Pacific Conservatory Theatre
Student Matinee Program
Presents

August Wilson’s *Fences*

Generously sponsored by
Franca Bongi-Lockard
Nancy K. Johnson

*A Study Guide for Educators*
Welcome to the Pacific Conservatory Theatre

A NOTE TO THE TEACHER
Thank you for bringing your students to PCPA at Allan Hancock College. Here are some helpful hints for your visit to the Marian Theatre. The top priority of our staff is to provide an enjoyable day of live theatre for you and your students. We offer you this study guide as a tool to prepare your students prior to the performance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENT ETIQUETTE
Note-able behavior is a vital part of theater for youth. Going to the theater is not a casual event. It is a special occasion. If students are prepared properly, it will be a memorable, educational experience they will remember for years.

1. Have students enter the theater in a single file. Chaperones should be one adult for every ten students. Our ushers will assist you with locating your seats. Please wait until the usher has seated your party before any rearranging of seats to avoid injury and confusion. While seated, teachers should space themselves so they are visible, between every groups of ten students. Teachers and adults must remain with their group during the entire performance.

2. Once seated in the theater, students may go to the bathroom in small groups and with the teacher's permission. Please chaperone younger students. Once the show is over, please remain seated until the House Manager dismisses your school.

3. Please remind your students that we do not permit:
   - food, gum, drinks, smoking, hats, backpacks or large purses
   - disruptive talking.
   - disorderly and inappropriate behavior (stepping on/over seats, throwing objects, etc.)
   - cameras, iPods, cell phones, beepers, tape recorders, hand held video games. (Adults are asked to put any beepers or cell phones on silent or vibrate.) In cases of disorderly behavior, groups may be asked to leave the theater without ticket refunds.

4. Teachers should take time to remind students before attending the show of the following about a live performance: Sometimes we forget when we come into a theatre that we are one of the most important parts of the production. Without an audience there would be no performance. Your contribution of laughter, quiet attention and applause is part of the play.

When we watch movies or television we are watching images on a screen, and what we say or do cannot affect them. In the theatre the actors are real people who are present and creating an experience with us at that very moment. They see and hear us and are sensitive to our response. They know how we feel about the play by how we watch and listen. An invisible bond is formed between actors and a good audience, and it enables the actors to do their best for you. A good audience helps make a good performance. PCPA welcomes you as a partner in the live theatre experience from the moment you take your seats. We hope that your visit will be a highlight of your school year.
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

The Study Guide is a companion piece designed to explore many ideas depicted in the stage production of August Wilson’s *Fences*. Although the guide's intent is to enhance the student's theatrical experience, it can also be used as an introduction to the elements of a play, and the production elements involved in the play's presentation. The guide has been organized into three major sections:

- Elements of the story
- Elements of production
- Activities

Teachers and group leaders will want to select portions of the guide for their specific usage. Discussion questions are meant to provoke a line of thought about a particular topic. The answers to the discussion questions in many instances will initiate the process of exploration and discovery of varied interpretations by everyone involved. This can be as rewarding as the wonderful experience of seeing August Wilson’s *Fences* on-stage.

Derrick Lee Weeden as Tony and Karole Foreman as Rose
PRODUCTION TEAM AND CAST
August Wilson’s
Fences

Director
Scenic Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Composer
Fight Director
Stage Manager

Timothy Bond
Jason Bolen
Deb Trout
Tim Thistleton
Michael G. Keck
Mark Booher
Ellen Beltramo

CAST OF CHARACTERS
Troy Maxson
Jim Bono
Rose
Lyons
Gabriel
Cory
Raynell

Derrick Lee Weeden*
Michael j. Asberry*
Karole Foreman*
Satchel Anrdre
Michael G. Keck
Chris Mansa
Kandace Flowers

* Actor’s Equity Association
ELEMENTS OF THE STORY

Synopsis of the Production

Troy Maxson, like many black men of his era, fled north to escape the horrible sharecropping conditions in the South. He lived in shacks, resorted to stealing, and spent some 15 years in jail for killing a man he tried to rob who shot him before Troy killed him with a knife. He became a talented baseball player in the Negro Leagues, but was overlooked by the major leagues because of his age - just as they began to accept Negroes. Troy is now picking up garbage and is pushing his boss to allow blacks to drive the garbage trucks. His friend and payday drinking buddy, Bono, thinks Troy has been cheating on his wife, Rose. Troy’s son Cory is being recruited by a college football team which Troy is convinced will lead nowhere based on his own experience with discrimination. Cory breaks the news to Troy that he’s quit his job at the A&P so he can play football after school which does not sit well with Troy. Rose reminds Troy about the fence she wants built.

Troy’s brother Gabriel suffered a brain injury in the war. He carries an old trumpet on a string tied around his waist. Gabriel has moved out of the Maxson house and into a boarding house. It was his compensation check from the government that went to buy the Maxson house and his monthly stipend has been going toward the mortgage.

Later in the day, Cory and Troy are working on the fence and the discussion turns to the football recruiter. Troy is convinced the white men will never let his son get ahead in sports and that he needs to get his job back and learn a skill, and then defiantly assures Cory that he’ll never sign the permission paper Cory needs to get the football scholarship. Cory asks why Troy doesn’t like him which sets Troy off explaining a father’s duty is to provide for his son and liking him has nothing to do with it. Rose tries to convince Troy to let their son play football reminding Troy he was too old for the major leagues and he should recognize that the world has changed.

A couple weeks have passed and Troy has successfully broken through the color barrier at work and is now allowed to drive the trash truck. Troy starts reminiscing about the horrible conditions as a youth and the brutal abuse he endured from his father and how he walked 200 miles to escape that environment. When he arrived in Pittsburgh he couldn’t find a job and survived by stealing food and then money. He admits that the time he spent in jail cured him from
wanting to rob people.

Troy learns that Cory has been lying and hasn’t kept his job with the A&P. Cory has come in upset because he’s learned that Troy has told the coach that Cory can’t play football anymore and told him to call off the college recruiter. His disrespect earns him “strike one.”

Another day, Troy and Bono are in the backyard talking and Bono is concerned with Troy’s growing attention to Alberta and he doesn’t want Troy to wreck his 18 year marriage with Rose. But a short while later Troy is admitting to his affair to Rose, and that Alberta is pregnant. Rose can’t believe what she’s hearing as Troy tries to justify his affair. Rose tries to leave but in a rage Troy grabs her arm as Cory enters and fights with Troy. Troy restrains himself from seriously hurting Cory and proclaims, “that’s strike two.”

Six months later, Troy is leaving the house as Rose informs him that Gabriel has been committed to a mental hospital and accuses Troy of selling his brother out by signing the commitment papers to get a part of his government check. Things go from bad to worse when he hears that Alberta died during child birth, though the baby is healthy. Rose agrees to help care for the baby they’ve named Raynell, but from now on, she refuses to accept Troy back into her life.

Seven years later the family is preparing for Troy’s funeral. Gabriel attempts to blow his trumpet before “the gates of heaven stand open as wide as God’s closet.”

Michael G. Keck as Gabriel, Carole Foreman as Rose and Derrick Lee Weeden as Troy
About The Play

_Fences_ is the third of 10 plays (The American Century Cycle) August Wilson penned to dramatize the black experiences in the United States with each play representing each decade of the 20th century. It won the 1987 Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in the same year. Set in 1950s Pittsburgh, _Fences_ centers on Troy Maxson, a trash collector and former baseball hero in the Negro League, whose inner conflicts take their toll on his relationships with his wife, children, and friends as they look to their own chances to fulfill their dreams. Wilson’s most renowned work, _Fences_ was developed at the National Playwrights Conference in 1983 premiering at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 1985. It played on Broadway in 1987 featuring James Earl Jones as Troy Maxson. In addition to the Tony for Best Play, it also won Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Play, Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play, Best Featured Actor in a Play, and Best Direction of a Play. It also won Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding New Play, Outstanding Actor in a Play, and Outstanding Featured Actress in a Play. A revival in 2010 featured Denzel Washington as Troy Maxson and Viola Davis as Rose. It was nominated for ten Tony Awards winning Best Revival of a Play, Best Actor in a Play, and Best Actress in a Play. A film adaptation directed by Denzel Washington in which he also starred with Viola Davis, reprising their roles from the Broadway production, was released last year. It was nominated for four Oscars: Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. Davis won for her performance. Washington and Davis also received Golden Globe nominations for their performances.

Timothy Bond, who has directed seven of Wilson’s Century Cycle plays, said he is honored to be directing the first August Wilson play in PCPA’s history, “Mr. Wilson is considered by many to be the American Shakespeare. His ‘American Century Cycle’ exploring the heritage and experience of African Americans, decade by decade, over the course of the 20th Century, is one of the monumental feats in the history of theatre. The design team’s focus has been about capturing the gritty truth and poetic blues-scape of the Maxson Family household which consists of an ancient two-story brick house in a dirt yard in the hill district of Pittsburgh in 1957. I am very excited about our stellar cast led by the amazing Derrick Lee Weeden.
and Karole Foreman as the unforgettable characters of Troy and Rose Maxson. The contagious humor, brilliant storytelling, powerful dialogue and soulful songs make Fences an unforgettable American Classic.”

Bond said there is much in this story he can personally relate to. Like the character Troy Maxson, Bond believed he would eventually play professional baseball until suffering an injustice and an injury that extinguished his dream. Beyond that he said, “It is significant to me to be telling this story in the Post-Obama Era in America, when many people in this nation are reawakening to the reality that there is still much work to be done to equal the playing field for people of color and women. As a person of color I have also faced racial discrimination in a number of ways throughout my life and live with those scars. I believe that by exploring African-American perspectives and culture, and examining America’s legacy of racial discrimination all Americans have a chance to holistically proceed into the future.”

This play uses many metaphors for the fence Troy Maxson is building. Timothy Bond continues, “We learn that a psychological fence went up around Troy after his father severely beat him and chased him off when he was only 14 years old. We also learn that Troy was an extraordinary Negro League baseball player, a home run slugger who hit balls 450 feet over fences. But when he is denied playing in the Major Leagues due to the color of his skin, this erects a devastating fence of injustice that mars his ability to see the few positive changes happening around him. Troy, scarred by racism and by the cycle of abuse from his father, seems doomed to repeat this pattern with his family. The cycle of dysfunction and separation seems like it will destroy the Maxson family and all of Troy’s relationships.”
AUGUST WILSON (April 27, 1945 – October 2, 2005) authored *Gem of the Ocean, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, The Piano Lesson, Seven Guitars, Fences, Two Trains Running, Jitney, King Hedley II, and Radio Golf*. These works explore the heritage and experience of African-Americans, decade-by-decade, over the course of the twentieth century. His plays have been produced at regional theaters across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway.

In 2003, Mr. Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*. Mr. Wilson’s works garnered many awards including Pulitzer Prizes for *Fences* (1987); and for *The Piano Lesson* (1990); a Tony Award for *Fences*; Great Britain’s Olivier Award for *Jitney*; as well as eight New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, Fences, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, The Piano Lesson, Two Trains Running, Seven Guitars, Jitney, and Radio Golf*. Additionally, the cast recording of *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* received a 1985 Grammy Award, and Mr. Wilson received a 1995 Emmy Award.
nomination for his screenplay adaptation of *The Piano Lesson*.

Mr. Wilson’s early works included the one-act plays *The Janitor, Recycle, The Coldest Day of the Year, Malcolm X, The Homecoming*, and the musical satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. Mr. Wilson received many fellowships and awards, including Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writers Award, and the 2003 Heinz Award, was awarded a 1999 National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States, and received numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities, as well as the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. He was an alumnus of New Dramatists, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a 1995 inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and on October 16, 2005, Broadway renamed the theater located at 245 West 52nd Street – The August Wilson Theatre. Additionally, Mr. Wilson was posthumously inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 2007.

Mr. Wilson was born and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and lived in Seattle, Washington at the time of his death. He is immediately survived by his two daughters, Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen Wilson, and his wife, costume designer Constanza Romero.
ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION

THEMES IN FENCES

RESPONSIBILITY IN FAMILY LIFE

Troy Maxson assumes the responsibilities of father, husband and provider who looks after his family as well as his disabled brother, Gabriel. However, he hides his frustrations, confiding them only to his friend, Jim Bono. Overwhelmed by these demands, Troy shirks his responsibilities, seeking escape with a younger woman, and fathering a child with her. When he brings the baby home, his explanation to his wife Rose is: “I can step out of this house and get away from the pressures and problems – be a different man.”

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS

Troy was a competent baseball player who developed his talent while in prison for fifteen years for killing a man during a robbery. When he is released from prison, he is too old to play in the major leagues. However, Troy refuses to acknowledge that his actions led to his prison time; instead he blames the system that discriminates against black players. Troy is blind to any changes that have occurred in the last 15 years. He refuses to recognize that time has passed and major leagues are now signing African-American players.

When his son Cory is recruited for an athletic scholarship, Troy forbids his son from playing football. Bitter over his own lack of advancement, Troy holds his son back from any success he might achieve. Cory accuses him of this fact when he explodes: “Just ’cause you didn’t have a chance, you just scared I’m gonna be better than you, that’s all.”

DEATH

Troy wrestled with Death when he had pneumonia; he finishes the fence around his house when he feels threatened by Death. His own name, Troy, is a metaphor for the defensive wall erected against the Athenians in the Trojan War. He refers to Death as “a fast ball on the outside corner.”

SEPARATION

Troy was separated from his family when he left home at the age of 14, and later from his new family when he went to prison. In the play we see Cory leave home because he feels his father has denied him an opportunity; Troy’s promotion to be a driver separates him from his friend, Bono; and finally, after Troy’s affair, Rose declares him “a womanless man.”

The most potent symbol of separation in the play is the fence that surrounds the Maxson family’s yard. Rose wants the fence to keep her loved ones safe; Troy builds the fence to keep intruders and Death out. When Troy played baseball, he always aimed to hit the ball over the fence, while he saw white America as having built a fence that kept
blacks contained. In addition, Troy built a fence around Cory to restrain him from achieving his goals and desires.

**RACISM**

The play takes place in 1957 at the cusp of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Even though he is too old to play baseball when released from prison, Troy feels racism derailed his sports career.

“Courtesy of the Theatre Company of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.”

Derrick Lee Weeden as Troy and Michael J. Asberry as Jim Bono
AMERICA IN THE 1950’S

One of the characteristics of the 1950s was the strong element of conservatism and anti-communist feeling that ran through society. This was the decade during which the phrase “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance, and church attendance rose.

Some important historic and cultural events of the decade were:

1950 – President Harry Truman approved the production of a hydrogen bomb and sent the Air Force and Navy to Korea in June.
1951 – Transcontinental TV began.
1952 – Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 removed racial and ethnic barriers to becoming a United States citizen.
1953-1961 – Dwight D. Eisenhower served as President.
1953 – Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were electrocuted for their part in a World War II act of espionage.
1954 – United States Senator Joe McCarthy began televised hearings into alleged Communists in the Army.
1954 – The Supreme Court wrote in Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, that separate facilities for blacks did not make those facilities equal according to the Constitution. Integration began across the nation.
1955 – Fighting ended in Korea.
1955 – Dr. Jonas Salk developed a vaccine for polio.
1955 – Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama.
1957 – Violence occurred at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, as black students tried to enroll.
1957 – The Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the first artificial satellite to orbit the earth.
1958 – Explorer I, first US satellite, successfully orbited the earth.
1958 – First domestic airline passenger service was begun by National Airlines between New York City and Miami.
1959 – Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states in the United States.

In the 1950s African Americans artists John T. Biggers, Romare Beardon and Henry Clay Anderson presented a different view of American life. In the field of literature, Lorraine Hansberry wrote A Raisin in the Sun in 1959; Langston Hughes was represented by his poetry in Laughing to Keep from Crying (1952), and in 1953 James Baldwin wrote Go Tell It on the Mountain, a semi-autobiographical novel.

On television people were watching the “Ozzie and Harriet Show”, the “Ed Sullivan Show”, Edward R. Murrow’s “See It Now” and Dick Clark’s “American Bandstand.” Rock ‘n’ roll emerged as a blend of Southern blues and gospel music. Bill Haley and the Comets, Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis ruled the pop charts. But some individuals preferred to listen to such crooners as Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and Perry Como.

In sports Althea Gibson was the first African American woman to play in the US Lawn Tennis Nationals at Forest Hills, New York. Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella and
Hank Aaron were burning up the bases in baseball, while Wilt Chamberlain and Elgin Baylor shone on the basketball court.

In fashion, blue jeans and poodle skirts were popular. Girls put their hair in ponytails and boys preferred crew cuts.

“Courtesy of the Theatre Company of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.”

Derrick Lee Weeden as Troy and Michael J. Asbery as Jim Bono

http://KClibrary.lonestar.edu/decade 50.htm
Racial Segregation in the United States

Racial segregation in the United States, as a general term, includes the segregation or "hypersegregation" of facilities, services, and opportunities such as housing, medical care, education, employment, and transportation along racial lines. The expression most often refers to the legally or socially enforced separation of African Americans from other races, but also applies to the general discrimination against people of color by white communities.

The term refers to the physical separation and provision of so-called "separate but equal" facilities, which were separate but rarely equal, as well as to other manifestations of racial discrimination, such as separation of roles within an institution: for example, in the United States Armed Forces before the 1950s, black units were typically separated from white units but were led by white officers. Signs were used to show non-whites where they could legally walk, talk, drink, rest, or eat. Segregated facilities extended from white only schools to white only graveyards.

Legal segregation of schools was stopped in the U.S. by federal enforcement of a series of Supreme Court decisions after Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. All legally enforced public segregation was abolished by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It passed after demonstrations during the Civil Rights Movement resulted in public opinion turning against enforced segregation.

Baseball Color Line

The color line in American baseball excluded players of Black African descent from Major League Baseball and its affiliated Minor Leagues until 1947 (with a few notable exceptions in the 19th century before the line was firmly established). Racial segregation in professional baseball was sometimes called a gentlemen's agreement, meaning a tacit understanding, as there was no written policy at the highest level of organized baseball, the major leagues. But a high minor league's vote in 1887 against allowing new contracts with black players within its league sent a powerful signal that eventually led to the disappearance of blacks from the sport's other minor leagues later that century, including the low minors.

After the line was in virtually full effect in the early 20th century, many black baseball clubs were established, especially during the 1920s to 1940s when there were several Negro Leagues. During this period some light-
skinned Hispanic players, Native Americans, and native Hawaiians were able to play in the Major Leagues.

The color line was broken for good when Jackie Robinson signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers organization for the 1946 season. In 1947, both Robinson in the National League and Larry Doby with the American League's Cleveland Indians appeared in games for their teams. By the late 1950s, the percentage of black players on Major League teams matched or exceeded that of the general population.

**RACISM AND ISSUES**

For much of the 20th century, it was a popular belief among many whites that the presence of blacks in a white neighborhood would bring down property values. The United States government created a policy to segregate the country, which involved making low-interest mortgages available to families through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veteran's Administration. Black families were legally entitled to these loans but were sometimes denied these loans because the planners behind this initiative labeled many black neighborhoods throughout the country as "in decline." The rules for loans did not say that "black families cannot get loans"; rather, they said people from "areas in decline" could not get loans. While a case could be made that the wording did not appear to compel segregation, it tended to have that effect.

In addition to encouraging white families to move to suburbs by providing them loans to do so, the government uprooted many established African American communities by building elevated highways through their neighborhoods. To build a highway, tens of thousands of single-family homes were destroyed. Because these properties were summarily declared to be "in decline," families were given pittances for their properties, and were forced into federal housing called "the projects." To build these projects, still more single family homes were demolished.

White and black people would sometimes be required to eat separately, go to separate schools, use separate public toilets, park benches, train, buses, and water fountains, etc. In some locales, in addition to segregated seating, it could be forbidden for stores or restaurants to serve different races under the same roof.

Public segregation was challenged by individual citizens on rare occasions but had minimal impact on civil rights issues, until December, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks refused to be moved to the back of a bus.
for a white passenger. Parks' civil disobedience had the effect of sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Parks' act of defiance became an important symbol of the modern Civil Rights Movement and Parks became an international icon of resistance to racial segregation.

Public signs identifying segregated facilities between 1930’s – 1950’s.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
The design model for PCPA’s production of August Wilson’s *Fences*. Set design by Jason Bolen.

**Setting** (as written by the playwright)
The setting is the yard which fronts the only entrance to the Maxson household, an ancient two-story brick house set back off a small alley in a big-city neighborhood. The entrance to the house is gained by two or three steps leading to a wooden porch badly in need of paint. A relatively recent addition to the house and running its full width, the porch lacks congruence. It is a sturdy porch with a flat roof. One or two chairs of dubious value sit at one end where the kitchen window opens onto the porch. An old fashioned icebox stands silent guard and opposite end.
The yard is a small dirt yard, partially fenced (except during the last scene), with a wooden sawhorse, a pile of lumber, and other fence-building equipment off to the side. Opposite is a tree from which hangs a ball made of rags.
A baseball bat leans against the tree. Two oil drums serve as garbage receptacles and sit near the house at right to complete the setting.
Scenic designer Jason Bolen was faced with the challenge of creating the Maxson home in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The play takes place in the yard of the Maxson’s house, and several years will pass between the start of, and the end of the play.

Jason Bolen’s design reflects the urban community in Pittsburgh as well as the many years the Maxson family have lived there. The most significant challenge of the play, is the ongoing construction of a fence, that will eventually surround the Maxson home.

The design model for PCPA’s production of August Wilson’s *Fences*. Set design by Jason Bolen.
As the character of Bono, says in the play; "Some people build fences to keep people out and other people build fences to keep people in."

The fence that Troy Maxson is building becomes the metaphor of the play. It begins to take on the characteristics of another presences on the stage. It becomes the barrier that Troy builds to keep the things that he fears the most, out. As well as the barrier that keeps him locked in the past. New pieces of the fence begin to appear as Troy and his family face the challenges their lives must endure.
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES*

PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

1. What analogies do you use to describe your everyday life? Why do analogies help in describing complex subjects?

2. What is a role of a parent toward their children?

POST-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

1. What does a fence symbolize in this play? What other analogies are used in this play?

2. How does the setting of 1950s Pittsburgh inform the play? What changes would happen if the story took place earlier or later?

3. What qualities does a hero have? What qualities does a villain have? Would you describe Troy as a hero or a villain?

4. How would you describe the relationship between Troy Maxson and his sons? His brother? His friends? His wives?

5. How does Troy’s fear of death and dying manifest itself in the play? How does he cope with it?

6. How would you describe Rose? How does she react to the confession from Troy? How would you have reacted to this information?

7. Why does Troy want Cory to drop football and get a job?

8. How does Lyons describe his love of music?

8. How would you describe the character Gabriel? What purpose does he serve for the play?

8. What surprises happen at the end of the play?
PERSPECTIVE WRITING – PERSONAL NARRATIVES

1. Select a moment from a typical day at your school; right before the morning bell rings, the morning announcements, a school wide assembly, the cafeteria at lunch, the final bell, a football game, etc. This should be a moment that has more than one person in attendance.

2. Each person will write a short monologue in first person tense describing the moment from their perspective of the experience. Make sure the moment is appropriate for school and that you are willing to share with the rest of the class.

3. Select one of the monologues that has the most potential or detail to be the scaffolding for the rest of the class to add elements from their monologues to make it richer or more evocative.

4. Discuss the similarities and differences that arose during the process. Was there general agreement or marked differences? If they were different why? Were they subtle or obvious variations? Did the class agree on what was important to include and why? If not how would the elimination of some elements change the way the story would be understood when read?

PERSPECTIVE WRITING – EULOGY

1. An eulogy is a speech or writing that praises a person that has recently died. Eulogies should not be confused with elegies, which are poems written in tribute to the dead; nor with obituaries, which are more similar to biographies.

2. After seeing the play, write an eulogy for Troy Maxson from your perspective.

3. Write a second eulogy for Troy Maxson from the perspective of Rose, Lyons, Cory or Bono.

4. Read and compare the eulogies in class. Discuss what information was important from the student’s perspective? What information was important when writing from another character’s perspective? What information did they leave out? Were there subtle or blatant differences from the different characters?
REPRESENTATIVE OBJECTS

1. Goal: The objective of this exercise is to give students a perspective of their pasts by using representative historical objects.

Examples of objects in *Fences*:
The lumber for the fence.
The baseball hanging from the tree.
The Trumpet Gabriel carries.
The old refrigerator on the porch.

2. August Wilson’s plays are full of symbolism. In *Fences*, there are many objects that become symbols. Start with compiling a list of objects that are found in the play and what they may represent. What do the objects tell us about the owner and how do the other characters react to these objects?

3. Have the class brainstorm some objects that they possess or remember from their past. How do these objects help to represent them?

4. Ask the students to talk with their parents and grandparents about some of the objects from their past.

5. Pick one of these objects and write a paragraph or compose a poem that is about the symbolic nature of these objects.

*“Courtesy of the Theatre Company of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.”*