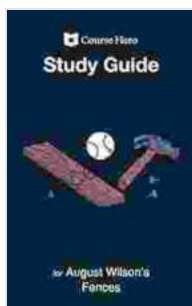


Study Guide for August Wilson's "Fences": A Deep Dive into the Play's Themes, Characters, and Symbolism

August Wilson's "Fences" is a Pulitzer Prize-winning play that explores the complexities of race, family, and the American dream in the mid-twentieth century. The play follows the Maxson family as they grapple with the challenges of life in a racially segregated neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This study guide will provide an overview of the play's themes, characters, and symbolism, as well as insights into Wilson's writing style and the historical context of the play.



Study Guide for August Wilson's Fences (Course Hero Study Guides) by Anna Nyakana

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 695 KB

Screen Reader : Supported

Print length : 103 pages

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Themes

Race and Inequality

"Fences" is a powerful exploration of the impact of racial segregation and discrimination on the lives of African Americans in the United States. The play depicts the daily humiliations and indignities that the Maxson family

faces, as well as the psychological toll that racism takes on them. Wilson also examines the ways in which racism can divide and destroy families.

The American Dream

Another major theme in "Fences" is the American dream. The play shows how the American dream can be both a source of hope and a source of disappointment for African Americans. The Maxsons strive to achieve the American dream of homeownership and economic success, but they find that their efforts are often thwarted by racism and discrimination.

Family

Family is a central theme in "Fences." The play explores the complex relationships between fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and siblings. Wilson shows how family can be a source of both love and conflict, and how the bonds of family can be tested by the challenges of life.

Characters

Troy Maxson

Troy Maxson is the protagonist of "Fences." He is a proud and hardworking man, but he is also flawed and difficult. Troy is a former baseball player who was denied the opportunity to play in the major leagues because of his race. This has left him with a deep sense of bitterness and resentment. Troy is also a stern and demanding father, and his relationships with his wife and sons are often strained.

Rose Maxson

Rose Maxson is Troy's wife. She is a patient and loving woman, but she is also strong-willed and independent. Rose is the glue that holds the Maxson

family together, and she is determined to protect her loved ones from the harsh realities of the world.

Cory Maxson

Cory Maxson is Troy and Rose's son. He is a talented athlete who dreams of playing football in college. However, Troy is determined to keep Cory from playing football, because he believes that it will lead to nothing but heartbreak. This conflict between father and son is a major source of tension in the play.

Symbolism

The Fence

The fence that Troy builds around his yard is a powerful symbol in the play. It represents the barriers that Troy has built around himself to protect himself from the pain of the world. The fence also symbolizes the racial segregation that exists in the United States.

The Baseball

The baseball that Troy holds in his hand throughout the play is a symbol of his lost dreams. Troy was a talented baseball player, but he was never given the opportunity to play in the major leagues because of his race. The baseball represents the unfulfilled potential of African Americans in the United States.

Writing Style

August Wilson's writing style is characterized by its realism and its use of vernacular language. Wilson's characters speak in the language of the

streets, and their dialogue is full of slang and colloquialisms. This use of language helps to create a sense of authenticity and immediacy.

Historical Context

"Fences" is set in the mid-twentieth century, a time of great change and turmoil in the United States. The play reflects the racial tensions and social upheavals of the era. Wilson's play is a valuable historical document that provides insights into the experiences of African Americans during this time period.

August Wilson's "Fences" is a powerful and moving play that explores the complex issues of race, family, and the American dream. The play's well-developed characters, powerful symbolism, and insightful writing style make it a timeless classic. "Fences" is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the history and culture of the United States.



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