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Fences: Dynamics of gender and race within relationships

August Wilson's *Fences* is a play that delves into individual differences and the relationships between the characters. This essay will explore the role of gender in relationship dynamics, the representation of race and class differences, and the impact of baseball as a history and myth on the characters as depicted in the play. Through an analysis of the play and the article *Baseball as History and Myth in August Wilson's 'Fences'*, this essay will show how August Wilson uses baseball as a means to examine the social issues

August Wilson's play *Fences* is an exploration of the dynamics of gender within relationships. It is set in the 1950s, a time when traditional gender roles were still largely enforced and when societal norms often held men and women to different standards. In the play, Troy Maxson struggles with an outdated view of masculinity that clashes with his changing social and economic landscape. He is unable to express his emotions, leading to a disconnect between himself and his family. His wife, Rose, is a strong and independent woman who is willing to stand up for herself and her family. She understands of Troy's struggles and is ultimately the one to help him find peace. Through the characters of Troy and Rose, Wilson highlights the tension between traditional and modern gender roles. He also examines the consequences of

adhering to rigid gender expectations, such as how it leads to a lack of communication and understanding in relationships. SG Shannon and SL Richards (2016) argue that *Fences* is an important work because it “forces readers to examine the ways in which gender roles shape our lives, our relationships, and our understanding of the world” (p. 3). This is certainly true, as the play ultimately shows the importance of embracing change and finding a balance between traditional and modern gender roles.

August Wilson's *Fences* is a powerful play that examines the complexities of race and class in American society. The play follows Troy Maxson, a former Negro League baseball player, and his family in the 1950s as they struggle to make ends meet and find their place in society. The play sheds light on the struggles of African Americans in the mid-twentieth century, as well as the systemic racism that exists in the United States. M Awkward (1995) argues that the play is a powerful examination of the effects of racism and classism on the black community, as well as on Troy's family. In particular, the play examines the toll that racism and classism take on Troy's relationships with his family, as well as his sense of identity and self-worth. The play also explores the ways in which racism and classism limit Troy's opportunities, as well as how they shape the lives of his children. Through its examination of race and class, *Fences* serves as a powerful reminder of the ways in which racism and classism continue to affect African Americans in the United States.

August Wilson's play *Fences* examines the African American struggle for identity and equality in the face of systematic racism and oppression. In particular, the play looks at how baseball

serves as a history and myth for the characters, providing them with a source of hope and inspiration. As S Koprince points out in *African American Review*, “Baseball is the language of Wilson's characters, a language they use to express their hopes and dreams, their despair, and their self-definition” (Koprince 2006). The play is set in the 1950s and the characters, particularly Troy Maxson, reflect the racial injustices of the era. Baseball serves as a metaphor for the struggles they face and provides an understanding of the African American experience. The characters’ dreams of playing in the Major Leagues, a dream that was never realized due to racism, represent the characters’ struggles to find identity and respect in a society that limits their opportunities. It also serves as a reminder of the history of the African American experience and the discrimination they faced. Baseball is symbolic of the past, present, and future of African American culture and identity, affirming the characters’ struggle for equality and respect. Koprince’s assertion that baseball is “the language of Wilson's characters” (Koprince 2006) is a powerful statement that demonstrates the importance of baseball in the play and in understanding the African American experience.

Overall, August Wilson’s play *Fences* is an intricate exploration of individual differences and the relationships between its characters. Through the iconic Troy Maxson and his struggles to pursue his dreams, the reader can identify with his efforts to live with abandon and still remain connected to those close to him. The relationship between Troy, Rose and Cory exemplifies how individual choices may alchemically alter family dynamics at multiple levels. Furthermore, Baseball being both a history and a myth, provides an interesting perspective on this play as it both ties the characters to the previous generations and showcases how old traditions help to

build identity but can also create conflicts. This demonstrates how August Wilson's *Fences* reflects not only how individual differences create tension within relationships but also how this tension is affected by a variety of external factors.

Works Cited

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