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Analysis of Symbolism and Imagery in *Fences* by August Wilson

Drama Paper

In the play *Fences* by August Wilson, the use of symbolism, imagery, and the role of baseball as history and myth are all essential elements in conveying a meaningful narrative. From the protagonist Troy Maxson's struggle to repair the fence in his yard to the use of baseball as a symbol of his own life journey, Wilson uses symbolism and imagery to illustrate the development of his characters and their relationships.

August Wilson's play *Fences* is a powerful work that touches on the themes of racism, family dynamics, and identity. Wilson uses symbolism in the play in order to effectively communicate his intended message. The play's protagonist, Troy, is a former Negro League baseball player and a garbage collector, who is constantly struggling to provide for his family and make sense of his place in the world (Wilson, 2012). The fence in the play symbolizes the barriers that are preventing Troy from reaching his goals and achieving the American dream. The fence also symbolizes the restrictions that racism places on African Americans, as the fence prevents Troy from gaining the access and opportunities that he desires. Additionally, the fence is a visual representation of the walls that Troy builds between himself and his family, as he is unable to fully connect with them due to his own insecurities and his fear of failure. Symbolically, the fence serves as a reminder of the struggles that African Americans face in their

aim for equality and success. As Koprince notes in *African American Review*, “The fence is a most effective symbol: it is a tangible expression of the 'fences' that racism has built around African Americans” (2006). Through his use of symbolism, Wilson is able to powerfully communicate the struggles that African Americans face in their pursuit of the American dream.

Baseball is deeply hooked into the American culture and has been popular since its inception. In his article, Koprince explores the role of baseball as both history and myth in August Wilson's play, *Fences*. Koprince argues that, “Wilson employs baseball to create a powerful metaphor, one that serves to illuminate the underlying themes of the play.”(2006) Wilson makes use of the game to illustrate the African American experience, specifically in regard to the racism and inequality that have been a part of American history. The play also uses baseball to illustrate how America is changing through the character of Troy Maxson. By using the game to express both history and myth, Koprince argues that Wilson is able to emphasize the importance of family, identity, and the struggle to come to terms with the past (2006). Through this metaphor, Wilson is able to captivate the audience and create a powerful story. Koprince's analysis of *Fences* highlights the role of baseball as both history and myth, and emphasizes how Wilson uses this metaphor to illustrate the African American experience and its relation to the past.

August Wilson's play *Fences* is a powerful example of how imagery can be used to illustrate character development. In the play, Wilson uses a physical fence to represent the inner struggles of the characters (2012). The fence is a strong symbol of Troy's internal struggles and his inability to foster meaningful relationships with his family and friends. The fence imagery is

used to show that Troy is constantly pushing away those he loves and is refusing to accept the changes in his life. The physical fence also serves as a symbol of the emotional boundaries Troy has created between himself and the people he loves, which further serves to illustrate his struggle to come to terms with his life and the changes he is facing. The imagery of the fence is a powerful tool for conveying Troy's internal struggles and his struggle to accept the changes in his life. By using the imagery of a fence, Wilson is able to effectively communicate his ideas about character development in a way that is both meaningful and powerful.

In conclusion, *Fences* by August Wilson is a play full of powerful imagery and deep symbolism. Wilson expertly employs metaphors to shed light on the African American experience. Furthermore, the article "Baseball as History and Myth in August Wilson's *Fences*" plainly demonstrates how Wilson's symbolic use of the game of baseball, in addition to its historical context, provides insight into the protagonist, themes, and overall ideas of the play. Last but not least, *Fences* is an incredible play filled with powerful imagery and symbolism that undermines Wilson's historical, social, and cultural themes.

Work Cited

Koprince, Susan. "Baseball as History and Myth in August Wilson's 'Fences.'" *African American Review*, vol. 40, no. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 349-358. *Academic Search Complete*, Ebscohost, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.nyack.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=58ce6bd5-aad9-4267-a45d-d6129a4d3f29%40sessionmgr102>.

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