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### Imagery in *Fences*

*Fences*, written by August Wilson, surrounds an African American family whose existence revolves around a fence that portrays their family's life. The play consists of many characters whose connections and relationships with themselves and each other grow and thrive whilst committing their duty to their family as well as exploring the betrayal that can break that bond. Troy Maxson, the main character, surrounds himself within a tangible and figurative fence that greatly affects his connections with his son, his wife, and death in order to keep others out of his life. Present in this play, are a lot of imagery and symbolism that provides the reader with a clear mental picture of what is going on. Enhancing what the writer is attempting to express to the reader such as the word "fences", also being the title, signifying the strength the Maxson family had as well as the strength a man had that potentially destroyed this family, while uniting them once again, in death.

An African-American man in his fifties who works for the sanitation service and loads trash onto trucks, is the main character otherwise known as the protagonist in *Fences*. As a baseball player in the Negro Leagues, Troy has also achieved success. Prior to the Major Leagues accepting Black players, Troy's athletic abilities declined. Troy is the household provider and the main character in his over thirty-year partnership with colleague sanitation worker, Jim Bono. Troy is strong, diligent, and inclined to spinning the

facts in intriguing, fantastical fiction. Fences' other interactions revolve around Troy's persona as its focal point. Troy is Rose's spouse, the father of Lyons, Cory, and Raynell, as well as Gabriel's brother. Troy is a heroic figure who takes great delight in providing for his family. Troy is discouraged by his years of labor for very little gain and frequently falls short of giving his family members the affection and assistance that they most need. Troy Maxon and his boys are not eligible for the promise of a comfortable life that results from dedication and hard work because they are viewed as inferior members of American society whose cheap labor in factories helps the creation of wealth for white Americans (volume 5, issue 4). Troy is not only an protagonist but can also be viewed as the antagonist as many of his actions affect his family's life causing him to ultimately lose his wife, his children, and even his coworker. Rose (Troy's wife) asks Troy and Cory to build a fence to protect her family, however throughout the play, viewers see an unfinished fence, which represents Rose and Troy's fading marriage.

Cory's mother, who is also Troy's second son, is his wife Rose. Rose is a 43-year-old African American housewife who routinely serves as a member at her church and adores her children and husband. In order to protect her family members near to her heart, Rose asks Troy and Cory to construct a fence in their little, dirt backyard. In contrast to Troy, Rose is a pragmatist who doesn't romanticize the past. She supports Cory's desire to play football as she has great expectations for her son. Raynell, Troy's adopted child, was accepted by Rose as her very own kid, showing her sympathy. Rose wishes to maintain a tight relationship with her family as she sings "Jesus, be a fence all around me every day. Jesus, I want you to protect me as I travel on my way" (Wilson 1042) in church. Following

18 years, Rose and Troy's relationship appeared to be crumbling once she questioned Troy asking him "Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me?" (Wilson 1071). The fence could have also been a means of keeping Troy in Rose's world. Troy hasn't been in a hurry to complete the fence as he perceives it as a type of restriction. Troy strives to maintain several fences, including his marriage, which serves as one of these obstacles. Troy vows to love Rose so much, yet readers can tell that he is constrained by personal partnerships. Troy doesn't construct the fence since he understands that doing so would signal the last of his attempts to flee to his other lover, Alberta. Troy's adulterous relationship creates a wall between him and his wife, and his actions cause Rose to feel imprisoned by a daughter who is not her own. Wilson uses the fence both metaphorically and figuratively. With the Maxson family, this fence was meant to stand in for both safety and connectedness to this family. Troy, though, has several wounds from his history. The bandages start to peel off as he makes judgments for Rose and Cory, exposing Troy's flaws to everyone, including Death.

The play's barriers start to develop shape as readers realize Troy's shortcomings as the literal fence transforms into a sign that completes the play. Fences arise repeatedly all through the play to conjure up images of various types of barriers. Some individuals "build fences to keep people out", as Bono puts it: "and some build fences to keep people in" (Wilson 1066). Viewers are shown that, if someone keeps their dear ones at a distance, they would ultimately be left solitary with their worst worry.

## Citations

Peyman Amanolahi Baharvand. "The Failure of the American Dream in August Wilson's Fences." *International Journal of English Language and Translation Studies*, vol. 05, no. 04, Dec. 2017, pp. 69–75. EBSCOhost, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsdoj&AN=edsdoj.81551e4502e6460c958d9b11e2409124&site=eds-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsdoj&AN=edsdoj.81551e4502e6460c958d9b11e2409124&site=eds-live&scope=site).

Wilson, August. *Fences*. *Literature: A Portable Anthology*, edited by Janet E. Gardner et al., 4th ed., Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2017, pp. 1030-1088.