

## *Fences - First Impressions*

### *Pre-Show Activity for Grades 6-12*

#### Goals

- Students will analyze character descriptions from *Fences*.
- Students will identify personal connections and points of interest within these characters.
- Students will engage in [Artful Thinking](#) routines to deepen perspective-taking.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding through multiple means of expression.

*NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and [Universal Design for Learning](#). TEKS can be found at the end of this document.*

#### Materials Needed

- Character descriptions from Alley Re-Sourced (printable handout included)
- Pencils or pens
- Optional: digital tools for audio-visual presentation options

#### Introduction- Meet the Characters

- Using Alley Re-Sourced, begin with a brief overview of *Fences*, including the time period and setting.
- Review the cast of characters and what information students can find in the “Who’s Who” section.
  - On the “Who’s Who” section of the Re-Sourced guide, we can see a picture of the actor, the character(s) they play, basic traits of that character, and a summary of what’s going on with them in world of the play.
- Offer multiple ways to access this information: review the material digitally, provide printed copies, read aloud descriptions or have students review the information in pairs.
- Encourage students to choose one character to focus on.

#### Same, Different, Connect, Engage

- This activity allows students to explore the characters in the show. Using the character descriptions and inferences students make, have students answer the following questions.
- Read the character description and discuss the traits and circumstances connected to the character.
  - **Same-** What traits, experiences, or qualities do you and this person share?
  - **Different-** What important differences do you notice between you and this person?
  - **Connect-** How do the values or tensions in this character’s life connect to how you think about your own life?

- **Engage-** What would like to ask, say, or do with the person if you had the chance?

### Creating a Response

- Students may respond in a way that matches their strengths and preferences:
  - **Write:** A journal entry, poem, or short script excerpt.
  - **Visualize:** A sketch, storyboard, collage, or symbolic representation.
  - **Perform:** A pose, tableau, mime, or short scene.
  - **Record/Produce:** An audio podcast reflection, video response, or digital graphic.
- Encourage students to capture how they see themselves in relation to the character through similarities, differences, and points of connection.

### Sharing and Feedback

- Offer varied ways for students to share:
  - Pair-share or small group discussion.
  - Gallery walk (physical or digital wall of responses).
  - Anonymous posting (teacher reads aloud or shares highlights).
  - Whole-class presentations (optional, not required).
- Conclude with a reflection using **Connect–Extend–Challenge:**
  - How did you connect with this character?
  - How did this activity extend your thinking about them or about yourself?
  - What challenged or surprised you?
- Students can reflect through a quick-write, sketch-note, pair-share, or digital submission.

### TEKS

#### Fine Arts- Theatre, Middle School 6-8

- Level 1- 2(B) imagine and clearly describe characters, their relationships, and their surroundings
- Level 2- 2(B) define characters by what they do, what they say, and what others say about them
- Level 3- 1(A) evaluate characterization using emotional and sensory recall

#### High School Levels I-IV

- Level I- 1(E) analyze characters by describing attributes such as physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions through reading scripts of published plays;
- Level II- 3 (C) analyze characters, themes, duties, and elements of a script to determine artistic roles and technical assignments;
- Levels III-IV- 2(C) analyze and interpret characters from various genres and styles, describing physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions;

#### English Language Arts and Reading, Middle School 6-8

- 5(E): make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society;

#### English Language Arts and Reading, High School- English I-IV

- English I- 6(B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils
- English II- 6(B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters, including archetypes, through historical and cultural settings and events
- English III- 6(B) analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme;
- English IV- 6(B) analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme;

**Who's Who: The Cast and Character Descriptions of Alley Theatre's *Fences***



**David Rainey**  
Troy Maxson

**Troy Maxson**

Troy is the head of the Maxson household. He is a hardworking man who takes pride in providing for his family. Shaped by a lifetime of missed opportunities, Troy believes survival matters more than dreams. He loves his family but struggles to show it in supportive ways. His need for control often creates distance between himself and those he wants to protect.

**Key Traits:**

Proud	Stubborn
Charismatic	Guarded

*"I done learned my lessons. I don't need no second chances."*



**Michelle Elaine**  
Rose Maxson

**Rose Maxson**

Rose is Troy's wife and the emotional center of the family. She is loving, patient, and deeply committed to keeping her family together. Rose believes in hope, forgiveness, and building a better future for her children.

**Key Traits:**

Loyal	Strong
Nurturing	Resilient

*"You take and don't give."*



**Aramie Payton**  
Cory Maxson

**Cory Maxson**

Cory is Troy and Rose's teenage son. He is determined, hopeful, and eager to create a future different from his father's. Cory dreams of playing football and believes opportunity should be pursued, not feared. His conflict with Troy reflects a larger struggle between generations.

**Key Traits:**

Ambitious	Hopeful
Defiant	Sensitive

*"I don't want to be like you."*



**Kendrick "KayB" Brown**  
Lyons Maxson

**Lyons Maxson**

Lyons is Troy's older son from a previous relationship. He is a musician who values creativity and self-expression. Lyons chooses passion over security, which puts him at odds with his father. He remains respectful toward Troy but refuses to give up his dream.

**Key Traits:**

Creative	Optimistic
Independent	Idealistic

*"I got to live my life the way I believe in."*



**Timothy Eric**  
Gabriel Maxson

**Gabriel Maxson**

Gabriel is Troy's brother and a World War II veteran who suffered a brain injury. He believes he is the angel Gabriel, sent to open the gates of heaven. Gabriel brings moments of joy, innocence, and spiritual symbolism to the play. His presence reminds the audience of the cost of war and the fragility of dignity.

**Key Traits:**

Innocent	Spiritual
Joyful	Vulnerable

*"I'm gonna tell St. Peter to open them gates."*



**Alex Morris**  
Jim Bono

### **Jim Bono**

Bono is Troy's longtime friend and coworker. He is loyal, observant, and often serves as the voice of reason. Bono understands Troy's flaws but tries to guide him toward better choices. He values honesty and respect, especially within family relationships.

#### **Key Traits:**

Loyal                      Thoughtful  
Honest                     Grounded

*"Some people build fences to keep people out...  
and others build fences to keep people in."*



**Mila Glenn**  
Raynell Maxson

### **Raynell Maxson**

Raynell represents new beginnings and hope for the future. Raynell's innocence and love for music help reconnect the family.

#### **Key Traits:**

Innocent                 Hopeful  
Gentle                    Symbolic

*"This here's my daddy's garden."*