

Fences – Build Your Own Fence

Post-Show Activity for Grades 6-12

Goals

- Students will identify and analyze key themes in *Fences*.
- Students will connect themes of emotional barriers and protective boundaries to their lived experience.
- Students will develop critical thinking through group discussion and written reflection.

NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and [Universal Design for Learning](#). Demonstration of Learning and TEKS can be found at the end of this document. [Artful Thinking Routines](#) are regularly referenced to encourage critical thinking.

Materials Needed

- Re-Sourced Guide for *Fences* (found [here](#)).
- *Fences* Story Web and Outline (included).
- Writing materials or digital devices for note-taking.
- Popsicle sticks, markers, glue, paper or cardboard base

Introduction

- Start with a brief discussion about the concept of themes in theatre. Explain how *Fences* addresses various themes such as:
 - Generational legacy – What we learn from our parents or pass down to the next generation.
 - Identity – who we are and how we see ourselves.
 - Secrets and Truth Telling – Things people hide or choose to reveal.
 - Isolation and Connection – Feeling alone vs feeling supported by others.
- A printable Story Web and Outline is included with this document. Encourage students to use this outline to organize their notes during the discussion and group work time.
- Ask them to brainstorm any themes they observed during the play. Write their ideas on the whiteboard or chart paper. Guide them to consider specific scenes.

Group Discussion

- Divide students into small groups.
- Have each group discuss the following question:
 - How might Troy building the fence represent emotional barriers or protection in the play?
- They can support their findings by analyzing:
 - Key scenes that highlighted the theme.
 - Character interactions that exemplified the theme.
 - Any dramatic or theatrical elements that contributed to their understanding of the theme.

Notes for UDL alignment: Bridge the language of the students (the way they phrased their ideas) with any academic or formal variations you wish to support. “Just cause you’re poor doesn’t mean you’re a bad person” would be another way of saying “Dickens’s critique of poverty and inequality.” Learn more about UDL guidelines for language and symbols [here](#).

Individual Activity: Build your “Fence”

- Ask students to think about something in their own lives that might be a personal boundary or emotional barrier they would build a fence for.
 - Examples:
 - Protecting family
 - Personal privacy
 - Trust
 - Fear of getting hurt
 - Loyalty to friends
 - Self-respect
- Students write their words or phrases on the popsicle sticks.
- Students may decorate their popsicle sticks to reflect each word or phrase, using a specific color, font style, or pattern.
- Students glue their popsicle sticks together to create a small fence on a piece of paper or cardboard.
 - Each stick represents something they are protecting or something that creates distance in their lives.

Sharing and Feedback

- Post the fences in a gallery for students to observe the work of their peers next to their own.
 - What did your fence have in common with others?
 - Did you notice any patterns in what people choose to protect or distance themselves from?
- Use “See / Think / Wonder” to encourage reflection:
 - What did you see in this visual? Objectively, without interpretation. Just visual details.
 - What do you think is happening in this visual? What do you see that makes you think that?
 - What do you wonder? What questions come up for you as you look at this stage picture?

TEKS

English Language Arts and Reading (Grades 6–12)

- (5E), (6A), (7A), (8A) – Analyze and interpret themes; make connections to personal experiences and society; draw inferences about symbolism and meaning; analyze how themes are developed in a text;

Theatre I–IV

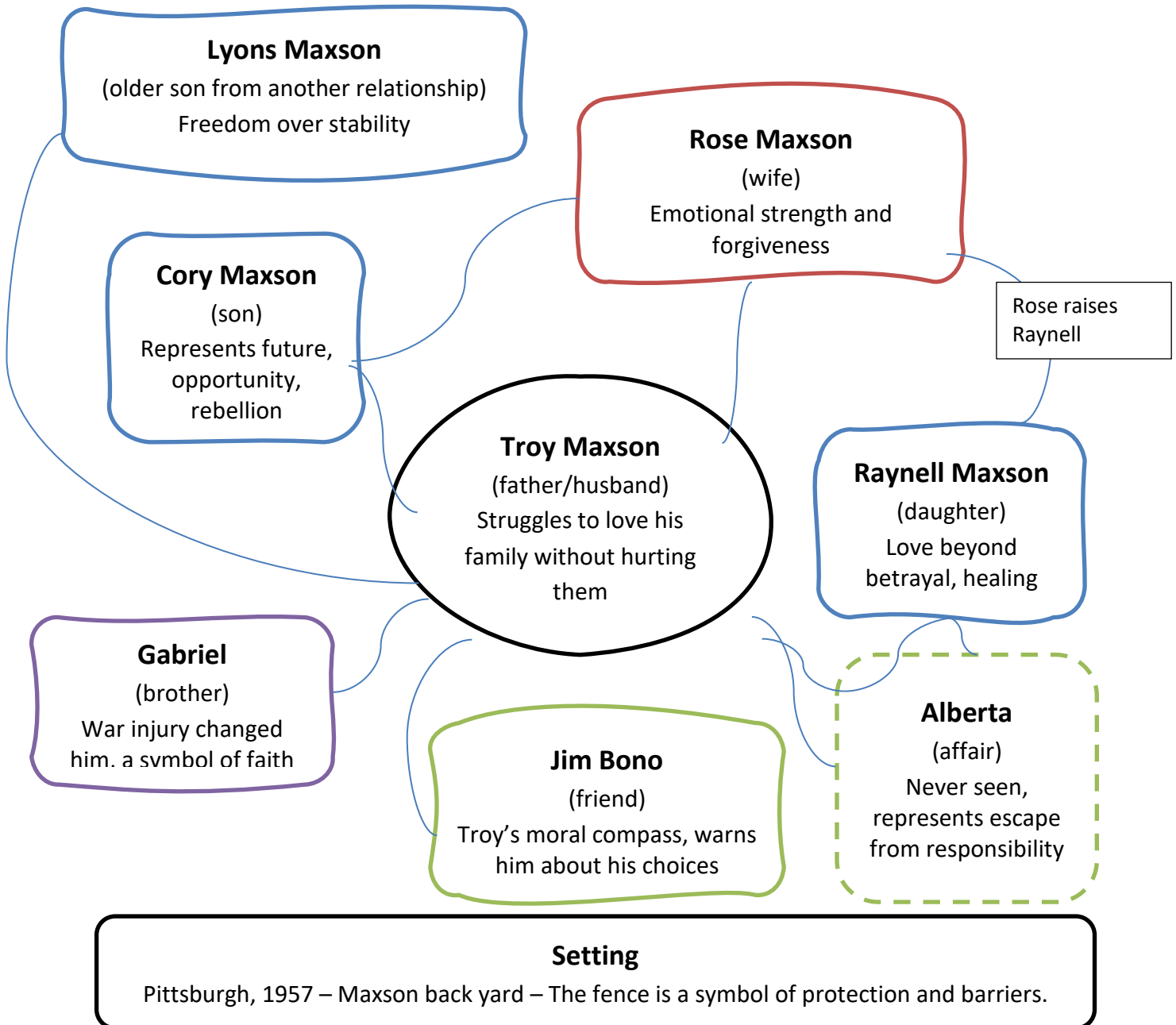
- (1A–C), (2A–B), (3A–B), (4A–B), (5A) – Apply creative expression to represent ideas and themes; interpret characters and dramatic elements; collaborate and communicate meaning through discussion and visual representation; respond to and evaluate theatrical concepts and symbolism.

Fences

Story Web & Outline

Story Web

This story web is a reference to help you remember the play. Use it to notice connections between characters, setting, and themes. You do not need to add anything unless your teacher asks you to. Use the web to support your analysis or creative response.



Fences

Story Web & Outline

Outline

This outline is a reference to help you remember the play. Use it to notice connections between characters, setting, and themes. You do not need to add anything unless your teacher asks you to. Use the outline to support your analysis or creative response.

Basic Play Information

- A. Title: Fences
- B. Playwright: August Wilson
- C. Genre: Drama / American realism
- D. Setting: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1957 — primarily in the Maxson family's backyard
- E. Central Point of View: Troy Maxson

Setting as a Driving Force

- A. The Maxson family's backyard becomes the central space where relationships unfold and conflicts between family members are revealed.
- B. The fence being built throughout the play symbolizes protection, separation, and the emotional barriers between characters.

Major Themes

- A. Generational Legacy
- B. Identity
- C. Secrets and Truth Telling
- D. Isolation and Connection

Key Moments / Ideas

- A. Troy challenges discrimination at work and becomes the first Black garbage truck driver.
- B. Troy refuses to allow Cory to pursue a football scholarship.
- C. Troy admits he is having an affair with Alberta.
- D. Rose agrees to raise Troy's daughter, Raynell, after Alberta dies.
- E. Cory leaves home after a confrontation with Troy and later returns for his father's funeral.

Overall Impact

- A. The play explores how personal history, racism, and generational conflict shape family relationships.
- B. It reveals the complicated ways love, responsibility, and pride influence people's choices.
- C. The ending encourages reflection on forgiveness, legacy, and how children understand their parents.