

## *Fences - Exploring Themes*

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

#### Goals

- Students will identify and analyze key themes in *Fences*.
- Students will connect themes to characters, plot, and historical context.
- 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.
- Art supplies.

#### Introduction

- Start with a brief discussion about the concept of themes in theatre. Explain how *Fences* addresses various themes such as:
  - Generational legacy
  - Identity
  - Secrets and Truth Telling
  - Isolation and Connection
- 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 and assign each group a specific theme from the play.
- Have each group discuss how their assigned theme was portrayed in the play 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](#).

## Group Work Time

- Each group will create a visual representation of their assigned theme. They can choose from various formats, including:
  - A poster that includes memorable quotes from the play, visuals, and explanations of the theme.
  - A collage using magazine cutouts, drawings, or digital images that symbolize the theme.
  - A short multimedia presentation that combines images, text, and audio to convey the theme.
- Use a visible timer while students are creating and give them verbal warnings.
  - Keep the list of themes visible if possible.
  - Encourage the use of the Story Web and Outline and discussion notes.

## Sharing and Feedback

- Designate a stage area and have each person or group present their work, explaining their theme and how it was expressed in the play.
- If time allows, students can display their work in a gallery walk.
- During presentations, use “See / Think / Wonder” to encourage reflection from the rest of the class:
  - 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)

- (2A–E), (3A–C), (5A–C), (6A–B), (7A), (8A) – Analyze theme and genre; interpret character and plot development; make inferences and draw conclusions with textual evidence;

### Theatre I–IV

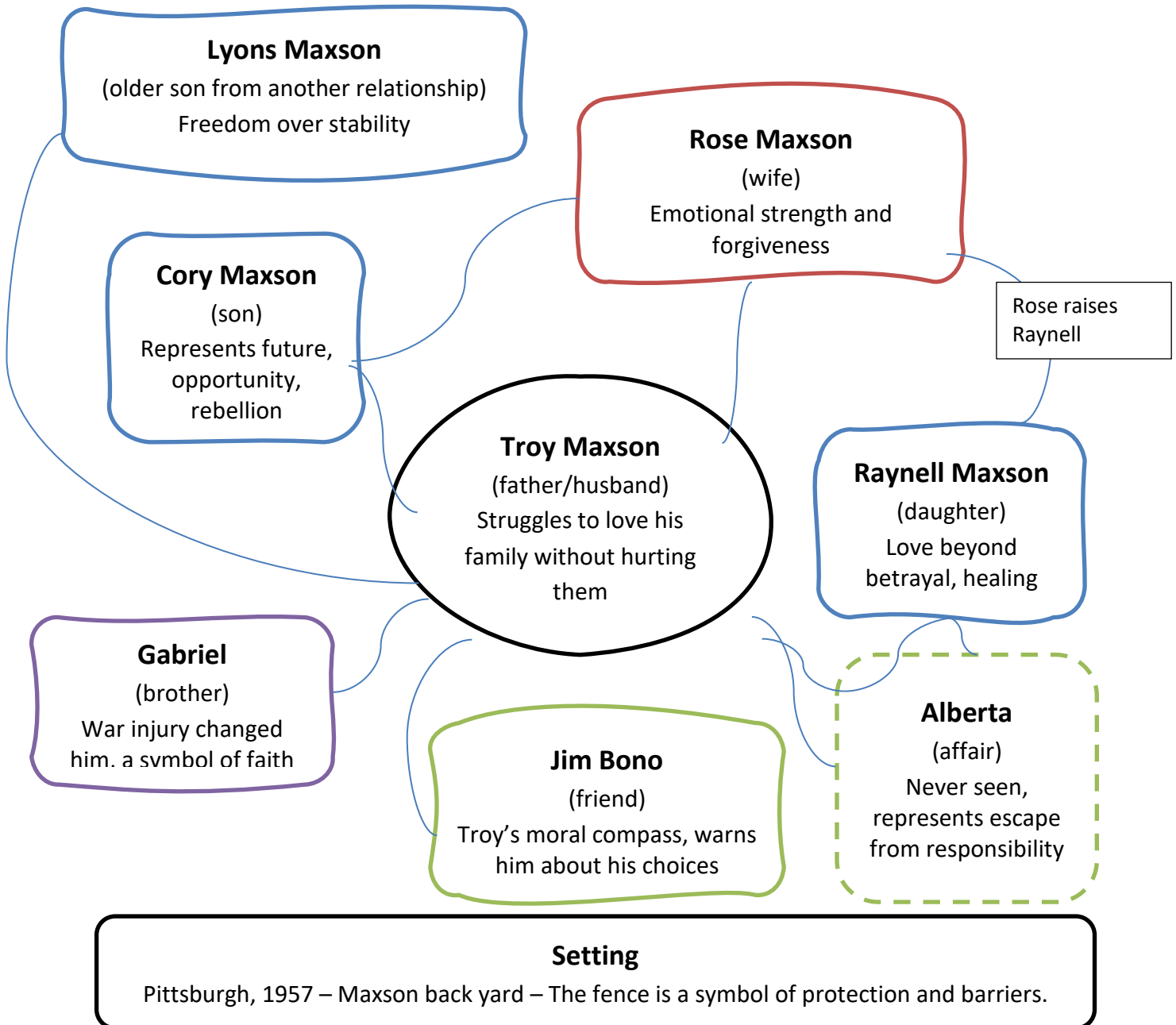
- (1A–C), (2A–C), (3A–B), (4A–B) – Develop and sustain characters using voice, movement, and imagination; interpret scripts and dramatic literature; collaborate to express ideas and themes through performance; analyze and critique theatrical works and performances.

## 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.