

## Fences

### 1a. Where are they?

- The whole play takes place on the front porch of the home of Troy and Rose. There is a screen door that leads into the kitchen. And two chairs outside the house. In front, there is a patch of dirt yard surrounded by an unfinished fence. On the other side, there are some trash cans and a place for Rose to hang the laundry. The house is located off a small alley in a big city neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- Act 1-
  - Scene 1- On the porch on a Friday with Troy and Bono drinking after work. Rose wanders in and out of the house preparing for dinner. And Lyons, Troy's son from his first marriage, comes by asking for money.
  - Scene 2- It's the morning and Rose is outside doing laundry. Troy comes all in a bad mood talking about this and that. Eventually, we are introduced to Gabe, Troy's brother who believes he is an angel who went to heaven when he died. He warns Troy that his name is in Saint Peter's book and he must prepare for judgment day.
  - Scene 3- Cory and Troy are working in the yard to build a fence. Although they argue about everything. Rose tries to defend Cory and let him play football but Troy is such an abusive narcissistic father to listen.
  - Scene 4- Another Friday night. Cory has gone off to a game. Rose is getting dinner ready. Troy and Bono come from work and do their drinking. Lyons comes back to repay his father. Troy tells a pity story about the way his father acted.
- Act 2-
  - Scene 1- Troy and Bono are outside in the yard. Troy is getting ready to cheat on his wife again and actually sleep with someone else. Bono is trying to convince him not to. We find out that Gabe has been arrested. Troy tells Rose that he cheated on her and is going to be a father.
  - Scene 2- Six months after she found he has been cheating. Rose tells Troy she wants him to come straight home after work. Troy thinks he has done nothing wrong because he gives her all his money. The baby is born and Alberta died in childbirth and Gabe has been taken away.
  - Scene 3- Rose is sitting out on the porch and Troy comes back with his new daughter. He sits on the porch and manipulates Rose into having to put up with him and take in his daughter.

- Scene 4- Two months later, Cory has graduated and is trying to start work. Troy and Bono are sitting on the porch. Troy has started drinking more. Bono is moving on to better things. Cory comes home to talk to his father but Troy loses his temper and they get into a fight over the baseball bat. Troy tells him to leave.
- Scene 5- It is now 1965 and the day of Troy's funeral. 7 years after the birth of his daughter. Raynell sings her father's song in the yard. The house is looking much better with a small garden in the yard. Cory comes home from the military. Bono and Lyons are there. Cory and Lyons catch up on the porch. Cory says that he won't be going to his dad's funeral, Rose argues until she convinces him. Gabe comes home and tries to blow the horn to let Troy into Heaven, but nothing comes out.

**1b. What is the time of year or season?**

- The play takes place over about 8 years.
- The first act takes place in early fall when Cory starts school and his football season.
- The second act starts months later in the spring.

**1c. What is the time of day?**

- Act 1
  - Scene 1, 4- After work/evening
  - Scene 2- On the morning
  - Scene 3- Midday
- Act 2
  - Scene 1- Morning
  - Scene 2- Morning, six months after scene 1.
  - Scene 3- Late evening, three days later
  - Scene 4- Two months later on a Friday evening.
  - Scene 5- Morning, 7 years later

**1d. Over what time period does the play span?** The play takes place over 8 years. Although most of the play happens within the same year 1957, scene 5 of act 2 takes place 7 years after scene 4. Most of the play takes place in the year 1957 after the second world war and in a time of booming factories.

**2. What happened before the play began?** Before the play starts there are things happening both in the world and in the family.

- In the world, there has been a surge of factories and businesses within cities. Although this comes with many job opportunities unfortunately none of those opportunities were

given to the children of the slaves. They were not allowed to work as the white European immigrants could. Some got what jobs they could and others were cast out of the city. They had to set up camp under bridges with homes made from sticks and paper.

- In the family, in Troy's past, he was traumatized and abused by his father and kicked out of his house at the age of 14. He then went off on his own and started working. He fell in love with a woman and had his first wife and child. Later he left his wife and found Rose, he married her and had his second son. Later in that marriage, he went and slept with another woman and had his daughter. At some point in his life, he went to jail where he met his best friend Bono. He got a job working as a garbage man. He played baseball when he was younger and wanted to go pro-ball with it but at his time people of color were not allowed. Rose met Troy when she was in her thirties. She thought he would be a nice man to settle down with and have children. She later realized that she was wrong, but she has no choice but to stay with him in order to stay protected to safe. They have a son Cory who is 18 years old when the play starts. He has grown up in the education system, he is in high school and has been playing football he wants to go professional and has offers coming in from recruiters but his father does not want him to do it.

### **3. Who are the characters? What are their ages?**

#### **4. What is the function of every character?**

- Troy Maxson: 53-
  - Husband to Rose but was married before. Cheats on rose constantly and eventually has a daughter with another woman.
  - Father to sons Lyons and Cory, and daughter Raynell.
  - Works as a garbage collector but used to play baseball.
  - He is abusive and narcissistic.
  - Likes to drink and Lie, most likely due to his childhood trauma from his abusive father.
  - He is uneducated and unable to read.
  - Went to jail and met his best friend Bono who he takes for granted.
  - He is the type of father who thinks just because he gives his kid food and shelter he is a "good father" when in reality he is a piece of shit.
  - Very abusive to his wife and children. Wants everyone to obey him like a dog.
- Jim Bono: early 50s-
  - Troy's best friend from prison.
  - Married to Lucille.
  - Works with Troy as a garbage collector
  - He is a very kind soul and is known as a "follower." When talking to Troy he does more listening than talking and he always boosts Troy's stories.

- He functions as Troy's balancing half. He gives him advice and tries to keep him straight, for example when Troy wants to cheat on Rose, Bono tries to remind him that Rose is a good woman and he should not mess things up.
- Rose: about 10 years younger than Troy, early 40s.
  - Married Troy and although there is love there it is mostly a relationship built on what he can provide for her. She knows that she is better off putting up with all of his issues than being out on her own.
  - She is the biological mother of Cory, but she is very kind to Lyons and takes care of him. And after Raynell is left with no parents Rose takes her in and raises her as if she was her own.
  - She works at home cooking and doing laundry, although she's got a bit of a gambling habit.
  - She is a kind soul and is always trying to bring Cory and Troy together, although there is far too much tension in their relationship. She is also very supportive of Cory's dreams and is very kind to Gabe.
  - She's a smart woman with good survival skills.
- Lyons: 33 years old
  - Troy's son from his first marriage.
  - He wants to be a musician but cares more about his looks than having any actual skill and making any money. He relies on getting money from his father or from his woman Bonnie who works a real job to support her husband.
  - He is a bit of a bum and a slacker but really sweet to Rose.
- Gabe: mid-40s (7 years younger than Troy)
  - He fought in World War 2 which left him mentally and physically disabled.
  - He also fully believes he is the Angel Gabriel, he wears a golden trumpet around his waist. At the end of the play, he blows it at Troy's funeral, although at first nothing came out he tries again and it blows loud and clear finally granting his brother access to heaven.
- Cory: In high school- 18
  - Son of Troy and Rose and half-siblings to Lyons and Raynell.
  - He is in high school and loves football, he wants to play professionally but his father won't let him.
  - He is very sweet to his mom but he and his father do not get along which causes issues in the house.
- Raynell: young girl and then 7
  - Illegitimate daughter of Troy. Her mother and father pass away and she is left to be raised by Rose.
  - Her birth mother is Alberta
  - She is the only thing that will come from Troy without being damaged by him.

**5. Who is the protagonist?-** The family. Rose and Cory.

- They were most affected by the abuse of Troy. They had to put up with years of being emotionally manipulated and belittled.
- Rose had to be married to the awful man and therefore she threw away her entire life on him. She stayed to be his little housewife and did all the cooking and cleaning. She raised her son and two of his illegitimate children and her brother-in-law. She put up with years of abuse and cheating just to keep herself and her children safe. And only got love and affection when it was convenient for Troy. Other than that he would push her around and call her awful things. Although she would stand up to him sometimes she could only do so much. She just wanted to be happy.
- Cory had to be raised by the manipulative bastard. His whole life was affected and torn apart by his father. His father never believed in him or supported him. He held him back from being happy or having any chance of being successful. He had dreams and ambitions and had to fight for his place.

**6. Who is the antagonist?-** Troy

- One of the worst characters I have ever had the displeasure of seeing in a play. An abusive man who liked to play the victim card. He believed that nothing was ever his fault and that everyone owed him for “everything” he did for them. When in reality they would have been much better off without him. He abused his wife Rose and cheated on her constantly, eventually got another woman pregnant, and then Rose had to raise the child. He mistreated his best friend Bono and took him for granted until eventually, he wouldn’t take it anymore and he left. He mocked and abused his first son Lyons, and then eventually he did it again to Cory. Thankfully he died by the end of the play and his tyranny was over. Although he had already done irreversible damage to his family, his daughter Raynell was saved from his abuse to be raised in a loving household.
- Troy hardly does any work for himself. Almost every time the fence is actually being worked on it is by Cory or Bono and Troy is just standing off to the side complaining.
- He feels as though all of his actions are justified because he wanted them and that he doesn’t need any other reasons.

**7. What kinds of dialogue do the characters speak?**

- They are speaking English but with a northern accent and their own kind of slang. They sound a little bit like my family from Louisiana. They use the same kind of words like “wrassel.” They also use a bit of “broken English” which I think was used to make them seem less educated. Cory does not talk like this but Troy does.

**8a. What happens in the play? (major plot points- a summary)** In the play, we follow the Maxson family. We see Troy the father and husband come home from work with his best friend

Bono. Then we have the wife and mother Rose who lives at home with their son Cory. Lyons the son of Troy's first marriage and is a musician. Cory plays football but his father does not support this, eventually, this causes them to fight to the point of Troy forcing Cory to leave home. During the span of the play, Troy's drinking and actions push his best friend Bono away. Also during Rose and Troy's marriage, he cheats on her and has a daughter with another woman. When that woman dies in childbirth Troy is left to raise Raynell all by himself. Rose takes it on herself to be the girl's mother but Troy loses his wife in the process. Throughout the story, we see Troy's brother Gabe, who is mentally and physically disabled and believes he is an angel from heaven. He gets in and out of trouble and gets busted out by his brother. By the end of the play, Troy has died and the whole family returns to the home for his funeral. Rose is living at home and raising Raynell. Lyons is still playing music. Cory is in the military and is making a respectable life for himself. Gabe comes to the funeral and plays the trumpet to let his brother into the gates of heaven.

**8b. What is the Major Dramatic Question?**

- How have Troy's actions affected his family and their lives?

**8c. What is the Inciting Incident?** When Rose tells Troy that Cory has recruiters to play professionally.

- After this Troy becomes obsessed with what his son does with his life and he feels that he gets the right to control that.

**8d. What is the point of attack?** When Troy goes and tells Cory's coach that he will not allow him to play ball and that the recruiters can not come to his house. This is where he went out of his way to stop Cory from having any kind of freedom or free will in his life. This is also the final straw that rips apart their relationship and divides them forever. This is also why I believe the climax is when Troy and Rose separate and not when Cory leaves home because the father-son relationship had already been ruined.

**8e. What are the Complications?** Troy is the biggest complication. His actions hold everyone back from their happiness and potential. Rose is lost in a marriage of convenience. Lyons does not have his father's support to follow his dreams. Cory is also held back and is forced to leave his home. Troy refuses to believe that times have changed and that there could be any potential success for people of color.

**8f. What is the Climax?** When Troy comes home and tells Rose that he has slept with another girl and is going to have a child. The only thing that has been stable throughout the play is Rose and Troy. Her love for him has been tested but never pushed. As his other sons and brother drift in and out of the scenes, Rose has stayed constant. But when she finds out he cheated on her despite how hard she has tried to be his perfect wife.

**8e. What is the Resolution?** The resolution comes when the family comes together for the funeral and Cory decides that he is going to go to his father's funeral. At that moment we have the whole family together, ironically reunited by the one man who drove them all apart. And the play can come to a peaceful resolution.

**9. What are the themes explored in the play? Defend your answer**

Religion

- One theme I find very interesting is the use of Heaven and Hell. At the beginning of the play, Troy talks about how he has seen and “Wrasselled” with death. As well as seeing the devil face to face and even talking with him. His very dark outlook on the world is seen as he claims that time will never change and people of color will never be able to rise up. His head is in a very dark place. His face is always cast down towards the ground and he is also seen in dark colors. Additionally, he is large and heavy, and his footsteps and body drag him towards the ground. On the other hand, his brother Gabriel is the complete opposite. Not only does he talk about Heaven, but he claims to be one of the angels. He recalls his memories from when he was up in heaven. His face is turned up towards the sky and his clothes are much brighter. His tone and words are much lighter, almost childlike. He seems to almost float through life. These brothers show great contrast and yet balance. Just like Heaven and Hell.

Love and Family

- They battle with the idea of love and necessity. They love each other only because they have to. They are obligated to love each other and stay together. Rose sticks by this and stays with Troy even though she shouldn't. Cory breaks from this and says that he doesn't want anything to do with his father.
- Love is not always unconditional. It can be situational. And has to be worked for and when people don't want to work for it then they don't get love.

Fatherhood

- The quote at the beginning of the script says “When the sins of our fathers visit us, we do not have to play host, we can banish them with forgiveness, As God, in His Largeness and Laws” Which I believe is a theme that is heavily played in this play. There is a recurring theme of generational trauma from Troy's father to Troy and eventually passed down to Cory. However, Cory was the only one that was able to forgive his father and therefore releasing himself from the burden so his father can rest in peace.

Race

- Race is a heavy theme because of the time period. People of color are still underprivileged in that time period. They could not have the same opportunities for jobs and education as the white people. This affected the way that Troy treated his family and the way he actually viewed himself. He thought that the world was just the way it was and that was never going to change.