



***How Come You Ain't Never Like Me?  
Identity Development in August Wilson's 'Fences'***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
English III and IV

(Note: Specially designed for students following the Occupational Course of Study)

**Keywords:** Identity Development, Social Development, Drama, August Wilson, *Fences*, Diversity, Intersectionality, Media Images, Marginalization, Racism, the New Racism, Stereotypes, Disabilities, Marginalization, Feminism, Ethnocentrism

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:**

Within the context of August Wilson's *Fences*, students will analyze and examine how identity informs social development using the lens of intersectionality theory to explore how economic, political and ideological systems of oppression are often used to justify subordination and marginalization of "other" groups within American society. Students will explore the impact of the New Racism on their growth and development as it pertains to media representations and perceived analyses of what it means to be Black (African American), to be a woman, to have a disability, and to be a young man coming of age in a society which perceives and promotes Blackness as a stigma. The Pulitzer Prize winning play *Fences* was written by one of America's greatest playwrights, August Wilson in 1986 and recently debuted on screen in 2017 featuring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis. This play, based on its relevance and accessibility, will serve as a vehicle to enlighten and educate students about the importance of understanding the role ideological oppression plays in social development.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 30 students in Occupational Course of Study English III students in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.*

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## How Come You Ain't Never Like Me? Identity Development in August Wilson's *Fences*

*Annette Teasdell*

### Introduction and Rationale

When August Wilson, a self-taught African American playwright crafted *Fences*, a Pulitzer Prize winning two-act drama published in 1986, he placed Troy Maxson at the center of a story which chronicles the experiences of an African American family in the 1950s whose members deal with racism, classism, and sexism in ways that impact their beliefs about themselves and those around them<sup>1</sup>. Identity development is informed by how we see ourselves in the eyes of others, especially those close to us such as our family, friends and loved ones. Using the lens of intersectionality theory<sup>2</sup> to explore how economic, political and ideological systems of oppression are often used to justify subordination and marginalization of “other” groups within American society, students will explore how media images inform social development by studying the characters in *Fences* and how their identities are informed by what they believe to be their “truths.” Students will explore the impact of the New Racism<sup>3</sup> on their growth and development as it pertains to media representations and perceived analyses of what it means to be Black (African American)<sup>4</sup>, to be a woman, to have a disability, and to be a young man coming of age in a society which perceives and promotes Blackness as a stigma.

In the Fall 2017, Charlotte Teachers Institute Seminar *Media and Minorities: Unpacking the Stereotypes* facilitated by Dr. Debra Smith of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, we discussed the impact of media representations on identity development. The rationale for this unit is based on my interest in the psychological impact of media representations especially as it pertains to negative portrayals of African American women, men, the differently abled and today's youth. Whereas media representations are based on social groups, ideas and events that include a depiction, a likeness or a constructed image, the effects of these representations are far reaching.

In society today, the influence of the media significantly impacts our beliefs about ourselves because we are constantly bombarded with images of what it means to be African American, a woman, a person with special needs, and a young person coming of age. In the play *Fences*, a young Cory asks his father “How Come You Ain't Never Like Me? This innocent, albeit hurtful, question embodies the feelings of a young man who wants to believe that his father loves him, but who is faced with very few concrete examples of him liking him. Troy tries to explain in his own way that life is not about being liked but about being treated fairly. As a Black man and a father who indeed loves his son, Troy knows he needs to prepare Cory for the reality of life in a racist society and so he seeks to educate him rather harshly by letting him know what he is up against. This exchange can also be applied to African Americans who find themselves not always being “liked” based on media representations but who strive to be treated and portrayed fairly.

Media representations of African American women and men as oversexualized beings who conform to categories such as Jezebels, Mammies, Sapphires, Thugs, Gangsta, etc.,<sup>5</sup> have greatly influenced self-esteem and identity development and created a climate where the group is cast into a monolith that is not truly representative of the African American experience. Within *Fences*, the role of women is heavily influenced by widely held beliefs about women, whether it's Troy's devoted wife Rose, or his mistress Alberta or his motherless daughter Raynell. Each of these women are prey to society's inclination to paint them with one broad brush rather than appreciating them for their individuality and the unique experiences they have had within their own circles. According to cultivation theory<sup>6</sup>, when these twisted images are rampant in the media, it leads individuals to perceive reality in ways that are more consistent with television's version of reality rather than what actually is truth. This is the case with women as well as the men in the play.

An endearing character in *Fences* is Troy's brother Gabe who is suffering from traumatic brain injury due, in large part, to his sacrifice for his country as a war Veteran. The reader learns much from Gabe about what it means to have a disabling condition and how that informs what others think of you even those closest to you like Gabe's family. Troy appears to take advantage of Gabe and to Rose's great distress, he confines Gabe to a home for the mentally challenged. Gabe's reality, like that of people with disabilities, are often misunderstood and misrepresented. Gabe who is harmless is often arrested for "vagrancy" so that the police can charge Troy a fee to release him from jail. Gabe, like many other persons with disabilities<sup>7</sup>, fall into the category of other where people make a judgement about who and what they are based on media representations. The Gaze vs. Voice theory of media representation<sup>8</sup> seems appropriate here because what one sees and determines about a person before ever hearing their voice or their story of who they are precedes them. In fact, Gabe seems to be the most trusted source through which Wilson brings wisdom and hope to the characters in the play. Conversations Gabe has with others in the play reveal that he is much more than what others perceive him to be especially his nephew Cory.

One of the greatest challenges facing teenage youth is peer pressure which is most often predicated on trying to "find one's self" which is one of the conflicts at the heart of *Fences*. Troy's son Cory has a very difficult time placing himself within his father's ill-informed ideas of who he (Cory) should be and the vision Cory has for his own life. Both men are challenged with what they perceive the role of the Black man to be in the 1950s. Troy's experiences are quite different than Cory's because of the generation he grew up in whereas Cory sees possibilities that Troy will not allow himself to see. Like today's youth who are embracing a Hip Hop culture that can oftentimes be antithetical to what their parents experienced, Cory cannot identify with Troy's views of reality.

*Fences* is a wonderful vehicle for exploring the way that stereotypes are presented and internalized and how that contributes to the New Racism while providing teachable moments for students in contemporary American society as it relates to identity development. This unit explores aspects of identity development which are informed by ideologically oppressive stereotypes that are common in today's media. Through studying the curriculum unit *How Come*

*You Ain't Never Like Me? Identity Development in August Wilson's Fences*, the students in my English classes at North Mecklenburg High School will benefit from reading the works of one of America's greatest playwrights while also learning about several key issues that are relative to their role in American society such as identity development, the New Racism and the ways that the media informs self-development while also developing strategies to deal with its' effects.

## Demographics

North Mecklenburg High School<sup>9</sup> is an urban high school located in Huntersville, a suburb of Charlotte, North Carolina where over half the student body qualifies for free/reduced lunch. With population of nearly 2,000 students, the school has a student:teacher ratio of 18:1 and the majority of its students are Black and male. The school has a 70% graduation rate which is below the North Carolina graduation rate of 76%. A breakdown of all ethnic groups is represented in the chart below.

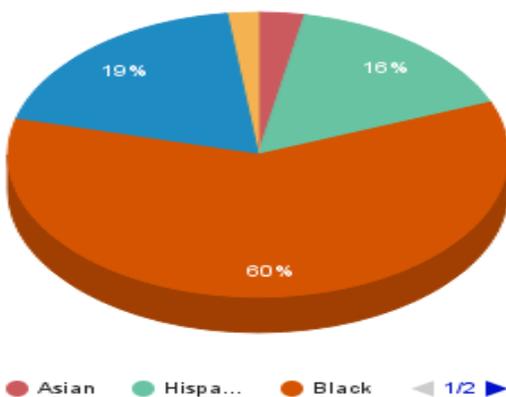


Figure 1 Ethnic Groups at North Mecklenburg High School

Based on the North Carolina School Report Card<sup>10</sup>, 22.3% of the students tested on the English II End-of-Course test scored at a Level I which indicates limited command of knowledge and skills which places them performing below grade level. Additionally, these scores do not meet North Carolina Standards for College and Career Readiness. Students scoring at Level I generally need more help to succeed in English and the students following the OCS curriculum are more likely to score at a Level I due to documented intellectual disabilities in reading and writing. Teaching a text like *Fences* affords them the opportunity to receive the material in written, auditory and visual format through the written text and the movie and the modified curriculum will promote ease of access.

To further elucidate, the chart below indicates demographics of students in the Mecklenburg High School Occupational Course of Study eleventh grade English III class in the Spring of 2017. The class is majority Black and majority male which makes the play relevant to their experiences particularly as we explore the role sports, work, and relationships have on the characters in the play. What these demographics also underscore is the overrepresentation of Black males in Special Education and while that is not the focus of this study it is worthy of note. By providing these students with literature that reflects experiences similar to their own lived

experiences, their interest in reading and studying *Fences* to learn the objectives of the unit will be heightened.

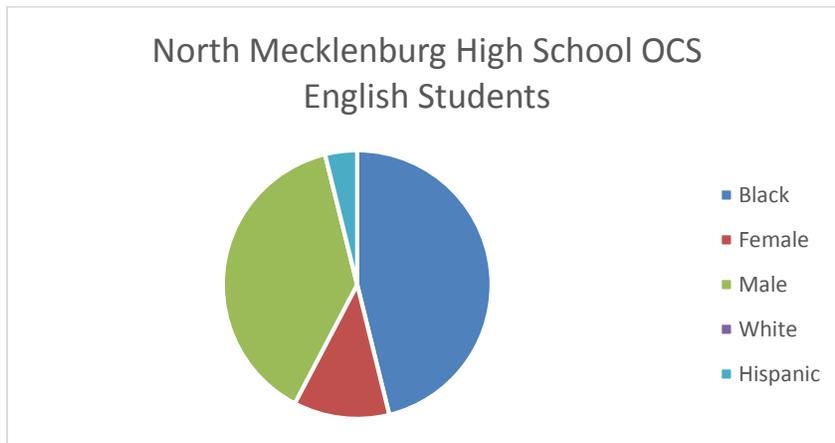


Figure 2 OCS English Student Demographics Fall 2017

## Unit Goals

While *Fences* is not a difficult text to read, it provides a vehicle to explore multiple themes across different media from the written play to the stage presentation to the 2016 motion picture *Fences* starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis. Students will analyze the characters, themes, setting, plot development for the purpose of analyzing the development of identity at the intersections of racism, sexism, ageism and physical ability across multiple interpretations of this award-winning drama.

Based on the Occupational Course of Study Literacy standards, by the end of grade 11, students should be able to read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. Students will examine the complexity of four characters—Troy, Rose, Gabe and Cory—as they each deal with inner conflicts exacerbated by their poverty-stricken existence in 1950s Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They will read the play to gain insight on the characters and then watch the play as well as the movie for comparative analysis. While the themes in the play are multilayered and multifaceted, our primary focus will be on the theme of identity development and self-love as it develops in this urban setting which is centered on the building of a “fence” to either keep people in or keep people out.

Below is a summary of the Core English Literacy standards, however, please refer to Appendix 1 Teaching Standards for more detail.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7

Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

## **Unit Overview**

*How Come You Ain't Never Like Me? Identity Development in August Wilson's Fences* will be taught in four major categories all centered around the baseball analogies and metaphorical devices often used in this award-winning play by August Wilson who is undoubtedly one of the greatest playwrights of our time. Winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1987 and in the same year winning the Tony Award for Best Play, *Fences* has set itself apart as an endearing story of the African American experience filled with themes of love, belonging, self-actualization and perseverance. It has been performed on Broadway with such theatrical giants as James Earl Jones, Denzel Washington and Viola Davis. In 2016, the motion picture debut of *Fences* featuring Denzel Washington as Troy and Viola Davis as Rose garnered great commercial success earning over \$64,000,000 as well as numerous accolades with Davis winning the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. This play has a timeliness that is born out of its efforts to tell the story of the African American experience from the gut-wrenching travails of a man, a woman, a disabled Veteran and a young man coming of age. When August Wilson died in 2005, the New York Times reported the following in his obituary:

“In his work, Mr. Wilson depicted the struggles of black Americans with uncommon lyrical richness, theatrical density and emotional heft, in plays that gave vivid voices to people on the

frayed margins of life...In bringing to the popular American stage the gritty specifics of the lives of his poor, trouble-plagued and sometimes powerfully embittered characters, Mr. Wilson also described universal truths about the struggle for dignity, love, security and happiness in the face of often overwhelming obstacles... 'I [Wilson] wanted to place this culture onstage in all its richness and fullness and to demonstrate its ability to sustain us in all areas of human life and endeavor and through profound moments of our history in which the larger society has thought less of us than we have thought of ourselves.'"<sup>11</sup>

In these poignant words, Wilson encapsulates a pervasive challenge in today's society of how one group is viewed through the eyes of another often with far reaching and disastrous consequences. A similar challenge is issued by another Pulitzer Prize winning African American author Toni Morrison who in *The Bluest Eye* warns of the destructive effects of physical beauty and love. Morrison invites the reader to take a glimpse into the warped world of Pecola Breedlove, a young Black girl who is considered ugly by most and whose only desire—a desire which drives her to insanity—is to acquire blue eyes so that others will love her as they love the blonde-haired blue-eyed Shirley Temples of the world who are the American standard of beauty. Referencing Pecola's family, Morrison recounts:

"You looked at them [the Breedloves] and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, "You are ugly people." They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance. "Yes," they had said. "You are right." "<sup>12</sup>

In contemporary American society, the media—its Billboard advertisements, movies, reality TV shows, magazine and news articles, music videos, etc.,—reinforce a norm of “beauty” that affects self-perception at the subliminal level. According to the hypodermic need theory of media representation<sup>13</sup>, media broadcasts directly shape the opinions and actions of viewers because information is “injected” directly into the viewer and then guides their actions. It “injected” Pecola with the notion that to be white meant to be loved and adored like Shirley Temple so she desperately desired the blue eyes that were indicative of white beauty. Like Pecola, Troy, Rose, Gabe and Cory are affected by a society that says their existences are substandard and not a thing of beauty. By using *Fences* as a lens through which to view media representations and analyze its impact on identity development from the 1950s through 2016, my students will have a vantage point for how the American standard of beauty is rarely informed by those groups standing at the margins and they will formulate their own ideas of what they need to be aware of to navigate its rough and choppy waters.

Through collaborative activities, hands on projects, technology based explorations and introspective analyses, students will explore the travails of specific marginalized groups and develop strategies for understanding their struggles and efforts to triumph over their circumstances. For the purpose of this unit, content has been divided into four major areas to address identity development from the 1950s to the present day. *Born with Two Strikes Against You* focuses on the experience of Black men from the 1950s to the current era and the challenges they face. *What About My Life* explores the African American women's perspective. *Take the Crooked with the Straights* addresses differently abled people and how they are perceived in society. *Don't You Strike Out* deals with the experiences of African American youth, particularly young Black males.

While this unit, as presented here, spans three weeks due to the unique learning needs of students in the Occupational Course of Study, it can be shortened to two weeks within the Future Ready Course of Study. The Unit Plan details daily activities and assessments but first, it is important to address the research undergirding this notion of media representation and identity development as it pertains to each marginalized group.

## **BORN WITH TWO STRIKES AGAINST YOU**

Troy Maxson's story, while somewhat depressing, is quite instructive because he lives his life based on his belief that he is born with two strikes against him. In other words, Troy believes that he has one chance to get things right because he is born Black and poor he has to play catch up to be on the level with everyone else around him.

Troy is a hard working garbageman eking out an existence in the Hill district of Pittsburgh in the 1950s. Through indirect and direct characterization, the playwright humanizes Maxson while also informing the reader of his unique travails. Speaking of Troy and how his story can be instructive to others, Wilson acknowledges:

“I believe my plays offer (white Americans) a different way to look at black Americans,” he told the Paris Review. “For instance, in *Fences*” they see a garbageman, a person they don't really look at, although they see a garbageman every day. By looking at Troy's life, white people find out that the content of this Black garbageman's life is affected by the same things—love, honor, beauty, betrayal, duty. Recognizing that these things are as much part of his life as theirs can affect how they think about and deal with black people in their lives.<sup>14</sup>”

Here is Troy, a man who is faced with disappointment in his career, in baseball and in his marriage and relationships. He is very vocal about the need for unionization among his fellow garbage workers due to what he sees as noted racial disparities. Troy works to become a driver so fervently that he “forgets” he doesn't even have a driver's license. He is unhappy with his line of work but does so tirelessly to provide for his family. His one weakness—the drinks he shares with first, his friend Bono and later his mistress, Alberta. Troy seems unable to get over his

failed attempts to enter the major leagues. He believes himself to be a very good baseball player but because of race restrictions he was not allowed to even try out for the majors. This leads to bitterness and resentment so deep that he dissuades Cory from pursuing a football career because he doesn't want his son to face the same disappointment. Troy loves Rose but, he is not happy enough in his marriage to remain true to her. Troy struggles to find happiness somewhere and even though adultery is not the best avenue, he tries to explain to his wife the peace his mistress Alberta provides him. When he explains that she is also pregnant with his baby, the reader feels that pain that is at once Rose and Alberta's. We want to hate Troy for the way he treats his disabled brother and the way he treats his son and especially the way he treats his wife. Troy believes he is born with two strikes against him and sells this story line throughout the play.

African American men today are facing the same challenges Troy faced in the 1950s. Raoul Peck's 2017 documentary "*I Am Not Your Negro*," tells the story of expatriate James Baldwin who poignantly stated "To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious means to be in a rage most of the time."<sup>15</sup> This seems to be the rage that engulfs Troy Maxson and it is perhaps also the rage that fuels the #blacklivesmatter<sup>16</sup> movement which soundly decries the unlawful killing of Blacks at the hands of police officers. Black men are angry because they are marginalized within society, in the workplace and at home. Troy fights for equality in the workplace just as men today are still dealing with more covert form of institutionalized racism.

The New Racism, this subjective institutionalized system, differs from the overt racism that Troy and his contemporaries faced in the 1950s. More often the New Racism evidences itself in political, economic and ideological realms. Even though we are living in a "colorblind" society just seconds away from the age of Obama, in North Carolina we still have illegally drawn, jerrymandered voting lines that contribute to widespread voter apathy. We have wage gaps where Black men are paid much less than white men in the same positions. Perhaps, most troubling however are the ideological representations of Black males as sexual deviants and outlaws who are headed for the criminal justice system. When young Black males see over and over the news reports of other Black males in handcuffs, they are subjected to the magic bullet theory<sup>17</sup> which holds that media broadcasts directly shape the opinions and actions of viewers as the information is "fired" directly into the viewer, and then convinces them to change their actions/views. The widely held notion that having a record gives one street credibility is so pervasive in Hip Hop culture as more and more "artists" are being arrested such as Lil' Wayne, 50 Cent and others. This glamorization of incarceration belies the point that Black men are persisting and doing quite well in careers in law, medicine, business and science and math. When young Black males see themselves represented in media as sexual deviants, they learn to behave as such. They forget to love their women because the music they listen to have reduced these women to "b\*\*\*\*\*s" and "h\*\*\*\*\*s" who are only useful for sexual exploits.

## **WHAT ABOUT MY LIFE**

In the movie adaptation of *Fences*, Viola Davis delivers an Oscar winning performance highlighted by her monologue entitled "What About My Life." It encapsulates the struggles she has witnessed as a dedicated wife to a man who is committing adultery and has born a child out of wedlock whom he eventually expects that she will help him raise. She poignantly captures the

experiences of Black women of her time and the dedication to marriage and family that is expected during the 1950s. Students will analyze the role of Rose in the household and in the community as she takes on her true identity by becoming less Troy Maxson's wife and more truly Rose Maxson.

African American women and girls have much in common with Rose. Today, African American women are faced with the same challenges of identity development that Rose faced. She links her identity to her roles as wife, mother and care-giver rather than finding her true identity in the things that bring her pleasure. This is Rose's response to Troy's report of adultery:

"I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. I got a life too. I gave eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me..." "I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams...and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never gonna bloom."<sup>18</sup>

Rose realizes, with great regret, that she has placed her life in Troy's hands unconditionally and that now that wager has cost her greatly. In those 18 years of marriage, she shifted from Rose with wants and desires and dreams to Troy Maxson's wife. She does not think about her desires for her own life because as a wife and mother in the 1950s, she saw her sole responsibility as being the wife to her husband and the mother to her son. She gave Troy everything she had to give. She felt it was her obligation. She further explains:

"But I held on to you, Troy. I held you tighter. You was my husband. I owed you everything I had. Every part of me I could find to give you. And upstairs in that room...with the darkness falling in on me...I gave everything I had to try and erase the doubt that you wasn't the finest man in the world. And wherever you was going...I wanted to be there with you. Cause you was my husband. Cause that's the only way I was gonna survive as your wife. You always talking about what you give...and what you don't have to give. But you take too. You take...and don't even know nobody's giving."<sup>19</sup>

Rose believes in her husband even when she knows that he is not the "finest" man in the world. She holds on to the dream of living a normal life with a family she can call her own. Even though, she knows about Troy's indiscretion, she wants to know if he is going to leave her for the other woman. She admonishes him, "You should have stayed in my bed, Troy. ... You should have held me tight. You should have grabbed me and held on." What Rose is saying to Troy is that they are in this together. According to the 2017 Status Report on Black Women,<sup>20</sup> in Pennsylvania only 59% of Black women are in the labor force. Rose benefited from having a working husband who provided financial means for the family but she shares in common the

travails of today's Black women who are dealing with husbands who cheat. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges for Rose is that she cannot imagine herself without Troy. She tells him "you can't wish me and my boy away." Rose is terrified that the life she has invested in for 18 years is now slowly fading away.

In her TEDTalk, Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie asks and answers the question of why We Should All Be Feminists<sup>21</sup> by explaining stories of her family and friends and how they responded to her advocacy of feminism. Of one of her American friends, she recounts her confusion when the woman was so upset about a situation at work and she did not stand up. Instead, she went to the bathroom and cried. Adichie recalls how invested the woman was in being "liked" and acknowledges:

"How they [African American women] have been raised to believe that their being likable is very important and that this likable trait is a specific thing. And that specific thing does not include showing anger or being aggressive or disagreeing too loudly...We spend too much time teaching girls to worry about what boys think of them...All over the world, there are so many magazine articles and books telling women what to do, how to be and not to be, in order to attract or please men...Gender matters everywhere in the world and I would like today to ask that we begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves."

Rose's challenge—to find her right place—is quite relevant today. African American women in America are often faced with the same uncertainty of who they are and where they fit in. In Melissa Harris-Perry's *Sister Citizen*, she uses the metaphor of the Crooked Room<sup>22</sup> to explain the difficulty Black women have in finding their place in society. She references the commonly held stereotypes of Black women as the promiscuous Jezebel (like Alberta), the nurturing Mammy (Rose) and the angry Sapphire. Standing amidst these stereotypes and the media images associated with them, today's Black woman finds herself trying to stand straight in a Crooked Room because their realities are tilted by the perceptions of other. She says "It can be so hard to stand up straight when your surroundings are tilted by your own perceptions and those of others."

Too often, young girls are socialized on what it means to be a Black woman based on what they see on Reality TV without investigating the impact of these negative images on their lives. Young African American are emulating the Basketball Wives and the Real Housewives without taking counsel from their inner circles because those media images are prevalent and correlate well with the objectification of the Black female body and the oversexualization of the Black female in Reality TV.<sup>23</sup>

Rose's attempt to find peace with who she is and the investment she has made in her marriage and furthermore in her life is rooted in the need for acceptance. Winfrey in *The Sisters Are All Right: Changing the Broken Narrative of Black Women in America*<sup>24</sup> encourages women to pay attention to the negative stereotypes that abound and to fight against these negative

images by speaking up and advocating for oneself. Rose does this and this is a teachable lesson for our young women and our young men and especially those who are differently able.

### **TAKE THE CROOKED WITH THE STRAIGHTS**

“You got to take the crooked with the straights” best symbolizes Gabe’s existence. The brother to Troy Maxson, Gabe suffers from traumatic brain injury and has a metal plate in his head due to an injury he sustains in battle. As a Veteran, he receives benefits but Troy is responsible for his affairs. Gabe is often delusional and wanders the streets blowing his trumpet to signal to St. Peter to open the pearly gates. Wilson uses this character to show at first a softer side of Troy but as the play evolves we see that Troy’s intent with Gabe is not so filled with brotherly love as he would like us to believe. He takes advantage of Gabe, uses \$3,000 of Gabe’s money to purchase a home and allows Gabe to move out and live in a boarding house where Gabe has to pay rent. Ultimately, when Gabe gets arrested for vagrancy, Troy commits him to a mental health institution. Because the students in the Occupational Course of Study Program face disabilities across a wide range of spectrums, analyzing the plight of Gabe to find his place in society can be juxtaposed against media representations of what it means to be differently abled and have special learning needs.

August Wilson is a master at weaving a story that includes a character who is not at center but whose role in the story is so critical. When the reader first meets Gabe, the immediate response is to have compassion for him because of his disability. What Wilson does however, is use Gabe as the voice of reason in the play. As the story comes to a close, Gabe is the one who knows without a doubt that his brother is heaven bound. Troy to Gabe is a doing of right things. He has, Gabe believes, been a good brother to him. Nothing else about Troy matters to Gabe. We see through Troy’s treatment of his brother that he does not always have his best interests at heart. Based on Wilson’s characterization of Gabe, he is a vagrant who wanders the streets of Pittsburgh selling things and blowing his trumpet to call for St. Peter. Naming is significant here because Gabe is named for the angel Gabriel and to a great degree, he has been an angel to Troy. Without Gabe, Troy would have no place to live. Gabe, in his own way provides counsel to Troy’s sons.

Gabe is nonetheless marginalized. He is not treated with the respect he deserves because people judge him before he opens his mouth. People with disabilities are very rarely the beneficiaries of positive media representation. They are often seen as incapable and incompetent when this is not the case. According to Phil Hunt:

“Disabled people have identified ten commonly recurring disabling stereotypes in the mass media. These include: the disabled person as pitiable and pathetic, as an object of curiosity or violence, as sinister or evil, as the super cripple, as atmosphere, as laughable, as her/his own worst enemy, as a burden, as non-sexual, and as being unable to participate in daily life. These stereotypes are particularly evident on television, in the press, and in advertising.”<sup>25</sup>

Hunt further explains that the stereotyped portrayal of disabled people in the media is perhaps one of the primary obstacles to identity development. No one really takes Gabe seriously and it is especially evident from the patronizing looks from the family in the closing scene in the motion picture *Fences* that they pity him, that is until the skies really do open up as if to welcome Troy home.

Because this unit is being taught to students with intellectual disabilities, it is important to tell Gabe's story and to discuss the self-perception. Sometimes students are so ashamed of having an Individualized Education Plan and they will go to great lengths to prevent their peers from knowing they are in Special Education classes. Some students will intentionally report after the tardy bell and rush to be the first to leave so others will not see them in "those classes." Why? Because they are bullied and teased for something they cannot change. In my classes, I make every attempt to treat them as human beings and to provide them with the same rights to a Free and Appropriate Public Education that other students get. Adapting the curriculum to meet their learning needs is one thing but not giving them the same right to access the curriculum that other students are studying is inexcusable. What we can learn from Gabe is that it is important for students to know what resources/options are available to persons with disabilities who may not have the support of family to face important life transitions.

## **DON'T YOU STRIKE OUT**

As Troy is born with two strikes against him, his urging to Cory is "don't you strike out." Cory is a young man who is on the verge of signing to play football due to his expertise. Troy refuses to let Cory play because he believes Cory needs to work and become a man not chase pipe dreams. Cory does not understand his father and really believes he does not like him. Cory wants to understand Troy's travails but he sees his father a bitter man who does not want his son to realize his dream. Their relationship is strained to the point of breaking and when Cory and his father get into a physical altercation, Cory leaves the house. Setting out on one's own without the support of one's family as an African American male presents a unique set of challenges. Cory enters the military to make a life for himself.

Presenters at the Charlotte Teachers Institute Equal Justice Initiative Workshop talked very frankly and convincingly about the School to Prison Pipeline and its effects on African American males in particular.<sup>26</sup> The curricula materials provided shed light on the legacy of slavery, lynching and racial segregation which continue to impact us today. Media representations of African American males as criminals, hoodlums and thugs align with societal perceptions that African American males are an endangered group. As I listened to the workshop presenter, a well-spoken, highly trained, articulate lawyer, express his concerns about the plight of young Blacks, I wished that the media was present to document and put the spotlight on a Black man who made his life work addressing social justice issues that are at the core of society's challenges. In *Fences*, Cory sees the military as a pathway to success but, only after his father stopped him from pursuing a football career. In this unit, it is important, particularly for the students enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study, to focus on pathways today's youth can take to achieve success. With identity of Black males so compromised by media

representations, it is important for youth to be aware of their strengths and to forge through all the misrepresentations that exist in the media.

Furthermore, today's youth must take the next step toward bringing about change in this area. This unit takes a look at the language of today's generation and explores misogyny in Hip Hop culture. Without a close analysis of their media diets, today's youth will not only fall prey to the negative stereotypes that oppress them but they will continue to pass them on. What this unit will attempt to do is to get them thinking about how they can be an agent for social change and bring attention to negative media portrayal and how they affect their self-perception. This brief from the obituary of the author of *Fences* cements the matter:

“Mr. [August] Wilson did not write plays with specific political agendas, but he did believe art could subtly effect social change. And while his essential aim was to evoke and ennoble the collective African-American experience, he also believed his work could help rewrite some of those rules.”<sup>27</sup>

## **Instructional Implementation**

Because the students in my English classes follow the Occupational Course of Study due to specific learning disabilities, the curriculum has been modified and adapted to their unique learning needs. The implementation standards for this unit reflect this. We plan to use the standard play in written and video format however, we will modify assignments and assessment information which are detailed herein.

### Teaching Strategies and Activities

#### Focus on *Fences* Journal

Throughout the unit, students will complete a journal entitled Focus on *Fences* which they will design using art materials in the classroom. Each day students will write a summary of what they have read in the play to keep a running record they can refer back to as they read. The journal will also provide a means for them to express their feelings about key events in the story that may or may not lend itself to group discussion. Also, students will be given free write topics to include in their journals.

### Classroom Lessons and Activities

#### Hill District Newspaper Project

Playwright August Wilson was a native of the Hill District in Pittsburgh and much of the background of the play is rooted in the Hill District. Students will create a collaborative newspaper that showcases stories about what is taking place in the Hill District and in the play. They will create an advertisement for Lyons' band. They will write a news story about Troy's efforts to bring about changes at his job. They will create a want ad for the A&P. They will write Troy Maxson's obituary. They will write an editorial about fair representations of African

Americans in the media. They will write a brief history of the Hill District. They will write a birth announcement for Raynell. They will write a news story about Cory's football team. They will interview a former Negro League player or historian. This project will engage their literacy skills and help them synthesize the major events in our study. Students will work together to create the newspaper using an online tool such as Wix or Weebly or they can produce a poster size newspaper using Word to write their stories and illustrate their newspaper.

### Negro League Project

To explore the history of the Negro League and to better understand the life of Troy Maxson, students will complete the Negro League Project. They will research the Negro League and profile one Negro League baseball player to create a Google slide show including at least 10 slides. The profile should include a biography and achievements of the baseball player.

### Hip-Hoptionary Project

Students will create their own Hip-Hoptionary similar to HipHptionary TM The Dictionary of Hip Hop Terminology by Alonzo Westbrook.<sup>28</sup> This will document the language of their generation and will provide a vehicle for communicating with other adults in their immediate circles. Additionally, their HipHoptionary will give them ownership over their unique cultural expression. They will compare and contrast this to the language of 1950s youth. What was the vernacular in the 1950s compared to today's youth.

### *Fences* Foldable

Students will complete a foldable over the span of the unit to use as a study guide for the final assessment. The foldable will include the main components of the unit to include a profile of each main character, themes in *Fences*, key vocabulary and a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the play and the movie. The foldable provides a reasonable accommodation for students who may have difficulty remembering all the details of the play and it will provide support as a learning station during assessments.

### *Fences* 3D Scene Development Project

While reading the play students will create a 3D scene as a competition to see which group brings the play to life most effectively. Groups will be randomly assigned and will be provided tools to develop their project. This project supports the kinesthetic learner and allows for creative collaboration.

### *Fences* Showbill

To show their creativity, students will create *Fences* Showbill to advertise the play. They must be conscious of the media images they use in their advertisements. The showbills will be judged for creativity and thoroughness of design. This project will enhance students attention to the details of the plot and will allow them to show their creativity.

## “Misogyny in the Mix” Media Analysis Project

Students will create a project called Misogyny in the Mix to analyze the lyrics of Hip Hop music. They will report on evidence of misogyny or denigration of women in song lyrics and in advertisements and videos. They will also review how gender directs Hip Hop culture. What evidence is there of the role of women and men in writing songs? What are the implications of this on African American youth. The project will be done as a Power Point or Prezi which may or may not include music videos and analyses.

Racism Alphabet (Kim Korona, [www.humaneeducation.org](http://www.humaneeducation.org))

Students will explore racism and its effects by creating a racism alphabet similar to the project by Kim Korona which is explained in greater detail at <https://humaneeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/RacismAlpha2013.pdf>.<sup>29</sup> Students will use white boards and markers, to create a racism alphabet similar to the one in *Faces of Racism* by Josef Szwarc but which more closely explains how the characters in *Fences* might experience racism. They will use these terms to discuss racism and its impact.

Where Are the People Like Me (Brandi Burke-Hicks, [www.humaneeducation.org](http://www.humaneeducation.org))

Students will view the student friendly version on the definition of intersectionality at <https://youtu.be/w6dnj2IyYjE>. This will help students understand unique terminology regarding different groups. Then students will complete the activity “Where are the People Like Me”<sup>30</sup> based on the activity designed by Brandi Burke-Hicks. Students will use magazines, catalogs, books, recycled paper and paper clips to prepare a collage that shows who is and is not represented in the media. Together, we will discuss the impact of media representations and what this says and does not say about their unique experiences and contributions. This will be a gateway to a discussion on media representations using materials from “Where Are the People Like Me.” The students will look for people based on predetermined characteristics such as the ones outlined in the activity that represent intersectionality. Discussion questions may include the following:

- What characteristics were the most difficult to locate?
- What messages are sent to people who don't see themselves reflected in ads/articles/stories?
- What messages are sent to adults and children in general who view these ads/articles/stories?
- What groups do you belong to (or special characteristics do you have) that aren't represented?
- What can we do to encourage more visibility of diversity in media?
- What should we do when we encounter negative stereotypes in the media?
- How can we exercise our rights as consumers if we do not like certain media representations?

I Got the Blues Project

At the heart of most August Wilson plays lies the Blues. The Blues as a music genre often gets marginalized but through the “I Got the Blues Project” students will explore the Blues and the music in the movie *Fences* to explain the Blues and present it as an artform with a history of its own.

#### Assessments

To assess their synthesis of the concepts in the Unit, students will review with Kahoot! quizzes, informal reviews and summative assessments including some of the projects listed above. Students will take a major exam that covers all aspects of the unit. See Appendix 7 for sample questions upon which assessment instruments will be built.

## Appendix 1 Teaching Standards

The Occupational Course of Study is specially designed for students with certain exceptionalities and is further explained here <https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/disability-resources/intellectual-disabilities/occupational-course-of-study>. Details regarding the English standards can be found on this page.

Based on the Occupational Course of Study Literacy standards, by the end of grade 11, students should be able to read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. Below is a summary of the Core English Literacy standards.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7

Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

## Appendix 2 Unit Plan

### “How Come You Ain’t Never Like Me?” Identity Development in August Wilson’s *Fences* Unit Plan

North Mecklenburg High School OCS English III: Annette Teasdell	
<b>UNIT TOPIC AND LENGTH:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ This unit is designed to cover 3 weeks as it is designed for OCS English III. The content is adapted to meet the unique learning needs of this student population who have specific learning disabilities in reading and writing.</li></ul>	
<b>COMMON CORE CONTENT STANDARDS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ See Appendix 1 for an explanation of the Standards.</li></ul>	
<b>BIG IDEAS/ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Are African Americans today facing the same challenges Troy, Rose, Gabe and Cory faced in the 1950s?</li><li>➤ To what extent does the New Racism, this subjective institutionalized system, differ from the overt racism that Troy and his contemporaries faced in the 1950s?</li><li>➤ How do media representations of Black men, women, the disabled and youth inform the New Racism?</li><li>➤ What pathways to success do today’s youth have beyond athletic dreams?</li><li>➤ How does the media inform our understanding of people who are considered “other”?</li><li>➤ What resources/options are available to persons with disabilities who do not have the support of family to face important life transitions?</li></ul>	<b>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ What effects can the media have on one’s view of oneself and on how others view you?</li><li>➤ What is the New Racism?</li><li>➤ What is intersectionality?</li><li>➤ What does it mean to be marginalized?</li><li>➤ What can you do to counteract the effects of negative media representations?</li></ul>
<b>CONTENT:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Students will use <i>Fences</i> to analyze the effects of media representations on identity development.</li><li>➤ Student will develop a keen eye for understanding how media is used to promote the New Racism.</li></ul>	<b>SKILLS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Knowing and understanding</li><li>➤ Communicating</li><li>➤ Thinking critically</li><li>➤ Investigating</li></ul>

**VOCABULARY/KEY TERMS:**

- SEE APPENDIX 5 FOR A LIST OF KEY VOCABULARY AND KEY TERMS.

**ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE AND ACTIVITIES:**

- SEE APPENDIX 7 FOR INFORMAL AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS.

**FINAL PERFORMANCE TASK:**

- Students will develop and present the Hill District Newspaper Project and the HipHoptionary Project as a culminating analysis of *Fences*. They will also have a unit test.

**LEARNING PLAN & ACTIVITIES:**

- To achieve the desired results students will complete supplemental activities explained in Appendices 3-6 which include the The Hill District Newspaper Project, the Negro Leagues Project, The *Fences* Foldable, the *Fences* 3D Scene Development Project, the Misogyny in the Mix Media Project, the Racism Alphabet Activity, Where are the People Like Me Activity, the HipHoptionary and the I Got the Blues Project?
- Students will demonstrate achievement of the desired results through completion of the Focus on *Fences* journal, collaborative learning activities, Kahoot! Quizzes, quizlets, classwork and tests.
- Students will be able to communicate more effectively on issues of media representation and racism as it relates to identity development.
- Challenges in the unit include making the content accessible for students with specific learning disabilities.

**Additional Support Strategies:** For students who need help understanding the key themes and concepts, consider assessing and building background knowledge using the following strategies: using video clips and additional supports such as read aloud and extended time. Students with specific learning disabilities in reading and writing will need modified assignments and scaffolding.

**RESOURCES:**

- A complete list of teacher and student resources are provided in Appendix 8.

**REFLECTIONS:**

- To be completed before, during and after the unit.

### **Appendix 3 Supplemental Activities**

Where Are the People Like Me (Brandi Burke-Hicks, [www.humaneeducation.org](http://www.humaneeducation.org))

Racism Alphabet (Kim Korona, [www.humaneeducation.org](http://www.humaneeducation.org))

“Misogyny in the Mix” Media Analysis Project

Supplemental Study Guide

<https://www.scribd.com/document/338811774/fencesbookletweek1-1>

### **Appendix 4 Free Write Topics**

- Are African Americans today facing the same challenges Troy, Rose, Gabe and Cory faced in the 1950s?
- To what extent does the New Racism, this subjective institutionalized system, differ from the overt racism that Troy and his contemporaries faced in the 1950s?
- How do media representations of Black men, women, the disabled and youth inform the New Racism?
- What pathways to success do today’s youth have beyond athletic dreams?
- What resources/options are available to persons with disabilities who do not have the support of family to face important life transitions?
- How does the media inform our understanding of people who are considered “other”?

## Appendix 5 Vocabulary/Key Terms

### Unit Vocabulary

1. Media Literacy
2. Discrimination
3. Racism
4. Stereotypes
5. Prejudice
6. The New Racism
7. Intersectionality
8. Self-esteem
9. Identity
10. Negro League
11. Athlete
12. Baseball
13. Football
14. Scholarship
15. Job
16. Organized Labor
17. Strike
18. Sanitation Worker
19. Prison
20. Musician
21. Disabled
22. Traumatic Brain Injury
23. Family
24. Drama
25. Play
26. Act
27. Scene
28. Narrator
29. Character
30. Fences

## Appendix 6 Worksheets

Fences Study Guide <https://www.scribd.com/document/338811774/fencesbookletweek1-1>

Prestwick Study Guide <https://www.prestwickhouse.com/samples/301301.pdf>

## Appendix 7 Assessment Instruments

**Assessments (formal and informal) will be based on the following questions which will be used as study tools throughout the unit.**

**Fences Act I Questions (Questions to be adapted to meet the learning needs of the group.)**

1. What is the setting of the play—time and place?
2. What is Troy and Bono's weekly ritual?
3. How is the fence, which is on stage the entire time, a symbol?
4. Characterize Troy. Include his family in the description and their relationships.
5. Of what does Bono accuse Troy of? And with whom?
6. What sport does Cory play? What does Troy think about him playing this sport and why?

7. What is meant by “Death ain’t nothing but a fastball on the outside corner”?
8. What did Troy mean when he wrestled with Death for three days? How is this an example of Troy as a raconteur?
9. Why wouldn’t Troy give Lyon’s the money personally?
10. What’s the one thing Troy wants above anything else?
11. Why does Rose play the lottery?
12. Explain the story of Pope and how it is significant.
13. Who is Gabriel? What could his name symbolize?
14. How is Troy conflicted about Gabriel’s situation?
15. Why does Troy refuse to sign with the recruiter? What conflict in the story does this bring up again?
16. Explain, in your own words, why Troy says the monologue below and what he means.  
 “It’s my job. It’s my responsibility! You understand that? A man got to take care of his family. You live in my house . . . sleep you behind on my bedclothes . . . fill you belly up with my food . . . cause you my son. You my flesh and blood. Not ‘cause I like you! Cause it’s my duty to take care of you. I owe a responsibility to you! Let’s get this straight right here . . . before it go along any further . . . I ain’t got to like you. Mr. Rand don’t give me my money come payday cause he likes me. He gives me cause he owe me. I done give you everything I had to give you. I gave you your life! Me and your mama worked that out between us. And liking your black ass wasn’t part of the bargain. Don’t you try and go through life worrying about if somebody like you or not. You best be making sure they doing right by you. You understand what I’m saying, boy?”
17. What news does Troy receive when called to the commissioner’s office?
18. Bono provides an irony to the above question —what is it?
19. What’s “the walking blues”?
20. Provide an overview of Troy’s relationship with his father.
21. How did Troy and Bono meet and become friends?
22. What did Troy tell Coach Zellman? How does this relate to the theme of sins of the father?

**Fences Act II Questions (Questions to be adapted to meet the learning needs of the group.)**

**Act II, Scene I.**

1. Why does Rose want the fence built? What’s Troy’s answer?
2. “Some people build fences to keep people out . . . and other people build fences to keep people in.” What’s the symbolic explanation?
3. Why was Gabe arrested?
4. What does Troy confess to Rose?
5. What does Rose mean when she says she “got eighteen years of my life invested in you”?
6. What is Troy’s reason for having the affair? How does it relate to the theme of family in the play?
7. Why does Cory attack Troy? Instead of hitting Cory what does Troy say to him?

Act II, Scene II.

8. What does Troy tell Death?
9. What happened to Alberta?
10. What does Troy profess when he returns from the hospital?
11. “This child got a mother. But you a womanless man.” What does that line show about Rose’s development as a character? How has she changed?
12. Rose agrees to take care of Alberta’s baby . . . why?

Act II, Scene IV.

13. What do we learn about Cory at the start of Scene IV?
14. The world *forlorn* could describe Troy. Explain how.
15. What is thematic idea of the Sins of the Father? When is it shown?
16. “I can’t taste nothing no more.” What does Troy mean?

Act II, Scene V.

17. What has Cory become?
18. Why was Lyons sent to prison?
19. What was Troy doing when he died?
20. What do we see again when Cory and Raynell sing a song that Troy as well as his father used to sing? (Thematic idea)
21. What is suggested at the end of the play when Gabriel tries to blow the trumpet but fails then does a dance and the gates stand open?

## Appendix 8 Resources

List of Materials for Classroom Use

*Fences* the play by August Wilson

*Fences* the movie by Denzel Washington

Computers

Arts and Crafts Supplies

Focus on *Fences* Journals

## List of Materials for Classroom Use

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Description/Use</b>	<b>Location</b>
<i>Fences</i> by August Wilson	Original play to be used to teach the unit.	Classroom set.
<i>Fences</i>	The motion picture to be used to supplement the written version of the play.	Teacher resource
Laptops	To be used to access supplemental materials such as Google Drive, Quizlet, Kahoot!	Classroom
Foldable Materials	Construction paper, glue, markers, handouts to be used for foldables on the unit content.	Classroom supply closet

## Resources for Students

To fully engage the contents of the unit, students may use the following resources:

<b>Student Resource</b>	<b>Description/Use</b>	<b>Location</b>
August Wilson: The Ground On Which I Stand	A Documentary of the Life of August Wilson	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-full-film/3727/">http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-full-film/3727/</a>
The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum Online	For research on the Negro Leagues	<a href="https://www.nlbm.com/">https://www.nlbm.com/</a>
History of the Blues Timeline	Tool for understanding the history of the Blues	<a href="https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/the-history-of-the-blues">https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/the-history-of-the-blues</a>
Wix Webpage Design Tool	A tool for creating your own web design	<a href="https://www.wix.com/">https://www.wix.com/</a>
We Are the Ship	This audio book provides a narrative account of the history of the Negro Leagues.	See bibliography for reference information.

## Resources for Teachers

For supplemental unit content, teachers may use the following resources in addition to the student resources and the complete list of references in the bibliography.

Teacher Resource	Description/Use	Location
Intersectionality Video	Informative, student-friendly explanation of Intersectionality	<a href="https://youtu.be/w6dnj2IyYjE">https://youtu.be/w6dnj2IyYjE</a>
<i>An Educator's Guide to Working with African American Students</i>	This handy desk reference includes strategies for promoting academic success and is written by award winning urban educator, Dr. Chance Lewis who is the Carol Grotnes Belk Distinguished Professor of Urban Education at UNC Charlotte. In this book, you will discover how to connect with African American students and improve teaching strategies.	Lewis, Chance. <i>An Educator's Guide to Working with African American Students</i> . Lewis Educational Consultants, 2016.
<i>Fences</i>	The original movie adapted by Denzel Washington will bring the written play to life for students and can be used for comparative analysis.	Wilson, August. <i>Fences</i> . Penguin, 2016
<i>Fences</i>	The original play written by August Wilson to use while reading the play.	Wilson, August. <i>Fences</i> . Plume, 1986
<i>The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children</i>	A useful resource to improve teacher tools for educating African American children written by Gloria Ladson-Billings who has had proven success with instructional design.	Ladson-Billings, Gloria. <i>The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children</i> , John Wiley and Sons, 2009.
<i>August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand</i>	A documentary on the life of August which can be used to provide background on the author prior to reading and studying <i>Fences</i> .	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-full-film/3727/">http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-full-film/3727/</a>
James Earl Jones "How Come You Ain't Never Like Me"	A rendition of the signature piece from <i>Fences</i> performed by James Earl Jones on Broadway. A great tool for comparative analysis with the Denzel Washington rendition. This is a wonderful discussion starter for the power of needing to be "liked."	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_kGtQmvrVI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_kGtQmvrVI</a>
Denzel Washington "How Come	A rendition of the signature piece from <i>Fences</i> performed by Denzel Washington on Broadway. A great tool	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBTXS42dj40">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBTXS42dj40</a>

You Ain't Never Liked Me"	for comparative analysis with the James Earl Jones rendition. This is a wonderful discussion starter for the power of needing to be "liked."	
Viola Davis "What About My Life"	A very powerful scene from the movie <i>Fences</i> where Rose heartbreakingly deals with Troy's infidelity.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6whbvX_ULeI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6whbvX_ULeI</a>
Viola Davis "What About My Life"	A very powerful scene from the Broadway play <i>Fences</i> where Rose heartbreakingly deals with Troy's infidelity.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt5LLLU_qew">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt5LLLU_qew</a>
Denzel Washington "I Don't Want Him to Be Like Me"	Excerpt from the Broadway play <i>Fences</i> where Denzel Washington explains why he doesn't want Cory to play football. Great discussion starter for a conversation about parent child relationships and athletics.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqIHzuBm2Gk#t=2.671366">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqIHzuBm2Gk#t=2.671366</a>
Gabe Opens the Gates of Heaven	Gabe stars in the closing scene of the movie <i>Fences</i> where he tells St. Peter to open the gates for Troy.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_ZRL2S62VE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_ZRL2S62VE</a>
Drama Prezi	A great Prezi to introduce students to drama (created by Wenda Thompson).	<a href="https://prezi.com/taxyvthtynpb/drama-vocabulary/">https://prezi.com/taxyvthtynpb/drama-vocabulary/</a>

## Bibliography

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *We should all be feminists*. Vintage, 2014. A refreshing perspective on feminism from the perspective of an African writer who advocates that we should all be feminists. This is especially useful because it charges people to look at feminism from a different perspective where all people should be concerned about this message.
- Allington, Richard L., and Anne McGill-Franzen, eds. *Summer reading: Closing the rich/poor reading achievement gap*. Teachers College Press, 2012. This research examines the reasons behind the achievement gap in reading based on class issues and concludes that while school is in session, rich and poor students' reading gains are on par but summer often widens the gap.
- Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2016. A persuasive perspective on the history and legacy of structural racism based on white anger toward Black Americans from Reconstruction to the Great Migration to the present age.
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- <sup>3</sup> Collins, Patricia Hill. *Another kind of public education: Race, schools, the media, and democratic possibilities*. Beacon Press, 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> Black and African American are often used interchangeably within the context of the paper/unit.
- <sup>5</sup> Harris-Perry, Melissa V. *Sister citizen: Shame, stereotypes, and Black women in America*. Yale University Press, 2011.
- <sup>6</sup> Class notes, Dr. Debra Smith, Media and Minorities CTI Seminar, September 16, 2017.
- <sup>7</sup> Kunjufu, Jawanza. "Black Boys and Special Education—Change Is Needed." (2009).
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- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/north-mecklenburg-high-school-profile>. Retrieved September 23, 2017.
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- <sup>11</sup> August Wilson's obituary, New York Times, October 3, 2005.
- <sup>12</sup> Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, Penguin, 1970.
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- <sup>14</sup> August Wilson's obituary, New York Times, October 3, 2005.
- <sup>15</sup> Baldwin, James and Peck, R. A. O. U. L. "I am not your Negro." (2017).
- <sup>16</sup> #blacklivesmatter
- <sup>17</sup> Class notes, Dr. Debra Smith, Media and Minorities CTI Seminar, September 16, 2017.
- <sup>18</sup> Wilson, August. *Fences*. Penguin, 2016, pp. 71.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> *The Status of Black Women in the United States*. National Domestic Workers Alliance. <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/The-Status-of-Black-Women-6.26.17.pdf>. Retrieved September 24, 2017.
- <sup>21</sup> Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *We should all be feminists*. Vintage, 2014.
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- <sup>26</sup> Charlotte Teachers Institute Equal Justice Initiative Workshop, Queens University, August 15, 2017.
- <sup>27</sup> August Wilson's obituary, New York Times, October 3, 2005.
- <sup>28</sup> Westbrook, Alonzo. *Hip hoptionary TM: The dictionary of hip hop terminology*. Crown Archetype, 2002.
- <sup>29</sup> Racism Alphabet, <https://humaneeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/RacismAlpha2013.pdf>
- <sup>30</sup> "Where are the People Like Me" <https://humaneeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/PeopleLikeMe1013.pdf>