Ford’s Theatre Student Matinee

PROGRAM

August Wilson’s

FENCES

www.fords.org
In Fences, a big part of Troy’s anger comes from his baseball career and never getting to play in the (white) major leagues because of his race. Instead, he played in the Negro Leagues. But what were the Negro Leagues?

When baseball first became organized in the 1860’s, a small group of African-Americans played alongside white players. But by the end of the 19th century, Jim Crow laws and segregationists shut black ballplayers out of the competition. Still wanting to play, African Americans created their own teams and competed against each other around the country.

The Pittsburgh Crawfords, By Harrison Studio - Heritage Auctions, Public Domain. This team played in the neighborhood where Fences takes place.

Did You Know?

While these African-American teams drew crowds, white-owned booking agents controlled the baseball fields and passed little of the profits on to the teams. It wasn’t till the teams officially formed The Negro National League in 1920 that they controlled their own bookings and finally saw bigger earnings. Soon, other regions formed the Southern Negro League and the Eastern Colored League. The leagues often faced off in the Negro League World Series.

Major League Baseball began to integrate in 1947 when the Kansas City Monarchs’ Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers.
Today, some may be surprised that a parent wouldn’t want his son to get a football scholarship to college. But Troy’s life experiences made him suspicious of white men’s promises and he wanted something more secure for his son.

**Turn to a friend and ask:**

Do you think Troy was a good parent to Corey and Lyons?

If you say yes, why? And if you say no, what could he have done differently?

What do you think Corey most wanted from his father?

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**WHAT MAKES A GOOD PARENT?**

*Of these, which is the MOST important? Put them in order.*

- Providing for your family
- Being affectionate
- Spending time with your child
- Boosting your child’s sense of worth
- Disciplining your child
- Teaching your child what you know about the world
How Will You Be like August Wilson?

A PLAY PER DECADE

August Wilson wrote ten plays set in Pittsburgh that represent each decade of the 20th century. This was a massive undertaking! Wilson wanted people to know what it was like to be African American in that city. Fences represents the 1950’s.

Photo of August Wilson by David Cooper.

“HAVE A BELIEF IN YOURSELF THAT IS BIGGER THAN ANYONE’S DISBELIEF.”

– August Wilson

What would you want people to know about what it’s like to be YOU growing up where you LIVE?

Share your thoughts with us on Twitter @FordsEdu!

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