

## LESSON NOTE ON LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH WEEK 4

**SUBJECT:** Literature-in-English

**TOPIC:** Non-African Drama: "Fences" by August Wilson (I)

**CLASS:** SS2

**WEEK:** 4

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Troy Maxson: the protagonist of the play
2. Lyons Maxson: Troy's eldest son and Rose's stepson
3. Cory Maxson: Troy and Rose's son
4. Rose Maxson: Troy's second wife, mother of Cory
5. Gabriel Maxson: Troy's brother
6. Jim Bono: Troy's friend and co-worker
7. Raynell Maxson: Troy's daughter from Alberta

### MINOR CHARACTERS

Alberta: Troy's lover

Bonnie: Lyons girlfriend

Mr. Stawicki: Cory's boss at the A&P

### PLOT SUMMARY

This play depicts many of the problems that Africa-Americans face: they deal with racism, lack of money, insufficient job opportunities etc.

The play introduces to the reader a character such as Troy Maxson who is a garbage collector; he is hardworking and used to be a talented baseball player. The story depicts that he wants to have an

influence over his children's career; he was sceptical about Cory being recruited by colleges for football and also sceptical about Lyon's pursuit of music.

Jim Bono, Troy's friend who does the same job as him (Troy) usually have a Friday night ritual (a weekly routine of drink and conversation) one of such nights where they discussed their boss Mr Rand and a complaint Troy had filled about working conditions that deny the black garbage workers the opportunity to drive garbage trucks. In Act 1, Scene 2, Troy and Cory work on constructing a fence which he promised his wife, Rose he would build. Rose is keen to know why he will not allow Cory to play football. Troy's refusal to allow his son play football; he (Troy) reminds her of his past, that due to racial discrimination, he was not allowed to play in major league baseball. Troy thinks that as a black man, Cory has no future in football, but says he will allow Cory to pursue football on one condition: he must work his job at the A&P store and juggle football practice at the same time. Even though Cory is scheduled to meet with a recruiter, who would present Troy papers which, if he signs it, it would secure his son a position at the college, Troy is difficult, and says he won't sign anything unless Cory works. Eventually, we learn that Cory never gets his job at the A&P back, and Troy having found this out too, tells his coach to take him off the team. This enrages Cory, as the future he had envisioned for himself has crumbled before his eyes. Troy tells him that his disobedience in not getting his job back at A&P counts as a strike against him, like strike in baseball. Cory is furious that his father has forbidden the coach to let him play football or be recruited by a college team, this results in Cory insulting his father.

The playwright also introduces to the reader the character such as Gabriel, Troy's brother, who had a head injury as a result of war, he once lived with Troy but he is happy he moved out of Troy's house to live on his own.

Act 1, Scene 4 takes place on the next Friday night with Troy and Bono engaged in their weekend ritual. In one of Troy's discussion with Bono, he admits to having an affair with Alberta, a woman who works in Troy's company and Bono tells him that he needs to make things right with Rose, so after that, he confesses to Rose that he is having an affair with Alberta and they are both expecting a baby. This shocked Rose, she blamed Troy for not sacrificing himself enough to preserve their relationship, while they were still talking, Rose turns to walk away, Troy grabs her roughly, Cory walked in on them, angered at the sight of Troy roughly holding Rose by the arm, and fights his dad, earning yet another strike supposed "strike", Troy is ready to strike back but Rose stops him.

Act II, Scene 2, occurs six months later. Alberta died while trying to have the baby, Troy brings home his infant motherless daughter, Raynell. Rose agrees to help him care for the baby but says she is finished with him. Then on another one of Troy's Fridays, Troy and Jim end their relationship, in an argument over Troy's infidelity to Rose. Later on, Troy signed papers to have Gabriel institutionalized of which Rose

disapproves. Troy is now entitled to Gabriel's money every month and Rose accuses him of selling out his brother.

The last act begins Eight years later, at the advent of Troy's death, the family: Cory, Lyons, Rose, Raynell and Gabriel are gathered at the Maxson's household, with Jim preparing to attend Troy's funeral. Cory however says he does not want to attend and Rose reprimands him, saying Cory is obligated to go because Troy was his father, and that refraining from mourning his dad doesn't make him a man, Lyon who had been in prison was permitted to attend his father's funeral, Gabriel sees this as a momentous time, he enters the scene and tries to play the music of spiritual exaltation with his "trumpet of judgement" but no sound comes out, he dances hysterically with his trumpet and prepares to signal Saint Peter to open the gates of heaven for Troy.

### Setting

"Fences" is set in the modest home of Troy Maxon. His house is in Pittsburgh.

### Assignment

1. How did the theme of deception play out in "Fences"?
2. Why wasn't Troy satisfied with Cory playing football?