

**Ohio Standards
Connections:**

STANDARD:

READING

APPLICATIONS:

LITERARY TEXT

BENCHMARK A:

Analyze and evaluate the five elements (plot, character, setting, point of view, and theme) in literary text.

INDICATOR 11.2:

Analyze the historical, social and cultural context of setting.

STANDARD:

READING

APPLICATIONS:

LITERARY TEXT

BENCHMARK B:

Explain ways characters confront similar situations and conflict.

INDICATOR 11.1:

Compare and contrast motivations and reactions of literary characters confronting similar conflicts (e.g., individual vs. nature, freedom vs. responsibility, individual vs. society), using specific examples of characters' thoughts, words and actions.

STANDARD: VISUAL

ARTS: CREATIVE

EXPRESSION AND

COMMUNICATION

BENCHMARK B:

Create expressive artworks that demonstrate a sense of purpose and understanding of the relationships among

Lesson Summary:

After reading the play *Fences* by August Wilson and viewing images from the collection of the Columbus Museum of Art, students will compare and contrast issues of urban poverty in America from the 1930s -1970s with present day lifestyles.

Estimated Duration:

The lesson will take approximately six 50 minutes classes.

Commentary:

The story Fences by August Wilson brings forth the plight of one family living in a black tenement in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the late 1950s through 1965. Though the story exemplifies some unique problems of poor African-Americans, the father/son and husband/wife relationships are typical of many Americans. The author was a Civil Rights Activist in the 1960-70s and repeatedly wrote plays about 20th century black culture. He was also influenced by the blues. August Wilson was born in Pittsburgh 1945 and died in October 2005.

Pre-Assessment:

Using the attached handout (p.7) ask each student to reflect on urban poverty today and in 20th century America. (10 minutes) Collect these papers and save to share with the students at the end of the lesson. Discuss and list on the board the issues that the students identify as problems of urban poverty.

Scoring Guidelines: 16 points suggested

Post-Assessment:

Students will create a collage including words and images and will be assessed on group discussions.

Performance Task Checklist (p.11)

Post-Assessment handout (p. 13)

Scoring Guidelines:

Collage Rubric (p. 12)

Instructional Procedures:

1. Students complete pre-assessment questionnaire.
2. DISCUSS: What is poverty? What would you consider to be issues related to urban poverty today? Are these the same issues impoverished urban dwellers experienced in the 20th century?
3. Read FENCES by August Wilson silently or aloud as a class.
4. DISCUSSION: List characteristics of each character on the board. List the main action of each scene in the play.

form, materials and techniques and subject matter.

INDICATOR 11.3:
Create artworks that demonstrate a range of individual ideas, subject matter and themes with at least one idea explored in depth.

STANDARD:
MUSIC:CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS AND APPLICATIONS
BENCHMARK C:
Compare and contrast several cultures' music works based on the function music serves, role of the musicians, and conditions under which the music is performed.

INDICATOR 11:
Compare a music work with another work of art (e.g., dance, drama, visual art) from the same culture on the basis of similar non-arts influences.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How does poverty play a role in the struggles on the Maxson family? Does poverty cause similar tensions amongst families today?
- If the Maxson family didn't have financial worries, would things have turned out differently?
- Is this story a realistic portrayal of urban poverty?
- Compare and contrast how the different characters react to similar conflicts. For example, compare Troy's and Rose's reaction to Cory's desire to play football. Can you identify the root cause of the characters' reactions.

5. Students should complete the Compare/Contrast worksheet (attachment p. 8) identifying the main characters, motivations and reactions in the play.

6. View select images of urban poverty. What mood and action is portrayed in each photo or painting? Use a single word to describe each image. What issue is the artist trying to display?

7. **COLLAGE:** Students will create a collage to portray an issue of urban poverty. Students may use images from contemporary magazines and newspapers, or online websites. At least 3 words will be incorporated into the collage to help express an idea or issue of urban poverty. To create a collage the students may cut, tear and glue paper, images and words onto a background. Students should utilize the Performance Task Checklist (page 11) to help them assess completion of their work. The teacher may wish to view the DVD *Collage: Textures and Techniques*. In it artist, Claudine Helmuth demonstrates a variety of techniques. The teacher may also wish to have the class view the DVD, as well.

OPTION: Ask students to look at fences in their own neighborhoods. The teacher might provide photos of fences including chain link, wrought iron fences, wood, brick, and stone fences. Consider the fence as a metaphor for your neighborhood. What symbol might be used as a finial for a post to describe your neighborhood or home? i.e. A lion for fierceness or strength. What would be another good symbol for the entryway gate? What other qualities of your neighborhood or home would you like to describe? How might you depict those ideas? What material best symbolizes your neighborhood? Indestructible brick, woven twigs? Make a graphite pencil drawing of your fence using tonal values and detail. Include a home in the background behind the fence.

8. Display and discuss the artwork as a class when complete. Are the ideas communicated well? Does the view understand the special qualities of the neighborhood/home?

Differentiated Instructional Support

For those who may not be able to cut, paste and find appropriate images related to urban poverty, they may wish to enact the story of *Fences*; or identify and listen to blues music that incorporates some of the same issues of urban poverty observed in the play and images. Students may wish to ‘write’ music or poetry that communicates similar urban social issues to those in the images and play.

Extension

Research the work of artists such as Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, and the New York Photo League. Videos and books are available on these artists at the Columbus Museum of Art.

Homework Options and Home Connections

Students will need to find images and words online or in magazines or newspapers that reflect an issue related to urban poverty. Students may need to read and review the play at home. They may also be required to search for music lyrics that fit the images.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Music: August Wilson was greatly influenced by the blues. Bring music to class, including some blues and possibly current blues, folk or hip hop, with lyrics that define issues of urban poverty in America. After listening to the music, discuss the concerns portrayed by the tone of each piece, as well as the lyrics. List key concepts, words and the mood of the piece. When was this piece written? When was it performed? Compare the dates to the timeline of American art and history. Once a basic historic framework has been built, ask the students to work in small groups to write a song that reflects issues of poverty today or in the past. Incorporate several key words from the list created from listening to music in class. Students may choose to write their own music or use the tune of a well-known song. Type the lyrics and perform the songs.

Assessment:

Does the song expose issues/concerns of urban poverty?

Was the student inventive in the interplay of words?

Did the student create their own tune?

What was the overall tone of the piece?

Materials and Resources:

FOR TEACHERS

Fences by August Wilson Copies are available for loan in the Central Ohio area from the Columbus Museum of Art.

Information about A. Wilson and his work:

<http://www.bridgesweb.com/blacktheatre/wilson.html>

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/awilson.html>

Negro League Baseball Museum (information related to Troy)

<http://www.nlbm.com/>

Venn Diagram: Compare and Contrast Character motivations/reactions Page 8

IMAGES FROM THE COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART WEBSITE:

Alland, Alexander Children at play in Backyard 1940

Engel, Morris New York City-Harlem 1939

Gwathmey, Rosalie Shout Freedom 1945

Huberland, Morris City Kids in Back Alleys by Bridge 1945

Manning, Jack Elks Parade, Harlem 1938

Delano, Jack Interior of new FSA Client Edward Gont's Home with one of Eleven Children Asleep 1940

Ashjian, Lucy Untitled -Triplets 1937

Gwathmey, Robert Custodian 1963

Hirsch, Joseph Supper 1963/65

Abelman, Ida A Manhattan Landscape with Figures 1936

Evergood, Philip Spring 1934

Suggested music:

Urban Blues

description http://www.arcmusic.org/features/blues_guides/urban_blues.pdf

Music CDs: Eisenhower Blues by Lenoir

Ghetto Child by Shamekia Copeland

CD player

FOR STUDENTS

Fences by August Wilson

Materials for collage which can include: Magazines, newspapers or internet access, colored paper, markers, glue, scissors, silly scissors, tape, paint, etc.

Drawing paper, drawing pencil(s), eraser

Key Vocabulary

Blues-A form of music that depicts melancholy or sadness. A song or instrumental piece of music in the style of a type of popular music that developed from African American folk songs in the early 20th century, consisting mainly of slow sad songs often performed over a repeating harmonic pattern

Fence- An enclosing structure erected to enclose an area and act as a barrier.

Metaphor-symbol, figurative language, implicit comparison, for example, to say that somebody is a snake

Motivation- inspiration, stimulus or reason or incentive

Poverty-destitute, needy, or indigent

Reaction-emotional or physical response

Social Issue-concern or problem of a specific culture or people

Symbol-something that represents something else, sign with specific meaning,

Tenement-urban apartment building, item of rented property, public housing

Tension-strain, anxiety, pressure

Urban- city or inner city area

Encarta Dictionary: North America

Technology Connections

Students may search issues of urban poverty from the 20th century at
www.smithsonian.gov

www.memory.loc.gov

Research Connections

Students may wish to research the history of Jim Crow Laws in America.

www.jimcrowhistory.org

Attachments

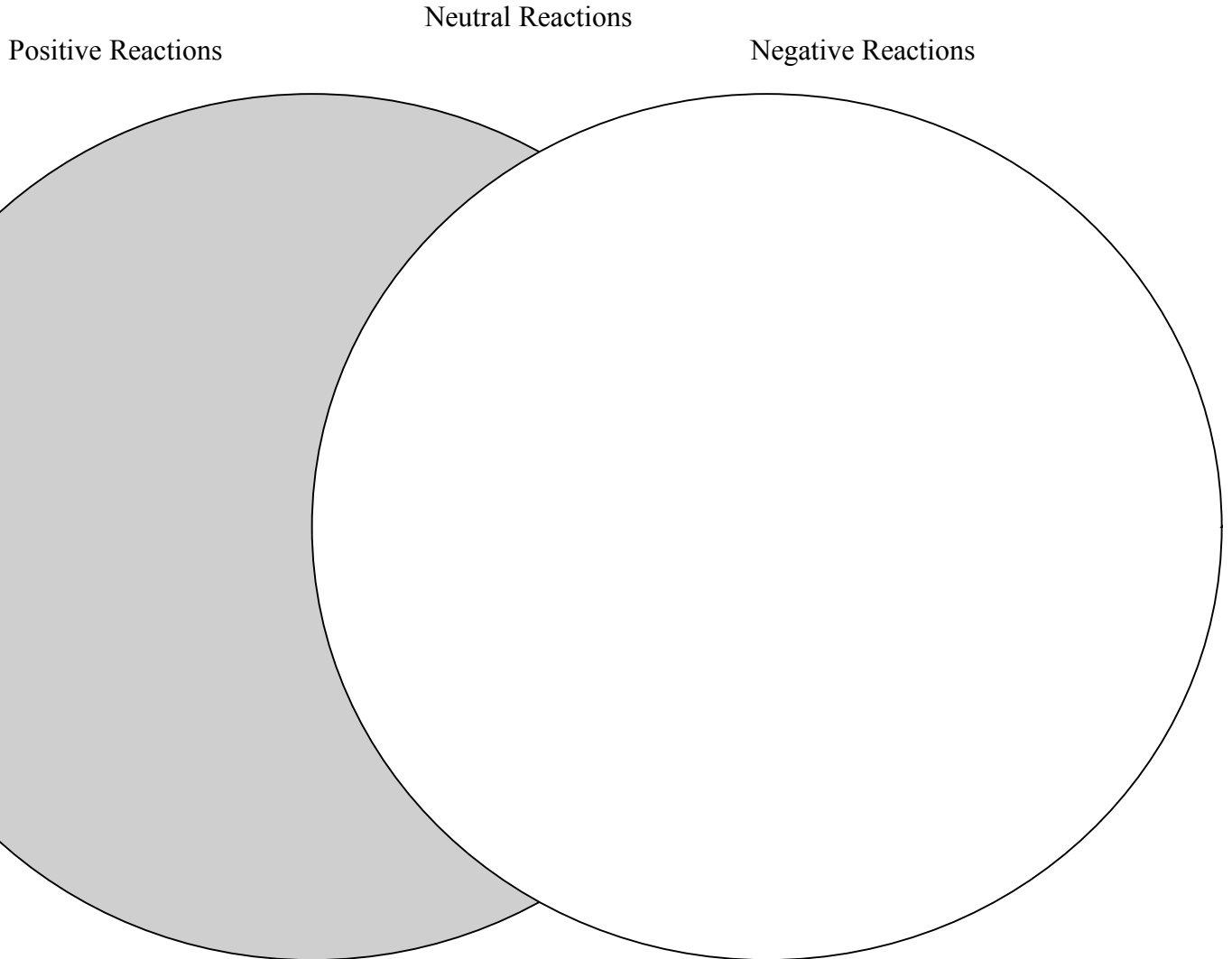
Pre-Assessment, Performance Task Checklist, Rubric,

Background information about Mr. Wilson, the play and the time period.

Venn Diagram, Listing of Music Resources

***FENCES* BY AUGUST WILSON
COMPARE & CONTRAST**

LIST CHARACTERS AND COMPARE AND CONTRAST MOTIVATIONS AND/OR REACTIONS WHEN THEY CONFRONT SIMILAR SITUATIONS



Additional Notes about characters: _____

The Blues

The following songs are excellent resources relating the blues music and this lesson. Lyrics may be found at the accompanied website. Albums may be found at the Columbus Metropolitan Library, internet or your local music store.

Five Long Years by B.B. King Written by Eddie Boyd. Another version, by Muddy Waters, is also here. <http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/2541/blbking.htm>

Ghetto Child by Shemekia Copeland
<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/2541/blscopel.htm>

No Education by Lightnin' Hopkins
<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/2541/bllhopki.htm#no>

Burnin' In L.A. by Lightnin' Hopkins
<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/2541/bllhopki.htm#Burnin'493>

Eisenhower Blues by J B Lenoir
<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/2541/bljlenoi.htm#Eisenhower>

Computer Took My Job by Maurice John Vaughn
<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/2541/blmvaugh.htm#Computer395>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON *FENCES*

<http://www.bridgesweb.com/blacktheatre/wilson.html>

- Opened at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 1985 and in New York in 1987 where it won the Pulitzer Prize as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. The play was directed, as usual, by Lloyd Richards who also ran the Yale Repertory Theatre.
- *Fences* presents a slice-of-life in a black tenement in (Pittsburgh?) set in the late 1950s through 1965. The main character, Troy Maxson, is a garbage collector who has taken great pride in keeping his family together and providing for them. Troy's rebellion and frustration set the tone for the play as he struggles for fairness in a society which seems to offer none.
- Note the realistic and metaphorical use of the fence in the play. Troy and Cory are building a realistic fence around the house, and Troy is building metaphorical fences between himself and virtually everyone else in the play.
- Troy wrestles with the idea of death and claims that he sees death as nothing but a fastball, something he can handle. The baseball metaphor is used in relation to death and throughout the play. His frustration with his baseball career in the Negro Leagues affects his relationship with his son, Cory.
- The father and son relationship between Troy and Cory is explored as a central part of the drama. Their relationship becomes complicated by strong feelings of pride and independence on both sides.
- Troy is not a flawless protagonist in that his relationship with his wife, Rose, is challenged at every turn. Eventually his sexual infidelity and a subsequent child by another woman (who Rose cares for), the marriage is effectively destroyed.
- Among the ironies in the play, Troy argued for blacks to drive the garbage trucks, but he doesn't know how to drive or have a license.
- According to Wilson, "One question in the play is `Are the tools we are given sufficient to compete in a world that is different from the one our parent's knew?' I think they are--it's just that we have to do different things with the tools."
- By the end of *Fences*, every character except Raynell is institutionalized--Rose in the church, Lyons in the penitentiary, Gabriel in the mental hospital, and Cory in the U.S. Marines. The only free person is the girl, Troy's daughter, the hope of the future.
- When asked about television versus theatre's presentation of African American life, Wilson believes that though the *Cosby* Show was highly successful, it does not accurately reflect African American life.
- *Fences* is both unique to the plight of African Americans and universal in its depiction of the human condition. The father-son and husband-wife relationships cross both unique and universal boundaries.

Name _____ Class period _____

PERFORMANCE TASK CHECKLIST

CHECK EACH ITEM AS YOU COMPLETE THE TASK

| | | |
|-------|---|---------------|
| _____ | <i>Pre-assessment completed</i> | <i>16 pts</i> |
| _____ | <i>Compare and Contrast page</i> | <i>20 pts</i> |
| _____ | <i>Participates in class discussions</i> | <i>10pts</i> |
| _____ | <i>Create a collage:</i> | <i>90 pts</i> |
| _____ | Includes 3 words or phrases demonstrating urban poverty | |
| _____ | Includes a number of images that express the idea of urban poverty in this decade and the 20 th century. | |
| _____ | Lettering is neat and appropriate | |
| _____ | Composition is well planned—balance of color, darks & lights, shapes & lines | |
| _____ | Use of Overlap | |
| _____ | Composition reads around the page well | |
| _____ | Reviewed and compared rubric to collage | |
| _____ | <i>Post-Assessment</i> | <i>25 pts</i> |

TOTAL _____

COMMENTS:

URBAN POVERTY COLLAGE RUBRIC

Name _____ Class Period _____

| | Master 62-90 pts | Satisfactory 31-61 pts | Apprentice 0-30 pts |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| CREATIVITY/ ORIGINALITY | Work displays inventive use of words and images in an aesthetic composition <i>30 pts</i> | The use of words and Images is somewhat creative in a composition that is planned <i>20 pts</i> | The use of words and Images are rather cliché and uninventive <i>10 pts</i> |
| EFFORT | Student has continually worked above and beyond expectations in discussions, artwork and readings <i>30 pts</i> | Student has been somewhat involved in discussion, readings and attempted to complete collage properly <i>20 pts</i> | Student has not been interested in the readings, discussions and creating collage <i>10 pts</i> |
| CRAFTSMANSHIP | The collage displays exemplary craftsmanship. It is well-planned, neatly cut, torn and glued and includes overlap and a variety of color or shape. <i>30 pts</i> | The collage is well-planned but is not neat and does not display good compositional skills. <i>20 pts</i> | The collage is not well-planned. It is not neatly crafted nor does the design incorporate the use of overlap, variety of color or shape. <i>10 pts</i> |

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Post Assessment

25 points

Name _____ Class period _____

How is the fence a metaphor in this play? (2 points)

What are some social issues found in the story of *Fences*? (5 points)

Identify some of the social issues portrayed in the artwork from the Columbus Museum of Art? (5 points)

Is urban poverty present today? What are some of the social issues found in contemporary urban areas? (5 points)

Are the same people impoverished today as in America in the 1930s-70s? (3 points)

What might you do to make a difference in the world and to help eliminate urban poverty issues? (5 points)