

# Troy Maxson Character Analysis

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## Character Analysis Of Troy Maxson From The Play Fences By August Wilson

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How would you feel if your life has been a failure.? This is the question Troy maxson, the protagonist in the play "Fences" by August Wilson had to live with through the rest of his life. Barbara says, "Fences tells the story of Troy Maxson, a garbage collector, whose dreams of becoming a major league baseball player are shattered by the prohibition against integrated games that lasted until 1947—when Troy is past his prime." (Wilcots, p.2). Shaped by the effects of racism in his life, by the wrestle it created in his youth, not fulfilling his dream as a baseball player, Troy lives in the shadow of what could and should have been. Troy's character is the climax that all other relationships in the play assemble around. First and foremost, Troy is a brother to Gabriel, a wife to Rose, father to his three sons and lastly, a friend to Bono. Troy Maxson is a virtuous man with a dreadful flaw that leads him to a bad path ending in depression, sorrow and ruin."

August Wilson plays are always realistic, and they often include the activities and situations that occurs in everyday lives. The characters in Wilson's plays are black and they

speak in an African -American language similar to the one spoken in "Pittsburg". His characters speak in a very profound way than you'd find in an everyday speech. For this reason, it is seen "Fences" is an example poetic realism.

Troy is a hardworking man who is introduced to the audience as strong willed and willing to do everything possible to provide for his family. He constantly reminds his family and children of his role as head of the house and him being breadwinner each time they mention a career he doesn't want them to get into. For example, at the beginning of the play, it is evident Troy has two sons, Cory and Lyons. Cory has a chance at a football team, but Troy refuses stating, "The white man ain't gonna let you get nowhere with that football no way." (1.3). Troy's past experiences had modelled his opinions and there is a tiny bit of jealousy considering because Cory has gotten a shot on what Troy wanted but didn't get as a kid. So, he is perceived as being resistant to change.

While a part of him is truly trying to engage Cory into a position which is fruitful and can't be taken away from him, another part of him is trying secretly and jealously to bring Cory down and keep him away as he had been kept for so many years. The verbal abuse by Troy to Cory is enough for him to question his father's love: "How come you ain't never liked me.?" (1.3.39). Troy responds by saying that his love can be seen in the provision of basic needs to his children like clothing, food and shelter. This clearly shows Troy as a man who believes in hard work to provide for his family.

Neither Lyons and Cory share a close relationship with Troy. It is...

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Troy Maxson character analysis reveals a complex and multifaceted individual who embodies the struggles of African American men in mid-20th century America. Created by playwright August Wilson in the critically acclaimed play "Fences," Troy is a character marked by his experiences, choices, and the societal limitations imposed on him. This analysis will delve into Troy's background, personality traits, relationships, and the themes he represents, providing a comprehensive understanding of his character and the implications of his life choices.

## Background and Context

Troy Maxson is a former baseball player who was once a star in the Negro Leagues. However, he is now a garbage collector in 1950s Pittsburgh. His character is shaped by several critical factors, including:

1. **Racial Discrimination:** Troy's experiences with racism have profoundly impacted his outlook on life. His inability to play in the Major Leagues due to the color of his skin haunts him and fuels his bitterness.
2. **Economic Struggles:** As a black man in a racially divided America, Troy faces limited economic opportunities. His job as a garbage collector represents a compromise between survival and his aspirations.
3. **Family Dynamics:** Troy's relationships with his wife, Rose, and his sons, Lyons and Cory, are marked by conflict and tension, stemming from Troy's own troubled upbringing and his flawed perceptions of masculinity.

## Personality Traits

Troy Maxson is a deeply flawed character, and his personality

traits reflect both his strengths and weaknesses. Some of the most notable traits include:

- **Pride:** Troy takes great pride in his ability to provide for his family, yet this pride often morphs into arrogance and stubbornness. He refuses to accept help and insists on doing things his way, which leads to conflict.
- **Bitterness:** Years of facing systemic racism have left Troy bitter. He often projects this bitterness onto his family and friends, pushing away those who care for him.
- **Defensiveness:** Troy's defensive nature stems from his experiences with betrayal and disappointment. He frequently feels the need to assert his authority, often leading him to shut down others and their perspectives.
- **Charisma:** Despite his flaws, Troy is a charismatic figure, able to engage others with his storytelling and humor. This charisma often masks his deeper insecurities and vulnerabilities.

## Key Relationships

The relationships Troy has with other characters are central to understanding his complexity. Each interaction sheds light on his character and the themes of the play.

## 1. Troy and Rose

Troy's relationship with his wife, Rose, is one of the most poignant aspects of the play.

- **Supportive Partner:** Rose represents stability and unconditional love in Troy's life. She supports his ambitions and dreams, yet she also bears the brunt of his emotional turmoil.
- **Conflict:** As the play progresses, Troy's infidelity with Alberta causes a significant rift. Rose's heartbreak highlights Troy's selfishness and inability to recognize the consequences of his actions.
- **Strength:** Rose embodies strength and resilience, ultimately confronting Troy about his choices. Her realization that she must prioritize her own well-being serves as a counterpoint to Troy's self-destructive nature.

## 2. Troy and Lyons

Lyons, Troy's eldest son, is an aspiring musician who struggles with living up to his father's expectations.

- **Father-Son Conflict:** Troy's disapproval of Lyons' pursuit of music highlights the generational divide and differing values. Troy believes in hard work and practicality, while Lyons seeks artistic expression.
- **Rejection:** Troy's rejection of Lyons' dreams stems from his own unfulfilled aspirations, as he sees his son's choices as a reflection of his failures. This dynamic exacerbates the existing tension between them.

## 3. Troy and Cory

Cory, Troy's younger son, represents the hope of a new generation. He is a talented football player with dreams of a scholarship.

- **Dreams vs. Reality:** Troy's refusal to support Cory's aspirations

reflects his fears and insecurities. He projects his own failures onto Cory, believing that the world will not embrace his son as it failed to embrace him.

- Climactic Conflict: The culmination of their relationship comes to a head when Cory confronts Troy about his oppressive nature. This confrontation serves as a turning point, illustrating how Troy's actions have reverberated through generations.

## Thematic Implications

Troy Maxson's character embodies several critical themes that resonate throughout "Fences."

### 1. The American Dream

Troy's struggles with the American Dream illustrate the barriers faced by African Americans. His thwarted aspirations reveal how systemic racism can hinder personal success, leading to disillusionment and bitterness.

## 2. Masculinity and Pride

Troy's concept of masculinity is deeply flawed, rooted in pride and the need for control. His inability to express vulnerability and seek help ultimately leads to his downfall, suggesting that true strength lies in acceptance and openness.

## 3. Family Legacy

The generational conflict between Troy and his sons highlights the theme of family legacy. Troy's inability to support his children's dreams ultimately perpetuates a cycle of disappointment and unfulfilled potential, raising questions about how parental choices shape future generations.

## Conclusion

In summary, Troy Maxson character analysis reveals a man grappling with the weight of his past, the complexities of his relationships, and the limitations imposed by society. His pride and bitterness create barriers, not only for himself but also for

those he loves. While he is a product of his environment, Troy's choices illustrate the profound impact of individual actions on family dynamics and the pursuit of dreams. Through Troy, August Wilson crafts a compelling narrative that speaks to the universal struggle for identity, fulfillment, and legacy in the face of adversity.

## Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key characteristics of Troy Maxson in August Wilson's 'Fences'?

Troy Maxson is portrayed as a complex character defined by his pride, bitterness, and struggle against systemic racism. He is a devoted father but also flawed, displaying both love and harshness towards his family.

How does Troy Maxson's past influence his present behavior?

Troy's experiences as a former baseball player denied opportunities due to racial discrimination shape his cynicism and resentment. His past failures lead him to impose strict rules on his son, Cory, reflecting his desire to protect him from the same disappointments.

In what ways does Troy Maxson embody the theme of the American Dream?

Troy represents the struggle for the American Dream, as he



seeks to provide for his family and achieve success. However, his disillusionment with the opportunities available to Black men in America highlights the barriers that prevent him from fully realizing this dream.

What role does Troy Maxson's relationship with his family play in his character development?

Troy's interactions with his wife, Rose, and his sons, Cory and Lyons, reveal his conflicting desires for connection and control. His relationships illustrate his internal battles and ultimately contribute to his tragic downfall, as he struggles to balance love with his own insecurities.

How does Troy Maxson's attitude towards responsibility shape his character arc?

Troy grapples with the concept of responsibility throughout the play. Initially, he takes pride in his role as the family provider but later shirks emotional responsibilities, leading to strained relationships and highlighting his tragic flaws.

What does Troy Maxson's character reveal about the African American experience in the 1950s?

Troy's character serves as a lens through which the struggles of African Americans during the 1950s are examined. His experiences with job discrimination, unfulfilled dreams, and the impact of racial injustice reflect the broader societal challenges faced by Black individuals during that era.

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