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# *Fences*

By August Wilson  
Directed by Lou Bellamy  
Presented by Cargill

August 21 through September 21, 2008  
Previews August 19 & 20

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## Vocabulary of Important Terms

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| <b>Aaron, Hank</b>                    | Formerly baseball's all-time home-run king, Aaron played 23 years as an outfielder for the Milwaukee (later Atlanta) Braves and Milwaukee Brewers (1954–76). He holds many of baseball's most distinguished records, including runs batted in (2,297), extra base hits (1,477), total bases (6,856) and most years with 30 or more home runs (15). He is also in the top five for career hits and runs.   |
| <b>Abolition (of slavery)</b>         | the act of formally repealing an existing practice through legal means, either by making it illegal, or simply no longer allowing it to exist in any form. In the United States, The Abolition Movement refers to the project to end racial slavery and liberate black Americans. The movement gained momentum after the British Parliament outlawed the African slave trade in 1807 and incorporated people from various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds including but not limited to free blacks and liberal whites such as the Quakers. In 1863 slavery was outlawed in the United States with the formal declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation. |
| <b>American Civil Rights Movement</b> | (1955–1968) refers to the reform movements in the United States aimed at abolishing racial discrimination against African Americans and restoring suffrage in Southern states.  |
| <b>Barnstorm</b>                      | To travel around an area appearing in exhibition sports events, especially baseball games.  |
| <b>Batter's Box</b>                   | the box in which a batter stands when batting. Lies to the left or right of home plate depending on whether the batter is right or left handed.   |
| <b>Bell, Cool Papa</b>                | (May 17, 1903 – March 7, 1991) was an American center fielder in Negro league baseball, considered by many baseball observers to have been the fastest man ever to play the game. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1974.  |
| <b>Brown v. Board of Education</b>    | was a landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court, which declared that state laws that established separate public schools for black and white students denied black children equal educational opportunities. This victory paved the way for integration and the civil rights movement.   |
| <b>Bunt</b>                           | to hit a baseball in such a way so as to make it go a short distance. Typically used to advance a team member on base.  |
| <b>Curve Ball</b>                     | a ball with spin put on by the pitcher to deceive the batter as to its trajectory. The ball curves away as it reaches the batter.   |

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| <b>Great Depression, The</b> | Initiated in 1929 with the crash of the stock market, the period between 1930 and approximately 1940 saw a drastic wave of unemployment sweep the country and reverberate throughout the world. Economies world over were affected. In the United States the government responded by creating several federal work and social aid programs to support the citizenry during these trying times. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Works Progress (Project) Administration helped create thousands of jobs across the country, thereby alleviating some of the pressure of poverty and also strengthening the infrastructure of the United States with railways, highways, water-works, etc. The start of World War II helped usher in massive production in the US and around the world. |
| <b>DuBois, W.E.B.</b>        | (February 23, 1868 – August 27, 1963) William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was an African American civil rights activist, public intellectual, Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian, writer, editor, poet, and scholar. The Editor-in-Chief of <i>Crisis</i> and <i>Opportunity</i> , publications circulated by the NAACP, an organization he helped found. Du Bois wrote and published over 4,000 articles, essays and books over the course of the 95-year life. Among his most significant works are <i>The Philadelphia Negro</i> (1899), <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (1903), <i>John Brown</i> (1909), <i>Black Reconstruction</i> (1935), and <i>Black Folk, Then and Now</i> (1939).   |
| <b>Dunbar, Paul Laurence</b> | (June 27, 1872 -- February 9, 1906) was the first African-American poet to garner national critical acclaim. Born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1872, Dunbar penned a large body of dialect poems, standard English poems, essays, novels and short stories before he died at the age of 33. His work often addressed the difficulties encountered by members of his race and the efforts of African-Americans to achieve equality in America. He was praised both by the prominent literary critics of his time and his literary contemporaries.   |
| <b>Fence, The</b>            | also known as "the wall," the fence in baseball marks the boundary of a baseball stadium. To "hit one to the fences" would be to hit a ball beyond the boundaries of the stadium and, therefore, make a homerun.  |
| <b>Foster, Rube</b>          | (September 17, 1879 - December 9, 1930) covered the entire spectrum of baseball and excelled at each phase of his participation. As a raw-talent rookie pitcher soon after the turn of the century, the big 6'4" Texan is credited with 51 victories in 1902, including a win over the great "Rube" Waddell, the game in which he received his nickname. Black baseball's greatest manager, Foster was most responsible for its continued existence. He was voted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981.  |
| <b>Full Count</b>            | status of a batter who has two strikes and three balls, which in baseball means that the batter is either out or on base on the next pitch.   |

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- Gem of the Ocean** set in 1904, begins August Wilson's century-long cycle chronicling black American life. Bewildered by the collapse of the old slave regime, the first generation of black Americans recently freed from slavery are unprepared for the backlash against their newly acquired freedom by whites. Many venture north and find themselves at Aunt Ester's door, seeking solace, advice, or a place to heal. Aunt Ester makes room in the world for those cast aside. She examines and treats wounded souls. Her wisdom is ancient, timeless, connected to the source from which black Americans had been taken. *Gem of the Ocean* introduces us finally to Aunt Ester, keeper of the flame.
- Gentleman's Agreement** is an informal agreement between two or more parties. It may be written, oral, or simply understood as part of an unspoken agreement by convention or through mutually beneficial etiquette. The essence of a gentleman's agreement is that it relies upon the honor of the parties for its fulfillment, rather than being in any way enforceable. A segregationist policy lasted for 60 years that barred African-Americans from Major League Baseball. This ban was finally broken by the Brooklyn Dodgers' signing of Jackie Robinson in 1945.
- Going Down Swinging** an idiom used when a batter keeps swinging at pitches and strikes out but does not give up.
- Greenlee, Gus** (December 26, 1893—July 7, 1952) was a Negro League baseball owner and an African American businessman. Born in Marion, North Carolina, he migrated to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's Hill District in 1916. After working several menial jobs, he established a bootlegging business that he operated from his taxi. He later made his reputation as a numbers runner and racketeer, as well as the owner of the Crawford Grill nightclub and the Negro League baseball team the Pittsburgh Crawfords. He was also known as a philanthropist who helped fellow blacks in his community with scholarships for schooling and with grants to buy homes.
- Gibson, Josh** (December 21, 1911 - January 20, 1947) was an American catcher in baseball's Negro Leagues. He played for the Homestead Grays from 1930 to 1931, moved to the Pittsburgh Crawfords from 1932 to 1936, and returned to the Grays from 1937 to 1939 and 1942 to 1946. In 1933 he hit .467 with 55 home runs in 137 games against all levels of competition. His lifetime batting average is said to be higher than .350, with other sources putting it as high as .384, the best in Negro League history. He reportedly hit "almost 800" homers in his 17-year career against Negro League and independent baseball. His lifetime batting average, according to the Hall of Fame's official data, was .359. It was reported that he won nine home-run titles and four batting championships playing for the Crawfords and the Homestead Grays. In two seasons in the late 1930s, it was written that not only did he hit higher than .400, but his slugging percentage was above 1.000. *The Sporting News* of June 3, 1967 credits Gibson with a home run in a Negro League game at Yankee Stadium that struck two feet from the top of the wall circling the center field bleachers, about 580 feet from home plate. Although it has never been conclusively proven, Chicago American Giants infielder Jack Marshall said Gibson slugged one over the third deck next to the left field bullpen in 1934 for the only fair ball hit out of Yankee Stadium. There is no published season-by-season breakdown of Gibson's home run totals in all the games he played in various leagues and exhibitions.

**Industrial Revolution**

was a period in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation had a profound effect on the socioeconomic and cultural conditions in North America and Europe. The Industrial Revolution instigated a shift from manual-labor-based economies towards machine-based manufacturing. Trade expansion was enabled by the introduction of canals, improved roads and railways.

**Jim Crow**

Segregation, or “Jim Crow law” the enforced, at one time legal, separation of the races in the United States based on racial prejudice and assumptions of racial superiority that was contested largely in the public realm as it pertained to people of color accessing social services such as public transportation, public drinking fountains and bathrooms, schools, theaters and stores. Segregation also influenced miscegenation (interracial or interethnic marriage or dating) hiring practices, legal representation, voting practices, medical care and housing. Citizens, business owners, state and federal officials, terrorist mob groups and the KKK enforced segregation. The Civil Rights Movement spurred the US Supreme Court to declare segregation officially unconstitutional in 1954. Its retraction throughout the country proved both slow and very violent.

**King Jr., Dr. Martin Luther**

(January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968) was a leader in the American civil rights movement. A Baptist minister, King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–6) and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (1957), serving as its first president. His efforts led to the 1963 March on Washington, where King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. There, he raised public consciousness of the civil rights movement and established himself as one of the greatest orators in U.S. history. In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to end segregation and racial discrimination through civil disobedience and other non-violent means. By the time of his death in 1968, he had refocused his efforts on ending poverty and opposing the Vietnam War, both from a religious perspective. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and Congressional Gold Medal in 2004; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a national holiday in the United States in 1986.

**King Hedley II**

is the ninth play in August Wilson’s ten-play 20<sup>th</sup> Century Cycle chronicling the lives of African Americans decade by decade. Set in the 1980s, it is the sequel to *Seven Guitars*, a play in which young Ruby chose Hedley and she named their child King. We meet King the second as a grown man, fighting to survive a life that seems never to look bright. King carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. At times, he even seems strapped with a curse. Yet King imagines that he is crowned instead, adorned with halo whose meaning he does not yet know. *King Hedley II* is a riveting play about the past revisiting a man struggling to free himself from the grip of his family’s legacy while desperate to hold on to his loved ones.

- Ku Klux Klansman** a member of the white supremacist, segregationist, anti-Semitic fraternal terrorist organization originated in the United States created at the end of the Civil War. Known particularly for its acts of hate against blacks in the American South that includes lynching (murder), cross-burning, violence against children and bombings. The KKK is particularly outspoken about “racial purity” and the “threat of miscegenation.” In recent years the organization has also expressed anti-homosexual views as well.
- Little Rock, Arkansas** the city in which nine black school children were besieged by racial hatred for trying to enter the segregated public high school in 1957. The group became known as the Little Rock Nine. The ensuing Little Rock Crisis, in which the students were initially prevented from entering the racially segregated school by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus, and then attended after the intervention of President Eisenhower, is considered to be one of the most important events in the American Civil Rights Movement.
- Montgomery, Alabama** the first capital of the Confederate States of America, Montgomery became a hotspot for Civil Rights activity in the 1950s and 1960s. Rev. Dr. Martin L. King Jr. gained national attention for civil rights issues during his tenure (1954 to 1960) as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, two blocks from the State Capitol Building. A civil rights memorial has been erected near the still-active church. On December 1, 1955 Rosa Parks became a civil rights heroine in the city by refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man. The reaction to this arrest led to the 382-day Montgomery Bus Boycott, which forced the city to desegregate its transit system on December 21, 1956. In 1965, Dr. King's nationally publicized march for justice was conducted from Selma to Montgomery.
- Montgomery Bus Boycott** was a political and social protest campaign started in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, intended to oppose the city's policy of racial segregation on its public transit system. The ensuing struggle lasted from December 1, 1955, to December 20, 1956, and led to a United States Supreme Court decision that declared the Alabama and Montgomery laws requiring segregated buses unconstitutional.
- Negro League** was an American professional baseball league comprising predominantly African-American teams. The term may be used broadly to include professional black teams outside the leagues and it may be used narrowly for the seven relatively successful leagues beginning 1920 that are sometimes termed "Negro Major Leagues." The first professional team, established in 1885, achieved great and lasting success as the Cuban Giants, while the first league, the National Colored Base Ball League, failed in 1887 after only two weeks due to low attendance. The Negro American League of 1951 is considered the last major league season.
- Paige, Satchel** (July 7, 1906–June 8, 1982) was an American baseball player whose pitching in the Negro Leagues and in Major League Baseball made him a legend of American baseball. Paige is often credited with having recorded more than 300 career shutouts. His career win total is estimated at well over 1500 games, a figure which includes virtually countless appearances in exhibition games against all levels of competition both in the United States and south of the border.

**Parks, Rosa**

(February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) was an African American civil rights activist whom the U.S. Congress later called "Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement". On December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Parks refused to obey the bus driver's order that she give up her seat to make room for a white passenger. Parks' civil disobedience sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This movement turned Parks into an international icon of resistance to racial segregation and launched boycott leader Martin Luther King, Jr. to national prominence in the civil rights movement. Parks eventually received honors ranging from the 1979 Spingarn Medal to a posthumous statue in the United States Capitol's National Statuary Hall. At the time of her action, Parks was secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP and had recently attended the Highlander Folk School, a Tennessee center for workers' rights and racial equality. Although widely honored in later years for her action, she also suffered for it, losing her job as a seamstress in a local department store.

**Radio Golf**

is the last play in August Wilson's 20th Century Cycle chronicling the African American experience decade by decade. It is the story of a man whose path through life has been decreed by his father. Following in the footsteps of a well-respected but feared man, Harmond Wilks struggles to evade his shadow. He does what is expected of him in order to help his community, but it is ultimately his own journey and rejection of the grandeur which awaits him that brings him back to the people of Pittsburgh's Hill District.

**Robinson, Jackie**

(January 31, 1919 – October 24, 1972) Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson became the first African-American major league baseball player of the modern era in 1947. While not the first African American professional baseball player in United States history, his Major League debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers ended approximately eighty years of baseball segregation, also known as the baseball color line, or color barrier. In the United States at this time, many white people believed that blacks and whites should be segregated or kept apart in many phases of life, including sports and daily life. The Baseball Hall of Fame inducted Robinson in 1962 and he was a member of six World Series teams. In addition to his accomplishments on the field, Jackie Robinson was also a forerunner of the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1960s, he was a key figure in the establishment and growth of the Freedom National Bank, an African-American owned and controlled entity based in Harlem, New York. He also wrote a syndicated newspaper column for a number of years, in which he was an outspoken supporter of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. In recognition of his accomplishments, Robinson was posthumously awarded a Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. On April 15, 1997, the 50 year anniversary of his debut, Major League Baseball retired the jersey number 42, the number he wore, across all MLB teams in recognition of his accomplishments both on and off the field in a ceremony at Shea Stadium.

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- Segregation** or “Jim Crow law” the enforced, at one time legal, separation of the races in the United States based on racial prejudice and assumptions of racial superiority that was contested largely in the public realm as it pertained to people of color accessing social services such as public transportation, public drinking fountains and bathrooms, schools, theaters and stores. Segregation also influenced miscegenation (interracial or interethnic marriage or dating) hiring practices, legal representation, voting practices, medical care and housing. Citizens, business owners, state and federal officials, terrorist mob groups and the KKK enforced segregation. The Civil Rights Movement spurred the US Supreme Court to declare segregation officially unconstitutional in 1954. Its retraction throughout the country proved both slow and very violent.
- Southern Manifesto** was a document written in February-March 1956 by legislators in the United States Congress opposed to racial integration in public places. The manifesto was signed by 101 politicians from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The document was largely drawn up to counter the landmark Supreme Court 1954 ruling *Brown v. Board of Education*, which integrated public schools. The initial version was written by Strom Thurmond and the final version mainly by Richard Russell. The manifesto was signed by 19 Senators and 81 members of the House of Representatives, including the entire congressional delegations of the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia. School segregation laws were some of the most enduring and best-known of the Jim Crow laws that characterized the American South and several northern states at the time. The Southern Manifesto accused the Supreme Court of "clear abuse of judicial power." It further promised to use "all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation."
- Strike Out** a baseball term. A batter makes an out by either swinging and missing the pitch or not hitting good pitches.
- Uncle Remus** is a fictional character, the title character and fictional narrator of a collection of African American a collection folktales including animal stories, songs, and oral folklore, collected from adapted and compiled by a white writer, Joel Chandler Harris, who published them in book form in 1881. A journalist in post-Reconstruction Atlanta, Georgia's West End, Harris produced seven Uncle Remus books. The genre of stories follows the trickster tales like those found in West Africa, however resituated by a white writer, the tales lose much of their cultural authenticity. At the time of Harris' publication, his work was praised for its ability to capture “plantation Negro dialect.” The term "uncle" was a patronizing, familiar and often racist title reserved by whites for elderly black men in the South, which is considered by many to be pejorative and offensive.

**Washington,  
Booker T.**

(April 5, 1856 – November 14, 1915) was an influential educator, political leader and author working at the turn of the century. He was the founding principal of the Tuskegee Institute. He is perhaps most famous for his autobiography *Up From Slavery* and his 1895 address in Atlanta wherein he suggested that the best way for African Americans to participate within US society was to redirect efforts to end segregation in order to focus on education and developing a skilled labor force. His debates over this with W.E.B. DuBois, who considered Washington an apologist, are well-known.

**Wilson, August**

(April 27, 1945—October 2, 2005) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning African American playwright. Called "one of the most important voices in the American theater today" by Mervyn Rothstein in the *New York Times*, August Wilson's authentic sounding characters have brought a new understanding of the black experience to audiences around the country. For example, *Fences*, tells the story of a black baseball player who broke national records by leaps and bounds but was prevented from playing outside of the Negro Leagues. *Fences* opened on Broadway in the spring of 1987 to enormous critical acclaim and earned Wilson his first Pulitzer Prize. Wilson's work gives audiences the opportunity to go back and reexamine American history through characters that are epic, poignant and defiantly struggling against the institutionalized legacy of racism in this country.