
Relationships and Self-improvement in "Fences"

As Ernest Hemingway once said, "The most painful thing is losing yourself in the process of loving someone too much, and forgetting you're special too." It is common for people to lose themselves in relationships. It is easy to take on certain personality traits of a partner and believe that it is a part of who you are and your personality. Relationships can be hard and sometimes they demand that you compromise your needs for your partners. Some relationships can make you feel trapped, and this is the case in August Wilson's play, *Fences*. Troy and Rose have been married for over 20 years and have a loving committed marriage; however, Troy feels trapped like he is "stuck on first base", so he makes the decision to cheat on Rose. He believes that this new relationship has made him feel alive and special; however he fails to think of Rose's feelings. Troy's decisions make him lose the respect of both his wife and his son, Cory. Rose too says that she wanted to leave and feel special, but she didn't because she was committed to Troy; After a big fight, Rose proclaims that he is woman less man and Cory stands up for his mom. Although both Cory and Rose lose touch with their relationship with Troy, they have evolved into stronger and more independent people because of Troy.

To begin, Cory's relationship with Troy has built the strong-willed person Cory has become. In the beginning Troy always overshadows everyone. Troy is a person that "fills a room" when he walks in (1647). He is the center of attention. Troy refuses to let anyone else have a different opinion or standpoint; it is Troy's way or no way. Troy is stubborn and refuses to admit when he is wrong. This is shown in Cory's relationship with him. Cory, who had been playing football to get into college, asked his dad to sign a permission slip from a recruiter to play for a college team. Cory understood that he could get into college by playing football; however, Troy refused to acknowledge that anyone could be right except for him. Troy is stuck in the past and believes that Cory does not have a chance to make it in football. Even though Cory knows this is his way into college, Troy will not listen to his son and refuses to let him be on the football team. When Cory stands up for himself and confronts his dad he is given a "strike" (1630). Troy approaches Cory and says "you done made a mistake"; however, Cory protests and claims he did not make a mistake (1630). Troy gives him a strike for standing up for himself and this is when Cory knows that his dad is wrong. This is the turning point in Cory and Troy's relationship. Cory can understand that standing up for himself isn't wrong, it is just not what his dad wants. Cory now understands that even though his dad is loud and overbearing, he will not try to understand others; he will only think about himself. These strikes have continuously beat down Cory and Troy has further discouraged him by saying that even though he provides for Cory he does not have to like him. The strikes discourage any behavior Troy doesn't like. The strikes are used to control Cory; however the strikes are the downfall of Troy's control over Cory. The final strike is what sets Cory off to becoming strong-willed and independent. After standing up for himself and

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his mom and calling out Troy's wrongdoings, Cory is told to leave the house. Troy tells him that "if he want to come back here, he's going to have to use bat" (1644). This fight makes Cory fight for himself and for what he believes in. Cory now has the opportunity to become stronger and more independent without the weight of his dad on him all the time. Troy was like "a shadow that followed you everywhere. It weighed on you and sunk into your skin" for Cory. The relationship between Cory and Troy gave Cory the motivation and drive to become stronger and fight for himself.

Furthermore, not only did Cory grow as a person because of his relationship with Troy, but so did Rose. Troy had a very loud personality, and often overshadowed Rose. Rose told Cory that "when your daddy walked through the house, he was so big he filled it" (1647). Troy is always telling ridiculous stories and not thinking of others. He constantly talks about how much he gives and does not consider what other people give to him. Rose and Troy's relationship makes Rose realize that she is strong and special too. Rose has had to give up a lot to be with Troy. When Troy tells her that he has cheated on her, she screams "I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams and buried them inside you... I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never going to bloom" (1636). Even though Rose gave all of her wants and dreams to Troy, she knew that they would not become a reality; she gave up on her dreams to stay with Troy. Rose gave so much to Troy, and he did not appreciate it. After this fight, Rose sticks up for herself and becomes stronger. Once Troy asks her to mother his new child, she says she will do it, but he is still a womanless man. Rose continues to grow without Troy and plants herself somewhere else. She is able to become more independent and get her own job because her relationship with Troy has made her more driven.

It is easy to lose aspects of ourselves in others. When we are close to someone, our personalities tend to meld and we forget who we are without the other. Cory is able to become stronger because of his relationship with Troy. He is able to recognize the need to stand up for himself and others. Rose too changes because of Troy. Without being overshadowed because of him, Rose is able to become more independent. The people that we are surrounded by shape our personalities and who we are. Rose and Cory were able to grow and change because they made a change in who they wanted to be apart of their lives.

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