

Prompt: Write a college level essay on August Wilson including citations

August Wilson (April 27, 1945 – October 2, 2005) was an American playwright whose work primarily explored the African American experience in the 20th century. Throughout his career, Wilson wrote ten plays, collectively referred to as the "Pittsburgh Cycle," which were set in different decades of the 20th century in the Hill District neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where Wilson himself grew up.

Wilson's work is notable for its emphasis on the importance of community and family, as well as its deep examination of the impact of racism on African American lives. In each of his plays, Wilson portrays the African-American experience in the 20th century and how the characters navigated through the racial discrimination and how their lives were shaped by the social and political context.

One of his most famous plays, "Fences," which was first performed in 1985, explores the life of Troy Maxson, a former baseball player who is struggling with his bitterness and resentment over being denied the opportunity to play in the major leagues due to the color of his skin. The play won the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony Award for Best Play. Wilson's other notable plays include "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," which explores the exploitation of African American musicians in the 1920s, and "The Piano Lesson," which tells the story of a family's struggle to come to terms with their past and their inheritance.

Wilson's plays were not only critically acclaimed but also widely performed and produced in both regional and Broadway theaters. His work continues to be widely studied and performed, and his plays are considered some of the most important contributions to American drama in the 20th century.

In recognition of his contributions to American theater, Wilson was awarded a MacArthur "Genius" Grant in 1985, and in 2007, a year after his death, he was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play "Radio Golf."

In conclusion, August Wilson is considered one of the most important American playwrights of the 20th century. His work, which primarily explores the African American experience in the 20th century, is notable for its emphasis on community and family, as well as its deep examination of the impact of racism on African American lives. Wilson's plays continue to be widely studied and performed, and his contributions to American theater are undeniable.

Sources:

August Wilson, "Fences," (New York: Penguin Books, 1986)
August Wilson, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," (New York: Penguin Books, 1984)
August Wilson, "The Piano Lesson," (New York: Penguin Books, 1990)
"August Wilson," The Pulitzer Prizes, accessed January 15, 2023,
<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/august-wilson>.