

# The piano lesson by august wilson

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

full The Piano Lesson (a play by August Wilson) 06 October The play by August Wilson centers on an old piano which carries a strong emotional feeling of attachment for the characters. They see it as a link to the past while others view the piano as holding something evil that should be disposed. The story is anchored on these differing viewpoints as one sibling wanted to keep it at all costs as a strong reminder of their ancestry but another sibling wanted to sell it so it can be put to better use like buying land.

Boy Willie is the brother of Berniece; he had just been released from a prison farm in Mississippi and came back home. On arrival, he wanted to sell their old family piano as he sees it as bad luck, blaming that old piano as cause of his imprisonment. For him, the piano can serve better purposes by selling it to raise needed money although he took momentary pride in its legacy by telling Maretha (his niece and Berniece's daughter) about its history so she "could walk around here with her head held high" (Nadel 107). The piano was once owned by a slaveowner named Mr. Sutter who owned Boy Willie's ancestors. He is of the opinion the piano does not serve a purpose or has value and is just a relic of the past. Boy Willie believes selling the piano will liberate him from the past and ensure his own future and fortune; he claims their father will surely understand, by saying, "if my daddy had seen where he could have traded that piano in for some land of his own, it wouldn't be sitting up here now" to justify his urgency in selling the piano (Elam 132) and to convince Berniece to sell.

His sister Berniece is against the very idea of selling the piano as she sees it as a link to their past (back to their great-grandparents who were sold in exchange for the piano). The carvings on the piano served as grim reminders

<https://assignbuster.com/the-piano-lesson-by-august-wilson/>

of slavery and so she insists on keeping the piano, contrary to the opinion of her brother Boy Willie. This resulted in a quarrel among them because of this difference in outlook. For her, the piano is an important family heirloom and a part of their family's history and heritage. When Sutter's ghost had appeared and fought with Willie, she sang a few pieces of music on the piano and Sutter appeared defeated because of it indicating she got some help from their own deceased relatives. The title of the play as piano lesson is not really about piano lessons at all but rather the lessons one learns from life (MacLean 104). In the play, August Wilson also emphasized the empowerment of the black female American in the adoration of Berniece in deciding to keep their family piano, with her saying "Look at this piano. Look at it. Mama Ola polished this piano with her tears for seventeen years. For seventeen years, she rubbed on it till her hands bled" (Sharma 15).

#### Works Cited

Elam, Harry Justin. *The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson*. Ann Arbor, MI, USA: University of Michigan Press, 2004. Print.

MacLean, John V. *If You Teach It, They Will Read: Literatures Life Lessons for Today's Students*. Lanham, MD, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2010. Print.

Nadel, Alan. *May all your Fences Have Gates: Essays on the Drama of August Wilson*. Iowa City, IA, USA: University of Iowa Press, 1993. Print.

Sharma, Raja. *Ready Reference Treatise: The Piano Lesson*. Raleigh, NC, USA: Lulu.

Count = 506 (text only)

Due: October 06, 2014 @ 9: 16 p. m.