Some themes in The Piano Lesson

History

Ownership
All have ownership. The big one is the piano.
Sutter’s grandfather owned the family.
The truck (Lymon). Berniece questions Lymon’s ownership of the truck.
The house (it’s Doaker’s house—we think—but Berniece calls it “my house.” She has strong attachments to her possessions—witness the piano.)
Wining Boy’s suit which he sells to Lymon
Grace: who’s girl is she? (First Boy Willie’s, then Lymon’s). She also has a boyfriend (Leroy).
Firewood.
Ownership of responsibility.
Berniece questions ownership in lots of situations.
Maretha is Berniece’s daughter. Berniece insists on her parental rights in arguing over how to raise her with Boy Willie.
Sibling conflict over ownership.

Social class

The supernatural/spiritual
What is real? Which powers have real power? (Ghost, God)

Desire

Travel

Music
Seems to resolve problems (Berniece playing at end of play, Doaker, Wining Boy, Lymon and Boy Willie sing together, which eases tension)
Wining Boy is sick of music
The piano causes problems between Boy Willie and Berniece

Legacy/inheritance
It’s important to honor the efforts of the past generations and not let them go to waste
Clinging to the past can ruin opportunities in the present and the future, but so can failure to make use of it properly.

Self-worth