

**ALL MY SONS****Author: Arthur Miller**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Objectives**
- 3. About the Author**
- 4. Summary of the Play**
- 5. Character Analysis**
- 6. Important Questions and Answers**

**Introduction:**

The play *All my Sons* is written by a well known American playwright Arthur Miller. It was first commercially successful play by Arthur Miller and was first staged in 1947. It received the New York drama Critics Circle Award.

**Objectives**

The objective of this unit is to:

- Acquaint the students with the biography of Arthur Miller.
- To make the students understand the summary and analysis of the play.
- To highlight the main characters and themes of the play.

**About the Author**

Arthur Miller was one of the leading American playwrights of the twentieth century. He was born in October 1915 in New York City to a women's clothing manufacturer, who lost everything in the economic collapse of the 1930s. Living through young adulthood during the Great Depression, Miller was shaped by the poverty that surrounded him. The Depression demonstrated to the playwright the fragility and vulnerability of human existence in the modern era. After graduating from high school, Miller worked in a warehouse so that he could earn enough money to attend the University of Michigan, where he began to write plays.

Miller's first play to make it to Broadway, *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), was a dismal failure, closing after only four performances. This early setback almost discouraged Miller from writing completely, but he gave himself one more try. Three years later, *All My Sons* won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best play of 1947, launching Miller into theatrical stardom. *All My Sons*, a drama about a manufacturer of faulty war materials, was strongly influenced by the naturalist drama of Henrik Ibsen.

*Death of a Salesman* (1949) secured Miller's reputation as one of the nation's foremost playwrights. In this play, Miller mixes the tradition of social realism that informs most of his work with a more experimental structure that includes fluid leaps in time as the protagonist, Willy Loman, drifts into memories of his sons as teenagers. Loman represents an American archetype: a victim of his own delusions of grandeur and obsession with success, and haunted by a sense of failure.

Also in 1956, Miller married actress Marilyn Monroe. The two divorced in 1961, one year before her death. That year Monroe appeared in her last film, *The Misfits*, which is based on an original screenplay by Miller. After divorcing Monroe, Miller wed Ingeborg Morath, to whom he remained married until his death in 2005. The pair had a son and a daughter.

Miller also wrote the plays *A Memory of Two Mondays* and the short *A View from the Bridge*, which were both staged in 1955. His other works include *After the Fall* (1964), a thinly veiled account of his marriage to Monroe, as well as *The Price* (1967), *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), and *The American Clock* (1980). His most recent works include the plays *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1991), *The Last Yankee* (1993), and *Broken Glass* (1993), which won the Olivier Award for Best Play.

### **Summary of the Play *All My Sons***

Joe and Kate Keller had two sons, Chris and Larry. Keller owned a manufacturing plant with Steve Deever, and their families were close. Steve's daughter Ann was Larry's beau, and George was their friend. When the war came, both Keller boys and George were drafted.

During the war, Keller's and Deever's manufacturing plant had a very profitable contract with the U.S. Army, supplying airplane parts. One morning, a shipment of defective parts came in. Under pressure from the army to keep up the output, Steve Deever called Keller, who had not yet come into work that morning, to ask what he should do. Keller told Steve to weld the cracks in the airplane parts and ship them out. Steve was nervous about doing this alone, but Keller said that he had the flu and could not go into work. Steve shipped out the defective but possibly safe parts on his own.

Later, it was discovered that the defective parts caused twenty-one planes to crash and their pilots to die. Steve and Keller were arrested and convicted, but Keller managed to win an appeal and get his conviction overturned. He claimed that Steve did not call him and that he was

completely unaware of the shipment. Keller went home free, while Steve remained in jail, shunned by his family.

Meanwhile, overseas, Larry received word about the first conviction. Racked with shame and grief, he wrote a letter to Ann telling her that she must not wait for him. Larry then went out to fly a mission, during which he broke out of formation and crashed his plane, killing himself. Larry was reported missing.

Three years later, the action of the play begins. Chris has invited Ann to the Keller house because he intends to propose to her--they have renewed their contact in the last few years while she has been living in New York. They must be careful, however, since Mother insists that Larry is still alive somewhere. Her belief is reinforced by the fact that Larry's memorial tree blew down in a storm that morning, which she sees as a positive sign. Her superstition has also led her to ask the neighbor to make a horoscope for Larry in order to determine whether the day he disappeared was an astrologically favorable day. Everyone else has accepted that Larry is not coming home, and Chris and Keller argue that Mother should learn to forget her other son. Mother demands that Keller in particular should believe that Larry is alive, because if he is not, then their son's blood is on Keller's hands.

Ann's brother George arrives to stop the wedding. He had gone to visit Steve in jail to tell him that his daughter was getting married, and then he left newly convinced that his father was innocent. He accuses Keller, who disarms George by being friendly and confident. George is reassured until Mother accidentally says that Keller has not been sick in fifteen years. Keller tries to cover her slip of the tongue by adding the exception of his flu during the war, but it is now too late. George is again convinced of Keller's guilt, but Chris tells him to leave the house.

Chris's confidence in his father's innocence is shaken, however, and in a confrontation with his parents, he is told by Mother that he must believe that Larry is alive. If Larry is dead, Mother claims, then it means that Keller killed him by shipping out those defective parts. Chris shouts angrily at his father, accusing him of being inhuman and a murderer, and he wonders aloud what he must do in response to this unpleasant new information about his family history.

Chris is disillusioned and devastated, and he runs off to be angry at his father in privacy. Mother tells Keller that he ought to volunteer to go to jail--if Chris wants him to. She also talks to Ann and continues insisting that Larry is alive. Ann is forced to show Mother the letter that Larry wrote to her before he died, which was essentially a suicide note. The note basically confirms Mother's belief that if Larry is dead, then Keller is responsible--not because Larry's plane had the defective parts, but because Larry killed himself in response to the family responsibility and shame due to the defective parts.

Mother begs Ann not to show the letter to her husband and son, but Ann does not comply. Chris returns and says that he is not going to send his father to jail, because that would accomplish

nothing and his family practicality has finally overcome his idealism. He also says that he is going to leave and that Ann will not be going with him, because he fears that she will forever wordlessly ask him to turn his father in to the authorities.

Keller enters, and Mother is unable to prevent Chris from reading Larry's letter aloud. Keller now finally understands that in the eyes of Larry and in a symbolic moral sense, all the dead pilots were his sons. He says that he is going into the house to get a jacket, and then he will drive to the jail and turn himself in. But a moment later, a gunshot is heard--Keller has killed himself.

## **Character Analysis**

### **Joe Keller**

Middle aged and prosperous, Joe Keller is a family man whose world does not extend beyond the borders of his front yard or the gate around his factory. He is not a greedy, conniving caricature of capitalism, but rather a good-natured and loving man of little education, whose myopic perspective on his world stems from a devotion to his family and an education in a society that encourages generally antisocial behavior. American rugged individualism alienated Keller, whose past misdeeds haunt the future of his family.

### **Kate Keller (Mother)**

Though she has a successful husband and a loving son, Mother cannot abandon the memory of her other son, who was lost in the war. Her delusions about Larry's disappearance and her vehement self-denial are symptomatic of greater issues than just a grief-stricken mother's inability to cope with the loss of a child. Nervous and suspicious, Mother has taken on the burden of her husband's secret while he presents the face of an untroubled conscience to the world, while she suffers from headaches and nightmares. Her fantasies about Larry are constructed from a sense of self-preservation, and the flimsy basis for her hopes is threatened any time someone who loved Larry intimates that he or she may not share Kate's confidence in his return.

### **Chris Keller**

Returning from the war as a hero, Chris found the day-to-day provincialism of his old life stifling. But Chris is a family man, and he is devoted to his parents. He is uncomfortable with the success his father's business found during the war, when so many of his comrades died pointlessly. He redirects his discomfort into an idealism and an attitude of social awareness that is foreign to his family environment. Others perceive Chris's idealism as oppressive, asking sacrifices of others that Chris himself does not make as he lives comfortably (if guiltily) on his father's dime.

### **Larry Keller**

Although he has been dead for some years by the start of the play, Larry is as much a character in the play as anyone who actually appears on stage. His disappearance haunts his family through his mother's superstitious belief in his return, as well as through his brother's wary but measured rejection of Larry's claim on his childhood sweetheart. Larry is constantly compared to Chris throughout the play, ostensibly for the purpose of better defining the character of Chris, but in the end we learn that Larry's own character had quite an effect on the story. Larry is portrayed by his father as the more sensible and practical of his sons, the one with a head for business who would understand his father's arguments. Larry, not Chris, possessed the stronger sense of honor and connectedness, and Larry sacrificed himself in penance for his father's misdeeds.

### **Ann Deever**

The beautiful Ann has not become attached to a new man since her beau Larry died in the war, but this is not through lack of suitors. Ann is mired in the past, though she has not been waiting for Larry to return. Rather, she has waited for his brother Chris to step forward and take Larry's place in her heart. She is an honest, down-to-earth girl, and she is emboldened by the strength of certain of her convictions. Sharing Chris's idealism and righteousness, she has shunned her father for his crimes during the war, and she fully understands his assertion that if he had any suspicions of his own father, he could not live with himself. Ann and her brother work to establish "appropriate" reactions to a father's wartime racketeering.

### **George Deever**

George serves a mostly functional role in the story of the Keller family. His arrival in the second act is a catalyst for a situation that was on edge from long-established tensions. His disdain is for the crime, not for the man, and now that he has been newly convinced of his father's innocence, he is here to rescue his sister from entering the family of the man he believes is actually guilty. Yet George is easily disarmed by Keller's good humor, and his own convictions about his father's innocence are almost undermined by his awareness of his father's other faults and weaknesses.

### **Dr. Jim Bayliss**

The neighborhood doctor, Jim is a good man who believes in the duty of one man to help another, but he at the same time acknowledges a man's responsibility to his family. He is interested in medicine not for the money but to help people. This point is dramatized by his reluctance to bother with a hypochondriac. He once left his wife to do medical research, but he eventually went home, putting his responsibility to his family ahead of his responsibility to the world.

### **Sue Bayliss**

Jim's wife Sue put her husband through medical school, and she expects more than gratitude in return. She blames Chris's infectious, insinuating idealism for her husband's interest in the fiscally unrewarding field of medical research.

### **Frank Lubey**

A simple neighbor, Frank has an interest in astrology. Mother asked him before the start of the play to prepare a horoscope for Larry in order to determine his "favorable day."

### **Lydia Lubey**

Now married to Frank, Lydia is a former sweetheart of George's, but she did not wait for him to return from the war. Seeing Lydia makes George wistful about the simpler life he could have had, if he had not left home for the greater world of New York.

## **Important Questions and Answers**

### **Q1: Discuss the theme of the play *All My Sons*?**

Ans. The main theme of this play is a businessman's evasion of responsibility for a decision in wartime which led to the loss of twenty one lives. Joe Keller, who has a contract for the manufacture of airplane cylinder heads, knows that he is guilty. His wife knows it. The neighbours know it. Even his son Chris suspects it but cannot face the fact.

Miller's concern with large social issues is really the key to our understanding of the play. In *All My Sons* family relations are predominant. To Keller, nothing is bigger than the family. It's everything for him. When Chris discovers his father's complicity in the sale of defective cylinder heads to the Air Force, he turns against him. Rather than go on living, Keller kills himself. Keller's death is a parable of our times. Through it, Miller points to our inescapable social responsibilities. Any evasiveness is severely punished. Plays such as these are specially relevant today. Following are the major themes in the play:

### **Relatedness**

Arthur Miller stated that the issue of relatedness is the main one in *All My Sons*. The play introduces questions that involve an individual's obligation to society, personal responsibility, and the distinction between private and public matters. Keller can live with his actions during the war because he sees himself as answerable only to himself and his family, not to society as a whole. Miller criticizes Keller's myopic worldview, which allows him to discount his crimes because they were done "for the family." The principal contention is that Keller is wrong in his claim that there is nothing greater than the family, since there is a whole world to which Keller is connected. To cut yourself off from your relationships with society at large is to invite tragedy of a nature both public (regarding the pilots) and private (regarding the suicides).

### **The Nuclear Family**

The reverse side of Miller's relatedness argument is his downplaying of the family as the nucleus of society. Somehow people are to feel a more general caring for others that is not drawn off by family obligations. What, then, is the place of the family in the larger social system? Discussions of the family serve mostly to contrast characters' opinions about an individual's responsibilities to

the family versus society at large. The family is also presented as a unit that can be corrupted and damaged by the actions and denials of its individuals, a small-scale example of the way individual actions can corrupt society.

### **The Past**

*All My Sons* is a play about the past. It is inescapable--but how exactly does it affect the present and shape the future? Can crimes ever be ignored or forgotten? Most of the dialogue involves various characters discovering various secrets about the recent history of the Keller family. Miller shows how these past secrets have affected those who have kept them. The revelation of the secrets is presented as unavoidable--they were going to come out at some point, no matter what, and it is through Miller's manipulation of the catalysts that the truths are all revealed on the same day. While the revelations are unavoidable, so are their fatal consequences.

### **Denial and Self-Deception**

How do we deceive ourselves and others? We select things to focus on in life, but do we also need to deny certain things in order to live well? What toll does denial take on the psyche, the family, and society? Two main facts about the Keller family history must be confronted. One is Larry's death, and the other is Keller's responsibility for the shipment of defective parts. Mother denies the first while accepting the second, and Keller accepts the first while denying the second. The result is that both characters live in a state of self-deception, willfully ignoring one of the truths so that the family can continue to function in acceptable ways.

### **Idealism**

Chris is described by other characters as an idealist, although we do not see this trait in action aside from his angry response to the wartime profiteering. Yet the others define him by his idealism, setting him apart as a man of scruples. Chris decides that he must abandon these scruples to the cause of practicality when he is faced with the prospect of sending his father to jail. Is idealism sustainable in a fallen, complex world? If ideals must be sacrificed, is there any supervening ideal or principle to help us decide which ideals should be sacrificed in which circumstances?

### **Business**

Keller argues that his actions during the war were defensible as requirements of good business practice. He also frequently defines himself as an uneducated man, taking pride in his commercial success without traditional book learning. Yet, his sound business sense actually leads to his downfall. This failure is connected with Miller's leftist politics and the play's overall criticisms (shared by some conservatives) of a capitalist system that encourages individuals to value their business sense over their moral sense. How could rules that govern business be exempt from the moral norms and laws governing the rest of society?

## **Blame**

Each character in the play has a different experience of blame. Joe Keller tries to blame anyone and everyone for crimes during the war, first by letting his partner go to jail. Later, when he is confronted with the truth, he blames business practice and the U.S. Army and everyone he can think of--except himself. When he finally does accept blame, after learning how Larry had taken the blame and shame on himself, Keller kills himself. Chris, meanwhile, feels guilty for surviving the war and for having money, but when the crimes are revealed, he places the blame squarely on his father's shoulders. He even blames his father for his own inability to send his father to prison. These are just a few examples of the many instances of deflected blame in this story, and this very human impulse is used to great effect by Miller to demonstrate the true relationships and power plays between characters as they try to maintain self-respect as well as personal and family honor.

## **The American Dream**

Miller points out the flaw with a merely economic interpretation of the American Dream as business success alone. Keller sacrifices other parts of the American Dream for simple economic success. Has he given up part of his basic human decency (consider the pilots) and a successful family life--does he sacrifice Steve or Larry? Miller suggests the flaws of a capitalist who has no grounding in cultural or social morals. While Keller accepted the idea that a good businessman like himself should patch over the flawed shipment, Miller critiques a system that would encourage profit and greed at the expense of human life and happiness. The challenge is to recover the full American Dream of healthy communities with thriving families, whether or not capitalism is the economic system that leads to this happy life. Economic mobility alone can be detrimental--consider George's abandonment of his hometown for big city success. There is a rift in the Bayliss marriage over Dr. Bayliss's desire to do unprofitable research, because his wife wants him to make more money instead of do what he enjoys and what will help others.

### **Q2: Analyse the character of Chris Keller.**

**Ans.**

#### **CHRIS KELLER'S PERSONALITY**

Chris was a good rich 32-year-old man. He was a lovely man who really loved his parents and people around him. Before working in the factory of his family's, Chris was in command of a company, overseas and went to war for 5 years. He expected to marry his girlfriend named Annie who had ever been the fiancée of his dead brother, Larry. But old crucial case was happened twice to their family which made him decided not to marry her even he loved her so much, because he felt guilty to Annie's family. Chris was tall and handsome. He was also like his



father, solidly built, a listener. A man who capable of immense affection and loyalty. Chris was interested in reading book section, even so he never bought a book.

## CHRIS KELLER'S CHARACTERISTIC

In this drama 'All My Son ', Chris had some characteristics which were appeared in every conversations and attitudes that he showed. The characteristics of his were lover, honest, firm, mature, and positive thinker.

### **1.Lover**

The main characterictic of Chris' was lover actually. Because this drama told us about the son who really loved his parents. Chris loved everyone around him. He was a lover man when he went to get an aspirin for his mother, Kate or Mrs. Keller, when he protected Annie from thinking bad about people on the block who still talked about her Dad in the jail, and when he did not allow George to talk to Mr.Keller about case. Chris Keller was lover man when he went to get an aspirin for his mother, Kate or Mrs. Keller. Mrs. Keller was sensing the reason why Annie came. She felt sick on the top of her head. But he refused the first offering of Chris to get her an aspirin. But when the pain got worse, she asked Chris to get the aspirin for her. Chris was worried about his mother, because she was too much in thinking of Larry. Moreover the memorial tree of Larry blew down which she saw by herself. Chris assumed that his mother got a headache because she had less sleep after dreaming of Larry who asked for help in her dream. Chris Keller was a lover man when he protected Annie from thinking bad about people on the block who still talked about her Dad in the jail. Annie knew that people on the block still remembered the case when Frank asked her about Steve, her father. Knowing that, Annie asked Chris to explained it and why he did not say anything to her about that. Chris did not tell Annie if people on the still talked about he dad or not because he did not want to make Annie worry and uncomfortable if she would going to meet averybody in the block. Chris Keller was a lover man when he did not allow George to talk to Mr. Keller about the case. Mrs. Keller was not well at that time, so Chris did not expect a fight which could make his mother shock. Because if George would discuss about the case again, Mrs. Keller's condition would be worse, especially her psychological condition..

### **2.Honest**

Chris Keller had honest characteristics which appeared in some parts of the conversations. He was kind of person who could not lie. Chris Keller was honest when he told the truth of his opinion about Annie's father in the point of view of people in the blocks, when he told everything he felt about his mother who still clinged and waited Larry after three years he died, and when he told Annie about what made him ashamed. Chris Keller was honest when he told the truth of his opinion about annies father in the point of

view of people in the block. Annie worried people on the block if they still talked about his father who was still in the prison. And when she asked Chris about that, Chris gave her the honest answer whereas Mr and Mrs Keller tried to cover it and comfort her. He said that everybody would still remember the case which killed 21 pilots during the war and her father Steve was murderer.

Chris Keller was honest when he told everything he felt about his mother who still clinged and waited for Larry after three years he died. Even he and his father had ever let Mrs. Keller go on thinking that Larry was still alive, he tried to be honest to his mother. He said that she was like hoping something impossible to be. Waiting for Larry who was lost for three years was delusion for Chris. Although his words annoyed his mother, he kept being honest and said what he had felt. Because he did not want his mother go on hoping Larry coming back. Whereas Chris also would

marry

Annie.

Chris Keller was honest when he told Annie about what made him ashamed. Annie felt that Chris was kind of embarrassed since she got in his house. That made her want to leave. So Chris became honest and told her that he loved and what made him ashamed. Chris told her about what had happened to him in the overseas which he had not told to his parents.

### 3. Firm

Firmness was also one of Chris Keller characteristics which infrequently appeared in this drama and sometimes can be considered as stubborn characteristic. Chris Keller was firm, but he became firm only if he thought something was right to be strengthened for. Chris Keller became firm when he told his father about his intention to marry Annie, when he forced his father to bring mother over her hope that Larry was alive somewhere, and when he said to her mother that he

intended

to

marry

Annie.

Chris Keller was firm when he told to his father about his intention to marry Annie. Mr. Keller asked him why the girl must be Annie, and then he said he wanted inspiring life and build something that he could give himself to. It meant that he would leave the business that his father had developed for him. If Mr. Keller did not want him to leave the business and house, Mr. Keller had to help Chris stayed there by blessing him if he was going to marry Annie. And Mr. Keller had to help him tell to Mother that Larry was dead so she would not think that he was going to marry Larry's girl. In this part Chris also became hard headed. Chris Keller was firm when he forced his father to bring mother over her hope that Larry was alive somewhere. Chris thought that they had done a big mistake, to let mother go on thinking that Larry would come back. Because that, mother's belief became stonger and she always insisted everybody that Larry was just missing. Chris said to his father that they had to stop mother on thinking that way even because it would go on, mother would be more hurt. At first Mr. Keller disagreed with Chris who was hard headed for good sake. Chris was firm when he said to his mother that he intended to marry Annie. At that time Mrs.

Keller disagreed with him because Annie was still Larry's girl for her and that was impossible for Chris to marry Annie. But, Chris still held fast to his intention of marrying Annie. So did Mrs Keller, she more disagreed when Frank said about horoscope that November twenty fifth was Larry's favorable day so it was impossible for Larry to have died. Chris would not let Annie go with George to New York, even Mrs. Keller had packed annie's bag. And Chris still intended to marry her.

#### **4.Mature**

Maturity was existing among other characteristics of Chris. He showed that he was mature when he could let her brother Larry who was dead during the war go, when he calm her mother Mrs. Keller who went through to Larry again, and when he could accept the fact that his father was the one who guilty in the case. Chris Keller was mature when he could let her brother Larry who was dead during the war go. Letting Larry go was the hardest thing to do for Mrs. Keller but not for Chris and Mr. Keller. He was truly mature man because he did not mourn Larry like his mother did even after three years. He could face that like a mature man. Chris Keller was mature when he calms her mother Mrs. Keller who went through depression. Chris went between the conversation which was about to be worse and uncomfortable. And he cut that out. He calmed his mother by inviting her to have dinner with Annie and Mr. Keller. He did that because he did not want her mother to go on the conversation which caused her headache be worse. Chris Keller was mature when he could accept the fact that his father was the one who guilt in the case. Even his belief of his father was shaken but he could understand the reason of his father's dishonesty. But the money that he got from the factory which his father established by being dishonest really bothered him. He also understood that all what Mr. Keller did was for Chris, but that was the wrong way to make Chris happy. Chris faced it disappointedly and bore it up. He became unselfish by deciding to leave the house and not forcing his father to go to the jail. Chris also canceled to marry Annie due to that he felt guilty to her family and thought that in deepest of Annie's heart she would ask Chris to jail his father.

#### **5.PositiveThinker**

Positive thinker means Chris never had bad prejudice against people around him. Chris Keller was positive thinker when he got angry because his father thought something bad to Annie and George, when Annie told him that Sue hated him, and when his mother thought that George would open the case again and that Annie and her family hated them. Chris Keller was positive thinker when he got angry because his father thought something bad to annie and George. When George who was in Columbus called Annie, Mr. Keller felt strange, he had a prejudice against Annie that she and George had planned something to open the case of defective parts. For a moment, Chris was angry because he was sure that Annie would not do that. Chris had positive thinking toward Annie. Chris Keller was positive thinker when he Annie told him that Sue hated him. Chris was good

man. Chris always thought that everyone is like him since he never had prejudice against people especially his neighbourhood. So he did not believe when Annie, who had had conversation with Sue before, said that Sue hated him. Chris Keller was positive thinker when his mother thought that George would open the case again and that Annie and her family hated them. Mother felt that way because it was strange that George suddenly visited his father and Keller's family. But Chris disagreed with her so he tried to stop her suspecting them and cut their conversation out. He did not want to argue with his mother.

The characteristics of Chris Keller has been mentioned one by one followed with proofs for each characteristics. And based on the characteristics above, they show that Chris Keller was the flat main-protagonist character. Eventhough, he was hard headed sometimes.

### **Q3: Discuss the character sketch of Joe Keller in the play *All My Sons*.**

Ans. **Joe Keller, Ignoramus**

Arthur Miller gives a good bit of space to the description of Joe Keller in the opening stage directions:

*A heavy man of stolid mind and build, a business man these many years, but with the imprint of the machine-shop worker and boss still upon him. When he reads, when he speaks, when he listens, it is with the terrible concentration of the uneducated man for whom there is still wonder in many commonly known things, a man whose judgments must be dredged out of experience and a peasant-like common sense. A man among men. (1.1)*

The description of Joe as a simpleton comes up again and again in this play. Chris teasingly calls him an "elephant" (1.535) and Kate calls him a "bull" (3.36). After George's ominous phone call, Kate warns her husband to "be smart now, Joe. The boy is coming. Be smart" (1.620). Miller emphasizes Joe's lack of education as one justification for his criminal actions. We don't think Joe approved those cracked cylinder heads because he's stupid. He approved them because, as an uneducated man, he needs all the more desperately to protect his way of making a living.

### **Joe and Money**

Joe has always been concerned with money. With the Great Depression fresh in his memory – and personal poverty even older than that – economic security is his greatest concern. Joe is outraged when Kate and Chris attack him for saving his business. "I spoiled both of you," he says. "I should've put him out when I was ten like I was put out, and make him earn his keep. Then he'd know how a buck is made in this world" (3.63). Joe's narration of his triumph over the criminal justice system concludes with the boast that "fourteen months later I had one of the best

shops in the state again, a respected man again; bigger than ever" (1.446). Until he finally understands the cause of Larry's death, his primary value is the success of his business and his ability to make money.

### **Family Man**

Miller doesn't totally demonize Joe, however. It's not just for his own comfort that Joe makes money; it's for his family. "Nothin' is bigger" than family to Joe (1.67). Though they don't like to admit it, Kate and Chris reap the benefits of Joe's single-mindedness. Kate has a nice house and garden. She can look forward to steak and champagne by the sea. Chris stands to inherit a lucrative business that will similarly support a cozy family life with Ann. We believe Joe when he tells his son, " I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you [...] for you, a business for you" (2.546, 556). Joe isn't evil, he just has a tragic lack of vision.

**Q4: Highlight the aptness of the title *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller.**

**Q5: What is the significance of American dream in the play *All My Sons*?**

**Lesson Writer: Prof. Harpreet Kour**