

WU?@therep

ALL MY SONS

by Arthur Miller

Directed by Seth Gordon

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At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth slowing down

for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together WU? @ THE REP—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (A/S/L), a plot summary (FYI), biographical information (F2F), historical context (B4U), and other bits and pieces (HTH). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means IRL, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom.

NEATO!

As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

This powerful play looks at personal actions and responsibility. Who pays the consequences for our choices? It becomes even more complex when your students explore the obligation and responsibility a son or daughter has in dealing with the consequences of a parent's choice. What happens when love of family and social ethics come in conflict?

It would be a good idea to take a minute to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has one intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and halfway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and making noise is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

Marsha Coplon, Director of Education

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A/S/L

JOE KELLER: Factory owner and patriarch of the Keller family.

KATE KELLER: Wife of Joe, mother of Larry and Chris. Firmly believes Larry is still alive.

LARRY KELLER: The Kellers' eldest son who went missing during World War II.

CHRIS KELLER: The Kellers' younger son who works with his father after returning from the war.

ANN DEEVER: A girl who grew up next door and became Larry's fiancée.

GEORGE DEEVER: Ann's brother, who is now a lawyer.

JIM & SUE BAYLISS: The Kellers' next-door neighbors.

FRANK & LYDIA LUBEY: The Kellers' neighbors.

BERT: A young boy from the neighborhood

H/H

ABREAST: up-to-date, aware

ASPERSIONS: attacks on someone's integrity or reputation

BROADCLOTH: in contrast to a hair shirt, this fabric is woven of soft, more expensive cloth

BULLDOZE: to use strong force when dealing with a situation

CALAMITY: disaster

CASANOVA: a man with a reputation for romancing many women

DAST: dare

EXONERATED: to be completely cleared of blame and suspicion of guilt

FASCISM: an authoritarian and nationalistic system of government that opposes democracy

HABERDASHERING: dealing in men's clothing and accessories

HAIR SHIRT: a shirt made of coarse fabric or animal hair; often worn for penance

MALTED: similar to a milk shake

ROUÉ: a man who leads a life filled with sensual pleasures

THRASH: defeat

YELLOW: cowardly

ZEPPELIN: a large cylindrical airship, a blimp

PROSECUTION, CONVICTION, EXONERATION, OH MY!

Understanding Criminal Prosecution

PROSECUTION: Prosecution is the carrying out of legal proceedings against someone with a criminal charge.

CHARGE: To be charged with a crime means that a formal allegation of an offence has been made against a person.

CONVICTION: A person is convicted of a crime when he or she has been declared guilty of an offense.

SENTENCE: Sentencing occurs when a convicted criminal is issued a punishment.

EXONERATION: Exoneration, the process of being freed from guilt or blame, can occur one of two ways: a person can be declared factually innocent, or a person can be relieved of the consequences of their conviction. Once a person is exonerated, they can be released from their punishment or imprisonment and return to their normal life.

BTW



SPOILER ALERT!

This synopsis contains spoilers about the story of the show. If you wish to be completely surprised by what you see on stage, you may wish to wait until after the play to read this article.

ON THE MORNING AFTER a big storm, the Keller family awakens to a fallen tree in the backyard. The tree was planted in memory of Larry, the Kellers' eldest son who disappeared during World War II. In the backyard we also find Joe Keller. Neighbors Jim and Frank soon gather to chat. During this conversation Frank reveals that he is working on Larry's horoscope to determine whether November 25, the day Larry disappeared, was a favorable day for Larry, a day on which it would have been nearly impossible for him to die.

CONVERSATION SHIFTS to Ann Deever's arrival. Ann, the daughter of Joe's former business partner, Steve, and Larry's former fiancée, grew up next door to the Kellers and has returned to visit the Keller family. However, this discussion is cut short as Jim's wife, Sue, and Frank's wife, Lydia, interrupt the exchange. Next, Joe's son Chris arrives, followed quickly by Bert, a neighborhood boy whom Joe has employed as a "policeman" for the town.

AFTER THE NEIGHBORS head home, Chris and Joe find themselves alone to reflect on more serious matters, like Kate Keller's unwavering belief that Larry is still alive somewhere. This is particularly painful for Chris, because he would like to marry Ann, and cannot do so if his mother will not let go of Larry. Eventually Kate joins Chris and Joe to share her nightmare and steadfast beliefs about Larry, and conjecture about why Ann has come back after all this time. When Bert returns with police talk, Kate blows up and reprimands Joe for continuing the jail game.

WHEN ANN JOINS THE FAMILY outside, she reminisces about the old days. Quickly, Ann and the Kellers begin catching up on what has happened over the last few years with Ann's parents, her love life, and her brother, George. Eventually the conversation wanders to Joe and Steve Deever's imprisonment. During the war, their factory produced airplane parts, and one day cylinder heads for P-40s were coming out cracked. Joe was out sick that day, and supposedly Steve covered up the cracks and shipped the parts out anyway. This action led to the deaths of several pilots. Steve and Joe were arrested and convicted of the crime; however, Joe was later exonerated, while Steve remains in jail. During the course of the current conversation, Joe tells his homecoming story and expresses his forgiveness towards Steve.

AFTER KATE AND JOE go back in the house, Chris and Ann decide to get married. Shortly after, Ann receives a call from her brother, George, who plans to join Ann at the Kellers later that day after visiting their father for the first time in three years.

AS ACT TWO OPENS, we find Chris cleaning up the remains of his brother's memorial tree while the rest of the Keller household prepares for an evening out at the lake. When Ann and Sue find themselves alone in the backyard, Sue warns Ann to take Chris far away when he and Ann marry.



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SUDDENLY, GEORGE ARRIVES and angrily confronts Chris. George, who has always believed in Joe's innocence because Chris believed it, finally visited his father and heard a different story—that Joe knew all about the cracked cylinder heads and instructed Steve to ship them. George now believes his father is in jail because of Joe. He refuses to let the Kellers take another thing from his family—Ann. However, Chris and Ann don't believe George's story; and as the fight grows Kate joins them to welcome George. Things calm down until Kate claims that Joe hasn't been sick in 15 years, which sets George off because Joe claimed to be home sick on the day his factory produced the cracked cylinder heads. Frank adds to the chaos by arriving with Larry's completed horoscope, revealing that November 25 was one of Larry's favorable days and therefore he couldn't have died. To Kate, this is proof that Ann cannot marry Chris and that she should leave immediately. George is convinced to leave the Kellers home, but not Ann.

WHEN THE KELLERS find themselves alone, Chris demands that Kate accept Ann and admit

that Larry is dead once and for all. Kate tells Chris they must hold onto Larry because "God does not let a son be killed by his father." With this, Chris finally acknowledges the truth, that Joe is guilty. He storms out.

WE FIND KATE WAITING for Chris to return home at the top of Act Three. After Jim reveals he, too, knows the truth, he volunteers to search for Chris. Kate and Joe philosophize about Joe and Chris' value differences—Joe's focus on his family and Chris' respect for everyone. Ann emerges from the house with a revelation for Kate: a letter Larry wrote just before committing suicide on November 25. As Kate digests the news, Chris returns and declares he will leave the Kellers home and move to Cleveland to get away from it all. Joe offers to donate all of their money to charity to repent. This offer does not appease Chris. Ann then shares Larry's letter with Chris, causing Chris' desire to turn his father in. When Joe goes back in the house to find his jacket, we hear a gunshot. As Ann runs for help, the lights go down on Kate and Chris mourning together.

Set model by
Scenic Designer
Michael Ganio



IRL

AFTER WORLD WAR II ENDED, veterans like Chris returned home to find that their views of life had changed. In Chris' words:

"There was no meaning in it here. The whole thing to them was a kind of a—bus accident. I went to work with Dad, and that rat-race again. I felt—what you said—ashamed somehow. Because nobody was changed at all. It seemed to make suckers out of a lot of guys. I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator."



Like Chris, many veterans have trouble adjusting back to their old lives after deployment. In fact, the Center for Veterans Issues lists a wide range of issues veterans can face including injuries and health issues, mental health problems, unemployment, poverty or homelessness, substance abuse, family problems or criminal justice issues.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HELP veterans by showing thanks for their service to our country and supporting them in times of need.

See the list below for some ideas on how you can support our veterans.

1. Visit a wounded veteran at the hospital.
2. Deliver a meal, care package or letter to veterans.
3. Help a veteran tell his or her story through the Veterans History Project.
4. Read books or watch documentaries about the lives of soldiers to better understand their needs.
5. Mow a veteran's lawn (or rake their leaves or shovel their snow depending on the time of year).
6. Volunteer with or donate money to an organization that supports veterans.
7. Thank a veteran for his or her service.

Can you think of other ways to support veterans?



P-40s & Cylinder Heads

A P-40, OR A CURTISS P-40 WARHAWK is a single-engine, single-seat, metal American aircraft. The P-40 first flew in 1938, and was used throughout World War II by air forces in 28 different countries. With more than 13,000 produced, the P-40 was the third most produced American fighter plane during the war.

CYLINDER HEADS are one of the parts needed for a P-40. The cylinder head serves as the top of a cylinder that encases valves and spark plugs in the plane's internal combustion engine. If a cylinder head were cracked, the compression of fuel and air in the cylinder would be lost, resulting in an inability for the plane's engine to start or run properly.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

JOE AND CHRIS, like many father and son pairs, find lots of things to disagree about: work, romance and social responsibility. Chris feels that we are connected with others in the world around us. He learned this lesson during the war, watching his company members die. Chris tells Ann: "I got an idea—watching them go down. Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to me that one new thing was made. A kind of...responsibility. Man for man." Chris understands that the actions we take affect more people than our family. Joe, however, has spent his life struggling to be successful in order to support his family. Even though Joe's choice to ship out defective airplane parts killed 21 soldiers, he justifies this action to himself because it allowed him to continue to provide a comfortable home for his family and a future for his son. Joe finally comes to understand Chris' position of social responsibility toward the end of the play. He says, "I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were."

What do you think; do we have a responsibility solely to our families? Or to everyone? Or how would you balance those desires?

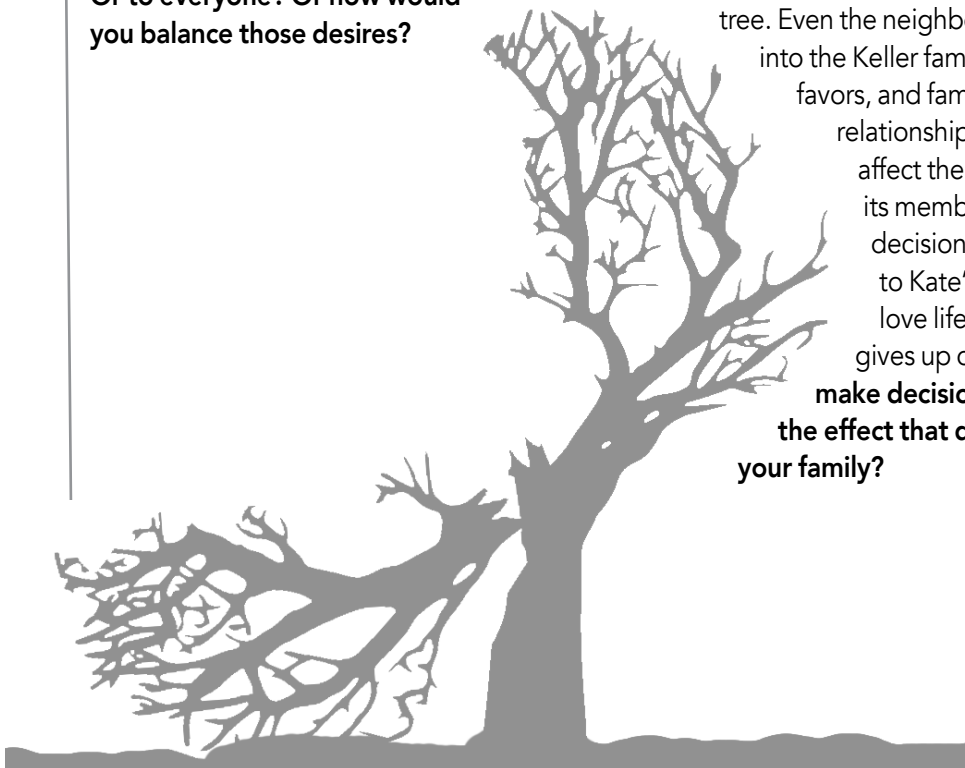
DENIAL

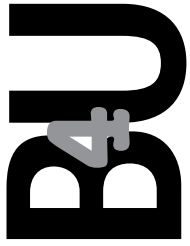
ALMOST EVERY CHARACTER in *All My Sons* is in denial about something. Kate denies that Larry is dead; Chris denies that he wants to be part of his father's business, but wants to make a fortune for Ann; Ann denies that Joe played a part in her father's demise; and everyone, including Joe himself, denies that Joe is guilty. The characters' denial has put their lives in a holding pattern because they will not accept the truth and move on with their lives. Kate is stuck grieving for her missing son; Chris is stuck working a job that brings him no joy; Ann is stuck with a divided family because she refuses to speak to her father; and 21 men are stuck without justice because Joe denies his guilt.

Can you think of another story with characters' whose denial holds them back from fully living?

FAMILY TIES

THE KELLERS ARE clearly a tight-knit family. Chris, a grown man, still lives at home with his parents and even works for his father, and despite Larry's disappearance, the Kellers are constantly reminded of him by his memorial tree. Even the neighbors are tightly wound into the Keller family, between friendships, favors, and familiarity. The close relationships of the Keller family affect the decisions that each of its members make, from Joe's decision to protect his business to Kate's meddling with Chris' love life to ensure that he never gives up on Larry. **When you make decisions, do you factor in the effect that decision will have on your family?**





WORLD WAR II

WORLD WAR II, fought between the Allied Forces of the United States, United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy and Japan, lasted from 1939 to 1945.

WAR BEGAN in Europe in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, inciting Britain and France to declare war on Germany. Germany subsequently attacked Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and France. In the summer of 1940, Germany launched an attack on Britain, resulting in Germany's first military failure.

MEANWHILE, THE UNITED STATES was still at peace. However, in 1940 the first peacetime draft was held for men ages 21 to 35 to serve in the armed forces for one year. That all changed on December 7, 1941 when Japan unleashed a surprise attack on the US Navy Base at Pearl Harbor. This prompted the US to declare war on Japan the very next day. However, fighting for the US did not begin fully until late spring 1942 when a series of naval battles led up to a huge defeat for Japan at the Battle of Midway in June 1942. Over the next few months, America and Japan continued to struggle over control of the Solomon Islands, which were located near Allied Powers shipping routes. Eventually, the US gained control of these islands. Britain was also fighting against Japan in Burma.

BACK IN EUROPE, Italy expanded the war further by attacking Greece and North Africa, while Germany began an invasion of the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union's size and brutal winters proved to be too much for the German forces, and they never succeeded in capturing the country. In fact, German forces began retreating from the Soviet Union in 1943 and were completely out of the country in 1944. The Soviet Union continued to pursue the German forces through Eastern Europe.

IN 1944 the Allied Forces made strides towards victory as well. In June, British and American forces launched the D-Day invasion on the coast of Normandy in France, causing German forces to retreat. As Allied Forces closed in on Germany from the east and the west, they surrendered on May 8, 1945, what is now known as Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day.

BATTLES CONTINUED with Japan in 1944, with major clashes at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The Allies began heavily bombing major Japanese cities in 1945, culminating in the US dropping atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Japan surrendered shortly after, and with that World War II came to a close.



WORLD WAR II'S AFFECT ON AMERICA

Between the Great Depression and the outbreak of World War II, the outlook in America was bleak in the 1930s and early 1940s. In 1941, about 40% of families lived below the poverty line, and eight million people were unemployed. The number of marriages and births was dropping, too. As America became more involved in the war, millions of men left to fight, by choice or by draft, production and manufacturing increased to meet the demands of a nation at war, the production and purchase of consumer goods were restricted, and women joined the workforce in droves.

The increased production and increased workforce needed during the war helped to lift America's economy. After the war, this new prosperity continued and Americans began spending money on new homes, cars and appliances. As the men returned home, many women left their jobs and returned home as well. During and after the war, marriage and birth rates began to climb, resulting in the Baby Boom.

WAR PROFITEERING

War profiteering can be traced back to the earliest civilizations. Profiteering as we know it began during the Intercolonial Wars (late 1600s to 1762) when military commanders and governors began awarding profitable military supply contracts to their friends and family and received subsequent financial kickbacks. In recent history, this type of profiteering peaked in the United States during World War I when military spending reached \$11 billion thanks to deceptive accounting, artificial price inflation and huge profit margins.

In 1934, the Senate created the Special Committee on Investigation of the Munitions Industry. This committee discovered that instances of profiteering were much more common than previously thought. Despite the efforts of the committee, war profiteering continued during World War II. Joe Keller himself is guilty of profiting from the war by sacrificing the lives of airplane pilots instead of the reputation of his business and financial stability of his family.





IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II, Arthur Miller transformed theatre in the United States with plays packed with unrest and dissatisfaction, capturing an authentic and raw view of the country. Miller's ability to capture the struggle of the American working class has helped him become one of the most widely performed American playwrights.

ARTHUR MILLER WAS BORN on October 15, 1915 to Jewish parents who emigrated from Poland. Miller's father, Isadore, was a women's clothing manufacturer, and his mother, Augusta, was a teacher. Miller had two elder siblings, Kermit and Joan. The Great Depression ruined Isadore's manufacturing business, causing the family to move from Brooklyn to Harlem. Eventually, Isadore built a new life for his family working as a hat manufacturer.

IN HIGH SCHOOL, Miller was an average student and talented athlete. He graduated in 1928 and worked for several years to save up money for college. In 1934, Miller enrolled at the University of Michigan to study journalism and drama. Greek dramas and the works of Henrik Ibsen captured his attention during his time at school. In 1936, Miller wrote *Honors at Dawn*, for which he won an Avery Hopwood Award. Miller earned his bachelor's degree in English two years later in 1938, and in 1940 he married his college sweetheart Mary Slattery, with whom he had two children.

IN 1944, *The Man who Had All the Luck*, Miller's first Broadway play, premiered to horrible reviews and closed after only four performances. The next year, Miller published his first novel, *Focus*, which was about anti-Semitism. In 1947, *All My Sons* opened on Broadway. Miller's first Broadway failure left him

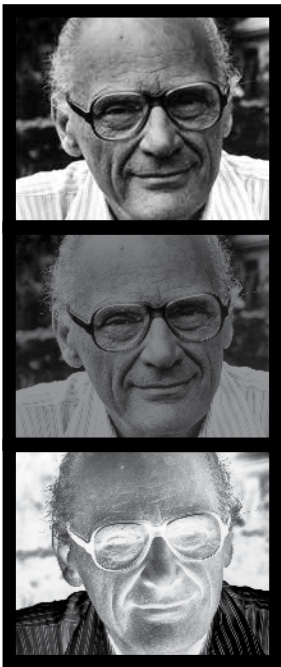
with doubts about his abilities as a writer, so he vowed if *All My Sons* was not well received he would change professions. Luckily the play was a success, winning a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.

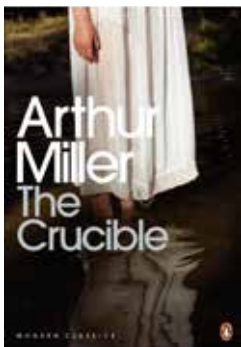
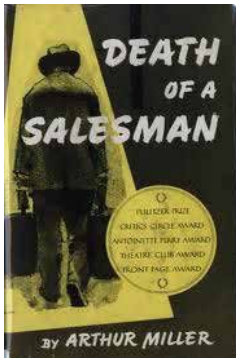
MILLER'S SUCCESS CONTINUED with *Death of a Salesman* in 1949, the first play to win a Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award (it won three actually), and a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Miller's next work, *The Crucible*, was based on the Salem Witch Trials, but was actually an attack on Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee.

THE HOUSE UN-AMERICAN Activities Committee investigated Miller three years after *The Crucible* premiered, ending in a conviction of contempt of Congress for Miller. That year Miller also divorced his wife Mary, and married Marilyn Monroe. However, Monroe and Miller divorced only a few years later. He soon again re-married to photographer Inge Morath.

MILLER'S CAREER GREW pretty quiet until the 1990s when revivals of his earlier plays and new plays *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* and *The Last Yankee* brought him back into favor with critics. *Finishing the Picture*, Miller's last work premiered at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in 2004.

ARTHUR MILLER PASSED AWAY IN 2005. The lights on Broadway were dimmed to honor a man whose realism, mastery of the American vernacular, and accurate depictions of desperation and struggle of the middle class forever changed the face of American theatre.





ARTHUR MILLER'S LITERARY INFLUENCES

In *The Poetics*, one of the first and most important pieces of dramatic criticism, Aristotle defined six elements of drama: plot, character, theme, language, music, and spectacle. With tragedy specifically, Aristotle believed that the tragic hero or heroine should be a royal figure who experiences a downfall. The Greek tragedies, Aristotle's fodder in writing *The Poetics*, had a big influence on Arthur Miller. Miller, however, did not believe that the tragic figure must be royal; in fact, Miller wrote an essay "Tragedy and the Common Man" in which he posits that tragedy is born from an individual attempting to gain his rightful place in society. You can see the characters of *All My Sons* attempt to gain their rightful places in society as Joe works to secure success for his family, Kate struggles to hold her family together, and Chris attempts to start his own family.

HENRIK IBSEN, the father of modern realism, also had a huge influence on Miller. Ibsen's realism offered Miller characters who speak their minds and attempt to control their own destinies, a dramatic structure that allows for past issues to create drama in the present, and realism in setting and lighting. We see many of the characters in *All My Sons* attempt to take control of their own lives. Joe fights for an exoneration and then continues to deny his guilt in order to save his own name, but also to provide for and protect his family. Kate also strives to control her fate by keeping her life exactly the same as it has always been by denying Joe's guilt, refusing to believe Larry is dead, and stopping Chris and Ann's marriage. However, all of this denial of the past from Joe, Kate, and many others comes to haunt the characters as they are forced to face their choices.

IBSEN'S PLAYS often dealt with social problems: *A Doll's House* addresses women's rights, *Pillars of Society* reflects on pretension and pride, and *An Enemy of the People* deals with political hypocrisy. Miller tackles modern social issues with *All My Sons*, but also with other works including *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*. In *All My Sons* Miller takes on social responsibility, *Death of a Salesman* addresses the American Dream, and *The Crucible* is a metaphor for Joseph McCarthy's prosecution of alleged Communists.

SWDY?

ANN: "I don't write him. [...] I've never written to him. Neither has my brother."

After Ann's father is convicted of selling the Armed Forces faulty airplane parts, thereby causing the deaths of 21 pilots, Ann never writes or visits her father. Neither does her brother, George. If one of your family members were convicted of a serious crime like Mr. Deever, would you still speak to them?

ANN: "He crashed off the coast of China November twenty-fifth! His engine didn't fail him. But he died. I know..."

Larry sent Ann a letter before he went missing on November 25. However, Larry did not send a letter to his family. Therefore, Ann is the only person who knows what happened to Larry that day three years ago. Larry's mother, Kate, still clings to the idea that Larry is alive somewhere. If you knew a big secret like Ann does, would you tell someone?

JOE: "I'm in business, a man is in business; 120 cracked, you're out of business; you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business; you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts what the hell's it to them? You lay 40 years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take 40 years, let them take my life away?"

Joe had a lot to lose when he was producing airplane parts, but the pilots flying those planes had a lot to lose, too. If you had to choose between your own livelihood and the lives of others, what would you do?

CHRIS: "I'm taking him."

After discovering that Joe is guilty, Chris demands that Joe turn himself into the police. If you found one of your family members were guilty of a crime, would you turn them in?



READ MORE ABOUT IT

Want more information? Explore the following resources, picked by our friends at the St. Louis County Library.

FILMS

The Great Santini
Long Day's Journey Into Night
The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit
A Raisin in the Sun
Snow Falling on Cedars

BOOKS and EBOOKS

Abide with Me
by Elizabeth Strout
Go Set a Watchman
by Harper Lee
The Great Santini by Pat Conroy
Home by Marilynne Robinson

In the Unlikely Event
by Judy Bloom
Mudbound
by Hillary Jordan
The Story of a Marriage
by Andrew Sean Greer
While You Were Mine
by Ann Howard Creel

