

- I. Use the following university link to help you understand and analyze the play.

Studying Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*

<http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/gcse/allmysons.htm>

Read the introduction and background to the action and structure to the play.

- II. While reading take notes/annotate on each character. Use the list of adjectives to describe them.

authoritarian	(im)moral	strong
cheerful	(im)practical	strong-willed
compassionate	instinctive	taciturn
diet-conscious	kind	talkative
faithful	loving	tough
fraternal	materialistic	truthful
friendly	powerful	(un)confident
full-bodied	romantic	(un)expressive
garrulous	sarcastic	(un)happy
gregarious	self-conscious	(un)informed
heavy	self-demeaning	(un)refined
honest	sensitive	(un)restrained
idealistic	simple-minded	(un)sophisticated
ill-tempered	sociable	weak

- III. Pay careful attention to the setting. Draw it out. Identify its importance.
- IV. Take notes on the major symbols and their significant meaning and relevance.
e.g. apple tree, lightening, newspaper, horoscope, game played with Bert, polished shoes, etc.

- V. *All My Sons* is filled with numerous events which foreshadow the future.

List them and their significance.

VI. There are many significant events in this play. Consider the significance of:

- Kate's dream
- the arrival of George
- Ann's eventual disclosure of Larry's letter.

VII. While doing a close read pay attention to some of the possible themes:

Father-son relationship	The powers of ambition/greed
Atonement and forgiveness	The value of family – family loyalties
Morality vs. Immorality	Altruism vs. self
The scars of war	Duty and Responsibility
	The American Dream

Act I

1. What is the significance of the setting (time and place)?
2. Describe the family relationships in the Keller home.
3. Why is Jim such an unhappy man?
4. What is Larry's role?
5. How is Ann's presence seen by the various characters?
6. What makes Keller a successful husband, father, community member, and businessman? What does this tell us about his character?
7. How does Keller explain the airplane cylinder-head disaster, and Deever's role in it? – Tie in to universal theme.
8. Explain Chris' difficulty in being free to love or many Ann – Tie in to universal theme.
9. How has the war affected each of the characters? Tie in to universal theme.
10. What is revealed about society in small town USA?
11. Compare the relationships between Jim and Sue on one hand and Frank and Lydia on the other.
12. How does Ann's relationship with Chris develop?
13. Why are Joe Keller's speeches indicated by his name, while Kate's speeches are indicated by "Mother"?
14. What is Kate's attitude towards her missing son? What is your opinion about this attitude?
15. How doe George's visit affect the various characters?
16. What is the situation at the end of Act I?

Act II

1. How is Mother affected by George's visit?
2. How does Ann react to George's visit?
3. What are the different attitudes towards Chris?
4. How does Sue feel about the Kellers?
5. Account for the various reactions to Ann's father.
6. Why is George so bitter?
7. How does Keller feel about his old partner?
8. Tell how George exposes Keller, and with what results.
9. What is Kate's role in Act II?

10. How do Keller, Chris and George differ in attitude to family loyalties and social responsibilities?
11. What is your opinion of the stand taken by Ann and George regarding their father?
12. How is Keller's former partner shown in Act II?
13. What problems remain unsolved at the end of Act II?

Act III

1. How is Chris affected by the information of his father's guilt?
2. What is shown by the fact that Jim has always known of Keller's guilt, but kept silent?
3. What change comes over Ann, Kate, and Chris?
4. What, according to Chris, has a man got to be? How does this differ from Keller's philosophy? Connect this to a universal theme.
5. What is Jim's role in the last act?
6. With what hope does the play end?

Socratic Discussion Questions

1. In the discussion about different careers in the beginning of the play, Frank says that he once wanted to be a forester. Why do you think the playwright decided to have his character say this rather than something else like cartoonist, or English teacher, or mechanical engineer? Why is Arthur Miller's choice of "forester" significant here?
2. The tree that the storm has destroyed is an apple tree, and knowledge is an important "topic" not only at the beginning of the play but throughout the development of the plot. Why might the playwright's choice of tree be significant? That is, why do you think Arthur Miller chose an apple tree rather than a cherry tree or an oak tree? Is there a Biblical reference here?
3. Chris says to Kate, "We're like at a railroad station waiting for a train that never comes in" (21). Why is Chris's statement effective? How does it reflect the situation he believes he and his family are in? If Arthur Miller had written the play 50 years later, how might he have "modernized" the "railroad" metaphor?
4. Joe Keller plays a jail game with the young boy Bert, who tells him what's going on in the neighborhood. Why is this jail game central to the action of the play? Why do you think Joe needs to know what is happening in his own neighborhood?
5. "Keller: She'll be down soon. Wait'll you meet her, Sue, she's a knockout. Sue: I should've been a man. People are always introducing me to beautiful women" (10). In Act I, there are a number of humorous exchanges like this one between characters, some of which come with a touch of sarcasm. Why is humor important in the play? How does it help us to see the truth about the characters?
6. *All My Sons* is a play concerned with the false values in American life. Discuss.
7. Explain how *All My Sons* is a realistic play.
8. How are social responsibilities seen to conflict with family loyalties in this play?
9. Why is *All My Sons* a fitting title for this play?
10. Discuss the theme of Chris as a Christ symbol throughout the play.
11. "It's dollars and cents, nickels and dime; war and peace, it's nickel and dimes. Half the goddam country is gotta go if I go!" Give your opinion about this statement.

12. Some people feel that Chris is afflicted by some sense of guilt for having survived the war when others were killed, and having returned to the rat-race where nobody has changed. Others say that Chris' attitude to life after the war is a "phony idealism". Discuss these two opinions.
13. Can a man be a "Jesus in this world"? Answer this based on the play and a universal theme.
14. *All My Sons* is a play about the deaths that result from selling out in life. It is a passionate plea for the moral integrity of the individual and for the responsibility for the social welfare of others." Discuss.
15. Arthur Miller's intention is to show the reader that one cannot compromise with murder; one cannot buy back real respectability when one has murdered, for whatever reason. Discuss.