



# All My Sons

Arthur Miller

radium 88 <b>Ra</b> [226]	radium 88 <b>Ra</b> [226]	arsenic 33 <b>Ah</b> 74.922	arsenic 33 <b>Ah</b> 74.922	arsenic 33 <b>Ah</b> 74.922
radon 86 <b>Ro</b> [222]	molybdenum 42 <b>Ma</b> 95.94	radon 86 <b>Ro</b> [222]	molybdenum 42 <b>Ma</b> 95.94	molybdenum 42 <b>Ma</b> 95.94
gallium 31 <b>Ga</b> 69.723	gallium 31 <b>Ga</b> 69.723	oxygen 8 <b>O</b> 15.999	lanthanum 57 <b>La</b> 138.91	lanthanum 57 <b>La</b> 138.91



# Reading Act I

- Sort out who is who by making notes - one line - on each character.
- Picture the stage - sketch it or take notes.
- Identify the symbolism - what might be foreshadowed?







Tennessee Repertory Theatre, 2011





National Theatre Bucharest, 2009







# The Write Stuff 3

- What mood/atmosphere does Miller establish before the dialogue begins?
- How does he establish that mood/atmosphere?
- How does this differ from Hamlet's opening?





# Introductions

- What does the early dialogue (p 6 - 7) reveal about the characters?
  - Joe Keller
  - Jim
  - Frank



# Scene transitions

- Each time a character enters or leaves stage is a new scene.
- How many scenes are there in the first 20 pages or so?
- What changes as a result of each scene change?
- hhhhh



# Introductions 2

- What seems to be Chris's purpose in the play?
- What purposes are served by the long scene between Chris and Keller? (scene 10? - bottom p13 - top p18)
- What purpose was served by the short scene with Bert? (scene 9 - pp12-13)





# Kismet Kate - pp 18-23

- Why has she been off-stage for 14 summink pages?
- Why don't Keller and Chris shake her into reality?
- What else does Keller keep from her?
- What might prolong her hope that Larry is alive?
- Why is Chris's marriage proposal significant?
- Why does Kate undermine Keller re Bert?



# The Write Stuff 4

- What is the audience's impression of Kate and how does Miller create that impression?
- Why does Miller introduce Kate only after 14 pages of dialogue?



# The Write Stuff 5

- Describe going to the theatre to see a play.
- What makes going to the theatre different from other literary genres such as poetry, novel, short story?
- Why is drama akin to music?





# Two concerns

- Chris and Ann: convince Kate to accept Larry's death; marriage.
  - the future
- Revealing the truth about Keller.
  - the past



# End of Act I

- Read from p29a to p33b
- Analyse Keller's character in these pages. How does Miller foreshadow the upcoming revelation?
- Read Chris's speech pp35b - 36. What is Miller's purpose here?
- Why and how is the end of Act I suspenseful?



# Spoiling the story

- Autumn, 1943:** Joe allows Steve to supply the USAAF with faulty cylinder heads
- **Late autumn, 1943:** Twenty-one planes crash; Joe and Steve arrested
  - **November 25, 1943:** Larry (having read in newspaper about father) crashes plane deliberately off coast of China
  - **1944?:** Joe makes successful appeal; Steve remains in prison
  - **1945:** Chris Keller starts to write to Ann Deever
  - **August, 1947:** Ann visits Chris; George (unknown to Ann) visits Steve
  - **Saturday ? August, 1947:** Larry's memorial blown down
  - **Sunday ? August, 1947:** Opening of the play





## When you know the truth...

Chris:

*“I went to work with dad and that rat race again. I felt ... 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. I mean you can take those things out of a war, but when you drive that car, you’ve got to know that it came out of the love a man can have for a man. You’ve got to be a little better because of that. Otherwise what you really have is loot, and there’s blood on it.”*

# Act II



— — — V — — — — —

It is certain at home Mrs Peron blew  
almost the lot. (10)





Precisely calibrate a very good  
melody. (4-4)

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Sorry former copper on half the  
semester. (6,2)



# The Write Stuff 6

- How significant is Kate (Mother), especially at the junction of Acts 1 and 2?

*“Kate Keller carries the authority in the house and defines its reality.”*

*“Kate’s knowledge strips him [Keller] of any authority he once wielded.”*

*“It is her will that has sustained them and ... her desperate necessity that has infantilised them as she struggles to deny the truth, to reject causality.”*

*Christopher Bigsby, University of East Anglia*



# The Write Stuff 6

- Mother: [she nods weakly]: All right, Joe. [He straightens up.] Just ... be smart. [Keller, in hopeless fury, looks at her, turns around, goes up to porch and into house, slamming screen door violently behind him.]

*“Kate Keller carries the authority in the house and defines its reality.”*

*“Kate’s knowledge strips him [Keller] of any authority he once wielded.”*

*“It is her will that has sustained them and ... her desperate necessity that has infantilised them as she struggles to deny the truth, to reject causality.”*



# Here comes George

- The last character to go on stage. Page 51.
- Cf Inspector Birling in J B Priestly's play *An Inspector Calls*.
- How does Miller characterise George and how do the others react?
  - characters
  - audience
- At what point does the long scene with George begin to get serious?





## Act II

- Begins with trivialities and re-introduces suspense: what does George have to say?
- What is of importance before George enters (pp41 - 51)?
- Why is the dialogue on p49b significant?



# Here's George

- How does Miller manipulate tension? p51 - 71
- How does George's character develop through the rest of this act?
- How is George a foil to other characters?
- What parallels are there with *Hamlet* in the George scenes?



# How powerful is Kate?

- CHRIS *[smiling and full of command, cutting him off]*: If you want to go, I'll drive you to the station, but if you're staying, no arguments while you are here.
- MOTHER *[at last confessing the tension]*: Why should he argue? *[She goes to him and with desperation and compassion, stroking his hair.]* Georgie and us have no argument. How could we have an argument, Georgie? We all got hit by the same lightning; how can you... Did you see what happened to Larry's tree, Georgie? *[She has taken his arm and unwillingly, he moves across the stage with her.]* ...



# The end of Act II

- The confrontation between George and Keller takes some time to build. Begins p63.
- How does the power shift between George and Keller?
- What does George actually reveal to the others?
- How does Miller intensify the tension for the audience?



## Conflict in ebbs and flows - p64

- KELLER: ...You remember that.
- GEORGE: Yes but...
- KELLER: I'm just mentioning it, George. Because this is just one of a lot of things. Like when I gave Frank that money to invest in oil stock.
- GEORGE *[distressed]*: I know that, I ...
- KELLER *[driving in but restrained]* But it's good to remember those things, kid. ...





## George's realisation - p65

- KELLER: Say, I ain't got time to be sick.
- MOTHER: He hasn't been laid up in fifteen years. ...
- KELLER: Except my flu during the war.
- MOTHER: Huhh?
- KELLER: My flu, when I was sick during ... the war.
- MOTHER: Well sure ... *[to George]* I meant except for that flu. *[George stands perfectly still.]* Well it slipped my mind. Don't look at me that way. He wanted to go to the shop but he couldn't lift himself off the bed. ...



## Chris p68

- How does the power shift between the characters on this page?
- What happens to Chris here?
- What happens to Keller here?
- What happens to Mother here?



## Chris's realisation - p68

- MOTHER: Altogether! *[To CHRIS but not facing them]* Your brother's alive, darling, because if he's dead, your father killed him. Do you understand me now? As long as you live, that boy is alive. God does not let a son be killed by his father. Now you see, don't you? Now you see. *[Beyond control, she hurries up into the house.]*
- KELLER *[CHRIS has not moved. He speaks insinuatingly, questioningly]:* She's out of her mind.
- CHRIS *[a broken whisper]:* Then ... you did it?
- KELLER *[the beginning of a plea in his voice]:* He never flew a P40.
- CHRIS *[struck. Deadly]:* But the others.



# The Write Stuff 7

- You are to direct *All My Sons*.
- Choose one character in the play.
- Write instructions to the actor stating how the role is to be played. Be specific and include quoted examples and reasons for your decisions.



## Act III

- What are the most quotable lines in Act III that best illustrate Miller's purpose in the play?
- How can Larry's suicide be interpreted?





## Act III

- FRANK: The compromise is always made.
- KELLER: I'm his father and he's my son, and if there's something bigger than that, I'll put a bullet in my head!
- CHRIS: There's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it...



## Act III - a different approach

Centola, Steven, 1997. "All My Sons" in Bigsby, Christopher ed, 1997. *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.



# Steven Centola

- “Chris succeeds in convincing Keller that he has an obligation to others in society as well.”
- “The play ends with Chris facing with horror his own complicity in his father’s self-destruction.”



# Steven Centola 2

- “Chris desperately wants to escape from his [survivor’s] guilt by disguising his disgust with himself as contempt for his father.”
- “Larry’s death shows the paradox of denial. His suicide is ... a way of protesting and atoning for his father’s crime. However, by choosing to die instead of returning home to bear the shame of his father’s guilt, Larry fails to accept the responsibility of bringing his father to justice for his crime.”



# Jeffrey D Mason

- Mason, JD. (2008). Stone Tower: *The Political Theater of Arthur Miller*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.





# Jeffrey D Mason

- Keller “believes that because he acted for the benefit of his family , he can justify betraying his duty to his country’s war effort and causing the deaths of young men he never knew.”
- “Chris confronts his father to ask, ‘Don’t you live in this world?’ and so accuses him of defining his life in terms too private but he and Joe comprehend their worldwide complicity only as a version of family relations.”



# John Donne

- “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.”



# J B Priestley

- *An Inspector Calls* (1945)
- Inspector Goole's parting words:
- “One Eva Smith has gone - but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths still left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and chance of happiness, all intertwined with our lives, and what we think and say and do. We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night.” (Act 3)



# It's curtain for Keller!

- KELLER [looking at letter in his hand]: Then what is this if it isn't telling me...

# ALL MY SONS

