



# ALL MY SONS

by **ARTHUR MILLER**  
directed by **KIMBERLY SENIOR**

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## STUDY GUIDE

prepared by  
Whitney Dibo, Dramaturg

This Study Guide for *All My Sons* was prepared by Whitney Dibo and edited by Karen A. Callaway and Lara Goetsch for TimeLine Theatre, its patrons and educational outreach. Please request permission to use these materials for any subsequent production.

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# — STUDY GUIDE —

## Table of Contents

The Playwright: Arthur Miller .....	3
Miller’s Extensive Body of Work .....	4
<i>All My Sons</i> Production History .....	6
<i>The New York Times</i> Article on <i>All My Sons</i> .....	8
American Industry During World War II .....	10
Curtailing War Profits .....	12
Aircrafts Produced During World War II .....	13
The Truman Committee.....	13
Miller’s Inspiration for <i>All My Sons</i> .....	14
Other Scandals .....	15
The Drafted and the Missing of World War II .....	16
<i>Ludington Daily News</i> Article .....	17
World War II Deaths and United States Army Units .....	18
Understanding the World War II Draft .....	19
Survivor’s Guilt .....	20
Social Contract Theory.....	22
The Tragic Hero in Miller’s Work .....	24
“Tragedy and the Common Man” .....	25
The American Dream .....	28
Glossary of Terms .....	29
Discussion Questions .....	34
Sources and Suggested Reading .....	35

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## The Playwright: Arthur Miller



Born Oct. 17, 1915, to prosperous Jewish parents in New York City, Miller's early years were spent in relative luxury—his father owned the successful Miltex Coat and Suit Co., which, at its peak, boasted 800 employees. But after the stock market crash in 1929 the Millers sold their apartment overlooking Central Park and moved to Brooklyn. After graduating from high school in 1932 Miller began working as a clerk in an auto-parts warehouse on Tenth Avenue and West 63rd Street, a dingy building that later would be demolished to make way for the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

After hearing about the University of Michigan's manageable tuition (\$65 a semester) from a friend, Miller sent off an application in hopes of escaping life at the warehouse. He was rejected due to lackluster grades. In 1934, he reapplied and was granted conditional acceptance.

Originally a journalism student, Miller wrote articles for *The Michigan Daily* and used his elective credits to enroll in a playwriting class. By the time he graduated from the U. of M. in 1938 with a degree in English, Miller had been showered with the school's most prestigious writing awards, including the Avery Hopwood Award (prize \$250) for his first play, *No Villain*. He left Ann Arbor a confident playwright and became an employee of the Federal Theatre Project to finance his career.

But success after college did not come easily. Miller wrote a series of unsuccessful plays (for theater and radio), and, in 1940, he wrote his playwriting professor a letter of despair and doubt, decrying his abilities and premature success. His personal life, though, was faring better: He married Mary Grace Slattery, his college girlfriend, that same year.

In 1944, Miller's first Broadway play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, opened to disappointing reviews and closed after four performances. It was not until the opening of *All My Sons* in 1947 that Miller was catapulted onto the national scene. The play won a Tony Award for Best Authored Play, and also the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award (beating out Eugene O'Neil's *The Iceman Cometh*).

After the success of *All My Sons*, his career took an exponential turn: In 1949, *Death of a Salesman* won both the Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 1953, *The Crucible* earned Miller a third Tony Award for Best Play, despite widespread controversy over the script's "anti-Americanism."

Meanwhile, his personal life was falling apart: In 1955, for his 40th birthday, his wife kicked him out of their home because of his highly publicized affair with actress Marilyn Monroe. In 1956, Miller divorced Slattery and married Monroe, amid intense media attention and rumors of the couple's uneven intellects.

That same year Miller was questioned in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee, accused of being a Communist. He maintained his innocence but was blacklisted and held in contempt of Congress for refusing to hand over the name of a friend, supposedly a Communist. The ruling was reversed two years later.

Miller and Monroe divorced in 1961, and he married Inge Morath, an Austrian photographer. Morath died in 2002.

Miller wrote 17 plays, but his later work never achieved the same level of success as his earlier blockbusters, though *Broken Glass* (1994) did win the Tony Award for Best Play.

Miller was awarded the John F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1984 and a special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1999. He died Feb. 10, 2005, in his home in Roxbury, Conn., of congestive heart failure.

## **Miller's Extensive Body of Work**

1936 – Miller writes his first play, *No Villain*, in a playwriting class at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He wins the prestigious Avery Hopwood Award for excellence in writing.

1938-1944 – Miller joins the Federal Theatre Project and begins to write radio plays, some of which are broadcast on CBS.

1944 – *The Man Who Had All the Luck* opens on Broadway to disappointing reviews and closes after only four performances.

1945 – Miller writes *Focus*, a novel about an anti-Semite who is mistaken for a Jew.

1947 – *All My Sons* (directed by Elia Kazan) premieres on Broadway to rave reviews.

1949 – The opening of *Death of a Salesman* solidifies Miller's place in the American theatrical and literary canons.

1949 – Miller publishes his famed essay *The Tragedy of the Common Man* in the New York Times.

1950 – Miller adapts Henrik Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*, another play that confronts themes of communal and social responsibility.

1953 – *The Crucible* opens on Broadway, sparking governmental suspicion about Miller’s “un-American” lifestyle.

1955 – *A View from the Bridge* opens on Broadway, introducing audiences to yet another tragic Miller character. Eddie Carbone.

1961 – Miller writes the screenplay for *The Misfits*, based on his short story. The movie stars Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe, Miller’s wife.

1967 – Miller publishes *I Don’t Need You Anymore*, a collection of short stories.

1968 – *The Price* opens on Broadway; it is a play that boldly confronts themes of materialism and class.

1969 – Miller publishes *In Russia* with photographer wife Inge Morath, detailing their impressions of Russian culture during The Cold War.

1970 – Miller writes *Fame*, a television play about a playwright troubled by his success.

1972 – *The Creation of the World and Other Business*, a play inspired by the book of Genesis, is considered Miller’s first commercial failure since *The Man Who Had All the Luck* in 1944.

1977 – With his wife, Miller publishes *In the Country*,. The book is a series of photographs by Morath with text written by Miller on their life in Roxbury, Conn.

1980 – *The American Clock* opens on Broadway, featuring characters loosely based on Miller’s family.

1984 – Miller publishes ‘*Salesman*’ in *Beijing*, detailing the insights and challenges of directing a decidedly American play in a foreign country.

1987 – Miller publishes his autobiography, *Timebends: A Life*

1990 – Miller writes the screenplay for a detective film entitled *Everybody Wins*. The film receives dreadful reviews, but Miller’s reputation remains untarnished.

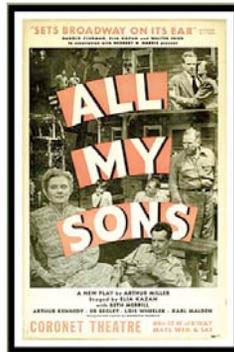
1994 – *Broken Glass*, a play based on the Jewish pogrom in Nazi Germany, premieres at the Long Wharf Theatre in Connecticut; it later wins a Tony Award for Best Play.

1996 – Miller writes the screenplay for *The Crucible*.

2002 – *Resurrection Blues*, Miller's biting comedy about religious dogma, premieres at The Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis.

2004 – Miller's final play, *Finishing the Picture*, premieres at the Goodman Theatre just months before his death. The play is a dramatization of his time shooting the movie *The Misfits*, with then-wife Marilyn Monroe.

## ***All My Sons* Production History**



*All My Sons* opened on Broadway at the Coronet Theatre in New York City Jan. 29, 1947, and closed Nov. 8, 1947. The show, which starred Ed Begley, Beth Miller, Arthur Kennedy, and Karl Malden, ran for 328 performances. It was directed by Elia Kazan (to whom it is dedicated). It won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, beating Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*. 1947 also was the year that the Tony Awards were established, and the play won the first awards for Author and Director.

### **Other Notable Productions**

1987 – A major Broadway revival with Richard Kiley (Joe Keller), Joyce Ebert (Kate Keller) and Jamey Sheridan (Chris Keller) wins a Tony for Best Revival. In addition, Kiley is nominated in the Actor (Play) category and Sheridan is nominated in the Actor (Featured Role – Play) category.

1997 – The Roundabout mounts a 50th Anniversary production, starring John Cullum as Joe Keller and directed by Barry Edelstein.

2002 – The Guthrie Theatre's production is directed by Artistic Director Joe Dowling

2008 – The latest Broadway revival features John Lithgow (Joe), Dianne Wiest (Kate), Patrick Wilson (Chris) and Katie Holmes (Ann Deever).

## Film, Radio and TV Adaptations



The first film adaptation of *All My Sons* came in 1948. The major roles were played by Edward G. Robinson (Joe Keller), Burt Lancaster (Chris Keller), Mady Christians (Kate Keller) and Louisa Horton (Ann Deever). This version was directed by Irving Reis and gained two award nominations, Best Written American Drama and The Robert Meltzer Award for Chester Erskine, the film's co-writer.

In 1950, Lux Radio Theater broadcast a radio play of *All My Sons* with Burt Lancaster as Joe Keller. It was adapted for the radio by S. H. Barnett, and, in an interesting twist deviating from Miller's original script, featured the character of Steve Deever in a speaking role.

In 1958 the play was adapted for television by Stanley Mann and directed by Cliff Owen. This production starred Albert Dekker (Joe Keller), Megs Jenkins (Kate Keller), Patrick McGoohan (Chris Keller) and Betta St. John (Ann Deever).

The second film adaptation was a made-for-TV movie, released in 1986. This version is much truer to Miller's original play than the 1948 film. The main roles were played by James Whitmore (Joe Keller), Michael Learned (Kate Keller), Aidan Quinn (Chris Keller) and Steppenwolf Theatre's Joan Allen (Ann Deever).

### ***All My Sons* Encounters Censorship**

In 1947, plans to stage *All My Sons* abroad were met with opposition over its potentially negative depiction of U.S. culture. The Civil Affairs Division of the American Military refused to issue a license for a production of the play in occupied Europe.

## *The New York Times Article on All My Sons*

*February 23, 1947*

**Mr. Miller Has a Change of Luck**

By JOHN K. HUTCHENS

It was a couple of years ago that Arthur Miller fell to talking with a Midwestern lady who told him of a war profiteer whose daughter, though she loved her father, exposed him and then ran away from home.

“Where,” the lady asked Mr. Miller only a couple of minutes later, “do you get ideas for plays and stories?”

“I just pick them up,” said Mr. Miller, “here and there.”

He had, of course, just picked up the basic idea for “All My Sons,” which came to town the other night, met with more hosannas than hoots, and has settled down to what promises to be a happy life on the very boards where Mr. Miller’s first Broadway play, “The Man Who Had All the Luck,” perished of fiscal anemia two seasons ago.

His new drama’s journey from that casual conversation to the footlights was, naturally, less simple than it sounds, else the paid-up membership of the Dramatists’ Guild would be translating stray comments into gold on every corner of the Main Stem, and blocking traffic. On the contrary, Mr. Miller—rendered wary by his previous brush with the footlights—spent two years, off and on, polishing his second Times Square entry; grew discouraged to the point of almost abandoning it two months before he finished; revised and rewrote so extensively that, while the manuscript of his play runs to the customary 110 pages, he has 700 other pages at home of trial heats and exploratory drafts.

But when he completed it he had something in which he frankly believes. For Mr. Miller, a lanky, easy talking man who stands something over six feet and possesses an engaging candor, believes in himself, in his play and in the theatre, though he is perfectly aware that the latter is a capricious business—“a sort of floating crap game”—in which the artist succeeds or fails according to the first impression his play makes on a relatively few people. He doesn’t care for that uncertainty.

“Along with this success,” he said gravely, “there is the terrible realization that it might have been otherwise. This was going to be my last play if it didn’t go.”

However, that basic idea of “All My Sons” always did feel right to Mr. Miller, who reasoned that if the incident suggesting it could take place in the isolationist Midwest its appeal might be general. He was inclined to be sure of it when he read the play to “five tough ex-GIs” who “were bowled over,” and he was even more certain when, at the tryout in New Haven, it met the approval of former soldiers now at Yale under the GI Bill of Rights.

“According to the manager of the theatre up there,” said Mr. Miller with justifiable pride, “it got the biggest ovation the house had heard since ‘The Copperhead.’ ”

But what pleases him most is that the play’s reception, including the mail he has received, bears out another notion he had had for some time—i.e., that the men coming back from this war would not be bitter cynics their forebears were after World War I. He has felt this since he visited seventeen training camps and talked with thousands of men and women to get “atmosphere” for the film “The Story of GI Joe.”

“They’re grateful I’m not a wise guy,” said Mr. Miller. “They write that the play is about ‘the things we feel but don’t say for fear of being laughed at.’ He is happy about this because he is ‘an idealistic man’ himself. Even if he does frequently feel older than his thirty-one years.

Those thirty-one years began, for him, in uptown Manhattan, where he lived until he was 13, removing then to Brooklyn, where he went to Abraham Lincoln High School and proceeded in due course to the University of Michigan. He went to Michigan because he heard they gave a lot of literary prizes there, and, sure enough, he walked off with two of them—a pair of Avery Hopwood drama awards—in addition to a \$1,250 Theatre Guild prize. He must have been as startled as anyone, because up to that point he had seen only one stage play in his life and had read only a few and, before sitting down to write his first drama, in all innocence he asked a classmate how long an act was supposed to run.

However, said Mr. Miller, you will never see any of these plays on Broadway, nor a comedy he wrote for the Federal Theatre Project. A fellow of easier artistic conscience might be tempted to take these out of the trunk and touch them up a little, but not Mr. Miller, because “I don’t believe in going back. I figure I’ve only got so many years to live.”

Heaven and the box office willing, he will not go back to radio writing either. He did a spell of it for the Columbia Workshop and other programs and became so adept that he could pound out a half-hour show in eight hours from scratch. “I despise radio,” said Mr. Miller flatly. “Every emotion in a radio script has to have a tag. It’s like playing a scene in a dark closet.” He winced a bit at the thought of it.

But a novel is something else again. It was a novel, “Focus,” which in 1945 established him as a writer of parts—an angry tale of bigotry and the makings of fascism in our midst, which achieved 90,000 copies. He will write another, an idea for which he is now weighing, though he might try the idea as a play. The choice does not bother him. Both forms—the theatre and the novel—satisfy him because they are free mediums for a writer who wants to speak his mind.

The theatre he especially likes, despite the fleeting life even of its better exhibits, despite the fact that “you have to be a little crazy to go on in it.” Among his favorite modern American plays are Sidney Howard’s “The Silver Cord” and Eugene

O'Neill's "Anna Christie"—which, he said, "will give you an idea of the kind of theatre I believe in." He doesn't go to the theatre often, and he is apt to attend a failure as a success, hoping to learn something therefrom.

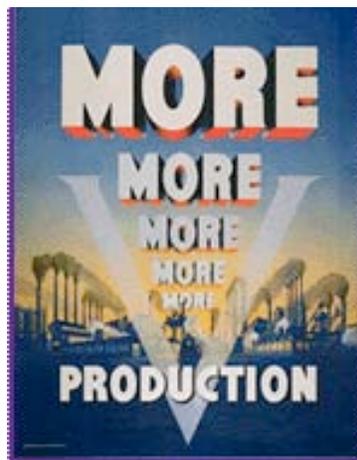
Among the instructive failures was his own "The Man Who Had All the Luck."

"They came down on me like a ton of bricks for that one," he said. "It was faulty, all right. It couldn't have succeeded, because it was not a resolved play."

But, as noted, he doesn't believe in looking back. He still lives in Brooklyn, in an old brownstone house; and, talking with him, you get a definite idea that he is a young man on his way.

"It will take about a year to write another," he said.

## American Industry During World War II



The American home front during World War II is essentially a lesson in basic economics: As demand for war materiel skyrocketed, supply congruously followed suit—fueled by a workforce that had previously seen unemployment figures to the tune of 24.9 percent just eight years earlier. In the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Dr. New Deal was replaced by Dr. Win the War."

The aircraft industry is prime example of this surge in national production: In May 1940, during the same week The Netherlands' government surrendered to German forces and France was buckling under the threat of invasion, President Roosevelt went before Congress and requested an exponential increase in aircraft production. Just 18 months earlier Roosevelt had asked that 3,000 additional aircrafts be produced on the government's dime. This time, he asked Congress to authorize funding for 50,000 new warplanes.

The numbers are staggering. In 1939, 2,141 aircrafts were built in the United States. Just five years later, the aircraft industry reached its production peak at

96,318 aircrafts in a single year, more than the USSR and Britain's aircraft production combined. No amount of government-sponsored social programs could have instigated an economic surge of this magnitude. Yet the irony remained that, while businessmen like Joe Keller prospered with the advent of government war contracts, hundreds of thousands of young American men were perishing on the European and Pacific fronts. It was a dichotomy that was unconscionable and unavoidable, given the desperate need for materiel and the inevitable profits that materiel produced.

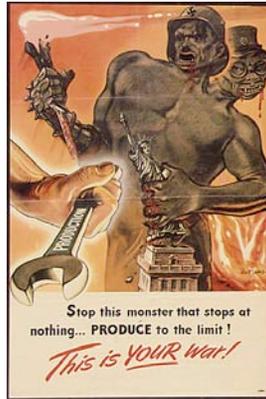
By the end of the war, the U.S. had produced 88,410 tanks, 257,390 artillery weapons, 2,679,840 machine guns, 2,382,311 military trucks and 324,750 warplanes. The United States Steel Corp. made 31.4 million kegs of nails, and enough steel fencing to stretch from New York City to San Francisco. Spending on military preparedness reached a stunning \$75 million a day by December 1941, and, by 1944, war profits after taxes reached \$10.8 billion.

Not only were factories asked to churn out materiel at this alarming rate—and it was considered the ultimate patriotic duty to do so—most also were switching from the products they'd previously produced and knew well (air conditioners, washer/dryers, etc.) to complex tank and aircraft parts.

The automobile industry, for example, produced roughly 3 million cars in 1941. In the years following Pearl Harbor, fewer than 400 new vehicles were manufactured as factories were retooled to produce tanks, aircrafts and military trucks. The demand was so high that pilots were known to sleep on cots outside the major plants, waiting to fly the planes away as they came off the production lines.

There is, however, an important distinction between a family-run business like Joe Keller's and mega-corporations like U.S. Steel and General Motors. Given their massive production capabilities, government contracts disproportionately favored these large corporations: Ten companies received 30 percent of the total \$240 billion spent on defense contracts during the war.

## Curtailing War Profits



The United States' government was acutely aware of the massive demands it was making on American industry. As early as 1940 the government already had doled out \$10 billion in defense contracts. President Roosevelt, a staunch opponent of war profiteering, was caught between the nation's critical need for materiel and his aversion to the acquisition of extreme wealth in wartime. "The American people will not relish the idea of any American citizen growing rich and fat in an emergency of blood and slaughter and human suffering," he said in 1938.

The initial tactic employed to simultaneously restrain war profits and garner much-needed federal revenue was the Excess Profits Tax, which is levied on companies flourishing during a war. Anything above a 10 percent return of invested capital would be considered excess profit attributed to the war effort and therefore subject to increased taxation (up to 90 percent in 1942). Though morally sound, it is ironic that the tax seemed to reward inefficiency and discourage mass production at a time when the country most needed efficiency and increased production.

Despite pressure from his government to compromise with big business, FDR was still committed to his moral instinct that companies should not rake in cash while soldiers gave their lives across the ocean. There had to be some way to legalize profiteering, or at least ensure that no company was succeeding in spite of inefficiency, mismanagement or internal corruption. If the government could not directly control war profits, the least it could do was make certain that the prospering companies were clean, honorable businesses that were just as venerable as the soldiers to whom they supplied materiel.

## Aircrafts Produced During World War II

Country	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	9145	TOTAL
United States	2,141	6,086	19,433	47,836	85,898	96,318	46,001	303,713
Germany	8,295	10,826	12,401	15,409	24,807	40,593	7,540	119,871
USSR	10,382	10,565	15,735	25,436	34,900	40,300	20,900	158,218
UK	7,940	15,049	20,094	23,672	26,263	26,461	12,070	131,549
Japan	4,467	4,768	5,088	8,861	16,693	28,180	8,263	76,320
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,225</b>	<b>47,294</b>	<b>73,751</b>	<b>121,214</b>	<b>188,561</b>	<b>231,852</b>	<b>94,774</b>	<b>789,671</b>

## The Truman Committee



The Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program (nicknamed The Truman Committee in honor of its no-nonsense chairman, Harry S. Truman) is a study in governmental efficiency and productivity. Its aim was not so much to sniff out war profiteers as it was to uncover incompetence, waste and corruption in war-contracted businesses. Truman believed the war effort was essentially being strangled by America's inability to produce materiel on a large scale, that the Axis powers would only be defeated by an overwhelming arsenal of ships in the water, tanks on the ground and planes in the air.

In 1941, Truman and his team embarked on a legendary road trip, traveling more than 10,000 miles to visit military bases, plants, small-town factories and corporation headquarters, with the aim of stamping out bad business and perfecting the American war machine. Between the years of 1941 and 1948, the Truman Committee called almost 1,800 witnesses to hundreds of hearings and issued more than 50 reports. The committee's findings indicted hundreds of companies and

undoubtedly saved the lives of thousands of soldiers who might have otherwise perished from defective materiel—as well as millions of taxpayer dollars.

The committee was hailed as a grand success and its chairman universally praised for his determination and meticulous management skills. The committee catapulted Truman, then a Missouri senator (D), to political stardom and primed him for his future role as president.

### **Miller's Inspiration for *All My Sons***

“Everybody knew a lot of illicit fortunes were being made, a lot of junk was being sold to the armed services, we all knew that. All the rules were being violated every day, but you didn't want to mention it.” — *Arthur Miller*

In 1944, Arthur Miller's then mother-in-law offhandedly mentioned an article she had read in an Ohio newspaper about a war profiteer whose daughter had turned him into federal officials for selling faulty machinery to the Army before running away from home. “By the time she had finished the tale, I had transformed the daughter into a son and the climax of the second act was full and clear in my mind,” Miller wrote in the 1957 introduction to his latest play collection.

As the legend goes, a few minutes later his mother-in-law asked her playwright son-in-law where he usually got the ideas for his stories. “I just pick them up,” he replied, “here and there.” In an interview with BBC-TV a half-century later, Miller said the young woman in the story became a man simply because “I didn't know much about girls then.”

While the specific case to which Miller's mother-in-law was referring is in question, there were numerous companies indicted by the Truman Committee that could have sparked the story. The most highly publicized was the indictment of Wright Aeronautical Corp. in Lockland, Ohio, a subsidiary of the giant Curtiss-Wright Corp. In 1943, the plant, which produced airplane engines, was accused of manufacturing leaky, defective engines, falsifying inspections and destroying records to cover up its wrongdoing. Until the scandal, Curtiss-Wright had been among the most prosperous companies of the wartime era, boasting the second highest number of government war contracts in the country. Accused of overstating the corruption at the Lockland plant, Truman responded, “The facts are that they were turning out phony engines and I have no doubt a lot of kids in training planes have been killed as a result.”

## Other Scandals

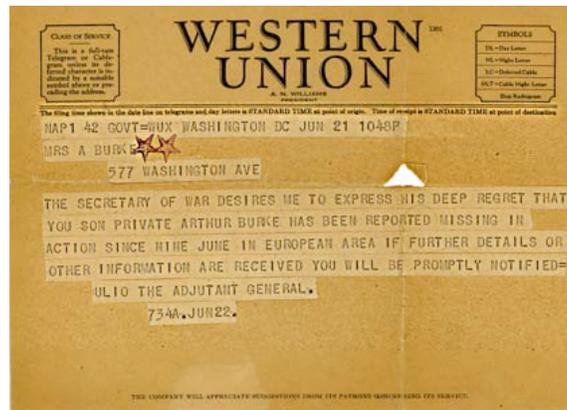


On Jan. 17, 1943—more than a year after Pearl Harbor—the S.S. Schenectady snapped in two and sank off the West Coast, only a few hours after it had been delivered to the Maritime Commission. The American Bureau of Shipping reported the sinking was due to the steel plate on the ship, which was “brittle” and “more like cast iron than steel.” The Truman Committee took over the case and at a hearing on March 23, 1943, the truth came out: The defective steel had been supplied by the Carnegie-Illinois Corp., a subsidiary of U.S. Steel, whose officials had willfully and consciously delivered faulty material to the Navy, Maritime Commission and Lend-Lease Administration and had falsified the steel test records to cover their tracks.

Testimony before the committee showed that the faking of tests had covered at least 28,000 tons of substandard plate; that minor officials and employees who had complained to their superiors about the faking of tests had had their “ears pinned back”; that high corporation officials “instead of cooperating (with the Truman Committee) ... attempted to delay and obstruct the investigation.” U.S. Steel officials naturally “deplored” the situation, and tried to put the blame on “a few individuals” with good intentions who had grown “lax.” This alibi, however, was decisively rejected by a federal grand jury in Pittsburgh in May, which refused to indict four individual employees offered as scapegoats and indicted the Carnegie-Illinois Corp. itself.

Another company nabbed by the committee was Anaconda Wire and Cable Co., whose Marion, Ind., plant (financed by the government) was indicted Dec. 21, 1942, for conspiring to sell the government defective communication and other combat wire, although its officials “well knew at all times” that use of such wire would “endanger the lives of men in the military service of the USA.”

## The Drafted and the Missing of World War II



In 1939, the United States Army had fewer than 200,000 men in uniform who could be sent overseas with proper training. As the threat of war loomed larger, Congress realized they could not rely on volunteers to build a competitive army. So in September 1940, President Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peacetime draft in the country's history. The law required all men ages 21-35 to hand over their personal information to local draft boards, thereby submitting themselves to the national draft lottery. That age bracket would later be expanded to men ages 18-45 after the United States officially entered the war. 6,443 draft boards were promptly set up around the country. Families waited with bated breath for Secretary of War Henry Stimson to reach into the lottery "war bowl" and pick out a capsule that would contain a single slip of paper with a number 1 through 7,836 printed on it. The first number drawn on Oct. 29, 1940, was 158; it was held by 6,175 young men across the country.

By the war's end, more than 35 million men had registered with the Army, 10 million of whom were drafted. While the American death toll from World War II hovers just above one million, almost 75,000 soldiers remain Missing in Action, the highest number from any American war. Roughly 20,000 of these MIA soldiers were men who served in the U.S. Army Air Forces, whose planes crashed in inaccessible mountainous regions or into foreign waters.

## Ludington Daily News Article

July 12, 1943:

### Sweeping Report of U. S. Military Aviation Passed on to Department of Justice

WASHINGTON —(P)— The Truman committee turned today from its sweeping review of military aviation to two particular problems: The reduction of military plane crashes and the guaranteeing that American planes have postwar landing rights on fields built abroad with United States funds.

Chairman Truman (D-Mo) and other members of the Senate group investigating the war program said a report would be forthcoming on plane crashes because "the committee is concerned about the large number of such casualties, particularly in non-combat operational flights in this country."

Two other members of the

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# EASTERN KENTUCKY TOWN GOES BERSERK

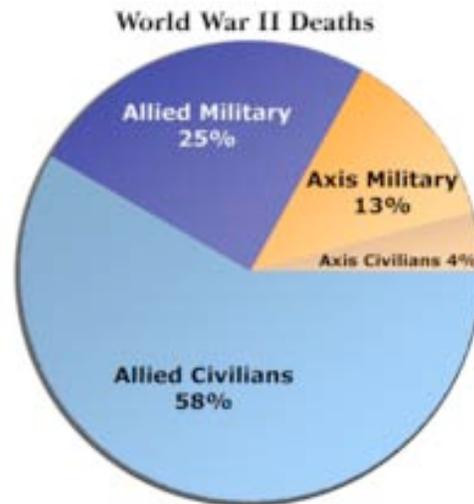
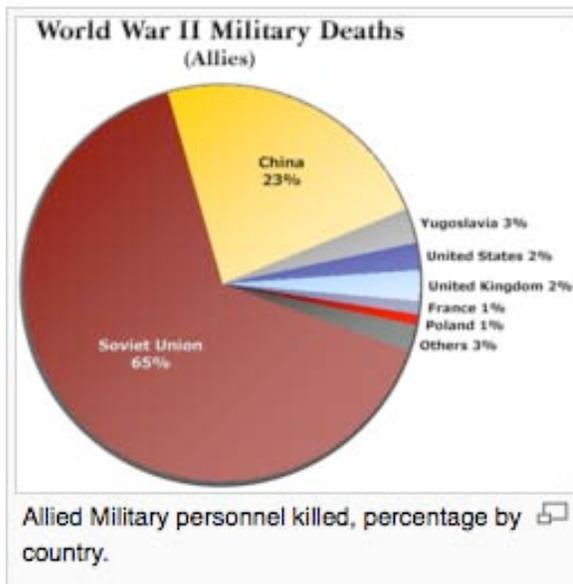
committee, Senators Mead (D-NY) and Brewster (R-Me), who will accompany three other senators on an aerial tour of world battlefronts this summer, have been instructed to investigate reports that hundreds of airports built on foreign soil with American money will be turned over to the countries where they are situated six months after the war.

Mead and Brewster will look into terms of the contracts covering construction of the military airports.

Meanwhile it was learned that the committee has turned over to the justice department the evidence on which it based its sensational overall report of the aviation industry. The committee's report charged that the Wright Aeronautical corporation at Lockland, Ohio, delivered "defective and sub-standard" airplane engines to the Army and Navy for use in combat craft.

G. W. Vaughan, president of Curtiss-Wright corporation of which Wright Aeronautical is a wholly owned subsidiary promptly labeled the committee's charges "false and unwarranted."

## World War II Deaths and United States Army Units



Unit Name	Consists of [1]:	Approx Number of men:	Commanded by:
<b>Army</b>	2 or more Corps	100,000 to 150,000	Field Marshal or General
<b>Corps</b>	2 or more Divisions	25,000 to 50,000	General or Lt. Gen.
<b>Division</b>	3 or more Brigades or Regiments	10,000 to 15,000	Lt. Gen or Maj. Gen.
<b>Brigade</b>	3 or more Battalions	1500 to 3500	Maj. Gen, Brigadier or Col.
<b>Regiment</b> [2]	2 or more Battalions	1000 to 2000	Col.
<b>Battalion</b>	4 or more Companies	400 to 1000	Lt. Col.
<b>Company</b>	2 or more Platoons	100 to 250	Captain or Maj
<b>Platoon (Troop)</b>	2 or more Squads	16 to 50	1st Lt.
<b>Squad</b>	2 or more Sections	8 to 24	Sgt.
<b>Section</b>		4 to 12	Sgt.

# Understanding the World War II Draft

## Your Number's Up!

By Carl Zebrowski

*Carl Zebrowski is the managing editor of America in WWII magazine. This article originally appeared in the magazine's December 2007 issue.*

Germany was a military juggernaut in 1940. The United States was not. America had been victorious in its wars leading up to World War II, but now its military barely ranked in the world's top 20. It had less than 200,000 men in uniform, and some of them were wearing doughboy helmets from World War I and carrying guns that dated back almost to the turn-of-the-century Spanish American War.

As it became clear that it was merely a matter of time, and not much of it, before the United States was forced to enter World War II, something had to change fast. Those "I Want You" posters with the finger-pointing Uncle Sam were pretty persuasive, but there was no way enough volunteers were going to enlist to build a military strong enough to challenge Germany and Japan. So in September 1940 Congress passed the Burke-Wadsworth Act to initiate a military draft, the first peacetime draft in American history. Young men ages 21 through 36 were required to register for the possibility of 12-month terms of service in the Western Hemisphere or in US territories or possessions. Some 20 million men had to register right away.

To process the registrations and administer the draft, local draft boards were set up from coast to coast. Each of the 6,443 boards assigned each of the registrants in its district a number, then a national lottery was held to rank the registrants. In Washington, papers with the numbers 1 through 7,836 printed on them were put into capsules, one number to a capsule. The capsules were dumped into a giant fishbowl that had been used for the same purpose in the WWI draft. The capsules were then stirred with a wooden spoon fashioned from part of a beam from Philadelphia's Independence Hall. Finally the capsules were drawn from the bowl one by one to establish the draft order. In a predictable photo opportunity staged on lottery day, October 29, 1940, a blindfolded Secretary of War Henry Stimson reached into the bowl and pulled out the first capsule. From a nearby podium, President Franklin Roosevelt announced the number drawn: 158. Across the country, 6,175 young men held that number.

All the men holding number 158 were brought in first by their local draft boards to be considered for service. Men holding the numbers that followed in the lottery were brought in until the services had their fill. All the men whose numbers were up received an "order to report for induction" from their local draft board. The letter named the branch of service the man was being called to and gave the date, time, and place where paperwork would be filled out and examinations given. A man had to be at least five feet tall and no taller than six and a half, be at least 105 pounds,

have vision correctable with glasses, have at least half his teeth, not have been convicted of a crime, and be able to read and write.

There were several reasons a man might be sent home. Men who didn't pass the medical examination were classified 4-F, physically unfit for service. Black men were passed over initially due to prejudiced questions about their ability to fight and worries that tensions between black and white servicemen might erupt. Men in certain occupations deemed essential to the war effort were excused so they could continue to do their work. And men with friends on their local draft board sometimes slipped through cracks.

The inductees who passed all the scrutiny were taken into the service right away. As the induction letter for 1941 stated, "Bring with you sufficient clothing for three days." It may have felt like being hauled off to jail without the opportunity for bail. The next stop was a stateside military installation and then, for most, shipping off to Europe, Africa, or the Pacific.

Drafting continued through the war, though a lot changed after that first round in 1940. Among the obvious changes were the expansion of the age range to include men from 18 to 37, the elimination of restrictions on where in the world a man could be sent, the growth of the enlistment term to the duration of the war plus six months, and a growing tendency to overlook physical shortcomings. By war's end some 35 million men had registered and 10 million were drafted. The draft had produced a military that could not only stand up to Germany and Japan, but could decisively defeat them.

## Survivor's Guilt



To a certain degree, Chris Keller suffers from what would later be diagnosed as "Survivor's Guilt," a psychological term originally coined in the 1960s to describe survivors of the Holocaust who felt they weren't entitled to happiness or wealth after the trauma of the concentration camps. The arbitrary nature of war—the

sheer incomprehensibility of why certain people die and others live—provides an unstable entry point back into society of most survivors.

In his introduction to *All My Sons*, British scholar Christopher Bigsby writes, “Chris feels guilty about his new happiness. In the war he led his men to their death. He is a survivor who feels the guilt of the survivor, a theme that Miller would return to in *After the Fall* (1964). Beyond that, he can see no connection between the sacrifices of war and the way of life it was supposedly fought to preserve.”

Robert Jay Lifton, a psychiatrist who studied psychological disorders in WWII veterans, described Survivor’s Guilt this way: “It is the soldier-survivor sense of having betrayed his buddies by letting them die while he stayed alive—at the same time feeling relieved and even joyous that it was *he* who survived ... his pleasure in surviving becoming a further source of guilt. Essentially, the survivor is plagued by the question: how I can be thankful and guilty at the same time?” This syndrome is only accentuated in Chris’s case, as it was his brother who died in addition to his entire company. When we meet Chris at the beginning of Act I, he is making his first move since the war toward owning his much-tainted happiness—by asking Annie to visit.

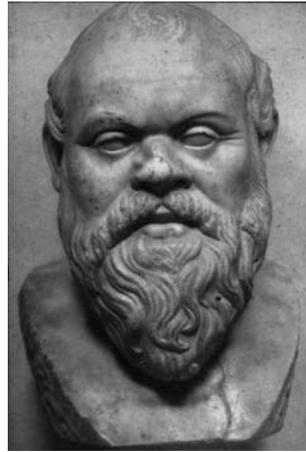
### **Survivor’s Guild in Literature and History**

In Kurt Vonnegut’s 1987 novel *Bluebeard*, the protagonist Rabo Karabekian’s father has survivor syndrome after witnessing the Armenian genocide. Ironically, he only witnessed a small part of the event; simply hiding in an outhouse and then coming back to a deserted village after the massacre.

Waylon Jennings, a guitarist for Buddy Holly’s band, had a seat on the plane chartered to take Holly and some of the performers to their next concert. But he gave up his seat to the sick J. P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson. The plane crashed Feb. 3, 1959, killing Richardson, Holly, Richie Valens and the pilot, Roger Peterson. When Holly found out Jennings wasn’t going with him, he joked, “Well, I hope your old bus freezes up.” Jennings’ response was, “Well, I hope your plane crashes.” His banter with Holly would haunt Jennings for years.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Rick Rescorla, chief security administrator of Morgan Stanley at the World Trade Center, is said to have acted upon survivor’s guilt as a result of traumatic experiences during the Vietnam War. He saved most of Morgan Stanley’s 2,700 employees and countless others before heading back into Tower 2 of the WTC shortly before it collapsed.

## Social Contract Theory



In *Crito*, an early Platonic dialogue, Socrates declines to escape and opts to accept his pending death sentence, the reason being that he is socially obligated to do so. Socrates argues that he is the product of the laws of Athens and owes his education, citizenship and life to the order and civility of Greek society. One of the tenets of the society in which he had chosen to live is that criminals must be punished. Socrates ultimately was unwilling to step outside that social contract, even to save his life.

This idea of a social contract is at the center of *All My Sons*. “The concept behind it was that Joe Keller was both responsible for and part of a great web of meaning, of being,” Miller said in 1999, “And a person who violates it in the way he did has done more than kill a few men. He has killed the possibility of a society having any future, any life. He has destroyed the life-force in that society.”

Helen Fein, a sociologist and historian who speaks frequently on the topic of modern genocide, coined the phrase “universe of obligation,” which she has defined as “the limits of the common conscience; those whom we are obligated to protect, to take into account, and to whom we must account.”

Her phrase is a derivative of the centuries-old Social Contract Theory, the idea that by living within a civilized, functioning society, we inherently subscribe to certain moral obligations and rules that, if broken, will shatter the very foundation on which the society is built.

In *All My Sons*, Joe and Chris Keller operate under different assumptions when it comes to their respective universes of obligation and who falls inside and outside the sphere of their social contract.

John Donne espouses the same idea in his famed poem *No Man is an Island*: “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.” Donne’s poetic rendering of the Social Contract Theory has become known as the Concept of Human Solidarity.

**“No Man is an Island”**  
**By 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.*

**Social Contract Theory in *All My Sons***

“Joe Keller’s crime is that he has sent defective cylinder heads for use in aircraft engines, he has committed perjury, and has allowed others to bear responsibility rather than accept the consequences of his own actions. But this is not primarily a play about a crime. It’s about a man’s failure to understand the terms of the social contract. In Miller’s wartime play *The Half-Bridge*, never produced, the ultimate crime, in a drama about espionage and blackmail, is not those breaches of criminal law but the removal of buoys which mark safe passage through ocean waters. Remove such buoys, both literal and symbolic, and there is no longer a common world from which we may derive either personal identity or social meaning. This is what is at stake in *All My Sons*.” —*Christopher Bigsby’s introduction to “All My Sons”*

“Joe Keller’s trouble, in a word, is not that he cannot tell right from wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally, has any viable connection with his world, his universe, or his society. He is not a partner in society, but an incorporated member, so to speak, and you cannot sue personally the officers of a corporation. I hasten to make clear here that I am not merely speaking of a literal corporation but the concept of a man’s becoming a function of production or distribution to the point where his personality becomes divorced from the action it propels.

“This fortress which *All My Sons* lays siege to is the fortress of unrelatedness. It is an assertion not so much of a morality in terms of right and wrong, but of a moral world’s being such because men cannot walk away from certain of their deeds. In this sense Joe Keller is a threat to society and in this sense the play is a social play. Its ‘socialness’ does not reside in its having dealt with the crime of selling defective materials to a nation at war—the same crime could easily be the basis of a thriller which would have no place in social dramaturgy. It is that the crime is seen as having roots in a certain relationship of the individual to society, and to a certain indoctrination he embodies, which, if dominant, can mean a jungle existence for all of us no matter how high our buildings soar.”

—*From Arthur’s Miller’s introduction to “Arthur Miller’s Collected Plays, 1957”*

“The concept behind it was that Joe Keller was both responsible for and part of a great web of meaning, of being. He had torn that web; he had ripped apart the structure that supports life and society... . That web of meaning, of existence. And a person who violates it in the way he did has done more than kill a few men. He has killed the possibility of a society having any future, any life. He has destroyed the life-force in that society.” —*Arthur Miller, 1999*

## The Tragic Hero in Miller’s Work

“I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his ‘rightful’ position in his society.” —*Arthur Miller*

The Greek overtones in Miller’s work have been the subject of countless high school English essays and graduate dissertations. Whether it is Joe Keller in *All My Sons* Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* or Eddie Carbone in *A View from the Bridge*, Miller’s uncompromising exploration of human mistake and regret is at the core of his literary genius. These men, though unforgivable in their sins and failures, are as sympathetic as they are flawed.

In the Greek tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides (and later in those of Shakespeare), the tragic hero is marked by a fatal flaw (usually hubris, or arrogance), which compels him to commit a grave and irrevocable error. The hero then descends into a journey marked by denial, suffering and isolation, only after which does he realize that death is the only possible course. Only with the tragic hero gone can moral order be restored, and with that death also comes freedom for all other entangled characters.

However, drawing parallels between Miller’s two most famous protagonists, Willy Loman and Joe Keller, is tricky business. Joe Keller is a pillar among men—beloved by the town in which he lives, the boss of a powerful business, a success by all measurable accounts. This is no Willy Loman, accustomed to failure and rejection. Though both men follow a similar trajectory and certainly share a similar end, Keller is more similar to the kings of Greek tragedy than his weak literary counterpart.

### **Other famous tragic heroes:**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| * Antigone    | * Brutus                                    |
| * Othello     | * Doctor Faustus                            |
| * King Lear   | * Frederic Henry, <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> |
| * Oedipus     | * Okonkwo, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>         |
| * Hamlet      | * Joe Christmas, <i>A Light in August</i>   |
| * Richard III | * Captain Ahab, <i>Moby Dick</i>            |

“*All My Sons* contains elements of Greek tragedy not only in its retroactive structures but also in a story that at times evokes Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* and Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. Joe Keller can be viewed as a king whose hands are stained with a son’s blood, and Kate Keller as a Queen who is suspended between shielding her husband and destroying him for love of a son. ... The Oedipal theme is carried further in Chris’s behavior toward his parents and the terrifying mix of love, protection and vengeance in Mrs. Keller. Likewise Ann, George and their absent father might be viewed as the opposite of the Kellers, an ill-used and wrongfully deposed royal family of three; in their own way they are similar to Ophelia, Laertes and Polonius of *Hamlet*, another play with Greek overtones.”

— “*Arthur Miller: His Life and Work*,” by Martin Gottfried

## “Tragedy and the Common Man”

*1949, The New York Times*

An Essay by Arthur Miller

In this age few tragedies are written. It has often been held that the lack is due to a paucity of heroes among us, or else that modern man has had the blood drawn out of his organs of belief by the skepticism of science, and the heroic attack on life cannot feed on an attitude of reserve and circumspection. For one reason or another, we are often held to be below tragedy—or tragedy above us. The inevitable conclusion is, of course, that the tragic mode is archaic, fit only for the very highly placed, the kings or the kingly, and where this admission is not made in so many words it is most often implied.

I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were. On the face of it this ought to be obvious in the light of modern psychiatry, which bases its analysis upon classic formulations, such as the Oedipus and Orestes complexes, for instance, which were enacted by royal beings, but which apply to everyone in similar emotional situations.

More simply, when the question of tragedy in art is not at issue, we never hesitate to attribute to the well-placed and the exalted the very same mental processes as the lowly. And finally, if the exaltation of tragic action were truly a property of the high-bred character alone, it is inconceivable that the mass of mankind should cherish tragedy above all other forms, let alone be capable of understanding it.

As a general rule, to which there may be exceptions unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggles that of the individual attempting to gain his “rightful” position in his society.

Sometimes he is one who has been displaced from it, sometimes one who seeks to attain it for the first time, but the fateful wound from which the inevitable events spiral is the wound of indignity, and its dominant force is indignation. Tragedy, then, is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly.

In the sense of having been initiated by the hero himself, the tale always reveals what has been called his "tragic flaw," a failing that is not peculiar to grand or elevated characters. Nor is it necessarily a weakness. The flaw, or crack in the character, is really nothing—and need be nothing, but his inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status. Only the passive, only those who accept their lot without active retaliation, are "flawless." Most of us are in that category. But there are among us today, as there always have been, those who act against the scheme of things that degrades them, and in the process of action everything we have accepted out of fear or insensitivity or ignorance is shaken before us and examined, and from this total onslaught by an individual against the seemingly stable cosmos surrounding us—from this total examination of the "unchangeable" environment—comes the terror and the fear that is classically associated with tragedy.

More important, from this total questioning of what has previously been unquestioned, we learn. And such a process is not beyond the common man. In revolutions around the world, these past thirty years, he has demonstrated again and again this inner dynamic of all tragedy.

Insistence upon the rank of the tragic hero, or the so-called nobility of his character, is really but a clinging to the outward forms of tragedy. If rank or nobility of character was indispensable, then it would follow that the problems of those with rank were the particular problems of tragedy. But surely the right of one monarch to capture the domain from another no longer raises our passions, nor are our concepts of justice what they were to the mind of an Elizabethan king.

The quality in such plays that does shake us, however, derives from the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what or who we are in this world. Among us today this fear is as strong, and perhaps stronger, than it ever was. In fact, it is the common man who knows this fear best.

Now, if it is true that tragedy is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly, his destruction in the attempt posits a wrong or an evil in his environment. And this is precisely the morality of tragedy and its lesson. The discovery of the moral law, which is what the enlightenment of tragedy consists of, is not the discovery of some abstract or metaphysical quantity.

The tragic night is a condition of life, a condition in which the human personality is able to flower and realize itself. The wrong is the condition which suppresses man, perverts the flowing out of his love and creative instinct. Tragedy enlightens and it

must, in that it points the heroic finger at the enemy of man's freedom. The thrust for freedom is the quality in tragedy which exalts. The revolutionary questioning of the stable environment is what terrifies. In no way is the common man debarred from such thoughts or such actions.

Seen in this light, our lack of tragedy may be partially accounted for by the turn which modern literature has taken toward the purely psychiatric view of life, or the purely sociological. If all our miseries, our indignities, are born and bred within our minds, then all action, let alone the heroic action, is obviously impossible.

And if society alone is responsible for the cramping of our lives, then the protagonist must needs be so pure and faultless as to force us to deny his validity as a character. From neither of these views can tragedy derive, simply because neither represents a balanced concept of life. Above all else, tragedy requires the finest appreciation by the writer of cause and effect.

No tragedy can therefore come about when its author fears to question absolutely everything, when he regards any institution, habit or custom as being either everlasting, immutable or inevitable. In the tragic view the need of man to wholly realize himself is the only fixed star, and whatever it is that hedges his nature and lowers it is ripe for attack and examination. Which is not to say that tragedy must preach revolution.

The Greeks could probe the very heavenly origin of their ways and return to confirm the rightness of laws. And Job could face God in anger, demanding his right and end in submission. But for a moment everything is in suspension, nothing is accepted, and in this stretching and tearing apart of the cosmos, in the very action of so doing, the character gains "size," the tragic stature which is spuriously attached to the royal or the high born in our minds. The commonest of men may take on that stature to the extent of his willingness to throw all he has into the contest, the battle to secure his rightful place in his world.

There is a misconception of tragedy with which I have been struck in review after review, and in many conversations with writers and readers alike. It is the idea that tragedy is of necessity allied to pessimism. Even the dictionary says nothing more about the word than that it means a story with a sad or unhappy ending. This impression is so firmly fixed that I almost hesitate to claim that in truth tragedy implies more optimism in its author than does comedy, and that its final result ought to be the reinforcement of the onlooker's brightest opinions of the human animal.

For, if it is true to say that in essence the tragic hero is intent upon claiming his whole due as a personality, and if this struggle must be total and without reservation, then it automatically demonstrates the indestructible will of man to achieve his humanity. The possibility of victory must be there in tragedy. Where pathos rules, where pathos is finally derived, a character has fought a battle he could not possibly have won. The pathetic is achieved when the protagonist is, by

virtue of his witlessness, his insensitivity or the very air he gives off, incapable of grappling with a much superior force. Pathos truly is the mode for the pessimist. But tragedy requires a nicer balance between what is possible and what is impossible. And it is curious, although edifying, that the plays we revere, century after century, are the tragedies. In them, and in them alone, lies the belief—optimistic, if you will, in the perfectibility of man. It is time, I think, that we who are without kings, took up this bright thread of our history and followed it to the only place it can possible lead in our time—the heart and spirit of the average man.

## The American Dream



“The American Dream is the largely unacknowledged screen in front of which all American writing plays itself out—the screen of the perfectibility of man.”

—Arthur Miller

The term “The American Dream” was coined by writer/historian James Truslow Adams in his 1931 book *Epic of America*, just as Miller was finishing high school in Brooklyn. “The American Dream,” Truslow wrote, “is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.”

Though perhaps a departure from its original meaning, the phrase is now closely associated with the idea of ownership and financial stability and conjures images of well-manicured homes much like Keller’s. Over time the phrase even has taken on a kind of glossy reputation, as if to imply its own inherent impossibility.

*All My Sons* is, to a certain extent, a critique of this dream and an indictment of those who clamor to achieve it without first paying credence to the morals on which such a society must be built.

The idea is also critiqued in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* and John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, the first going after the American Dream’s shallow materialism, the second attacking the assumption that the dream is available to any American.

Miller comes at his critique from a different angle, demonstrating the depth of sin a man like Joe Keller is willing to stomach in order to give his family the sought-after American Dream.

### **From James Truslow's *Epic of America***

“The American Dream ... is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”

“The American Dream that has lured tens of millions of all nations to our shores in the past century has not been a dream of material plenty, though that has doubtlessly counted heavily. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as a man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in the older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class.”

## **Glossary of Terms**

**Newfoundland dogs** – The Newfoundland is a large, usually black, breed of dog originally used as a working dog in Newfoundland, a Canadian island. They are famously known for their giant size and tremendous strength, as well as for their sweet dispositions, loyalty, and natural water-rescue tendencies.

**Favorable days in horoscopes** – A horoscope is related to a person's birth time, date, and year as well as during which of the twelve Zodiac segments the birth occurs. This Chinese tradition, which employs complex astrology/star-chart readings, predicts “favorable days” for specific endeavors—i.e., a favorable day for love, a favorable day for business, a favorable day for significant life-change, etc. The notion that a person cannot die on their one, quintessential “favorable day” is Miller's original creation.

**Don Ameche** – A prolific American screen actor, famous for portraying real people and historical figures in his films. The movie Frank refers to might be *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell*, in which Ameche plays the inventor of the telephone.

**Warner Brothers** – One of the country's largest and most prosperous movie studios, founded in 1918. By 1947 the company payroll had reached a staggering \$600,000/week. Don Ameche, however, was contacted to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.

**“For ten dollars you could hold his hand.”** – Roughly \$80 today

**Malted mixer** – A milkshake maker, a relatively new appliance in 1947.

**Oilstone** – (*stage directions*) A whetstone used for fine woodcarving.

“**The trouble is the Goddam newspapers...**” – Statistically speaking, it was extremely unlikely for a soldier previously reported MIA to return home unharmed. But there were news stories like the two below that would have given Mrs. Keller hope:

**CAPT. VAROFF, POLE VAULTER, TURNS UP SAFE**  
Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1963); Jan 18, 1945;  
ProQuest Historical Newspapers Chicago Tribune (1849 - 1986)  
pg. 17

**CAPT. VAROFF,  
POLE VAULTER,  
TURNS UP SAFE**

San Francisco, Cal., Jan. 17 (AP).—  
Capt. George Varoff, 30, former pole vault champion reported missing in action, has returned safely to his air base in China, his parents said today. Varoff has been a pilot in the China-Burma-India war zone. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Varoff, received word yesterday that he was safe. He was reported missing Dec. 7.

**MARINE THOUGHT  
MISSING SENDS  
MOTHER LETTER**

Pvt. Eugene J. Fuller, an 18 year old marine who had been reported missing in action Sept. 4 by the war department, took time out from playing cards to write to his mother Oct. 8. The letter was received yesterday by his mother, Mrs. Lillie Fuller, 201 Dean street, Woodstock. Her son said he had landed in the Solomon Islands in early August and was feeling fine. Pvt. Fuller has been in the marines since Jan. 29.



Pvt. Eugene J. Fuller.

— *Chicago Tribune Archival Database*

**Three-weeks salary in 1947**— According to the census bureau, the average family in 1947 earned \$3,546/ year, roughly equivalent to \$27,500 if adjusted to modern inflation. Given Ann’s gender and single status, her three-week salary would likely land around \$90, which means she means she spent close to the modern equivalent of \$700 on the dress.

**Battalion** – A standard army unit consisting of between 500 to 1,000 soldiers, usually led by a lieutenant colonel. Throughout WWII, the Army typically had three to five infantry battalions to a regiment and nine to a division (two-star generals lead a division).

**Mother McKeller** – Might be a reference to Mother Catherine McAuley, a Christian humanitarian who founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831, an organization that cared for the poor and sick.

“**Those dear dead boys beyond recall**” – A reference to J.L. Molly’s song “Love’s Old Sweet Song,” originally written in 1884. The song is also referenced in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Song context: “Once in the dear dead days beyond recall/When on the world the mists began to fall/Out of the dreams that rose in happy throng/Low to our hearts Love sang an old sweet song.”

**Burma** – Controlled by the British since the 1820s, Burma was a major front line in the Southeast Asian theatre of WWII. The U.S. troops fighting the Japanese in the area were nicknamed the American Katchin Rangers.

**Haberdashery** – Dealing in the business of men’s clothing, namely suits.

**“Maybe I too can be president.”** – A reference to the fact that, upon his return from WWII, future president Harry Truman opened a men’s clothing store in Missouri, his home state.

**Post Toasties** – The first cereal company to hide prizes and toys inside their breakfast cereal boxes. The company, founded in the late 1800s, put plastic toys in their cereal boxes as a marketing gimmick beginning in the early 1900s.

**Army Air Forces (USAAF)** – The military aviation arm of the United States of America during and immediately after World War II; the direct precursor to the United States Air Force. At its peak in 1944, there were more than 2.4 million men and women in service and nearly 80,000 aircraft. There were 783 domestic bases in December 1943. By VE Day 1.25 million men and women were stationed overseas, operating from more than 1,600 airfields worldwide.

**Cracked cylinder heads** – The top of a cylinder encasing the valves and spark plugs in an internal-combustion engine. A hole (or crack) in the cylinder head would lead to a lack of compression of fuel and air in the engine, so combustion is compromised and the engine won’t start. The most common reason for cracked cylinder heads is uneven heating around the circumference that causes uneven expansion and breakage.



*A cracked cylinder head*

**P-40s** – An American single-engine, single-seat, all-metal fighter and ground-attack aircraft that first flew in 1938. It was used by the air forces of 28 nations, including those of most Allied powers during WWII, and remained in front-line service until the end of the war. By November 1944, when production of the P-40 ceased, 13,738 had been built. P-40s engaged Japanese aircraft during the attack on Pearl Harbor and the invasion of the Philippines in December 1941.



*A P-40 warplane during WWII*

**Company** – During WWII, a combination of two or more platoons (see chart on page 18 for a detailed Army unit) typically consisting of 100-250 men. Led by a Captain or Major.

**Last pair of dry socks** – Soldiers typically carried only two pairs of socks at a time, laundering the two pairs only when they reached a main base.

**Labor Day** – Kissing joke refers to the prevalence of kissing booths at Labor Day carnivals.

**“George Bernard Shaw as an elephant”** – The Irish-born playwright (1856-1950) was known for his wit and command of subtext. The joke here is that Joe Keller has neither of these assets.

**Columbus** – The capital of Ohio; the state penitentiary is located there.

**Hair shirt** – A coarse, intentionally uncomfortable shirt made from animal’s hair, often worn by religious persons as a kind of penance.

**Twenty-five dollars a week in 1947** – About \$200 a week today

**Broadcloth** – In sharp contrast to the material used to make a hair shirt, broadcloth is a comfortable, soft material (usually cotton, originally wool), that shirts were made out of.

**Roué** – (French) A “rake,” a man habitually engaged in immoral conduct. The term is associated with gambling, women and excessive drinking.

**“Everybody’s gettin’ so Goddam educated in this country,”** –Joe Keller makes this comment. Around the turn of the century, the median education level of white males was the 8th grade; high school graduation was rare (Kroch and Sjoblom, 1994). In 1920, just 22 percent of those between the ages of 25 and 29 were high school graduates. By 1940, 38 percent of this age group had graduated from high school, but only 6 percent had graduated from college with a bachelor’s degree.

**Brooch/broach** – “Brooch” is the incorrect pronunciation of the word “broach,” meaning to bring up a topic of conversation. A brooch is a large lady’s pin.

**Zeppelin** – One of the first commercial airplanes invented in the late 1800s, operated by DELAG, the first commercial airlines. Zeppelins looked like long, bloated versions of modern airplanes, almost blimp-like, but were quite fast.

**Mahatma Gandhi** – The political and spiritual leader of India, he advocated non-violence activism during the Indian independence movement. He was famous for using fasting as a mode of passive resistance.

**Russian wolfhound** – Equivalent to today’s L.A.-based Chihuahua craze, Russian wolfhounds were considered a fashionable accessory for upper-class women during the 1920s. The hound has a silky white coat and a regal posture.

**“He was one year ahead of the draft”** – In 1940, Congress signed the Selective Service Training Act, the first peacetime draft in U.S. history for men ages 21 to 35, to serve one year. A lottery based on birthdays determined the order in which registered men were called up by Selective Service. The first to be called, in a sequence determined by the lottery, were men whose 20th birthday fell during the calendar year the induction took place, followed by, if needed, those aged 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 19 and 18 year olds (in that order).

**“A truer love hath no man!”** – A contortion of the Biblical phrase: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John15:13).

**Eagle Scouts** – Highest division of Boys Scouts of American; indicative of moral superiority.

**Andy Gump** – A character in the cartoon family “The Gumps,” created by Sidney Smith in 1917. The strip ran in daily newspapers for 42 years.

**General Motors** – A name that used to be synonymous with prosperity and success. By 1947, GM had manufactured more than 25 million cars and more than 12 billion dollars’ worth of war material. George is insinuating here that the Keller’s factory seems untarnished by the cylinder-head scandal that destroyed his family.



*An aeronautical parts factory, 1943.*

**“What ice does that cut?”** – “What does that have to do with anything?”

## Discussion Questions

1. Consider Chris Keller's worldview versus his father's: One is guided by a sense of responsibility to the greater community, the other by a sense of responsibility to family. Is one of these moral compasses inherently right or wrong?
2. Do you believe there is some legitimacy in Joe Keller's argument that certain wrongs are excusable in the name of family?
3. Consider Ann's reasons for bringing Larry's letter into the Keller home. Do you believe that she never intended to show it to Kate? And why do you think she didn't reveal the information in the letter to Chris sooner?
4. Do you believe Joe Keller is basically a decent member of society? And do you accept Chris's conviction that his father is "no worse than most men"? Or is what Joe did actually evil?
6. In what ways does the experience of war impact this play? Do you think American citizens today still retain that sense of "country" that Chris refers to in the climatic scenes of the play?
7. What should we make of the characters who "knew" about Joe's guilt all these years? What level of culpability do people like Kate Keller and Jim Bayliss share in the crime, given they knew about Joe's deceit and failed to act?
8. Do you think Kate truly believed Larry was coming back all those years? Or was she, on some level, acutely aware of the necessary deceit she was indulging?
9. In what ways is Joe Keller a tragic hero, and in what ways does he defy that label? Typically, tragic heroes harbor a "fatal flaw" that ultimately destroys any hope of redemption. What, do you think, is Joe Keller's fatal flaw?
10. Do you believe Chris had an obligation to jail his father? Or is there something feudal in that act, given he does not "raise the dead" when he puts his father behind bars?
11. What do you make of Sue's accusation that Chris wants people to be "better than it's possible to be?" Is Chris asking too much of his parents in the final scenes of the play?
12. Do you think the importance of marriage is as profound today as it was in 1947? Is Chris and Ann's situation timeless, or do you think their dilemma is heightened given the significance of marriage in the late 1940s?
13. What do you think becomes of Chris and Ann after the curtain goes down?

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### **Suggested Viewing:**

#### **Jerecki, Eugene. *Why We Fight: The Complete Series, 1943.***

A television series produced at the height of World War II and shown across the nation; the documentary drives home the profound importance of the home-front war effort and home-front material production.

#### **Ambrose, Steven. *Band of Brothers, 2001.***

A 10-part mini-series written by historian Stephen Ambrose and produced by Stephen Spielberg and Tom Hanks, following their collaboration on the film *Saving Private Ryan*. The series follows the story of the Easy Company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion from basic training through the end of World War II.

*All My Sons*, 1948 (black and white); directed by Irving Reis.

*All My Sons*, 1986; directed by John Powell II.

### **Suggested Web Sites:**

<http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/>

Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office.

[http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/The\\_Truman\\_Committee.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/The_Truman_Committee.htm)

U.S. Senate information on The Truman Committee.

<http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/breitman/1943/10/crimes.htm>

Brietman, George: "Wartime Crimes of Big Business." December 1943.

<http://www.loc.gov/index.html>

The Library of Congress home page; contains searchable information on war profits and World War II statistics.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20030512/editors>

Article in the *The Nation* on war profiteering; April 24, 2003.