



PRESENTS

A black and white photograph of three actors from the play 'All My Sons'. The actor at the top is a young man with long hair, looking upwards and to the left. The actor at the bottom left is an older man with a serious expression, looking downwards. The actor at the bottom right is an older woman with a serious expression, looking forward. The image is high-contrast, with deep shadows and bright highlights.

**ALL
MY
SONS**

**BY
ARTHUR MILLER**

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Note from the Dramaturg

ARTHUR MILLER (1915–2005)

A member of the pantheon of Great American Playwrights, Arthur Miller was born to Jewish-Polish immigrants in New York City in 1915. His father, like Chris's, ran a successful factory and was a community pillar. But, the Millers' success came before the stock market crash of 1929, and when it crashed they lost everything. A young teen, Miller had a front row seat to his father's conquest and absolute loss of the American Dream. The intersection of this fall from greatness with the hardships of the Great Depression profoundly shaped his worldview.

WWII further molded him. Denied enlistment by an injury, he was writing for the Federal Theatre Project, a New Deal initiative. In lieu of serving, he travelled to interview soldiers in Army hospitals and camps, adapting their stories into patriotic radio plays to amplify their experiences and stir the public conscience.

After his Broadway debut failure, Miller vowed to write one final play, and if it too failed he would leave the theatre. He spent two and a half years writing *All My Sons* – ten times longer than he'd spent on previous plays. He drew inspiration from Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* and a real wartime scandal between a father and daughter. Premiering to acclaim, *All My Sons* established his signature blend of social critique and psychological depth centered around the common man, foreshadowing masterpieces like *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*. Today, the play endures as a haunting reminder of the cost of denial and moral compromise — and the courage required to confront truth.

ON THEME

All My Sons unfolds in the shadow of not just World War II, but the American Dream – a siren song of prosperity, security, and contentment. More than a family's tragic downfall, it's an indictment of the systems shielding some from consequence while demanding everything of others. The Kellers' tragedy is rooted not in universal human frailty, but the specific privileges that insulate them – their whiteness, their money, their social carte blanche to shape truth. Their American Dream, built on selective accountability and willful blindness, exposes the corrosive bargain at the heart of any ideology that conflates success with moral worth. Miller's warning is clear: A society that clings to hierarchies of worth is a society already in collapse.

This play starkly reminds us that truth has always been contested terrain. In 1947, as now, facts are malleable in the hands of those with power and often empathy remains conditional – a privilege for those within our orbit. The Kellers' narratives reflect a society that clings to comforting fictions rather than confront uncomfortable realities. And as their illusions crumble, Miller argues that empathy shouldn't require personal stakes; to only care when tragedy touches your porch, is a moral failure.

Within the play's devastation lies a fragile seed of hope. Miller questions: What might a horizontal morality rooted in collective care – rather than blood, tribe, or transactional loyalty – look like? Such a world remains just out of reach in the play, but its potential haunts every scene.

As we grapple in a "post-truth" era with resurgent authoritarianism and the erosion of communal bonds, *All My Sons* challenges us to reject the stories we're sold that equate survival with domination. To see through the myths that excuse violence, to recognize that comfort built on others' suffering is not stability but a ticking bomb. What world might we build if we finally, recklessly, chose to see all our sons? The curtain falls on ruin, but also on clarity—a warning that our survival, now as then, depends not on whose dreams we prioritize, but on refusing to dream alone.



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