
UNIT 4 CHARACTERISATION IN *ALL MY SONS*

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will be discussing:

- the development and significance of all the major characters,
- the development and significance of the minor characters.

4.1 MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Play *All My Sons* has major characters such as Joe Keller, Chris Keller, Kate Keller, Ann Deever and George Deever being central to the action of the play.

4.1.1 Joe Keller

Critic Paul Blumberg in his article ‘Work as Alienation in the Plays of Arthur Miller’ in *Arthur Miller: New Perspectives* edited by Robert A. Martin says ‘Joe Keller, manufacturer, and central figure in *All My Sons*, has a moral perspective no larger than the fence that surrounds his factory or the grass growing evenly around his own house. Joe Keller is not a selfish, disagreeable or greedy industrialist; he is, an ignorant, good-natured and kindly fool, whose love for his wife and family is genuine and unselfish’.

Joe Keller the chief character of the play in his sixties is an amicable, warm person who loves social life. A self-made man with no education to fall back

upon, he still manages to set up a successful business after forty years of hard work. He had struggled to earn his livelihood from the age of ten and as a result knows the value of money. A man with little intellect, he lacks common sense. Every simple thing makes him wonder. He has values that are old-fashioned and judgments based on his experiences. A loving father to his sons, Keller feels honoured to have sons, but having lost one of them in the war, he wishes he had no sons so that he would not have to send them to fight in the war. War has changed his opinion and ideas. Keller is fun-loving, jovial and becomes a child while interacting with children. He makes friends with eight year-old Bert, the son of Frank and Lydia who equally like him.

A family man, Keller has great concern and affection for his wife. It disturbs him whenever Kate is upset. Keller is solicitous for his wife having to work in the kitchen whenever the maid servant is absent. He is anxious about his wife's belief that Larry is alive and would be back one day. Keller does not want to interfere much in Chris' choice of his bride for he believes that marriage is entirely one's own affair; however he is concerned that Kate would not like the idea of Chris marrying Larry's fiancée who still believes that Larry would return someday. Concerned about his wife's sentiments, Keller does not want his son to get married to Ann as Kate would not approve of it. After knowing Chris' decision to quit home if Kate disapproves his marriage with Ann, Keller is worried about the future of his business that had taken him his whole life to establish it.

Despite of the geniality and warmth, the tragic flaw in Keller's character allows him to betray his partner Steve Deever. His neighbours know about his manipulation of his acquittal but have apparently included him in their social circle. Keller is proud of the fact that his self-confidence, guts and the proof document of his innocence have gradually allowed them to forgive him. His son Chris is proud of his father who has faced the difficult times with courage so much so that Chris wants his name to be changed as Joe McGuts, for he is a tough man who has shown guts. Keller is glad that he had won confidence of the local people, Chris, Kate and Ann and does not let anyone have an inkling that he was involved in the supply of defective cylinder heads as much as Steve Deever.

After having wronged Steve Deever, Keller still shows his concern for him, asking George about his father's health and whether he still has the old-heart trouble. Keller sympathizes with Steve saying 'A little man makes a mistake and they hang him by the thumbs; the big one become ambassadors'. (*All My Sons* p.-67) To Ann's question whether he has any grievance against her father for dragging him in the defective cylinder heads case, Keller replies that he believes in the policy of forgiving and forgetting and had no grievances against him. In order to reduce his guilt, Keller wants to help Deever re-establish himself once he is out of jail.

Confronted by Chris, Keller is compelled to reveal the truth of the case. Keller gives account of the entire incident of the supply of defective cylinder heads to the army, implicating Steve Deever as the main accused. To justify his acts, Joe says that he had supplied the defective cylinders to save himself and the family from those of bankruptcy; otherwise, he would have to discard the defective cylinder heads and as a result his business that took him forty years to build would collapse in seconds. Being ignorant, he had never thought that the engine

heads would be fixed in the aircrafts without being checked and before a report sent to him about the status of the engines. Keller is no 'cynical profiteer, deliberately reducing the margin of safety in order to increase the margin of profit. Miller sees him as the simple man who has got on by energy and will power but who is hardly clever enough to know how he has done it.' (P.-26 'Three Yearly Plays' in *Miller: A study of his Plays* Dennis Welland, Eyre Methuen London.1979) 'As with most of Miller's characters, there is no vice in him, only littleness and his form of myopia. He is genuinely unable to visualise the public consequences of what was for him a private act.' (Pg-26 'Three Yearly Plays' in Dennis Welland, Eyre Methuen's *Miller: A Study of his Plays*. London 1979.) Trying to fulfill the roles of a father and husband, Joe Keller sees an obligation towards his family and a father's duty towards his son to work for their future interests. Keller believes that there is nothing bigger than one's family and for him father-son relationship is above all relationships. Like all men, he too has his own material interests and strives to work for the monetary gains of his family. Like other people he is not bothered about the damage to society that he brings while ensuring economic stability to his family. Keller's values are no different from those of any ordinary man living in the American capitalist society where there was a maddening competition in business. Being a practical man, Keller is unable to live up to the expectations of his son Chris, an idealist.

The letter written by Larry reveals that he committed suicide by allowing his plane to crash, shamed by his father's involvement in fraud and profiteering. Keller finally understands the disastrous implications of his actions. He realises in the end the responsibility he had to all twenty-one pilots who lost their lives and that there is no real forgiveness for his act. For him his suicide is the only way he can repay for his crime and escape from guilt. It would also save his son Chris from further humiliation. Joe Keller has a tragic end after he makes a wrong choice between the interests of the family and those of the nation. He is a flawed character who cannot be considered a ruthless and harsh character but someone with whom the audience can empathize and whom they can forgive.

4.1.2 Chris Keller

Chris Keller, the son of Joe Keller is a thirty-two year old well-built man who loves to keep himself informed of the latest publications of books and never misses to read the book section of the newspaper though he never buys those books. In the battlefront, Chris was called Mother McKeller in his battalion because he cared for everyone and was kind and sympathetic towards all of them. Returning from the war as a hero, Chris works for his father.

Chris is not fond of the company of women and does not mix with them except Ann, his only woman friend who had lived as a neighbour during childhood. After receiving several letters from Ann, he is convinced that she desires to marry him and has forgotten Larry completely. He still wants to clear his doubts by discussing with Ann and thereafter wants to convey his plans to his mother. A straightforward guy, Chris decides to quit his house and family if he is not given consent by his mother to marry Ann. He is willing to stay with his parents and take charge of the business, if only his father supports him to marry Ann.

Chris knows to deal with his mother with patience in order to please her to agree for his marriage with Ann. Kate does not give up her hope of Larry's return

which is the biggest obstacle for Chris marriage. Chris has a selfish motive in pursuing his mother to accept Larry's death. '.....he does so for his own selfish reasons and not because he thinks it is in her best interest to be able to face reality. ('*All My Sons*' Steven R. Centola in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller* edited by Christopher Bigsby). Chris' sincere love for Ann makes him protective towards her forcing him to argue with his mother several times whenever Kate tries to discourage their marriage.

An idealist Chris feels guilty of surviving the war when many of his friends died sacrificing their lives in the war for some noble cause. On his return home after the war, he saw that nothing had changed. Chris is amazed to see the way people carry on with the banalities of life. He feels ashamed seeing selfish people struggling for monetary gains. For Chris, the soldier's lives were laid down in vain because it did not change the world. He was hesitant to use the amenities and comforts that he had and was guilty even to marry Ann.

Chris' influence on her husband Jim Bayliss upsets Sue because he tries to encourage Jim Bayliss to give up medical practice in order to pursue a higher calling in medical research. Accusing Chris of being a hypocrite Sue is of the opinion that Chris wants people to sacrifice their comforts for the sake of principles while Chris himself takes money from his father's business that is established by dishonest means.

Out of love for his parents he assures them of his protection if a difficult situation came up on George's arrival to the Keller household. The immense faith Chris had on his father does not allow him to accept his father's guilt despite having a vague idea about the fraud committed by him. Chris believes that his father is innocent and that he is being falsely accused by the neighbours. Believing that Steve Deever had wrongly implicated his father, he does not want Keller to show so much concern for him, afraid that people of the locality might misunderstand him if he accommodated him in his factory. Chris is sure that a timid man like Steve Deever would not only supply defective cylinder heads but also put the blame on somebody else. In Chris opinion, Steve conveniently puts the blame for his misdeeds on Keller but his plans failed. He says that only George who is a fool believes his story. Chris does not believe in astrology. He refuses to agree with Kate and questions her view on how stars determine human destiny.

Chris who loves his parents, trusts his father and is shattered when his father acknowledges his guilt. Chris considers him as an infallible father figure and is ashamed by the arguments given by his father in order to justify his actions. 'Chris is his father's perfect opposite. While Joe cannot see beyond his family's dining room table, Chris feels a sense of unity with the world.' (Paul Blumberg in his article 'Work as Alienation' in *The Plays of Arthur Miller: New Perspectives* Edited by Robert A. Martin). Chris is profoundly hurt that Keller has deceived his partner Steve Deever and his own country. Chris sees a wider responsibility beyond that of a family; a human commitment. He is ashamed of his father being involved in such a criminal act while he was fighting in the war and risking his life daily and the men under his command were dying daily in the war. He says that the selflessness of his fellow soldiers has counted for nothing. He accuses his father of making money out of a business, which does not value the man on whose labour it relies. Joe is also accused of ignoring the interests of his country and deliberately endangering the lives of the countrymen.

After his father's guilt is revealed, Chris sees no other option but to put his father in jail. Keller on the other hand tries to escape from his guilt, and to save his son from further humiliation, he shoots himself. Chris blames himself for his father's self-destruction.

4.1.3 Kate Keller

Joe Keller's wife Kate Keller is kind, affectionate and motherly. Like her husband Keller, Kate is jovial, warm and a friendly neighbour welcoming everyone home. She is a woman of enormous maternal love extending her affection beyond her two children to George and Ann. She has firm belief that Larry who was reported missing in World War II has survived the war and would eventually return home. Kate does not approve the marriage of Chris with Ann as this would mean that she has accepted Larry's death; this in turn would prove her husband's guilt. Her love for Larry does not allow her to accept the fact that he has died and she is hopeful for his return, living in 'denial' and resorting to 'lies and self-deception as a means of contending with her sorrow and anguish'. (Steven R. Centola's 'All My Sons' in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller* by Christopher Bigsby) Her belief in astrology keeps her hopes of Larry's survival alive with Frank's insistence that Larry's horoscope indicated: the day Larry had died was his favourable day.

By her resort to superstition, Kate wants to persuade others to agree with her, in her belief that Larry was alive. Kate links Ann's arrival to the Keller home with the storm that had snapped the apple tree planted in Larry's memory thinking it was a sign of something significant. She connects both these incidents with Larry's gloves that she had unexpectedly seen for the first time after Larry had left. The day Larry was leaving for the battle she got up early even though she did not know that Larry had to leave for the war. An instinct within her indicated that something dreadful was going to happen. Later, she got the news that Larry was missing in action. Now she believes that Larry is still alive which she feels is a right notion.

Kate is impressed by Ann's devotion to Larry's memory. She is of the opinion that Ann was different from other fickle-minded girls who would have changed loyalties after their lover's death. Kate thinks that had she forgotten Larry or thought he was dead, she would have somebody else in New York and would have got married already.

Kate has several arguments with Ann and Chris trying to persuade them to believe that Larry would return someday. Her son Chris is of the opinion that she is the only woman in America to be still waiting for her son to come back after three years. Kate thinks that deep down in her heart Ann must be still waiting for Larry. Ann denies it as she already knows that Larry has committed suicide deeply shamed and embarrassed by his father's conviction. Unaware about Larry's suicide Chris supports Ann adding that she knows her mind well and is not waiting for Larry to return.

When asked by Ann what makes her believe that Larry was still alive, Kate says that certain things have to be, while certain things can never be. The sun has to rise; this is something, which has to be. That is the reason why we believe in the existence of God. If there was no God, anything could happen. But God exists

hence certain things can never happen. Kate says that her heart tells her what can happen and what can never happen.

Kate was not enthusiastic about Ann's visit to their house, the reason being the hostility of the neighbours towards Ann's father Steve Deever who was found guilty. Kate stops Chris from criticizing Ann's father while asking Ann not to blame her father. On Ann's questioning her why she said so, Kate says that her father's misdeeds had nothing to do with Larry.

Being aware of her husband's crime Kate asks Chris to protect both Keller and herself from any untoward incident that could arise on George's arrival to their house. She wants George and his sister Ann to leave the Keller household in order to prevent them from bringing damage to the Kellers because in her opinion both of them could destroy them out of hatred. According to her, Steve Deever had persisted in alleging in the court till the last day of the trial that it was Keller who had asked him to dispatch the damaged cylinder heads. In the midst of the speculations about George's visit, Kate's fondness for George persists and she does not forget to prepare his favourite grape-juice. Kate assures George that their family still loves him with the same warmth as they had done earlier. Showing her concern for him, she advises him to get married assuring George that Joe would help him with his career and she would find him a girl.

Amidst their conversation Kate comes out with the truth of Keller not falling ill during the war. Realising the revelation she has made, she corrects herself calling it a slip of the tongue pretending that she had forgotten that Keller had fallen ill. Instead of encouraging Keller to face his responsibilities honestly Kate supports him in the complicity of covering-up her husband's crime.

When Chris threatens to leave home with Ann, seeing that their marriage is imminent 'Chris' mother plays her final card in order to prevent the marriage which will signal the end of her hope.' (*A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century Drama* C.W.E. Bigsby, Cambridge University Press 1984) She reveals her husband's guilt to her son saying that if Larry is dead, he has been killed by his father Joe, 'God does not let a son be killed by his father' (*All My Sons* p-73). Kate's indirect accusations at Joe forces Chris to confront him, compelling him to come out with the truth.

Out of love and concern for Chris, Kate is restless after Chris disappears from the house after his argument with Joe. Kate feels helpless once she comes to know that Jim Bayliss knows the secret of Keller. Worried that Keller could not be saved anymore, she feels that there is no strength in her.

Kate wants Joe to confess his mistake and tell Chris that he is ready to pay the penalty for his crime which she thinks would satisfy her son and he would forgive him. Kate assures Joe that his mere willingness to go to prison would make Chris forgive him. Replying to Keller's justification of his act Kate says that she wanted him to make money but not by wrong means and there is no excuse for him to say that he made money by fraudulent for the sake of his family. Kate's refusal to Chris and Ann's marriage even after several requests made by both of them compels Ann to show her trump card in the form Larry's letter to save her future union with Chris. Kate is not at all disturbed by the contents of the letter for she had known all this while that her husband was responsible for killing

Larry. The letter forces Kate to accept Larry's death and her husband's crime of killing twenty one pilots. Kate wants to save her husband from languishing in jail pleading with Chris not to take him to the police saying that the war is over and that the contents of the letter have no meaning any more as Larry is dead.

After the shot is heard from inside the house, Kate understands that Joe had killed himself as a punishment for his crime of killing twenty-one pilots. Despite her own grief of losing her husband, she lovingly consoles Chris telling him not to hold himself responsible for his father's death but to forget the past and live a new life.

4.1.4 Ann Deever

Ann Deever the daughter of Steve Deever, business partner of Joe, surfaces in the play in act I and is described by Jim, Frank and Keller as a beautiful and intelligent girl. Ann Deever is twenty-one years old with gentle looks and firm belief. She is admired for her beauty by Kate, Joe and Chris. Seeing her previous house, Ann feels nostalgic and is reminded of her childhood days that were filled with happiness when she had stayed with her family in the neighbourhood.

She comes to the Keller household in order to marry Chris. 'She comes with a purpose of rescuing Chris from the demoralized family, haunted by Larry's ghost.' (A. Karunakar's 'Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*': *The End of An American Dream in Perspective on Post-War American Drama* Edited by D. Venkateswarlu, Y. Satyanarayana, A. Karunakar). For Joe Keller she is the ghost of the past, a threat to him, who would reveal the truth of the defective cylinder case. Ann is not waiting for Larry to return from the war, as it has been a long time after he went missing and she presumes that he is dead. After exchange of several letters Ann and Chris are in love and Ann comes to the Keller household on Chris' invitation to propose marriage to her. Ann is firm in her belief that Larry will not come back and does not agree with Kate's view that Larry is still alive. After coming to the Keller home Ann is disappointed and wants to leave because Kate does not want her to stay here any longer and Chris is uneasy with Ann's presence in the house. Ann feels assured after he expresses his love and proposes her to marry him. Hearing Chris explanation that he was ashamed to love her because of the tragedy he had seen around. Chris is hesitant to use the comforts and amenities he had and even thought that he did not deserve her. Ann makes him understand that he should not develop a feeling of guilt as he had the right to make use of everything including the money that his father had saved for him.

Ann shares Chris' idealism and righteousness and has shunned her father Steve Deever after he was found guilty in supplying defective cylinder heads to the army. She disowns him refusing to visit him in jail. Having no concern for her father Ann avoids answering questions related to her father and when asked about him she is ill at ease and says 'I really don't know'. She says that she had wept on hearing about his imprisonment after he was found guilty by the court, but when she came to know about Larry being killed by the defective cylinders, she realized the seriousness of his crime.

Ann talks very harshly about her father saying 'Father or no father there was only one way of looking at him'(All My Sons p-31). Keller told Ann how her father had cried half the night on hearing about Larry's death. But Ann is too

harsh and says that her father should have cried the whole night. Ann thinks that Chris is lucky that he can love his parents.

When George tells the facts about the case accusing Keller, Ann intervenes saying that the court had exonerated Keller after finding him innocent. She accuses her father of telling lies. Ann supports the Kellers, vehemently disagreeing with George when he says that whatever Keller family owns is by dishonest means. She is perhaps blinded by her love for Chris whom she wants to marry. Despite knowing the real culprit in the defective cylinder case, she conceals the facts known to her in order to avoid any kind of obstacle coming in the way of her marriage with Chris.

Ann is quite surprised by the concern Keller shows for her father; he is ready to help George settle in the neighbourhood with his family. Keller says that after he completes his term in prison he would help Steve begin a new life.

Chris' honesty and his idealistic qualities impress Ann. In Ann's view Chris is doing nothing wrong if he creates in Jim a desire to get better. According to Ann if Chris spends his father's money, he is also helping his father with his work.

Ann is embarrassed to meet Kellers' neighbours as she remembers the neighbours calling her father and her family 'murderers' and does not want to face humiliation again. Ann trusts Keller and is not prepared to believe Sue's words that Keller was guilty in the defective cylinder case. She learns that everyone in the locality believes that Keller is involved in the fraud. Ann knows that Chris would not have forgiven his father had he been involved in the case. Ann trusts Chris as much as Chris trusts his father.

Ann patiently tries to convince Kate to allow her to marry Chris and not to make him feel guilty of his intentions to marry her merely because she believes that Larry is alive. Ann requests Kate to accept the death of Larry. She tells Kate that she wanted to show Larry's letter to her not to hurt Kate's feeling but only to prove that Larry was dead. Ann had known in advance from the letter that Joe Keller was as much guilty as her father, but was living in denial despite knowing the fact that her former lover Larry had committed suicide shamed by his father's involvement in killing his fellow pilots. Her desperation to get married to Chris did not allow her to reveal the truth about Keller's crime. She does not want to become a villain for the Keller family by getting Keller arrested. '...she refrains from impeaching Keller until she feels compelled to do so in order to save her relationship with Chris. Her motives are selfish, governed primarily by a fundamental drive for self preservation.' (Steven R. Centola's 'All My Sons' in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller* edited by C. Bigsby). Being insecure she wants love and shelter in the Keller household. She shares with Chris that she has nowhere to go and would accompany him wherever he wishes to go. Ann is successful in clearing the way for their marriage without the feeling of guilt. Assuring Chris that she would not ask him to go against his father by handing him to the concerned authorities.

4.1.5 George Deever

Steve Deever's son George is a lawyer by profession and a veteran of World War II. He comes to the Keller' home after visiting his father serving imprisonment

in Columbus. Being idealistic, George disowns his father, feeling disgusted with his father's shameful offence. However, George gets to know about the truth of the defective cylinder case and the cunningness of Keller. He regrets the fact that he had lost touch with his father and had not seen him even after coming back from the war. He arrives at the Keller's house to prevent Ann's marriage with Chris and bring her back to New York.

The news of George's meeting with his father Steve Deever brings apprehensions to Joe Keller and his wife Kate. Joe Keller fears that George Deever might reopen the case which would put him in prison. Accused by Steve Deever several times during the trial of supplying defective cylinder heads to the army and now George's visit to his father in prison makes Joe Keller speculate about their intentions. George is a threat to Keller, his role is that of catalyst for the truth to emerge. Kate has her own apprehensions about George's visit to her house making her wonder why he went all the way from New York to Columbia to meet his father and now was coming to visit them. It surprises her that a person who had never written to his father for the last three years suddenly goes to visit him after he becomes a lawyer.

George wants to know from Ann if she would still marry Chris after hearing about the truth of Joe Keller's slyness. George finds Keller very clever to have told Deever on the phone that he would take full responsibility for supplying the damaged cylinder heads and then denying during the trial knowing very well that whatever he had said on the phone could not be proved. George alleges Chris of pretending to be ignorant despite knowing about the fraud that his father had committed. He accuses Kate of hiding the facts that she knew about her husband. Accusing her father of lying at the spur of the moment, Ann is not satisfied with George's argument against Keller of committing fraud. Ann refuses to accompany George to New York unless Chris would ask her to leave because she had come to his house on Chris's invitation. Arguing about the truth of the case with Chris, George leaves no stone unturned to prove Keller's involvement in the case but fails to convince Chris.

George is tactful in dealing with Keller. Instead of showing his fury towards him he talks to him calmly enquiring about his business. Only when Keller shows his sympathy towards his former partner Steve Deever, George gets furious and says that his father hates Keller's guts. Yet George is easily disarmed by Keller's good humour and Kate's kindness shown to him. He recalls how happy he was growing up in a homely atmosphere. He recollects the good times and the closeness the Deevers and the Kellers had shared. A pacified George even seems ready to accept Keller's version of the defective cylinder case but Kate inadvertently lets out the secret, saying that 'Joe hasn't been laid up in fifteen years' (*All My Sons*, p.69). Thereby confirming the facts told to him by his father. Though George is unable to get the truth out from Keller, he does build tension in the minds of Kate, Joe, Chris and Ann.

Sue finds George blunt when she refuses to see his old home bought by them. He bluntly comments:

George (removing his hat): You're the people who bought our house, aren't you?

Sue: That's right. Come and see what we did with it before you leave.

George (walks down and away from her): I liked it the way it was. (*All My Sons*, p.54)

George again replies bluntly on noticing the stump of the apple-tree.

George:The tree got thick, didn't they? (Points to stump) What's that?

Chris: Blew down last night. We had it there for Larry. You know.

George: Why, afraid you'll forget him? (*All My Sons*, 55)

4.2 MINOR CHARACTERS

The minor characters such as Dr. Jim Bayliss, Sue Bayliss, Frank Lubey, Lydia Lubey and Bert serve to further the action of the play, comment on the main characters, add depth to the main issues and also bring humour to the otherwise sombre play '*All My Sons*'.

4.2.1 Dr. Jim Bayliss

Dr. Jim is Sue's husband and a close friend and neighbour of Joe Keller. He does not want his son to become a doctor like himself because he believes that doctors do not have a high income like film actors.

His conversation with Frank makes it clear to us about what he thinks of his profession:

Frank: That boy's going to be a real doctor; he is smart.

Jim: Over my dead body he'll be a doctor. A good beginning, too.

Frank: Why, it's an honourable profession.....you could help humanity,.....

Jim: I would love to help humanity on a Warner Brothers salary. (*All My Sons*, 5)

Having no belief in astrology, Jim criticises Frank saying that Frank is completely out of his mind to believe that by reading Larry's horoscope he could find out if Larry was alive. According to Frank, Jim is a person who does not believe in anything.

Being aware of his money-minded wife, Jim jokingly gives a piece of advice to Ann saying that after she gets married she should never count her husband's earnings. Chris is fond of Jim and mentions about him to Ann in his letters he wrote to her. Jim is equally fond of Chris. Jim tells Ann that Chris was nicknamed Mother McKeller by the soldiers who found him kind and affectionate.

Although Jim suspects that Joe is as guilty as Deever, he likes the Kellers. He even tries to protect the Kellers 'from George Deever's hostile accusation and the family's ultimate confrontation over the truth'Jim tries to shield the family, particularly Chris, from the truth not only because he longs to protect them, but also because he needs to sustain the illusion of their perfection..... Having already watched "The star of (his) honesty.... go out." Jim knows he is lost "in the usual darkness"(p.118). If he no longer has the illusory image of Chris's perfection to drive and inspire him, he will find it impossible "to remember the

kind of man he wanted to be” (pg-118). Therefore, he lives in denial like the other characters in the play. (Steven R. Centola’s ‘All My Sons’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller* edited by Christopher Bigsby, p.58)

Seeing George in a nasty mood, a sensible Jim asks George to be seated in the car that he deliberately parks at a distance from the house. Later he goes to inform Chris that George is furious and would burst into rage any time. Jim does not want George to explode in front of Kate who is unwell. Knowing his state of mind Jim is scared of some violent incidence to take place. He tells Chris that he can see blood in George’s eyes therefore it would not be right to bring him home.

Jim shows his concern for Kate after a disturbed Chris leaves the house assuring her that he would come back. Jim knows Chris well. In his opinion Chris is not the kind of person who could accept the facts about his father’s crime at once. It will take him some time to swallow the bitter pill. He says that Chris will reconcile to the situation slowly. Jim Bayliss has idealistic notions that is awakened by Chris. Inspired by him he once left his wife to do medical research but eventually had to go back home as his wife wanted him to earn money in order to live a lavish life.

4.2.2 Sue Bayliss

Jim’s wife Sue Bayliss, a practical and jovial woman is about forty years old. She never lets her husband go out of her sight for longer than she can help. She had supported her husband financially while he was an intern and now she expects more than gratitude in return. Sue knows the truth about Joe Keller and also reveals the neighbourhood’s awareness about Keller having manipulated the court’s acquittal, yet she along with her husband continue to share the relation of close friends with the Kellers. ‘Sue Bayliss even expresses admiration for Keller for pulling a fast one to get out of jail.’ (Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* in *Arthur Miller’s Collected Plays*, p.94)

A straight forward woman, Sue complains to Ann that her husband had refused to take her to the beach saying that it was very hot. She tells her that this did not deter him from going to the airport to pick up George. She further says that men did anything for their neighbours but not for their wives. Inquisitive in nature, Sue is quite eager to know whether Ann’s brother George was coming to give away Ann in marriage. Sue thinks that Ann has chosen Chris as her husband because he is monetarily sound. For Sue, money makes all the difference in life. She deeply resents Chris’ friendship with her husband, a successful doctor accusing Chris of misleading Jim by suggesting to him to do medical research. According to Sue it is an impractical choice as it would bring a meagre income. She is afraid that if Jim devotes time in medical research they would be denied all the comforts of life. She says every time Jim has a session with Chris he feels as if he is compromising by not giving up medical practice for medical research. In Sue’s opinion everyone in the world does something wrong. Sue shares the same belief with Keller— that of family responsibility. In her opinion Chris wants to make people better than it is possible for them to be.

Sue thinks that Chris is a hypocrite enjoying all the comforts of life, taking money from his father’s business regularly, despite knowing that his father had earned it dishonestly. Sue says she does not have anything personal against Keller but if

Chris wants people to be ideal by sacrificing their comforts, he should first give up his comforts. Sue dislikes Chris and his father's inflated sense of self importance.

4.2.3 Frank Lubey

Frank Lubey is Lydia's husband and a friend and neighbour of Joe Keller. He is thirty-two years of age but already getting bald. A practical man like Keller, Frank had earned a good deal of money by property transactions. Frank does not read the newspaper because he believes that there is always bad news in the newspaper. He believes in astrology and by insisting that Larry's horoscope could reveal the truth, he keeps Kate's hopes of Larry's survival alive. A superstitious Frank sees certain significance in the fallen apple tree that had been snapped by the wind in the same month in which Larry was born. Frank's wife Lydia finds him very useful in fixing faulty toasters and other gadgets while Sue calls him 'Thomas Edison'.

Frank believes that a doctor's profession is honourable as doctors can serve humanity by researching in medicine. In Frank's opinion, for an intelligent man like Ann's father in prison, there should be a law that can either you execute him or release him with minor penalty. While George Chris and Larry were fighting in the war, he courted Lydia and produced three children. Frank missed joining the war because when the army had kept the maximum age limit as twenty seven, Frank was twenty eight and when the army raised the age limit to twenty eight, Frank had already become twenty-nine. Thereafter, he took up astrology.

4.2.4 Lydia Lubey

Lydia Lubey is a 'robust laughing girl', she is admired for her good looks and is also praised for her creativity and talents. Lydia is charming, affectionate and has great warmth. She is addressed fondly by George as 'Laughy'. The former girlfriend of George, Lydia married Frank when George went off to the war and did not return home after his father's imprisonment. When George comes to confront the Kellers and prevents Ann's marriage with Chris, he realises that he had lost everything including Lydia.

4.2.5 Bert

Eight year old Bert is the son of Frank and Lydia and is quite friendly with Keller. Keller tells him that there is a jail in the basement of his house. This annoys Kate. They play games in which Keller pretends to be a police officer while Bert acts as a policeman keeping watch on the objectionable elements in their neighbourhood.

4.3 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the major and minor characters of the play *All My Sons* in detail who influence the plot of the play.

4.4 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the character of Joe Keller.

2. Evaluate the character of Chris Keller.
3. Write short notes on the minor characters in the play *All My Sons*.

4.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

Bigsby C.W.E. *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1984.

Hoffman Daniel, *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*. Oxford University Press. 1979.



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