

Credits

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Introduction

Reading the play

All My Sons is short enough to be read aloud in its entirety in only a couple of lessons. You may decide to read the play straight through the first time in order to give students the opportunity to experience Miller's control of tension and to maintain a sense of the play as theatre. On the other hand, you may find it useful to pause at several key moments in the drama to reflect on, for example, the presentation of character, the themes and moral issues being explored, and Miller's development and control of the tension. The following approaches to reading and studying the play would all work well.

1. A quick read-through, followed by slower, more analytical study, using a selection of activities provided in this resource.
2. A quick-read through, pausing at a few key moments (suggestions i-vii below), followed by fuller activities.
 - i. Before reading activities (see pages 9-13).
 - ii. Pause at the end of 'Now stop it!' to discuss the development of tension and drama (see page 23).
 - iii. At the end of 'Section 6 – Gradual revelations', choose a key line and collect together themes which seem to be emerging (see page 27).
 - iv. At the end of Act 1, use the open questions on page 32 in class discussion to share understanding of, and response to, the first act.
 - v. After 'Section 11 – The truth revealed', discuss:
 - the revelation
 - the characters and their reaction to the revelation
 - the themes, issues and ideas explored and dramatised by Miller
 - the dramaturgy and structure of the play.
 - vi. End of Act 2: predict the end of the play, with reasons why. This could be tackled as a drama activity, with students in groups, improvising their ending.
 - vii. End of Act 3: a response chain as explained on page 44 and a series of tableaux (between three and six still pictures) to represent the key points in the play.
3. A stage-by-stage read-through, incorporating detailed study into the reading.

A group approach to reading

For the purposes of close analysis, this resource divides *All My Sons* into 14 roughly equal 'sections', with activities relating to each segment.

The tables below and on pages 6-8, provide a way of dividing each of the 14 main sections into further sub-sections (referred to as 'passages' throughout this material) suitable for preparation and performance by small groups. You may decide to use this approach throughout the reading of the play or to draw on it at points where you think experiencing the play as drama is particularly important. Before beginning to prepare their passage each student should have read the whole of the section. This could be done in students' own time for homework. The tables indicate the number of speaking parts in each passage; if there are more students in the class than there are speaking parts, it is always useful to have observers to comment on the interpretation of the play being suggested in the performance. The reading itself can be done in many ways, for example rehearsed readings, edited versions, specific drama activities or just reading in groups.

Section 1 – The opening stage direction

This is a short section which could be read and discussed as a class or in small groups.

Section 2 – The introduction of Keller and the neighbours

From **Jim**: 'Where's your tobacco?' to **Lydia**: 'Sh! sh!' [*She exits, laughing*].

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From Jim : 'Where's your tobacco?' to Jim : [<i>Softly, with wonder, as he scans the page</i>] 'Pssst!'	From Frank : [<i>Noticing the tree</i>] 'Hey, what happened to your tree?' to Frank : 'I didn't even see you.'	From Keller : 'Is he talkin' sense?' to Jim : '... there's not a damn thing to look at.'	From the stage direction [<i>Sue, Jim's wife enters</i>] to Sue : [<i>laughing, pointing at him</i>] 'Now you said it!'	From the stage direction [<i>Lydia Lubey enters</i>] to Lydia : 'Sh! sh!' [<i>She exits, laughing</i>].
Keller, Jim, Frank	Keller, Frank (Jim non-speaking)	Keller, Jim, Frank	Keller, Jim, Sue	Keller, Lydia, Frank, Sue

Section 3 – The introduction of Chris

From [*Chris watches her off. He is thirty-two*] to **Keller**: 'Yeah. I can see that.'

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From the stage direction [<i>Chris watches her off</i>] to [<i>Keller chuckles and winks at Chris, who is enjoying all this</i>].	From Keller : 'Yeah, that's a dangerous character, that Tommy' to Chris : 'No, I – I figured the best thing was to leave her alone.' [<i>Pause</i>]	From Keller : [<i>deeply touched</i>] 'She cried hard?' to Chris : 'I'm going to ask her to marry me.' [<i>Slight pause</i>]	From Keller : 'Well, that's only your business, Chris.' to Chris : 'Do you know? I don't!' [<i>Pause</i>]	From Chris : 'All right, then, Dad.' to Keller : 'Yeah. I can see that.'
Keller, Chris, Bert	Keller, Chris, Bert	Keller, Chris	Keller, Chris	Keller, Chris

Section 4 – The introduction of Mother

From **stage direction** [*Mother appears on porch*] to the end of **Mother's** speech: 'Now stop it!'

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From the stage direction [<i>Mother appears on porch</i>] to [<i>He sits in one of the chairs</i>].	From the stage direction [<i>Mother comes out on last line</i>] to Chris : 'Can I get you an aspirin?'	From the stage direction [<i>Mother puts her hand to her head</i>] to [<i>He goes up into the house with new spirit. Her smile vanishes</i>].	From Mother : [<i>With an accusing undertone</i>] to Mother : 'Look at it; look.'	From the end of Mother's speech: [<i>She sits on bench</i>]. 'Joe –' to end of Mother's speech: 'Now stop it!'
Keller, Chris, Mother	Keller, Chris, Mother	Keller, Chris, Mother	Keller, Mother	Keller, Mother, Bert

Section 5 – The introduction of Ann

From **stage direction** [*As Ann and Chris appear on porch*] to **Mother's** line: 'I have to have some tea.'

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From the stage direction [<i>As Ann and Chris appear on porch</i>] to Ann : 'Oh, excuse me!'	From the stage direction [<i>Jim has come to fence and is looking over it</i>] to Ann : 'That's a funny thing to say; how could I help remembering him?'	From Mother : [<i>– it is drawing to a head the wrong way for her</i>] to the stage direction [<i>They are laughing</i>].	From the stage direction [<i>Ann takes pan of beans off stool</i>] to Chris : 'Yes, I am.'	From Mother : 'Well if you're sure then you're sure.' to Mother : 'I have to have some tea.'
Keller, Chris, Mother, Ann, Sue (as voice off-stage)	Jim, Chris, Ann, Mother, Sue (voice off-stage), (Keller non-speaking)	Keller, Chris, Mother, Ann	Chris, Mother, Ann, (Keller non-speaking)	Chris, Mother, Ann, (Keller non-speaking)

Section 6 – Gradual revelations

From the **stage direction** [*Frank appears, carrying ladder*] to the **stage direction** [*He exits, laughing, into house*].

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
From the stage direction [<i>Frank appears, carrying ladder</i>] to the stage direction [<i>Ann rises and comes to Keller</i>].	From Ann : [<i>wondrously at them, happy</i>] 'Gosh, it's wonderful to hear you' to the end of Keller's speech: 'You hear me?'	From Ann : [<i>surprised</i>] 'Don't you hold anything against him?' to the stage direction [<i>Mother turns and goes into house</i>].	From the end of Keller's speech: 'Now look, Annie.' to the stage direction [<i>He exits, laughing, into house</i>].
Keller, Chris, Mother, Ann, Frank	Keller, Chris, Mother, Ann	Keller, Chris, Mother, Ann	Chris, Ann, Keller

Section 7 – 'A kind of – responsibility'

From **Chris**: [*calling after him*] 'Drink your tea, Casanova.' to the **stage direction** [*They kiss. Keller enters from the house*].

The whole of this section is a conversation between Ann and Chris. It is unusual in the play both because of its extended nature and because there is no on-stage audience for it.

Rather than groups working on different, consecutive extracts from the passage, students could prepare the conversation in pairs, before performing one or two versions to the class. It would be interesting to begin the analysis of this section with a discussion of the range of ways it is possible to play the two characters in this extended, intimate conversation.

Section 8 – 'The boy is coming'

From **Keller**: [*thumbing towards the house*] 'Hey, Ann, your brother' – to the end of Act 1.

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From Keller : [<i>thumbing towards the house</i>] 'Hey, Ann, your brother –' to the stage direction during Chris's speech [<i>With misgivings, Ann goes up and into house</i>].	From half way through Chris's speech: 'We're getting married, Dad' to Keller : [<i>breaking in</i>] 'All right, forget it, forget it.'	From the stage direction in Keller's speech [<i>With great force, moving about</i>] to the end of Keller's speech: 'Champagne, tuxedos –'	From the stage direction [<i>He breaks off as Ann's voice comes out loud from the house</i>] to Ann : [<i>as she and Chris exit up driveway</i>] 'See you.'	From the stage direction [<i>Mother comes down towards Keller, her eyes fixed on him</i>] to the end of Act 1.
Keller, Ann, Chris	Keller, Ann, Chris	Keller, Chris	Keller, Ann, Chris, Mother	Keller, Mother

Section 9 – ‘A father is a father’

From the beginning of Act 2 to the end of **Keller’s** ‘song’: ‘Oh, come on up, come on up, and come my lady’s hair –’

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F
From the beginning of Act 2 to the end of Chris’s line: ‘Let me know when George gets here.’	From the stage direction [<i>He goes into the house</i>] to the end of Ann’s speech: ‘It’s something very important to me.’	From Ann : ‘Certainly, if I can do it.’ to end of Sue’s speech: ‘I’m at the end of my rope on it!’	From the stage direction [<i>Chris enters on porch, wearing shirt and tie now</i>] to the stage direction [<i>They embrace as Keller appears on porch</i>]	From the end of stage direction [<i>Ann simply studies him</i>] to Keller’s line: ‘No, a partner. A good job.’	From the stage direction [<i>Pause. He sees she’s shocked, a little mystified</i>] to the end of Keller’s ‘song’: ‘Oh, come on up, come on up, and come my lady’s hair –’
Chris, Mother, Ann	Sue, Ann	Sue, Ann	Chris, Sue, Ann	Chris, Sue, Ann	Chris, Keller, Ann, Lydia

Section 10 – The arrival of George

From the **stage direction** [*Jim Bayliss rounds corner of driveway, walking rapidly*] to the end of **Ann’s** speech: [*She hears footsteps.*] ‘Shsh!’

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
From the stage direction [<i>Jim Bayliss rounds corner of driveway, walking rapidly</i>] to Jim and Sue’s exit.	From Chris [<i>calling after them</i>] to Ann : [<i>quickly, to forestall an outburst</i>] Sit down, dear. Don’t be angry, what’s the matter?	From the stage direction [<i>He allows her to seat him, looking at her</i>] to the end of Ann’s speech: ‘You know how quick he can lie.’	From George : [<i>turning to Chris, with deliberation</i>] ‘I’ll ask you something...’ to the end of Ann’s speech: [<i>She hears footsteps</i>] ‘Shsh!’
Chris, Sue, Jim, George, Ann	Ann, Chris, George	Ann, Chris, George	Ann, Chris, George

Section 11 – The truth revealed

From the **stage direction** [*Mother enters on porch*] to the end of **George’s** speech: ‘What happened that day, Joe?’

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From the stage direction [<i>Mother enters on porch</i>] to end of Mother’s speech: ‘The wind came along and –’	From the stage direction [<i>Lydia enters on porch</i>] to Mother : [<i>as a reprimand</i>] ‘She’s beautiful, you damned fool!’	From George : [<i>looks around longingly</i>] to Mother : [<i>to George</i>] ‘He never shot anybody.’	From the stage direction [<i>They all burst out laughing</i>] to Keller : ‘Then remember them, remember them.’	From the stage direction [<i>Ann comes out of house</i>] to George : ‘What happened that day, Joe?’
George, Chris, Mother, Ann	George, Chris, Mother, Ann, Lydia	Keller, George, Chris, Mother, Ann (one line)	Keller, George, Chris, Mother	Keller, George, Chris, Mother, Ann

Section 12 – The conclusion of Act 2

From the **stage direction** [*Frank enters briskly from driveway*] to the end of Act 2.

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From the stage direction [<i>Frank enters briskly from driveway</i>] to the end of Frank's speech: 'That's known, that's known, Chris!'	From Mother : 'Why isn't it possible, why isn't it possible, Chris!' to the stage direction [<i>They disappear up the driveway</i>].	From Chris : [<i>turning to his Mother</i>] What do mean... to the stage direction at the end of Mother's speech: [<i>Beyond control, she hurries up and into the house</i>].	From Keller : [<i>– Chris has not moved</i>] to Chris : 'I'm listening. God Almighty, I'm listening!'	From Keller : [<i>– their movements now are those of subtle pursuit and escape</i>] to the end of Act 2.
Chris, Mother, Frank	George, Chris, Mother, Ann, Frank (one line)	Keller, Chris, Mother	Keller, Chris (and voiceover for stage directions)	Keller, Chris

Section 13

From the opening of the Act to the **stage direction** [*Keller grabs letter from Chris's hand and reads it*].

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
From the opening of the act to the stage direction [<i>Jim exits up driveway</i>].	From Keller : [<i>coming down</i>] 'What does he want here?' to Mother : 'I know, darling, I know.'	From the stage direction [<i>Ann enters from house</i>] to Ann : 'Kate, dear, I'm so sorry ... I'm so sorry.'	From the stage direction [<i>Chris enters from driveway</i>] to Ann : 'Then I will!'	From the stage direction [<i>Keller enters from house</i>] to the stage direction [<i>Keller grabs letter from Chris's hand and reads it</i>].
George, Chris, Mother, Ann	Mother, Keller	Keller, Mother, Ann	Ann, Chris, Mother	Keller, Chris, Mother, Ann

Section 14 – The end of the play

From the **stage direction** [*After a long pause*] to the end of the play.

This is a short section. Groups could be given different directions, for example: to play the end as sympathetic to Keller, with a sense of hope, with a sense of despair. These interpretations could form the starting point for a wider discussion of the students' readings of the text.

Before reading

Miller's drama – conflicts and challenges

In his 'Introduction' to *The Collected Plays*, Arthur Miller explained what he wanted to explore in drama.

I take it that if one could know enough about a human being one could discover some conflict, some value, some challenge, however minor or major, which he cannot find it in himself to walk away from or turn his back on.

'Introduction', *The Collected Plays*

Before discovering more about the conflict, value or challenge facing the main characters in *All My Sons*, you are going to discuss some 'what if' scenarios to help you think about such conflicts.

- In pairs, or small groups, discuss these possible scenarios and decide what would be the moral thing to do.

Scenario 1 What if.....?

...your closest friend swears you to secrecy, then admits that, in a moment of madness, he was the person who stole the data projector from your classroom. Because the teachers don't feel that they are able to trust the students any more, everyone is locked out of the classrooms at breaks and lunchtimes and everyone is suffering. But if your friend is found out, he will be expelled. He has a hard time at home and you know that this would be the last straw – his parents would be likely to throw him out. What should you do?

Scenario 2 What if.....?

...there has been a major terrorist attack in Central London. Water supplies have been affected and within hours the shops have been stripped bare of all the bottled water, as people rush to get supplies. You and your family happen to have a large quantity of bottled water left over from a party, enough to last you for up to three weeks. The crisis may well last as long as that. You discover that several families on your road have hardly any water at all. What should you do?

Scenario 3 What if...?

You and a friend have been involved in a scam, defrauding the authorities by claiming benefits you are not entitled to. It was your idea: you thought it was foolproof and you persuaded your friend to do it too. Now she has been caught out and is facing a possible prison sentence. If she goes to jail, her children will have to go into care. If you own up, she might just get a caution or a fine. But you also have a family, all of whom are depending on you. What should you do?

Scenario 4 What if....?

You are a business executive, working for a big cosmetics company. You do lots of foreign travel for your job. Flying is much the quickest and easiest way to do it. But you have found out that travelling by air is seriously jeopardising the environment. What should you do?

- With another pair, compare your views on the moral choices involved in these scenarios.
- As a whole class, talk about these situations and whether they might make good subjects for drama and, if so, why. Do you think difficult moral dilemmas make better drama than easy ones? Discuss the reasons for your views.

The context

Arthur Miller said of *All My Sons*:

It was conceived in wartime and begun in wartime; the spectacle of human sacrifice in contrast with aggrandizement is a sharp and heartbreaking one. At a time when all public voices were announcing the arrival of that great day when industry and labor were one, my personal experience was daily demonstrating that beneath the slogans very little had changed. In this sense the play was a response to what I felt 'in the air'. It was an unveiling of what I believed everybody knew and nobody publicly said. At the same time, however, I believed I was bringing news, and it was news which I half expected would be denied as truth.

When, in effect, it was accepted, I was gratified, but a little surprised.

- In groups, talk about what you think Arthur Miller is talking about here. Speculate about the themes you think his drama might explore.
- As a class, come up with a list of possible moral dilemmas facing individuals in times of war.

Creating a drama

The following article is an edited version of a piece by Richard Norton-Taylor that was published in *the Guardian* newspaper on 19th December, 2006.

Unforgivable body armour delays caused soldier's death, says coroner **Army's failure to equip troops condemned**

A tank commander was killed in Iraq because of 'unforgivable and inexcusable' delays by the government in providing body armour to British troops, the coroner at his inquest ruled yesterday.

Sergeant Steven Roberts was accidentally shot dead by one of his comrades when a checkpoint he was manning near Basra came under attack in March 2003.

Delays in distributing enhanced body armour, costing £167 per person, meant more than 2,000 soldiers went into combat without it, the inquest was told.

Oxfordshire assistant deputy coroner Andrew Walker said: 'To send soldiers into a combat zone without the appropriate basic equipment is, in my view, unforgivable and inexcusable, and represents a breach of trust that the soldiers have in those who govern them.'

'Enhanced combat body armour was a basic piece of protective equipment. I have heard justification and excuse, and I put these to one side as I remind myself that Sgt Roberts lost his life because he did not have that basic piece of equipment.'

'Sgt Roberts's death was as a result of delay and serious failures in the acquisition and support chain that resulted in a significant shortage within his fighting unit of enhanced combat body armour, none

being available for him to wear.'...

The inquest was told that 'serious failings' in army supply and training systems meant he had to give up his personal body armour three days before his death.

The inquest was told that in September 2002, Geoff Hoon, then the defence secretary, was informed - six months before the invasion - that 37,000 extra sets of camouflaged body armour were needed.

The then director of capability, resources and scrutiny at the Ministry of Defence told the inquest that companies could not be asked to bid to supply the equipment at the time. Senior MoD officials have said that ministers did not want it to appear that they had already decided to join the US-led invasion.

- In pairs, talk about how you might use this situation in a drama exploring the moral dilemmas facing individuals in times of war. Some of the characters who might face such a dilemma include:
 - the Prime Minister
 - the Defence Secretary
 - a senior official at the Ministry of Defence
 - a Civil Servant aware that troops have not been provided with adequate body armour
 - the director of one of the companies bidding for the contract
 - Head of the Armed Forces
 - the Commander-in-Chief of the individual soldier
 - the soldier who shot Sergeant Steven Roberts.
- Whose dilemma do you think would make the most interesting or powerful drama?
- Share your ideas in class discussion.