

## *Main themes in relation to main characters*

All My Sons is a play written by the American playwright Arthur Miller. It is a social play that discusses issues that are found in real life. Miller wants to convey major themes which are the effect of war on society, the generation gap, individual versus community, options of crime and punishment and love as well.

The influence of war on the American society is very clear. War has a great effect on people. It seems that the society is corrupted by war because justice becomes injustice. This is shown when Keller proves that he is not guilty and he comes out as a "hero". In addition, there is no fair trial for Steve. Life is unjust because only the strong survives and "survival for the fittest". Moreover, the society becomes superficial, materialistic, practical and hypocritical as well. People accept a criminal simply because he has money and they forget all about innocents whose rights are destroyed. Moreover, the society has become like a "land of great big dogs" which eat each other. In addition, the society is like a "zoo" that is full of wild animals which do not care if they kill someone by accident or a criminal who goes unpunished. People struggle for keeping superficial appearances. In other words, people want to fulfil the American dream which is having a wife, children and a good business. People like to show off by their wealth and they know nothing about the bitterness of war. In addition, society sees war as a "bus accident" and they never see the destruction of war.

War also kills Keller's feelings. He becomes greedy and selfish as well. He has a talent of ignoring things. All he wants to fulfil is the American dream. He cares only for making a profit out of war for the sake of keeping his business. He fights to keep his business for securing his family. Consequently, he gives up morals and his responsibility towards his society. As a result, he does not feel guilty for committing such a crime. Unlike Chris who feels guilty for surviving a war. Chris' idealism is an outcome of war. He has tasted the bitterness of war. He has seen a mutual self-sacrifice and real brotherhood from his fellows of war. As a result, he learns how to be idealistic and he begins to think about others before thinking about himself. In other words, he feels responsible for his society and he rejects selfishness. That is why he does not enjoy his father's money as if they were covered with blood. What is more, he hesitates in marrying Ann who is the sweet heart of his lost brother. Moreover, the war obliges Kate to believe in astrology in order to provide her with hope that her son will come back. In other words, she has to mix illusion with reality in order to console herself.

Miller wants to highlight another major theme which is the generation gap. It seems that the parents fail to understand their children and vice versa. In Keller's family, Keller and Chris lack understanding. Keller believes that money and his family is his only responsibility. He does his best to make a profit out of war. This leads him to kill twenty one pilots. What is more, he ignores his guilt. For the sake of his family, he gives up his responsibility towards his society. In

other words, he neglects his role towards his society. In contrast to Chris who believes that his duties towards his society is much important than loving his family. Moreover, he is selfless and believes in self-sacrifice. His idealism prevents him from forgiving his father. In other words, he fails to understand his father's point of view about loving his family so much rather than his duties towards society. Kate also fails in understanding Chris. She wants him not to marry Ann because she believes in Larry's return. However, Chris tries to make her believe in Larry's death. In addition, both Kate and Keller fail to understand their son Larry. They fail to understand that he has committed suicide because his father is unable to understand him. Larry thinks that his suicide will make his father feel guilty for not being responsible for others.

In Steve's family, George and Ann misunderstand their father. They believe that he is guilty and he needs no sympathy. They refuse to forgive him. They leave him rotten in jail. In addition, they do not want to believe that he is innocent. In other words, they decide to kill their father who does not deserve to be killed by his own children. However, George decides not to be blind anymore. He begins to understand his father. Consequently, he decides to fight for his father's innocence and to ask for his rights. Moreover, he understands that his old and weak father deserve pity. However, Ann refuses to understand him. She wants him to be punished. She does not want to understand that he is in a bad need of her and her brother. This lack of understanding between the father and his children makes both of them suffer.

Another major theme is individual versus community. Both Keller and Chris believe in their duties and responsibilities. However, every one of them see his duty according to his principles, Keller is self-centred and practical. He does not see anything except his family. He ignores the fact that he has duties towards his society. In other words, he isolates himself from the society and he gives up responsibilities towards others. That is why he fails to see his role as an individual who has duties towards his country in contrast to Chris who is so idealistic. In war, he learns how to sacrifice his life for the sake of others. He is ready to kill himself for anybody and he believes that he has roles towards people. Business and money are not so important for him. He believes in honesty and honour. Moreover, he still keeps morals and principles. Moreover, he wants people to be idealistic and to give up their cruelty. In other words, he wants people to realize their duties and roles in life towards every single member in their society.

Miller also wants to convey a major theme which is social responsibility. When Chris blames his father for committing such a crime, Keller refuses to believe in his mistakes. Keller thinks that he has tried to fulfil his duties towards his family. In other words, he has to save his business because he has responsibilities towards his family. However, he is blind to his guilt until Chris reads Larry's letter. Consequently, Keller feels guilty for killing such young men like his son. In other words, Larry's suicide makes him feel responsible for his

society. As a result, he decides to commit suicide when he knows that he is blind to his role and his social responsibility. Dr Jim also feels that he has a role towards his family. He fails his dreams in order to fulfil his role as a father and a husband. He feels responsible for his children. As a result, he gives up his dreams. In addition, George also feels responsible for his father. He opens his eyes to see that he has to fulfil his role as a son. That is why he wants to bring the hidden truth to light in order to console his father.

Crime and options of punishment is an important issue which Miller wants to discuss. It seems that George and Ann's refusal to see their father in jail is a real and cruel punishment. They decide to cut off all their communications. They see him a criminal who does not deserve any mercy. As a result, he is left rotten in jail and deprived of his children. Keller is also punished by his sons, Larry and Chris. Larry has committed suicide for two reasons. First, he wants his father to learn responsibility. In other words, Larry's death makes him open his eyes to see his role as an individual. Thus, Larry's suicide makes his father feel guilty for committing such a crime. Larry wants him to feel that he is one of those who are killed by his hands. Chris also punishes his father. He blames his father bitterly and wildly. Moreover, he does not want to sympathize or understand him. In other words, he wants to send him to jail. Consequently, Keller could not handle his sons' punishments. He finds them cruel because they have no mercy and they fail to understand him. His sons make him feel guilty. As a result, he commits suicide because he fails to bare his guilt.

Love is a minor theme which Miller wants to convey. Miller draws his play with colours of love. First, there is love between a wife and a husband. Kate is a wife who loves her husband and cares about him. Keller is a good father who loves his family. Sue is also a loving wife who tries to care about her family. Moreover, Chris loves both his father and mother. He respects his father who represents his "star". In addition, Chris sympathizes with him at the end of the play. Moreover, Larry and Ann have been in love and they are supposed to get married. Moreover, Kate loves her son Larry and she does not want to encounter the reality of his death. As a result, she still believes that Larry is going to return for his loving mother.

In conclusion, Arthur Miller has succeeded in conveying his messages. In addition, the themes are very clear throughout the whole play. The themes aim to treat the ills of the American society.