

Twentieth Century American Drama
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Lecture - 15
Arthur Miller's All My Sons - Part 1

Hello and welcome to yet another session of this course on Twentieth Century American Drama. So, we are beginning a new play. We are beginning to discuss Arthur Miller's All My Sons, and this also needs to be read in continuation with the previous play, Death of a Salesman.

And, as we progress, we will also begin to see that there are certain kinds of continuities and some departures and given that you know, this play was written and produced at 2 different phases in terms of Arthur Miller's career as well as in terms of his theatrical exposure.

You will find that certain themes which were beginning to gain strength in Death of a Salesman they become more central in all senses. It is also more direct critique of the American dream, and we also find that in terms of the attitude in terms of the belief systems and value systems which are attributed to particular characters, and they also emerge in stronger terms when we come to All My Sons.

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Introduction

- ▶ The play was written in 1946.
- ▶ After the failure of his first play *The Man who had All the Luck*, depressed Miller decided if his next play is not a success he would quit writing and "find some other line of work".
- ▶ Directed for Broadway by Elia Kazan, a friend of Arthur Miller.
- ▶ It was a success and gave Miller financial stability and confidence to continue as a playwright.
- ▶ Accolades:
 - New York Drama Critic's Circle Award for Best Play
 - Tony Award for Best Author
 - Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play.


This play was written in 1946, and significantly this was one of also one of the plays which gave Miller a lot of financial stability and confidence to continue as a playwright. So, we find that, in some sense, this becomes a very significant play in his career, not just in terms of the thematic connections but also in terms of his fulfilment as a playwright.

And, this was directed for Broadway as well, and we did see the significance of plays becoming you know, really big heads in Broadway in some terms, you know, the roles of bridging the gap between what drama is as a genre and what it becomes translated as when it becomes you know a performance. So, this was also, you know much acclaimed play critically. It won a lot of popular awards as well.

And, in terms of its foregrounding of the theme of the American dream, we find that it drew a lot of attention in popular culture. It drew a lot of it you know gave rise to a lot of critical debates, and he was summoned before committees to discuss the kind of critique which was getting leveraged to the play. So, the significance was multi-layered.


And, we also find that in terms of laying the foundations of the critical foundations of American drama as a genre, this play also had played a major role in that sense.

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NPTEL

- Set in Post- World War II period.
- **Based upon a true story** of a manufacturing conspiracy, in which a private company convinced army inspection officers to approve defective aircraft engines intended for military use during World War II.
- Major Theme: Criticism of American Dream.
- Influenced by Henrik Ibsen's play *The Wild Duck*.



So, this setting becomes very important. This is set in the post you know, Second World War period. The trauma of war, the trauma of war what war had left behind it gets presented in a slightly different way altogether in this and play in *All My Sons*.

This was based upon a true story, and this was you know as some of you might be familiar with the general plot of the play already. So, this is in the background of a manufacturing conspiracy in which a private company had to convince a set of, you know, army inspection officers to approve some defective aircraft engines.

And, this was you know this is the background this of course, the I mean they are the use of military warfare and the use of these equipment during the Second World War. This is also about how the war the context of the war had changed the dynamics of not just nations not just territories, but how it also began to infiltrate into civilian life in some form or the other.

It is also with the difficult choices that one needs to make in the wake of these bigger events happening, the wake of these historical events which happen. So, though the major theme is a criticism of the American dream in some sense just like a death of a salesman, it continues to explore the ways in which the private life the private lives become dictated by the public scenarios.

So, the nation, the life of the nation, the personal lives of the citizens, everything becomes entwined, everything becomes, you know, informed by each other in very, very essential ways. This is also where we find that there is a continuing influence of European drama, there is a continuing influence particularly of Henrik Ibsen, even during this time.

And this was majorly influenced by Ibsen's play *The Wild Duck* and this in some in many ways, we can also see that the continuities that we can trace in American drama with that of the European drama also made give a certain trajectory to the genre in terms of you know evolving its critical traditions in terms of establishing its unique nature.

So, the continuity is where extremely important in setting the genre apart and while also, you know, carving out it is own unique path. So, this is something that we will keep saying in terms of particularly how realism becomes a much greater thing in terms of how realism becomes something very central to American drama.

And, even while staying in the forte of realism, we find that this genre continues to experiment with expressionist techniques continues to experiment with a lot of you know new technological things in terms of the staging in terms of the props being used.

So, there is a very direct correlation between how drama gets written and how it gets performed and which is why you know, as we had discussed before, Broadway also becomes a symbolic presence in defining the popularity and defining the critical reception of the genre.

In some sense, you know, we find that it continues even in the contemporary in terms of, you know the Broadway success a play enjoyed and sometimes in a retrospective sense, the plays which enjoyed an immense Broadway success they also get built into the canon too.

So, it is a two-way process which enriches the process of writing as well as this process of performance, yeah. So, this is also something that we will get to explore in greater detail as we progress with the reading of the play.

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NPTEL

Synopsis

- ▶ *All my Sons* is the story of Joe Keller, a self-made business man, who gives up his integrity and moral obligations towards society after he is blinded by his lust for wealth, material gains, and societal status that comes along.






So, just like in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, we find that here also we have a male protagonist a white male protagonist. So, here this is the story *All My Sons* is the story of Joe Keller. So, Joe Keller is a self-made businessman, and this is about this entire play is about how due to certain circumstances, he is forced to give up his integrity and his moral obligations towards society because he is also blinded and then sometimes there is a dilemma.

But, overall, we find that, you know, he also decides to pursue material gains and societal status, which are also, you know, part and parcel of this package that is offered by the American dream. So, what distinguishes *All My Sons* in a very crude way with when we compare it with the *Death of a Salesman* is there is a compelling moral compass over here in *All My Sons*.

The critique of the materials concerns which are part and parcel of the American dream. It is more central, it is more evident, it is very deliberately foregrounded in *All My Sons*. So, accordingly, we also find that, yeah, the aspects of morality, the aspects of value systems which are highlighted in *All My Sons* are also more central when compared with the *death of a salesman*.

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Major Characters

The Keller Family


- ▶ **Joe Keller** – A businessman who was tried and acquitted in a case involving shipping of defective aircraft parts for WW-II air force, which resulted in the death of 21 pilots. He is the father of Chris and Larry.
- ▶ **Larry**- Son of Joe. Not physically present in the play. He is implied to have killed in the war.
- ▶ **Chris**- An ex-soldier who suffers from survivor's guilt after all his troop members were killed in the war. He is the son of Joe and brother of Larry.
- ▶ **Kate**- Sentimental and superstitious wife of Joe who believes that her son Larry was not killed in the war.

So, these are the major characters. It is a Keller family who is at the center of the play just the way the Loman family was in the death of a salesman; Joe Keller, Larry, Chris and Kate, yeah.

And the Deever family or with Steve Deever, Annie Deever and George Deever, these are the central characters over here. We will get into the details when we begin to explore the play in most central terms.

So, this in sums and these 2 families come together in order to take the plot forward, and we also get to know of how you know how certain dialogues, certain exchanges in terms of the value system, in terms of the cultural attraction they also get defined by the way the 2 families are presented .


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Historical Context

- Written in 1946
- period immediately following **World War II** (1939-1945) and **Great Depression** (1929-1933)
- Due to the high rates of inflation following the Great depression, people were becoming more materialistic and opportunistic.
- Opportunistic **war-time prosperity of America.**
- Due to the high demand for weapons and other war supplies, manufacturing industries flourished in America.
- This also gave rise to corrupted practices in manufacturing industries- Use of substandard materials for more profit.



It will be useful to have a historical context in place before we get into the discussion. This play was written in 1946 as mentioned, and this is a period immediately following the Second World War and the Great Depression.

And, we find that, you know this period is very compelling in American history. This is the time when the nation begins to make a mark as a unique entity, but at the same time, finds itself in the middle of all of these historical events in a way that you know it had never experienced before.

So, there is this high there are these high rates of inflation which almost, you know, disturbing the entire economic fabric, and we find that people are becoming more materialistic and opportunistic because there is no other. There are not too many options at that time to go this way or that way. So, we find that there is a wartime prosperity which emerges in America which also, you know, in the morals in a moralistic sense, it makes a lot of people uncomfortable.

So, this is the discomfort which plays like this also trying to explore, trying to get into the heart of it, particularly from the perspective of a middle-class individual trying to get into the heart of this crisis and analyze it, yeah. And this is in no way this could be seen as a judgmental play. It is trying to get into the heart of the matter and unpack this discomfort.

So, what happens is in both *The Death of a Salesman* as well as in *All My Sons*, there are these typical characters who are being presented who are in some sense driven by circumstances. They are not inherently evil scheming men, but in some sense, they are driven into certain kinds of circumstances because of societal compulsions. Sometimes because of you know particular situations with which the nations or the society at large are facing.

So, in some sense you know we find Willy Loman is not designed to be the kind of man who would let his family down. Yeah, his adultery and his engagement with his sons none of that really reflects on what he is as a person, but there is also a certain compulsion which is built into it there are certain kinds of behavioural patterns, there are certain kinds of behavioural patterns, there are certain kind of ideas that he is being forced to pursue yeah sometimes in spite of himself.

So, this dilemma this dichotomy is brought out very centrally in both of these plays. So, we find that there is this is the post world War period, and there is also yeah you know kind of wartime prosperity. So, here is where the moral compass of the play also comes in in slightly ambiguous terms as well.

So, there is a certain kind of prosperity which is in alignment with some of the policies and the vision of the nation, but it is also conflicting heavily with some value systems, some middle-class value systems. We find there is a high demand for weapons during the war period and also, you know, in the decades that follow.

So, America begins to flourish in an economic sense by finding a number of manufacturing industries which would also supply you know also meet the demands of this wartime. It is, you know, supplying the arms, ammunition and all, and this is something, you know, which continues to be problematic in some sense when we look at it the economic as well as the moral aspects of it.

So, we find that, you know, in very organic terms, it also gives rise to a lot of corrupted practices, particularly within the manufacturing industries, and we find a lot of value systems getting compromised over here. So, for instance, you know using substandard materials for more profit and that leading to some catastrophe that also happens to be the central theme in this play you know the plot around which the central topic around which the plot moves, yeah.

So, we find that there is a kind of prosperity which needs to be embraced for nationalist reasons for also you know, for materialist purposes, but we also find that it is conflicting with the value system on which the American society ideally has been built. So, when we contrast this kind of prosperity and corruption which is also part of it with the ideal American dream.

We find that, in some sense, Joe Keller is also deeply seated. The dilemma is deeply seated in Joe Keller's life itself just that when it begins to manufacture them it just that it begins to manifest in more grave terms than it did in Willy Loman's life.

So, if we very briefly try and compare these 2 characters, we find that you know Willy Loman, in some sense, becomes the victim, and that is also contributed heavily through the psychological dilemma that he is going through. And, that there is a certain abstraction about it which also makes it slightly more comfortable to deal with because you know, it also seems like there is some kind of a balanced view of the world outside which gets projected over here.

But, here in Joe Keller's life, we find that the catastrophes and the decisions are more tangible in some sense and some irreversible. It gets connected every single step gets connected with the

personal and the political and the public in almost irreversible ways and making his tragedy more difficult, yeah more, you know, difficult to deal with, yeah.

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NPTEL

- With this revelation, a guilt stricken Joe agrees to turn himself to the police. He says that Larry sure was his son "But I think to him they were all my sons" – implying the pilots who died in the crash.
- Joe goes to fetch his coat and a gunshot is heard implying he killed himself.
- When Chris express his remorse, Kate advises him not to take the blame for his father's death. And asks him to leave with Annie and live peacefully elsewhere.



So, as the play progresses we find that, you know, Joe Keller decides to turn himself to the police, he gets into a confession mode, and this is where you know, the heart of the play also comes out, I think to him they were all my sons. Yeah, this is like implying the pilots and referring to all the pilots who died in the crash and this man taking up the responsibility for that, yeah.

So, in some sense, the tragedy, as I mentioned, is in a more aggravated sense over here while a character I like, Willy Loman, takes responsibility for what goes wrong with his family, with his 2 sons here that gets extended. The sense of family, the sense of empathy gets extended.

So, it is some in so many different ways, we find that there is an expansion of the American tribe, and there is a certain kind of inclusion of the American dream where almost everyone becomes responsible for the other person's life too.

So, unlike Willy Loman's life where you know he thinks he failed as a husband, that he failed as a father and perhaps you know to a certain extent as a friend, yeah, we find that you know there is a certain privateness about that experience yeah and there is also a sense of closure that the play arrives at with a Willy Loman's death that is of course, you know there is a lot of disillusionment.

There is a lot of holiness, and they also, you know, they are unable to make sense of the kind of life that Willy Loman did and that that helplessness with which he died, with which he went to the grave, you know, that is something which is difficult for the family, but there is also a sense of closure there is a sense of containment for all such type of emotions which are part of a play like the death of a salesman.

And the emotions in the play, the circumstances, everything could be superimposed on to any other American family's life, but all certain, and it continues to remain as a very private affair in a tangible sense in a practical sense. We find that that is not the case at all in the case of Joe Keller.

Here, his decision affects a lot many other people, which is why you know he tends to think that they were all his sons, yeah implying you know the tragedy is something which cannot be contained in a private sense. It becomes a national tragedy in some sense. So, here also, you know Joe Keller also that the play ends with his death again.

So, we find that the nature of death is also very different, yeah. Here, we find Joe Keller killing himself in order to escape from a sense of guilt, in order to escape from these many things within which he finds himself implicated in. But, we find that in Willy Loman's case, he walks towards his death just so his family could be rescued in some sense. There will be financial security, hopefully for the family, which you know does not work that way, we realize.

So, while both plays end in somewhat similar ways over here, but we realize that the actions that pushed them towards that moment and the implications of those actions are very, very different. But, what brings both of these plays together within a common thread of the narrative, within a common framework, is also the fact that this gives us different lenses different prisms through which we can look at the character of the American dream.

The American dream becomes this very volatile image over here, a very volatile metaphor for not just for things working out well for the nation, not just for prosperity, not just for material success. It also becomes a volatile metaphor for everything that could potentially go wrong when a set of people, a set of very ordinary individuals, are pursuing this dream.

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NPTEL

- ▶ **The House of un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)**– formed by the government of America in 1938 for investigating the alleged fascist and communist influence in US.
- ▶ Miller was called to appear before HUAC for his criticism of American Dream in *All my Sons*.



So, this is an instance which also reveals the kind of impact that this play had on the, you know, the popular culture on the national at the national front. So, there was this house of an American activities committee which was founded in 1938 for investigating the, you know, communist influences or the fascist influences within the country.

This was also a time when there was a growing concern about the communist ideals taking you know, getting traction in Europe and the rest of the world.

So, Miller was called to appear before this committee, the House of an American activities committee because he was critiquing the American dream very poignantly in *All My Sons*. This also reveals to us the nature of this direct critique as compared to a play like *Death of a Salesman*, right.

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- Criticism of American Dream
- Crisis of post-war society
- Responsibility and Morality
- Guilt and Atonement



So, these are some of the major themes which get explored in this play, the criticism of the American dream being the most poignant one, which takes different shapes and different colours as we progress through the play.

The crisis of the post-war society, which again takes us to a slight, takes us into a comparative mode with the post-war writings in Britain and the rest of Europe. We find that the crisis that America began to face as a post-war society was very different in nature because, you know, their involvement in the World War, as we know, was of a slightly different nature altogether.

So, it also led them to facing very unique kinds of problems. For them, they did not have a model per se to, you know, look back and emulate because they also, you know they in some sense, the American society was literally thrown into the middle of the war, yeah, due to the circumstances and due to certain decisions or you know certain misdecisions that the nation had taken.


So, this is some of the aspects that we will be able to delve into when we are looking at the play in detail, and it also gives us a possibility to examine the post-war societal or concerns societal conditions in America vis-a-vis say, Britain or the rest of Europe yeah vis-a-vis any other country which had also survived the world war in some form of the other war you know where traumatized and victimized by the Second World War.

So, it also has a very different take on the aspects of responsibility and morality for the sake of convenience, and since we are already familiar with Death of a Salesman, we will continue to go back and forth in order to give a more comparative and more objective say kind of analysis.

Guilt and atonement are 2 very emotional, psychologically charged themes which get a sort of a perfection as and when we find, you know, we go through the play. So, we will start looking at the play and then wrap up the discussion.

And, come back to take a closer look at different sections when you are also a little more familiar with the play, hopefully. So, these are the set of characters these are play in 3 acts, and these are the set of characters whom we will be meeting as we move forward. The act one we will read through the description first.

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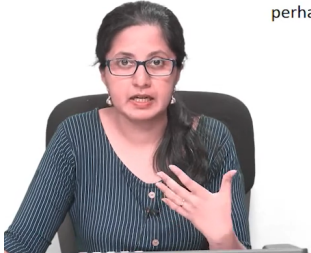


Lydia Lubey
Bert

Act One

The back yard of the Keller home in the outskirts of an American town. August of our era.

The stage is hedged on right and left by tall, closely planted poplars which lend the yard a secluded atmosphere. Upstage is filled with the back of the house and its open, unroofed porch which extends into the yard some six feet. The house is two stories high and has seven rooms. It would have cost perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built. Now it is nicely painted, looks tight



And, we will also find how these descriptions, these stage directions, they have an immense role to play in, you know, setting the stage literally as well as metaphorically, and we noticed, you know, how these, you know, descriptions also lend a certain character to the entire setting.

And that setting, you know, sometimes you know here the setting remains unnamed. It is an unnamed town, and even when it stays unnamed, the descriptions give help us to understand the characters even better too. So, Act One opens in the backyard of the Keller home on the outskirts of an American town, August of our era, yeah. So, this is an unnamed town unless Death of a Salesman.

And we also find that this opens in the backyard and not in the living room like it did you know the Death of a Salesman opened in the living room of the Loman family. The stage is hedged on the right and left by tall, closely planted poplars, which lend the yard a secluded atmosphere. So, these terms are very useful for us to kind of get to the heart of the emotion that the play is trying to foreground right from the beginning.

Upstage is filled with the back of the house, and it is an open, unroofed porch which extends into the yard some six feet. The house is two stories high and has seven rooms. It would have cost perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built.

Yeah, look at these descriptions and how the financial aspect becomes part of the description of the architecture. It is not just about how it looks, it is also about what one had to, you know, how much one had to pay in order to get this structure erected.

So, the aesthetics begin to coexist with the financial aspect of it, and this is also, you know, part and parcel of the way in which materialism becomes a huge thing during this time, yeah. So, it is straight away, you know, in very unapologetic and very direct terms, dives into the unattractive aspects in terms of the cost, yeah, even when it is talking about, you know, the number of rooms and what one sees in the backyard, yeah.

So, it would have cost perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built, and it is also interestingly unlike the earlier times here, cost becomes a marker to situate the value or the aesthetics of architecture, yeah. So, the structure gets value because of the cost that was invested into it, yeah. So, yeah, and we also get to know that you know the times are the look at the way you know I find this is very fascinating.

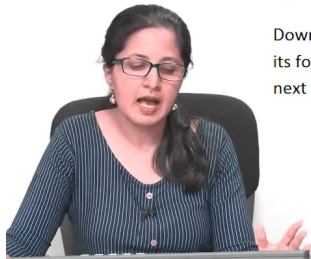
It would have cost perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built. It does not stop just with fifteen thousand, but fifteen thousand in the early twenties just so we get a sense of the value of currency during that time. Yeah, it is not, you know, fifteen thousand in the 1940s, but we are talking about the fifteen thousand dollars in the early twenties when it was built. It is helping one situate be caused in a historical sense.

So, here you know money becomes something historical as well the value of money which keeps changing which also becomes a newer kind of concern in terms of the shaping of a nation or shaping of a society that gets replicated perfectly in such descriptions.

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perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built. Now it is nicely painted, looks tight



and comfortable, and the yard is green with sod, here and there plants whose season is gone. At the right, beside the house, the entrance of the driveway can be seen, but the poplars cut off view of its continuation downstage. In the left corner, downstage, stands the four-foot-high stump of a slender apple tree whose upper trunk and branches lie toppled beside it, fruit still clinging to its branches.

Downstage right is a small, trellised arbor, shaped like a sea shell, with a decorative bulb hanging from its forward-curving roof. Carden chairs and a table are scattered about. A garbage pail on the ground next to the porch steps, a wire leaf-burner near it.

Now, it is nicely painted, looks tight and comfortable, and the yard with green with sod, here and there plants whose season is gone. At the right, beside the house, the entrance of the driveway can be seen, but the poplars cut-off view of it is continuation downstage. In the left corner, downstage stands a four-foot-high stump of a slender apple tree whose upper trunk and branches lie toppled beside it, fruit still clinging to it is branches.

This is also a fine blend of the materialistic world and certain very stereotypical countryside descriptions the apple tree, yeah and the poplars, yeah and the kind of plants which you know come and go in terms of the season.

Downstage right is a small, trellised arbour, shaped like a she-shaped like a sea shell, with a decorative bulb hanging from it is the forward-curving roof. Carden chairs and a table are scattered about. A garbage pail on the ground next to the porch steps, a wire-leaf burner near it.

Very very graphic and detailed descriptions. This attention to detail is something that we had begun to notice in this genre from the early twentieth century onwards. On the rise: it is early Sunday morning, and this location is again very interesting we find that you know this rootedness is always there, this everydayness, this quality of giving the mundane details this has been part of this genre again you know from the, particularly from it is this turn towards the realist mode.

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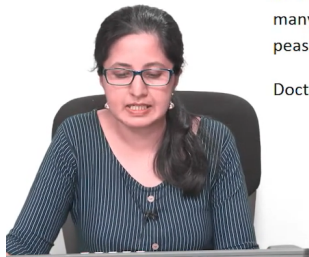
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Downstage right is a small, trellised arbor, shaped like a sea shell, with a decorative bulb hanging from its forward-curving roof. Garden chairs and a table are scattered about. A garbage pail on the ground next to the porch steps, a wire leaf-burner near it.

On the rise: It is early Sunday morning. Joe Keller is sitting in the sun reading the want ads of the Sunday paper, the other sections of which lie neatly on the ground beside him. Behind his back, inside the arbor, Doctor Jim Bayliss is reading part of the paper at the table.

Keller is nearing sixty. A heavy man of stolid mind and build, a business man these many years, but with the imprint of the machine-shop worker and boss still upon him. When he reads, when he speaks, when he listens, it is with the terrible concentration of the uneducated man for whom there is still wonder in many commonly known things, a man whose judgements must be dredged out of experience and a peasant-like common sense. A man among men.

Doctor Bayliss is nearly forty. A wry self-controlled man, an easy talker, but with a wisp of sadness that



Joe Keller is sitting in the sun reading the want ads of the Sunday paper and the other sections of which lie neatly on the ground beside him. Behind his back, inside the arbour, Doctor Jim Bayliss is reading a part of the paper at the table; yeah it, it is a household setting. Keller is nearing sixty.

A heavy man of stolid mind and build, a businessman these many years, but with the imprint of the machine shop worker and the boss still upon him. When he reads, when he speaks, when he listens, it is with the terrible concentration of the uneducated man for him there is still wonder in many commonly known things, yeah.

So, we are able to situate this character in very material terms over here. A man whose judgments must be dredged out of the experience and a peasant-like common sense, a man among men, yeah. So, here is a way in which, despite the ordinariness of Keller, he is being made to stand out yeah, he is uneducated there is a certain peasant-like quality about his responses, about his experiences.

But, there has also something about him which makes him stand out, yeah. So, this detailed description of this setting is also meant to make him stand out in that sense, yeah.

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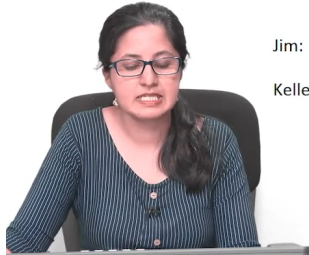


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Doctor Bayliss is nearly forty. A wry self-controlled man, an easy talker, but with a wisp of sadness that clings even to his self-effacing humor.

At curtain, Jim is standing at left, staring at the broken tree. He taps a pipe on it, blows through the pipe, feels in his pockets for tobacco, then speaks.



Jim: Where's your tobacco?

Keller: I think I left it on the table.

And Doctor Bayliss he is nearly forty. A wry self-controlled man, an easy talker, but with a wisp of sadness that clings even to his self-effacing humor. At curtain, Jim is standing at left, staring at the broken tree.

He taps a pipe on it, blows through the pipe, feels in his pockets for tobacco, for tobacco, then speaks. Tobacco, yeah, that also becomes a very significant marker which also has connections with trade which also has connections with the nation's economy. Those are some of the fine aspects that we will continue to explore as we progress with this play.

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Keller: Hello, Frank. What's doin'?

Frank: Nothin'. Walking off my breakfast. {looks up at the sky} That beautiful? Not a cloud in the sky.

Keller: {looking up} Yeah, nice.

Frank: Every Sunday ought to be like this.

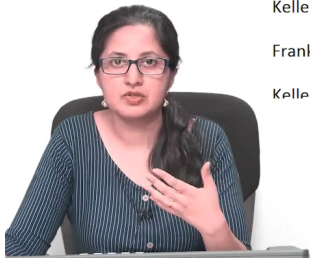
Keller: {indicating the sections beside him} Want the paper?

Frank: What's the difference, it's all bad news. What's today's calamity?

Keller: I don't know, I don't read the news part anymore. It's more interesting in the want ads.

Frank: Why, you trying to buy something?

Keller: No. I'm iust interested. To see what people want. v'know? For instance here's a guy is lookin' for



They begin with a very mundane discussion over here. And, we will stop with this point where Keller says that about you know his newspaper reading experience - Every Sunday ought to be like this, on the paper.

What is the difference, it is all bad news. What is today's calamity? So, look at this attitude, look at the response, look at what they expect on a Sunday morning when they are looking at the newspaper.

Yeah, What is a new calamity there is nothing much to look forward to when one is picking up the newspaper on a Sunday morning except to know what the next calamity is. There is a certain preparedness over here which is disturbing at the same time and Keller says, I do not know, I do not need the news part anymore. It's more interesting in the want ads. Why, you trying to some trying to buy something?

(Refer Slide Time : 28:52)



Keller: Hello, Frank. What's doin'?

Frank: Nothin'. Walking off my breakfast. {looks up at the sky} That beautiful? Not a cloud in the sky.

Keller: {looking up} Yeah, nice.

Frank: Every Sunday ought to be like this.

Keller: {indicating the sections beside him} Want the paper?

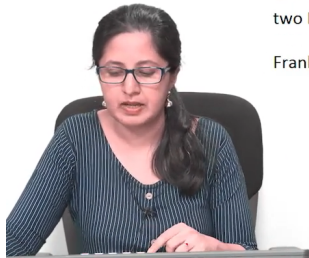
Frank: What's the difference, it's all bad news. What's today's calamity?

Keller: I don't know, I don't read the news part anymore. It's more interesting in the want ads.

Frank: Why, you trying to buy something?

Keller: No, I'm just interested. To see what people want, y'know? For instance here's a guy is lookin' for two Newfoundland dogs. Now what's he want with two Newfoundland dogs?

Frank: That is funny.



Keller: No, I'm just interested. To see what people want, y'know? For instance here's a guy is lookin' for two Newfoundland dogs. Now what's he want with two Newfoundland dogs?

Frank: That is funny.

Keller: Here's another one. Wanted, old dictionaries. High prices paid. Now what's a man going to do with an old dictionary?

Frank: Why not? Probably a book collector.

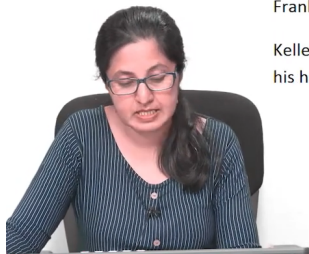
Keller: You mean he'll make a living out of that?

Frank: Sure, there's a lot of them.

Keller: {shaking his head} All the kind of business goin' on. In my day, either you were a lawyer, or a doctor, or you worked in a shop. Now...

Frank: Well, I was going to be a forester once.

Keller: Well, that shows you. In my day, there was no such think. {Scanning the page, sweeping it with his hand} You look at a page like this you realize how ignorant you are. {softly, with wonder, as he scans



No, I am just interested to see what people want you know. For instance, here is a guy he is looking for 2 Newfoundland dogs. Now, what's he wanted 2 Newfoundland dogs? That is funny. Here's another one. Wanted old dictionaries. High prices paid. Now, what's a man going to do

with an old dictionary? Why not? Probably a book collector. You mean he will make a living out of that? Sure, there is a lot of them.

So, all the kind of business going on in my day, either you were a lawyer or a doctor, or you worked in a shop, yeah. Well, I was going to be a forester once. Yeah, well, that shows you. In my day, there was no such thing. Scanning the page, sweeping it with his hand. You look at a page like this, and you realize how ignorant you are, yeah.

So, this is a very important beginning over here. This opening tells us a lot, not just about the characters, not just about the familiar settings within which he plays, but largely about how the character is playing in contrast with the changing attitudes, the changing business culture, the change in consumerist attitude, yeah. So, he is not, you know, he is looking at the newspaper to find to see what people want.

So, here is, you know, the American economy, the American society is in a certain moment at a certain moment in history when this shift towards the consumerist economy, the consumerist society it is getting captured in very beautiful terms over here. So, we will come back to look at this in a greater detail by then, I hopefully you know you will also find somewhere we will begin to start reading the play, and it will be easier for us to have a discussion out of this.

So, I thank you for your time, and I look forward to seeing you in the next session after having read a significant section of the play by yourself, yeah.

Thank you again.