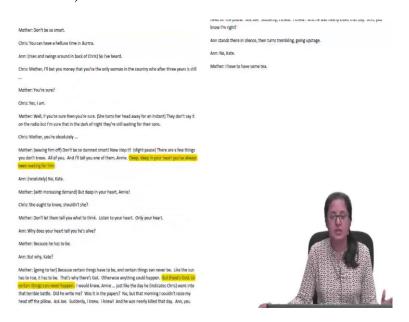
Twentieth Century American Drama Prof. Merin Simi Raj Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Lecture - 19 Arthur Miller's All My Sons Part 5

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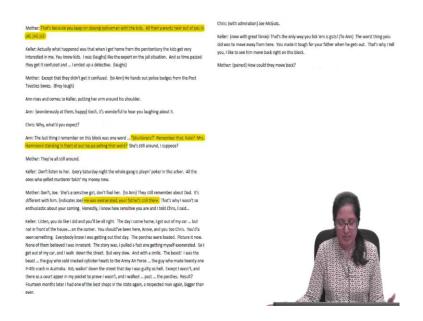
This NPTEL course is entitled *Twentieth Century American Drama* on *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller. We will looking at this play and this is again one of those plays by Miller where he is exploring at length the conflict between father and son. The father-son conflict is a theme that he recurrently explores in most of his works.

We find that this relation between the father and son and the various dynamics within families they get accentuated in a very different way very nuanced way, when it is also mapped into the many concerns of the society into the concerns of the many concerns of the nation itself. Here in some sense we can find the American Dream, the notion of the American Dream, the idea of the American Dream looming very high in the background.

We find that the individual concerns the value systems the way in which they navigate through their life itself it takes a very different form all together. We are almost at the end of Act 1 and even before the curtain falls at the end of Act 1 we realize that there are lot of major changes which begin to happen. We are been through this the mode of slow revelation like, it has been mentioned before also. In this mode of slow revelation we

find that the play introduces to a lot of critical events which become extremely seminal in defining the course of action forward.

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There is an uncertain kind of unspeakability about death right from the outset of this play. It is this tussle even within the family between mother and the rest of the family Joe Keller and their son Chris whether Larry, their first born whether their son is all has he is already he is whether he is actually dead or not. So, we find that the unspeakability associated with Larry's death there is much more than the emotional concern that the mother is showing about that. It is much more than the difficulty in her mind to believe that he is actually dead or not dead.

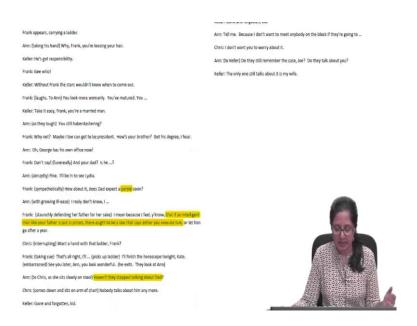
So, we are now been getting introduced into a number of things which are outside of their family territory, a lot of things which had major significance. Perhaps, in the things which are national significance itself. And we find that this aspect is there at the heart of this play making them act in different ways, making the rest of the characters act in decide in the in different ways.

So, in the previous session when we stopped we saw how Annie and mother were having an intimate conversation and mother was trying to find out whether Annie is still believed that deep in her heart she believe that Larry is going to come back. There seems to be this compulsive way in which mother is pursuing this after Annie almost forcing her to admit that she is still waiting for Larry. But Annie seems to hold her ground and

she continues to say that, she is willing to move on and this is something which becomes extremely unpalatable to the mother.

And we have very soon know that there is much more what than that we get to know very superficially in these discourses. She also makes it a mother, she gives it an emotional dimension, she almost gives it a psychic dimension when she talks about the horoscope and she sees different signs and symbols in the tree falling.

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But, there is something more grave here, when they are, they when they beginning to get into some of the details. So, when later on when Frank and Annie have this discussion, so, where Frank also mentions about Annie's dad who is whom he wonders whether he is expecting a parole soon. It is how about it, does dad expect a parole soon? And growing ill-ease I really do not know.

So, there is a brief discomfort over here when everyone begins to ask Annie about her dad whom we understand over here is in prison. So, Frank also spells out a few things over here by saying, "I mean because I feel that if an intelligent man like your father is put in prison, there ought to be a law that says either you execute him or let him go after a year".

Frank in some sense is trying to defend Annie's father, but clearly it is not a very comfortable conversation that they are having over here. So, Ann immediately begins to

confront Chris about it and also ask whether they have stopped talking about dad. We have realized from the beginning of this play there are a number of details. There is a lot of baggage over here. There are lot of things which had happened before the details of which we are not entirely privy into.

Ann ask Chris, "Have not they stopped talking about dad? Nobody talks about him anymore. Gone and forgotten, kid". And Keller is also reiterating that underscoring the fact that no one even discusses it. "Tell me because I do not want to meet anybody on the block if they are going to. I do not want you to worry about it.

Do they still remember the case, Joe? Do they talk about you? The only one still talks about it is my wife. Kate interferes and says that is because you keep on playing policeman with the kids. All their parents hear out of you is jail, jail and jail."

We realize where this discomfort with the word jail, prison and the police game that the kids playing, how why and how mother finds it extremely uncomfortable when the kids are playing that. Because, it is not really a playful thing that is certainly a lot of grave situation that the family entire family had gone through. We realize Ann's father is now in jail and we do not even know whether he is going to be out any time soon.

The background of the jail situation, the details of which will also be stay at the heart of this play it will very soon will be revealed to us. Ann also recalls this instance from the time may be three years before they left from that neighborhood. "The last thing I remember on this block was one word murderers. Remember that, Kate? Mrs. Hammond standing in front of our house yelling that word. She is still around, I suppose?"

Mother: They are all still around.

Keller: Do not listen to her. Every Saturday night the whole gang is playing poker in this arbor. All the ones who yelled murderer taking my money now.

"Do not Joe. She is a sensitive girl, do not fool her. They still remember about dad. It is different with him. He was exonerated, your father is still there. That is why I was not so enthusiastic about your coming. Honestly, I know how sensitive you are and I told Chris".

Mother is also trying to discourage her from continuing to stay there and of course, there is a background to this. There are a number of things which had happened due to which her father is in jail too. There is this story that Keller is recalling. He is reminiscing this and from that we get to know some snippets of what must have happened during that time after which Annie's father also had in jail.

As this play progresses we get to know that Annie's father and Joe Keller were partners and then something went really wrong; their factory was caught making certain things which were sub-standard. We will find this in the next passage, where Keller is also reminiscing this.

"The guy who sold cracked cylinder heads to the army air force. The guy who made twenty one P-40s crash in Australia. Kid, walking down the street that day I was guilty as hell. Except I was not and there as a court and there as a court paper in my pocket to prove I was not. I walked past the porches. The result? Fourteen months later I had one of the best shops in the state again, a respected man again, bigger than ever."

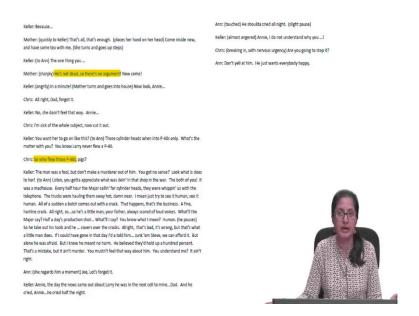
We have the background and we also realize that there is some dichotomy between these two families. They are placed in very different ways now. One family has a father who has been jailed, the other one who had come out of the trauma and reestablished him and got his respectability back again. The crisis over here is also much more than Larry's death.

The crisis over here is also about how these two families have been perceived and about the baggage that they carry. We will again know that Annie's father always held Joe Keller was responsible for what went to wrong with them. He is seen as someone who pulled a first one and got out of this mess entirely and literally when he is got free as well.

This makes the relationship between them all the more problematic as well. We find that the unspeakability about Larry's death is in fact, the unspeakability about a lot of baggage that they are all carry. Here is also the point when we waken to realize that these are families who are also torn between their responsibilities towards their immediate families and responsibility towards the society.

The societal responsibility and a familiar responsibility they take a very different form all together over here and at various levels they are also they are overlapping. We find that they are pulling the families and pulling individuals apart in terms of the kind of loyalties, in terms of sometimes even misplaced royalties.

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We get to know that Annie has not been able to forgive her father for what had happened. There is this brief conversation where mother is again coming back to this with this argument that Larry is not dead and that and that Annie's father or Chris's father nobody was responsible for that. It is very briefly where Keller is saying, "Those cylinder heads went in went into P-40s only. What is the matter with you? Larry never flew a P-40. So, who flew those P-40s, pigs?"

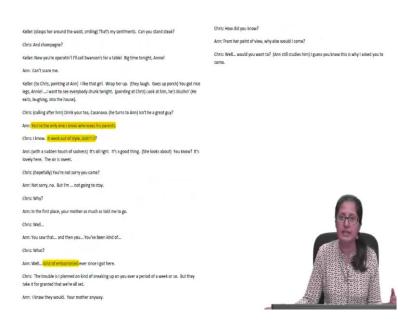
We find that here there is a fundamental difference between the way the father approaches this issue and the way Chris approaches this issue. For Keller it is just enough for him in his mind to believe that his son Larry he never flew a P-40 and the floor cylinders had gone into those P-40s which Larry never flew. For Chris, that does not make it easier in any way and which is why he is asking this oft quoted line from this play. "Who flew those P-40s pigs?"

Here the discussion is about Annie's father and Keller is trying to explain, "The man was a fool, but do not make a murderer out of him. You got no sense? Look what is does to

her. Listen you got to appreciate what he was doing in that shop in the war. The both of you, it was a madhouse and every half an hour the major calling for cylinder heads".

It is about there is some pressure of the industry, the pressure of the market condition that they had that is what they are blaming now after this the cracked cylinder heads which went into the P-40s had claimed the lives of about 20 young men. They are also recalling the night when this news came to them and how Chris's father Keller and Annie's father had spent the night when in two adjacent cells and he is also recalling how he cried all night.

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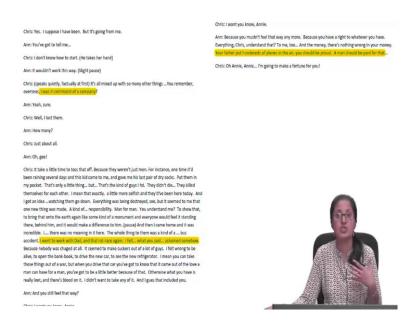
We find that Annie is less sympathetic towards her father at this point and she even thinks that Chris is among the very few left who still love the parents. "You are the only one I know who loves his parents. It went out of style, is not it? It is alright, it is a good thing". And she is then with this background it becomes easier to understand this play and the characters from a slightly different point of view all together.

We find that it is not just emotional crisis, it is not just the difficulty of relationships that these characters are facing, but more importantly they are dealing with a major national crisis in which their families were also a part of. In that sense they are trying to find the balance between these two two different pulls, the familiar responsibility and the societal responsibility. We find that the market conditions are not in the least conducive to solve this dichotomy.

Towards the end of the play also we realize that whatever they had to do they ended up doing though inadvertently was because of the pressure of the market and there was also this illusion that this is something that they were doing for the family. Joe Keller always had this in his mind that he was doing all of this for his family, while his family his son, his wife, they all fail to understand how the notion of the family like stops with just the immediate family.

How the notion of humanitarian concerns stop with just the boundaries of the family, which is why the title of the play *All My Sons* are all 40-20 young man who flew those P-40s and died. The play ends with this notion that they all are somebody's children and that since by extension they are all the children of this land. They all become by extension Joe Keller's sons though his own son did not really fly a P-40.

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In this play, we find that Annie's role is largely instrumental. She Annie's role is more like a trigger. It operates in such ways that it exposes the kind of people they all are, it also forces them to come to terms with the realities, the various realities and sometimes the various illusions that they have chosen to live with. Annie is also very quick to identify that there is a sort of an embarrassment that is there in Chris whenever she is approaching Annie.

She it at that point Chris confesses that he is indeed embarrassed about the money that he is his father has been making, the money in which he is also partaking. Because as he

says as she says, "I went to work with dad and that rat-race again. I felt what you said ashamed somehow". Somewhere we have begun to get the sense that he is in many ways uncomfortable with the consumer conditions, with the market conditions, with the industrial conditions through which his family has been making money.

Though at this point of time at this stage in the play, though he believes that his father did not really do anything wrong, he feels that there is something wrong in him being a part of that entire establishment which is why and it is not that his father's shop and his father's industry and those establishments. He finds that there is fundamentally something wrong with most of these establishments where the focus is on making money.

We will also find while interacting with him Sue points out her husband, the doctor Jim he also finds that there is something wrong in the current pursuit and he wants to spend more of his time on medical research and move away from the money making medical practice that he is into.

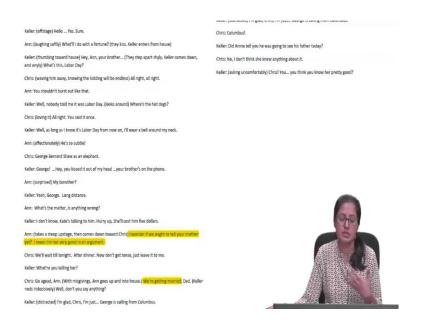
This ideal quality, the quality of idealism which is there in Chris makes it difficult not just for himself, but also for the people around him. We will very soon find that there is a certain validity in Chris feeling that way, because the way turns out toward the way things turn out towards the end of the play we find that sort of an idealism it is not misplaced at all. It is entirely rightly place and it has a right sort of responses and effects in the play as well.

Ann Annie seems to be more sympathetic at this stage towards Joe Keller and says, "Because you must not feel that way anymore. Because you have a right to whatever you have. Everything Chris, understand that? To me, to me too and the money, there is nothing wrong in your money. Your father put hundreds of planes in the air, you should be proud. A man should be paid for that".

Through these different little snippets that we get from different these different segments of the play we understand that this is almost like a rags to richer story, with the major crisis in the middle. Joe Keller here comes across as a man who has work very hard to reach where he has now and he is also earned a lot of respectability.

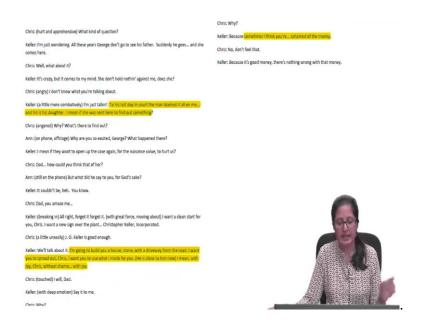
He is a man who has put hundreds of planes in the air and in between in his firm something went wrong, whereas handful of cracked cylinders also were part of this production. This had presumably cause the death of about 20 young men. Though at this stage in the play, we do not find that Chris is, we do not find that Joe Keller is implicate than any of these. We do find the kind of baggage, the guilt that he is carrying with him.

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And by extension that is a reason why Chris is also feeling extremely bad about being part of this industry, being partaking in the fortune in the money that he is been making.

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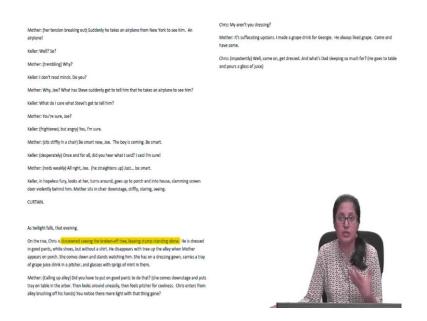
They continue to have this conversation a bit later Keller and Chris here father and son they also have this conversation about Chris being ashamed of this money, "Because sometimes I think you are ashamed of the money. No, do not feel that. Because it is good money, there is nothing wrong with that money".

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These conversations till the end of the play has a very different implication all together. We realize from where Chris is coming from and we also know the kind of validation, the legitimacy that Joe Keller is seeking in order to prove in order to prove at least to himself and his family that his money is good money that it is not the kind of money that one needs to be ashamed of.

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Thus, when the first act end we have a knowledge of the audience, of the many eventful things which had happened both in Joe Keller's family and as well as in Annie's family. We also know the implications and the complicated ways in which their lives are intertwined with each other.

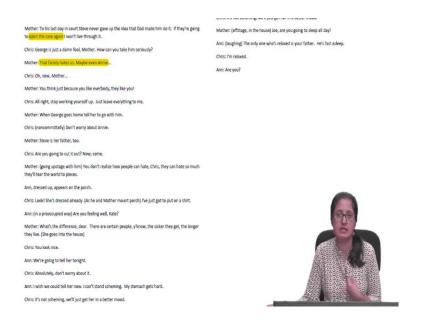
Here are two young people Chris and Annie who are about who would like to get married very soon, but their families are also torn apart in very different ways in very significant ways to such an extent that one has a respectable position in the society while the other is in. When the Act 1 is drawing to an end, we also realize that George, who is Annie's brother and a lawyer is now visiting their father in jail.

This knowledge is seen as a turning point in the play and this knowledge is received with a lot of trepidation by mother and by the Keller family all together. Chris even at a later point tries to take a more rational stands over here, but Keller and Kate they are both extremely terrified of the fact that all of a sudden after these many years George has chosen to visit Annie's father in jail their father in jail.

When the curtain falls it is in a very in a very dark mood that the curtain falls at the end of this Act 1. And Act 2 begins at twilight, the same evening and we find that Chris is discovered sawing the broken off tree leaving stump standing alone. This is very symbolic because at the beginning of Act 2 it we get to know that we are going the audience will be given more information.

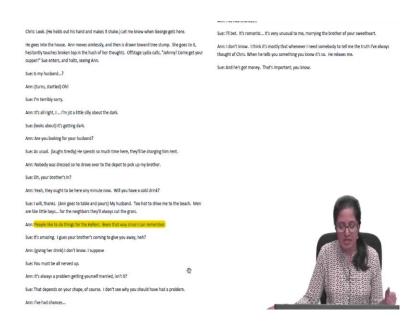
The audience will now know more about Larry's death. Chris is also just about to discover what exactly went wrong with Larry and how is that connected in very intricate ways with the unspeakability associated with his death in that in their family.

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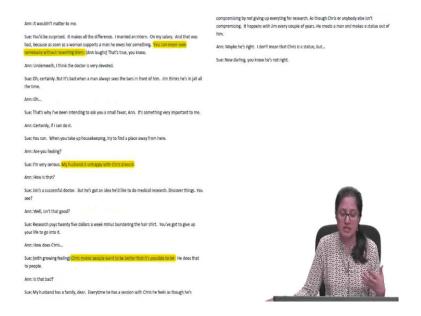
During that morning they are all waiting with a lot of trepidation for George to arrive and Annie and Chris are yet to formally tell mother that they would like to get married and in the middle of all this we find that Joe Keller is peacefully sleeping as well. Mother begins to have these skeptical thoughts about Annie and his her family that why did she show up all of a sudden from New York after these many years after all these three long years. It is coincidently around the same time that George visiting their father in prison.

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They begin to think of all kinds of things that could potentially go wrong and we do find that there is a growing discomfort in this entire setting. Sue and Ann between have a brief discussion where they talk about Chris which is again not a very pleasant conversation.

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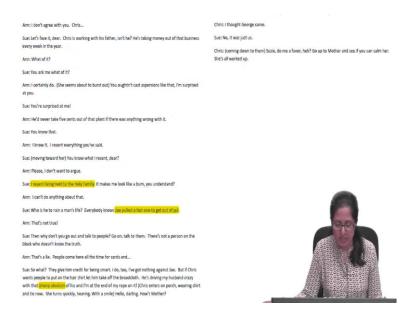
Sue has this concern that Chris is making her husband unhappy. "My husband is unhappy with Chris around". There is something very ironic about this because they seem to be getting along very well to Chris and Jim.

But Sue says, "My husband is unhappy with Chris around". And while giving the reason for this we also understand the kind of person Chris is, the kind of value system in which he is rooted and the many emotional turmoil that come from that. Sue says, "Chris makes people want to be better than it is possible to be".

We see that Chris is also the kind of person who would ideally project certain qualities onto people even when they do not have it, which is why he fails to see what was wrong with his own family. He fails to see what his father had done and he also fails to see the complicated ways in which things had happened with the cracked cylinder and after the way in which only one of the partners were imprisoned and how his father continue to regain his respectability and continue to live with his life.

He fails to see anything more to the fact that the mother did not want to accept the fact that Larry was dead, which is why the mother also wonders like why Chris never really knew what had happened. Because they all thought that they all had this inkling of a feeling that perhaps he knew exactly what had happened and he also chose to ignore things and he also chose to overlook things just all the others had.

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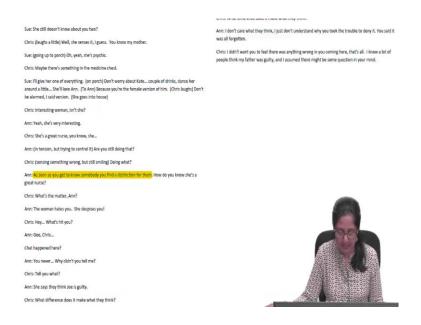
Chris comes across and here when Sue's referring to Chris look at the way she refers to the family. "I resent living next to the Holy Family. Who is he to ruin a man's life? Everybody knows". Joe pulled a fast one to get out of jail and later he refers to Chris's

idealism as a phony idealism. "He is driving my husband crazy with that phony idealism of his and I am at the end of my rope on it".

We get to know how the neighborhood refers to them. Right at the beginning even when Annie landed over there she started asking whether neighborhood is still talking about them. So, that time Chris chose to ignore it and maybe he willingly chose to overlook the way in which these families were continuing to be talked about.

When Sue says that everybody knows Joe pulled a fast one to get out of jail, it's very evident that everybody is still talking about them that the respectability is very superficial. It is only because now they have money things have become slightly easier for Keller's because people do not talk about them on their face. But clearly that is not the case. We get to know almost everyone continues to be talking about them and Chris in some sense chooses to overlook that entirely.

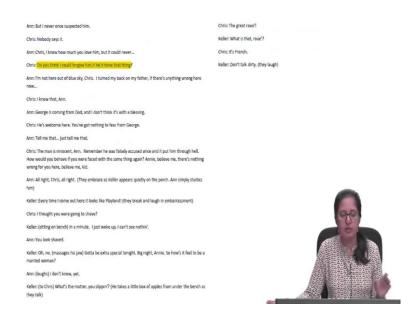
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This is a very faintly pointed out by Annie too when Chris say something nice about Sue. Annie immediately says, "As soon as you get to know somebody you find a distinction for them. How do she is a great nurse?" This need to find something ideal in people that seems to be quite he seems to be hardwired to think that way to find something ideal in people, to project a sense of idealism in everywhere that he is meeting.

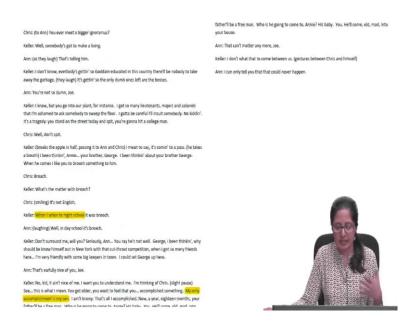
That seems to be the only way in which he can negotiate around with negotiate with the world around him. Because in his mind he is ashamed of, he is embarrassed of the kind of money that he is inheriting that he is partaking, because he is part of his father's business. And in order to perhaps salvage him of that he is also seeing things in people, seeing qualities in people that they do not have.

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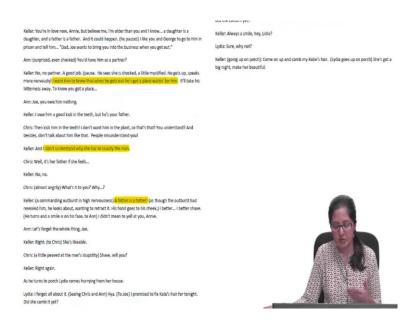
Before we wrap up this discussion for today Chris very clearly tells Annie that, "Do you think I could forgive him if he had done that thing". In his mind, his father is completely innocent. In his mind in Chris's mind, Joe Keller has not been part of the entire exercise at all. He was he has absolutely in no role in causing the death of the 20 young man who were flying the P-40s which also had cracked cylinders.

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It is very clear, it is a very black and white image in his mind, a much uncomplicated image in his mind unlike Keller and his wife Kate. We also get to know in between their conversations that Keller went to night school and he is someone who really tried, worked hard to reach where he has. And which is why perhaps he tries harder to preserve what he had very painstakingly achieved. He also time and again mention this about his son that his only accomplishment is his son.

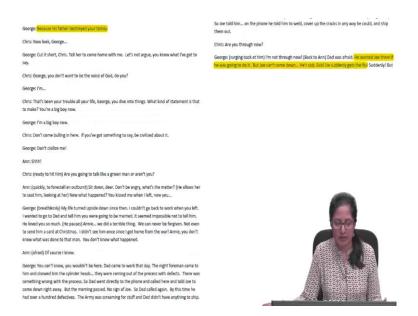
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And later on also him in when he keeps on defending fatherhood, later we realize that it is actually his own fatherhood that he is defending. He is trying to convince Ann to forgive her father saying, "I want him to know that when he is he gets out he is got a

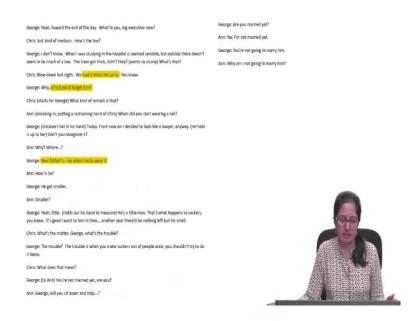
place waiting for him". And also when he says, "I do not understand why she has to crucify the man a father is a father". And this is in some form trying to justify himself. Keller here is actually justifying himself this is something we get to know however, only towards the end of the play.

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And as we move forward we find that halfway through the second act George is visiting, he is meeting the family.

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There it is almost like a court trial situation when we get to know about the different facts and the different details from different characters over here and the truth is out there for us to see towards the end of the play. Towards the end of the play, we also find that there is a kind of idealism which gets foregrounded over there. A very ideal solution, a very ideal resolution towards which the play is moving as well.

We stop at this point a midway through second act where George's arrival begins to accentuate the tension, accentuate the drama, but and also the slow unfolding of the events they begin to pick up pace as well.

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