Chapter VI

Crafted Dramaturgy
My (Arthur Miller’s) standard is, to be sure, derived from my life in the thirties, but I believe that it is as old as the drama itself and was merely articulated to me in the accent of the thirties. (Theater 182)

Drama is an aural-visual art. The main purpose of this art is communication. The language that the playwright employs, his sense of time, place and action, the way the actors enact their parts, the urges of the characters involved, the package of ideas, and sense of the play’s human experience all work together and contribute to the pleasures derived by the viewers.

A good play performs itself adequately and admirably. It serves as an aesthetic bliss to the audience. Not only that it generates thoughts but also it engages the mind of the theater-goer with new thought processes. The first characteristic feature of a good play is its representational quality. Drama is a mimetic art, one that imitates or represents human life and experience. A large part of the pleasure drama brings rests on how it reflects its ability to show the viewers' aspects of human life meaningfully enacted.

Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* meets this requirement admirably. Arthur Miller observes, “The assumption – or presumption – behind these
plays is that life has meaning" (Introduction 8). Drama is also an active art, in which actors portraying characters say and do things to one another. Actors are agents, doers, who make things happen through speech and bodily action.

If for instance, the actor is masked as he appears and his body movements are constricted and highly ordered, audience instantly expect that the common surface of life will also be breeched by the kinds of questions he or the play will respond to. He will very probably speak about the theme or essential preoccupation of the play directly and without getting to it by circuitous routes of naturalistic detail.

The actors in All My Sons and Death of a Salesman act their roles in the realistic-naturalistic environment. Incidentally the pointed observation of Patricia Waugh is worth recording here for it argues to the point:

The logic of everyday world is replaced by forms of contradiction and discontinuity, radical shifts of context which suggest that “reality” as well as (drama) is merely one more game with words. (Metafiction 202)

In addition, drama is an immediate art, one that represents action that occurs in the play’s present. This is so even when the play’s subject is historical, that is, even when its dramatic action concerns the past. The important point about drama’s immediacy is that plays bring the past into the present. The experience of drama is thus one of watching events as they occur. This is so very true of Arthur Miller’s All My Sons and Death of a Salesman.
One additional and critically important feature of drama derives from its mimetic, active, and immediate qualities: its interactive nature. The representation of human action displayed in drama is largely attributable to the interaction of its characters. The action of the plays is based on interaction, for dramatic characters respond and relate to one another. They engage one another in dialogue and action, in speech and visual displays. Such character interaction is the heart of drama: it is the catalyst of plot, the source of meaning, and a central reason for our pleasure in dramatic experience.

Drama is interactive in another sense. Drama is a composite art. It makes use of many of the other arts. Drama makes use of painting and architecture in the design and creation of stage sets, and in the way stage and actors are lighted or kept in shadow. Drama uses music and other sound effects to suggest feelings to build tension, or to create mood and atmosphere. Sculpture and dance are suggested by the way characters are positioned on the stage, and by the movements around it.

In viewing drama and in reading it, such as Arthur Miller’s All My Sons and Death of a Salesman one has to be alert as possible keeping open one’s eyes, ears, and minds. The viewer’s or reader’s pleasure from Arthur Miller’s All My Sons and Death of a Salesman arises from the cumulative impact of a multitude of impressions both visual and aural.
Make up and costume, lighting and sound, speech and action, posture and gesture, movement and expression – all work together to bring plays such as Arthur Miller’s All My Sons and Death of a Salesman to life, to imbue them with meaning and feeling, and most importantly to create a distinctive theatrical experience for the audience.

Incidentally, Death of a Salesman is Arthur Miller’s most famous and notable play. Produced and published in 1949, it had a long original Broadway run. Afterwards the play has been revived many times and the famous actor Dustin Hoffman acted in the character of Willy Loman.

As stated earlier the play is in the tradition of social realism inaugurated by Ibsen and continued by Chekhov, Strinberg and Shaw. The dialogue of the characters, their financial and emotional problems, and their behavior are all indicative of a typically realistic-naturalistic drama. And Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman raises questions about social values and attitudes, in this case the pursuit of success and the American Dream. Arthur Miller’s tone mixes sympathy and judgment, criticism and compassion. Hudson opines:

It can never be too repeated the world which the dramatist calls into being, with all its men and women, actions and passions, motives and struggles, successes and failures is a world of his own creation – a world for which when the last world about objectivity in art has been said he alone is responsible (258).
Arthur Miller provides extensive and detailed stage directions. He furnishes information about the lives his characters lead, giving the readers a sense of the past, which reflects on the present commercial oriented world also.

Thus, Arthur Miller gains maturation as artists of excellence, and relevance and consequence. This American artist genius has struck maturation only through hard labor, commitment to writing well, and celebration. It is through hard labor and sweat that Arthur Miller has attained higher level of sophistication in writing. Understandably, only elitist readers could delve deep into his plays, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, his mature art products.

The simple reason is that this dramatist, who has mastered dramaturgy is a demanding artist. He expects reader participation on his own terms and not on the terms of the readers or viewers. And the readers cannot afford to be casual browsers to grasp at the studied level of argumentation of Arthur Miller. Only perceptive and critically oriented readers could better appreciate his mature literary works.

The maturity of Arthur Miller is gauged against four parameters. In the first place their mature thinking enables them to deal with the major American themes of Capitalism, and American Dream, and Existential Suffering and paranoid neurotic alienation.

Secondly, Arthur Miller reveals his mature thought processes and writing capacities by delineating his characters. There is the upward trend as far as
characterization is concerned. There is a marked growth in the characters portrayed from the early characters to the later characters.

In the third place the maturation of Arthur Miller is examined from the point of view of how exquisitely he handles the elements of American dramaturgy. The goal of Arthur Miller has been to turn into mature artists, and astounding creative self. He has achieved a great measure of success in this regard. He could achieve literary pre-eminence and strike maturation at thematic level and characterization only by applying his mind with the single minded purpose of creating great works of art.

Yet again, Arthur Miller could turn into a mature artist because he has been able to employ his power of imagination, inborn talents, inspiration, and apt modes of expression in a combined manner for creating aesthetic artifacts. Understandably then, a high level of technical achievements marks the art products of Arthur Miller, he has employed his art tools with functional valuations and functional variations.

In fine, through verbal mastery, language manipulation, linguistic experimentation, innovative forms, and technical devices Arthur has gained recognition as a creative self. Incidentally there are valid statements of Arthur Miller and one read in conjunction with that of the other is worth the consideration for they throw ample light on his conception of drama and its purpose sense. Arthur Miller strongly feels:
By whatever means it is accomplished, the prime business of a play is to arouse the passions of its audience so that by the route of passion may be opened up new relationships between a man and men, and between men and Man. (Introduction 53)

Arthur Miller asserts that not only in the drama, but in sociology, psychology, psychiatry, and religion, the past half century has created an almost overwhelming documentation of man as a nearly passive creation of environment and family-created psychological drives. If only from the dramatic point of view, this dictum cannot be accepted as final and "realistic" any more than man's ultimate position can be accepted as his efficient use of state or corporate apparatus. It is no more "real", however, for drama to liberate itself from this vice by the route of romance and the spectacle of free will and a new heroic formula that it is "real" now to represent man's defeat as the ultimate implication of an overwhelming determinism (53).

Arthur Miller has written his plays on the assumption that they would be acted before audience. The actor brings questions of significance, relevance, and consequence to the world on to the stage. Which of them the play chooses to answer, and how they are answered, are the ruling and highly consequential imperatives, which create the style of the play, and control what are called the stylistic levels of its writing.
It is the nature of the questions asked and answered, rather than the language used—whether verse, ordinary slang, or colorless prose—that determines whether the style is realistic or nonrealistic. And there is always an organic connection rather than a temperamental choice involved in the style in which a play is written and must be performed.

Another decisive influence upon style is the conception and manipulation of them in the plays, such as Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. Broadly speaking, where it is conceived and used so as to convey a natural passage of hours, days, or months, the style it enforces is pressed toward realism.

Where action is quite openly freed so that things mature in a moment, for instance, which would take a year in life, a true license for nonrealistic styles thereby won. As is obvious the destruction of temporal necessity occurs in every play if only to a rudimentary degree; it is impossible that in life people should behave and speak in reference to a single thematic point for so continuous a time.

Events, therefore, are always collapsed and drawn together in Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. But as the collapsing process becomes more self-evident, and as the selection of events becomes less and less dominated by the question of their natural maturation, the style of the play moves further and further away from realism. And Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* attempts to account for time in terms of months, days, and hours, and *Death of a Salesman* explodes the watch and the calendar.
The compacting of time destroys the realistic style not only because it violates one’s sense of reality, but collapsing time inevitably emphasizes an element of existence, which in life is not visible or ordinarily felt with equivalent power, and this is the symbolic meaning of Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*.

On the discovery and the clarification of conflict in a man Arthur Miller makes a pointed observation, which is worth quoting in extenso here:

> Another material, of drama is not describable in a word, and has a less direct influence on style because it is probably the single most powerful influence on Miller’s way of writing and enforces on him a kind of taste and approach to the art, which mark these plays *All My Sons*, and *Death of a Salesman*. (Introduction 7)

It is necessary, if one is to reflect reality, not only to depict why a man does what he does, or why he nearly didn’t do it, but why he cannot simply walk away and say to hell with it. To ask this last question of a play is a cruel thing, for evasion is probably the most developed technique most men have, and in truth there is an extraordinarily small number of conflicts, which we must, at any cost, live out to their conclusions. To ask this question is immediately to impose on oneself not, perhaps, a style of writing but at least a kind of commitment he makes to life or refuses to make, the kind of challenge he accepts and the kind he can pass by. Of 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. The structure of these plays *All My Sons*, and *Death of a Salesman*, in this respect, is to the end such a conflict be discovered and clarified. Idea, in these plays *All My Sons*, and *Death of a Salesman*, is the generalized meaning of that discovery.

The assumption or presumption behind these plays *All My Sons*, and *Death of a Salesman* is that life has meaning and they carry an idea or two, or more. The ideas in these plays, *All My Sons*, and *Death of a Salesman*, are useful as a unifying force empowering the artist to evoke a cogent emotional life on the stage, but that in itself it has no aesthetic value, since, after all, it is only a means to an end.

The second is that since every play means something even the play, which denies all meaning to existence the “idea” of a play is its measure of value and importance and beauty, and that a play, which appears merely to exist to one side of “ideas” is an aesthetic nullity.

Therefore, idea is very important to a playwright like Arthur Miller. Two statements made by Arthur Miller studied together argue the point that Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* is Ibsenesque in form and style. The first argument of Arthur Miller is when *All My Sons* opened on Broadway it was called an “Ibsenesque“ play. Miller feels, "some people liked it for this reason, and others did not. Ibsen is relevant to this play but what he means to me is not always what he means to
others, either his advocates or his detractors” (12). More often than not, these days he is thought of as a stage carpenter with a flair for ideas of importance. The whole aim of shaping a dramatic work on strict lines, which will elicit a distinct meaning reducible to a sentence is now suspect, “Life” is now more complicated than such a mechanical contrasting of forces can hope to reflect.

This is revealing statement, which carries the reader back to where Arthur Miller pays compliment to Ibsen’s ability to forge a play upon factual bedrock. In the following statement drawn from “The Shadows of the Gods”, while recalling his early influences, Arthur Miller praises in a similar manner the polished carpentry of his dramatic art”. It is true:

Miller connected with Ibsen not because he wrote about problems, but because he was illuminating process. Nothing in his (Ibsen’s) plays exists for itself, not a smart line, not a gesture, that can be isolated. It was breath-taking. (Theater 180)

What is precious in the Ibsen method is its insistence upon valid causation, and this cannot be dismissed as a wooden notion. In this context, one more statement of Arthur Miller throws further light on the Ibsenesque nature of his play, All My Sons.

To return to Ibsen’s influence on this play (All My Sons), I should have to split the question in order to make sense of it. First, there was the real impact of his work upon me (Arthur Miller) at the time;
A situation in his (Ibsen's) plays is never stated but revealed in terms of hard actions, irrevocable deeds; and sentiment is never confused with the action it conceals. (19)

Having for so long written in terms of what people felt rather than what they did, he turned to his Ibsen's works at the time with the sense of homecoming. As he has said, he wanted then to write so that people of common sense would mistake his play for life itself and not be required to lend it some poetic license before it could be believed.

The fortress which All My Sons lays siege to is the fortress of unrelatedness. It is an assertion not so much of a morality in terms of right and wrong, but of a moral world's being such because men cannot walk away from certain of their deeds. In this sense Joe Keller is a threat to society and in this sense the play is a social play. Its socialness does not reside in its having dealt with the crime of selling defective materials to a nation at war - the same crime could easily be the base of a thriller, which would have no place in social dramaturgy.

It is that crime seen as having roots in a certain relationship of the individual to society, and to certain indoctrination he embodies, which, if dominant, can mean a jungle existence for all us no matter how high the buildings soar. It is a question of the survival of the fittest. The fittest adopts means, which are wrong, only to achieve his desired ends. He invariably bullies, browbeats,
cheats, and takes recourse to all kinds of duplicities and thievish knavery. In the process he sacrifices principles for money, and this is the nature of Keller, who survives because he is the fittest and Steve languishes in the jail, because he is no that fittest.

The following passages argues the point that is made. The first passage runs thus:

KELLER: Sure, he just got here. That’s the way they do, George.

A little man makes a mistake and thy hang him by the thumbs; the big ones become ambassadors. I wish you’d-a told me you were going to see Dad. (AMS 2.67)

The point is that Keller, the diabolic character quotes precepts and principles, when the blood in his hands cannot be washed away clean. Moreover, he proves true the jungle law where survival is the question of the fittest.

And All My Sons is a play, which is meant to become part of the lives of its audience - a play seriously meant for people of common sense, and relevant to both their domestic lives and their daily work, but an experience, which widens their awareness of connection - the filaments to the past and the future, which lie concealed in “life”.

Structurally and from the angle of the best traditions of the Gestalten theory, All My Sons is a structurally and organizationally a well-knit play.
In fact, in *All My Sons*, the connections between the present and the past, between events and moral consequences, between the manifest and the hidden are of proven worth.

Moving on to the discussion of Arthur Miller’s play, *Death of a Salesman* one starts with the argument that it is cast in the expressionistic design and mold. Arthur Miller, the expressionistic playwright attempts to dramatize a subjective picture of reality as seen by an individual consciousness. He attempts to show the inner life of a character, portraying external reality as he or she sees it.

Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* is expressionistic in design in that it dramatizes Willy Loman’s subjective sense of things, rather than exhibiting a concern for a strict and exact representation of external detail. The play, *Death of a Salesman*, is particularly expressionistic in its memory scenes, in which Willy recalls events from the past in such a way that he reenacts rather than merely remembers them. In the sense different times, places, and states of mind, fluctuate and merge as Arthur Miller reveals Willy Loman’s thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs, his inflated hopes and deflated dreams.

The expressionistic quality of the play is enhanced by lightning and music that signal flashbacks and contribute to its moods. Incidentally, the pointed statement of Arthur Miller in writing the play, *Death of a Salesman*, has been to project his optimistic mind. But contrary to his intention, the play, *Death of a Salesman*, is viewed as a document of pessimism.
Yet again, Arthur Miller’s statement concerning his purpose in writing the play, Death of a Salesman, which is simply to point out a historical fact, is quite interesting. He argues that this historical fact must be taken into account in any consideration of tragedy. In this respect Death of a Salesman is a slippery play to categorize because nobody in it stops to make a speech objectively stating that the great issues. A worse play, less closely articulating its meanings and actions, it would have more quickly satisfied a certain kind of criticism.

But it was meant to be less a play than a fact; it refused admission to its author’s opinions and opened itself to a revelation of process and the operations of an ethic, of social law as of action no less powerful in their effects upon individuals than any tribal law administered by gods with names. He cannot claim that this play is a genuine solid tragedy for his opinions on tragedy to be held valid. His purpose here is simply point out a historical fact, which must be taken into account in consideration of tragedy, and it is the sharp alternation between meaning of rank in society between the present time and the distant past. More important to him is the fact that this particular kind of argument obscures much relevant considerations (32-33).

Furthermore, Arthur Miller reads Death of a Salesman as a neat and a perfect package of ideas, and points how as an exquisite crafted artist with great maturation has channeled so many ideas in Death of a Salesman. The play Death of a Salesman grew from simple images. From a little frame house on a street of little frame houses, which had been loud with the noise of growing boys, and then was empty
and silent and finally occupied by strangers. Strangers who could not know with what joy Willy and his boys had once re-shingled the roof. Now it was quiet in the house, and the wrong people in the beds.

And, moreover, one is reminded of Vladimir Nabokov who is universally renowned for his techniques, the cinematic flashbacks and the technique of marrying the real with the unreal in his fictions, for instance in his *Invitation to a Beheading*. Similar mastery of the cinematic flashback is evidenced in the following memory scene. Willy Loman is going to meet his sons for dinner. Loud music and a red glow mark the scene as Happy is getting ready the table set. Biff comes in and tells Happy of the story of his failure. He waited for six hours to see Oliver, and after that Oliver just walked by him without even recognizing him.

Biff went into his empty office, stole his pen and ran away. The pen here is the phallic symbol satisfying the vicarious pleasure and satisfaction of Biff that by robbing the pen of Oliver - the phallic symbol - he is going to deny Oliver of his manly virility. He also admits that while waiting for Bill Oliver, he had a realization how false life was and how easily he had become a party to the make-believe world of his father. He now tells Happy that he would be ruthlessly frank with Willy Loman.

So, when Willy Loman walks in with full of hope and expectation, he is quite certain that Biff has succeeded in getting the money. He can even talk about
having lost his job without being too heartbroken. In a sense of strong emotional impact, Biff tells his father the story of his having failed to even talk to Bill Oliver and his having stolen the pen.

Biff’s story that Oliver would not help him with money shakes up Willy Loman so badly that he mumbles and laughs like a crazy man. His last hope is lost, pushing him into the realm of darkness and depression. The textual passage makes the perceptive and critically oriented reader appreciate the extent of misery tormenting Willy Loman.

HAPPY. Me? Who goes away? Who runs off and - -

BIFF. Yeah, but he doesn’t mean anything to you. You could help him - I can’t. Don’t you understand what I’m talking about? He’s going to kill himself, don’t you know that?

(DOS 2.90)

One issue that readers, audiences, and critics have consistently raised about Death of a Salesman concerns its status as a tragedy. The main question turns on whether Willy Loman is a tragic figure. Is he grand and noble enough to be a tragic hero? Is his failure tragic or pathetic? Over the years Arthur Miller has written about these and related questions in essays such as "On Social Drama", and "Tragedy and the Common Man". He has suggested that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy as kings; and also that the tragic feeling is evoked in
the mind and heart of the readers or viewers when they are in the presence of the character who is ready to lay down his life to secure his dignity. These observations apply to Willy Loman.

It ought to be stressed that other technical and theatrical considerations enable one to better appreciate the plays of Arthur Miller. In the first place one takes into consideration how basically, point of view refers to the dramatist’s relationship or involvement in the events of the story and it is expressed in terms of grammatical person.

James Hunt argues to the point thus:

First Person (“I”)  
1. The main character tells his or her story  
2. A minor character tells the main character’s story

Second Person (“You”)  
Second-person narratives are quite rare, because of the ambiguity of trying to involve the reader (“you”) in an imaginary action.

Third Person (“he,” “she”)  
1. Omniscient. An “all-knowing” narrator can be everywhere in the story at once and has unlimited access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters.  
2. Limited Omniscient. The narrator has access to the thoughts and feelings of only some of the characters.
The narrator has no access to the character’s thoughts and feelings and reports only what could be observed externally. (Literature 26-27)

The scheme of analyzing point of view does not take into account a number of possible variations. The distinction between “major” and “minor” characters in first person narratives does not distinguish between minor characters who are personally involved in the action and ones who are only observers, although this might be important. And the category of limited-omniscient third-person point of view does not distinguish between various kinds of limitations. Moreover, on the point of total omniscience, X. J. Kennedy and Dan Gioia make a pointed observation which is worth quoting here:

> Every point of view has limitations. Even total omniscience, a knowledge of the minds of all the characters, has its disadvantages. Such a point of view requires high skill to manage, without the storyteller’s losing his way in a multitude of perspectives. In fact, there are evident advantages in having a narrator not knowing everything. (24)

Once again, James Hunt argues that no matter how many categories are used, however, the reader still has to be attentive to the variations in point of view in any particular story. So it is probably best to keep the categories few in number and keep in mind the possibility of variations (Literature 27). As such, an author
must choose a point of view (or sometimes, several points of view) from which he or she will narrate the story. The choice will contribute to the total effect that the story will have. In a dramaturgy there is the succession of dramatic events, by which it is meant that narration usually consists of more than one event, although single-event narratives are theoretically (and perhaps also empirically) possible.

And an event is defined without great rigor as something that happens, something that can be summed up by a verb or a name of action as for example, "He rode on a tiger." And drama differs from other literary genres, such as lyrical poetry or expository prose. To begin with, the term narration suggests (1) a communication process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee and (2) the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message. It is this that distinguishes narrative fiction from narratives in other media, such as film, dance, or pantomime.

Dramatic events can be classified into two main kinds: those that advance the action by opening an alternative "kernels" and those that expand, amplify, maintain or delay the former "catalysts". And the two main principles of combination are temporal succession and causality. The minute there is more than one character, events may become simultaneous and the story is often multi-linear rather than uni-linear. Strict linear chronology, then, is neither natural nor an actual characteristic of most stories. It is a conventional norm, which has become widespread as to replace the actual multi-linear temporality of the story and acquire a pseudo-natural status.
Temporal succession, the “and then” principle, is often coupled with the principle of causality—“that’s why” or “therefore”. Half a century ago Foster used these to combinatory principles to distinguish between two types of narrative, which he called respectively “story” and “plot”. There is drama as a narrative of events arranged in time-sequence. A lot is also narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. “king died and then the queen died” is a story. “The king died and then the queen died of grief” is a plot.

Causality can either be implied by chronology or gain an explicit status in its own right. But the very notion of causality is by no means unproblematic. A minimal story consists of three conjoined events. The first and the third events are stative the second is active. Furthermore, the third event is the inverse of the first. Finally, the three events are conjoined by conjunctive features in such a way that (a) the first event precedes the second in time and the second precedes the third, and (b) the second causes the third.

And stories are in some subtle ways style language and medium-dependent. Todorov forcefully argues the point in his classic work that meaning does not exist before being articulated and perceived. There do not exist two utterances of identical meaning if their articulation has followed a different course (Literature 20).

Incidentally, story is concerned with “How does it turn out? What happens?” But theme is concerned with “What is it about? What does it add up to? What motif
holds up the happenings together? What does it make of life, and, perhaps, what wisdom does it offer?’ In a good drama the details add up to, and are controlled by some overall purpose.

The story is presented in drama through the mediation of some “prism”, “perspective”, “angle of vision”, verbalized by the narrator though not necessarily is. And the terms, “prism”, “perspective”, “angle of vision”, are associated with the common term, “focalization”. Focalization has a degree of abstractness, which avoids the specifically visual connotations of points of view. As the term, focalization, suggests, the focus of internal focalization is inside the represented events.

And internal focalization is sometimes no more than a textual stance.

1. In principle, focalization and narration are distinct activities.

2. In so-called “third-person center of consciousness” James’s The Ambassadors, and Joyce’s Portrait, the center of consciousness or “reflector” is the focalizer, while the user of the third person is the narrator.

3. Focalization and narration are also separate in first-person retrospective narratives.

4. As far as focalization is concerned, there is no difference between third-person center of consciousness and first-person retrospective narration. In both, the focalizer is a character within the represented world. The only difference between the two is the identity of the narrator.
However, focalization and narration may sometimes be combined. Focalization has both a subject and an object. The subject the focalizer is the agent, whose perception orients the presentation, whereas the object - the focalized - is what the focalizer perceives. All that a play can do is to create an illusion, an effect, a semblance of mimesis, but it does through diegesis. The crucial distinction, therefore, is not between telling and showing, but between different degrees and kinds of telling.

At this point there is the need to define the term, character, in fiction short fiction, poem, or drama. The term, character, refers to a personage in fiction, short fiction, poem, or drama. The term, character, also denotes the essential qualities and personality traits of a fictional or real individual. The ability to create compelling and believable characters is one of the hallmarks of the literary artist.

It ought to be noted that a character in a work of fiction is realized in a number of ways. If the character is a flat character, a two-dimensional character, there is no maturity in creating such a character. A flat character is known as a type character and is usually lightly sketched without much detail. Flat characters are analogous to humors, caricatures, types. A flat character is both simple and un-developing, whereas a round character is both complex and developing (with a) complexity, development, penetration into inner life.

Furthermore, such characters (flat characters) do not develop in the course of the action. As a consequence of the restriction of qualities and the absence of development, flat characters are easily recognized and easily remembered by the
reader. Round characters are defined by contrastive implication, namely, those that are not flat. There is no flat involves having more than one quality and developing in the course of the action.

But the character in drama should be a round character, a three-dimensional character. A round character is generally a complex personality given to poly urges and is a fully realized individual. The chief character or hero of a fiction or drama is usually three-dimensional and is known as the protagonist. His adversary, if any, is known as the antagonist.

Arthur Miller accepts conventional realism, but at the same time he does not ignore the inner workings of human psyche and mind. In his Introduction to the Collected Plays he hints at his involvement with the three stylistic modes prevalent in modern drama: the realistic, the expressionistic and the rhetorical. Although, he had gained appreciation for the power of 'hard facts' from Dostoevsky's The Brother Karamazov, he learned how to 'make the moral world real and evident' by observing in his plays Ibsen's ability to forge a play upon a factual bedrock. A situation in his plays as in Ibsen's is never stated but revealed in terms of hard actions, irrevocable deeds.

Miller in his plays successfully fuses together the social and the psychological. Neither the society nor the individual is there as a priority. The society is neither a background against which the personal relationships are studied, nor are the individuals merely illustrations of aspects of the way of life.
Every aspect of personal life is seen at its most important in completely personal terms. So in his plays both individual and the society are seen as belonging to each other, to a continuous and inseparable process.

Miller's plots are not traditional. They are thin yet completely woven. He does not allow looseness of construction and unnecessary details to creep in. Though they are carefully built he raises his plays time and again. His plots reveal his care and consciousness and his laboured effort. Hence they suffer from spontaneity. He maintains unities of time and place at the cost of the unity of action. In his attempt to yoke past and present together in the stream of consciousness manner, he tells the story elements. His are the poor narratives. To him ideas are more important than events. Hence his plots are dominated by ideas and mental states rather than a good story. Many time Miller avoids anti climaxes in his plays: at times he postpones climaxes.

*All My Sons* is a play of father – son relationship. So long as the ideologies do not come on opposite plains, this relationship exists. As soon as there is a cause of resentment or breach of trust the relationship comes crashing on the ground. In this play both father and son undergo a crisis of self-knowledge. Joe Keller unlike Willy Loman of *Death of a Salesman* does not refuse to admit his failure ultimately. "But I think to him they were all my sons. And I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were" (AMS 3.89). Joe Keller finally concedes his position to be untenable. He dies finally in order to make his
son realize the validity of his values. The main purpose of the dramatist in the play seems to show what happens to a man when he loses the grip of the forces of life, when he cherishes wrong values wrongly nourished by society, when he fails to understand himself and his environment.

Miller made use of the dream technique in *Death of a Salesman*. Miller himself has told us that the Salesman image was from the beginning absorbed with the concept that nothing in life comes 'next', but that everything exists together and at the same time within us. In writing this play, says Miller, he wished to create a form which would literally be the process of Willy Loman's way of mind. He wished to speak of the salesman most precisely he felt about him. The form of the play seems the form of a confession, for that is how it is told, now speaking of what happened yesterday, then suddenly following some connection to time twenty years ago; then leaping even further back and then returning to the present and even speculating about the future.

Willy Loman's dream occupies nearly half of the play. They are the dreams of all the world, the dreams of a happy, hopeful past, and the inescapable dream of past guilt. The recollections are not straight flash backs in the manner of cinema films, but they are distorted, speeded up, and accentuated by repetition and selection. These recollections merge with the present reality, but they are at the same time distinguishable from present reality.
One figure who appears in these recollections seems to have no existence in the real world – Uncle Ben, who is the embodiment of the American will to succeed. Long ago this man set out for Alaska to dig gold, but he found himself instead in Africa and so he made his fortune in diamonds. During the dream sequences, Willy himself seems unable to distinguish between truth and fantasy, between the past and the present. Willy's dreams are a symptom of schizophrenia, and thus they deepen the pathos of the situation. Moreover, the play does not conclude with its protagonist's death; it continues through his funeral, a solitary affair in marked and bitter contrast to the one Willy envisioned.

Benjamin Nelson is of the view that Death of a Salesman is a drama thoroughly centred in the main stream of American theatre. It presents a critical outlook of contemporary American society. It employs dramatic forms more expressive than the realistic technique in which it is rooted, succeeding as do the best works of O'Neill and Tennessee Williams in developing a poetic drama based upon the mode, language and experience of American life. It also manifests the primary struggle of the American dramatists to present the common man as the focus of dramatic imagination.

Most plays have flat characters to offset round characters. And characterization in literature is the presentation of the attitudes and behavior of imaginary persons in order to make them credible to the critically oriented and perceptive reading
Characterization is a unique feature of such fictional forms as the short fiction, fiction, drama, and narrative poetry. Criticism regards good characterization as an important criterion of excellence in fiction.

It ought to be stressed here that Arthur Miller's characterization is perfectly and artistically handled and the characters are superbly delineated. A character may be drawn with a few marked personality traits or with a complex collection of them. Usually the major characters in a work of fiction tend to be round characters such as the female protagonists and the chief male characters of Arthur Miller. They are round characters, while minor ones are flat characters and tend to exhibit only a few dominant traits.

A character may also be either static, showing little change, or dynamic, that is, significantly affected by the events of the narrative. Most novels and full length plays concern the development of dynamic characters, while static characters are more often the subject of one act plays and short fiction. Thus it is established that these requirements of drama are fully met by Arthur Miller in his plays, All My Sons and Death of Salesman.