

Arthur lowman  
commits adultery, a  
rather minor sin



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Arthur Miller profoundly explores the subject of morality and human values in his two famous plays, *Death of a Salesman* and *All My Sons*. Though dealing with a common topic, the works contain major differences that help to make them unique.

*Death of a Salesman* describes the tragedy behind shattered dreams and the effects that they bring on entire families. It focuses greatly on illusions created by individuals and the inability of those individuals to except reality. *All My Sons*, on the other hand, explores the frightening reality of people's insensitivity and their moral values and the illusions created to cover up the tragic reality. The reality versus illusion theme exhibits the parallelisms and the distinctions between the plays.

The subject of human values may be compared through the points of view, the imagery, and the life lessons of the two works. *All My Sons* denounces immorality more directly than *Death of a Salesman*. Joe Keller's refusal to stop the shipment of cracked cylinder heads causes the deaths of innocent American soldiers. The grim reality is that he allowed the people who were defending him and fighting next to his sons to die, thus committing the ultimate sin of murder.

In *All My Sons* Joe Keller immensely influences the lives of many outside his family while caring only about his own. By contrast, in *Death of a Salesman* Willy Lowman commits adultery, a rather minor sin when compared with murder. His influence is limited only to the lives of his wife and sons, while he desires to impact the lives of those outside his family. Arthur Miller

emphasizes the destruction of lives more apparently in *All My Sons* than in *Death of a Salesman*.

However, both plays are linked to events dealing with acquisition of money. The theme of material wealth can often be noticed as the basis for many actions in the two works. Joe Keller commits the terrible act because he fears losing his business and thus, not being able to provide for his family materially. He willingly chooses money over the lives of the soldiers and over the life of his friend and partner. Similarly, Willy Lowman's every action in life revolves around money and material success.

His obsession with acquiring wealth destroys his relationship with Biff and his own sanity and happiness. Willy has an affair only to further himself in his career, only to attract more customers. Also, his inauthentic dream for Biff centers solely around wealth. Willy explains to Biff that a man is measured by his success and his popularity, a lesson that cannot be described as moral. Another common theme of the plays is the constant lying. The characters of both works rarely tell the truth to themselves and to each other.

Biff's words in *Death of a Salesman*, '...We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!..

.'. depict the reality present in both *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*.

Through the two plays Arthur Miller explores several themes that deal with human values through different points of view that sometimes parallel each other greatly. Many distinctions can be seen in Miller's use of imagery

throughout both plays. Surprisingly, despite the heavy moral content of All <https://assignbuster.com/arthur-lowman-commits-adultery-a-rather-minor-sin/>

My Sons, in *Death of a Salesman* Miller uses imagery more vividly and more abundantly. *Death of a Salesman* incorporates the clever use of time, foreshadowing, and also music all throughout the play.

Willy's constant flashbacks, though at times perplexing to the reader, create a nostalgic and sorrowful atmosphere. They accurately present Willy's longing for the past, for the lost time, and irreparable mistakes. Through perpetual referral to the past Miller allows the reader to journey inside the mind and the spirit of a troubled man. The play is constructed on this time travel into the past which brings about the dreams of the future. Willy's flashbacks into the past also generate an air of anticipation. During one of the early flashbacks when Willie remembers a day with his boys Miller foreshadows Biff's future when Willie asks Bernard to give Biff the answers to a Regents exam.

'...There's nothing the matter with him!...He's got spirit, personality...'; insists Willy, refusing to accept the