

Did arthur miller believe in the american dream argumentative essay example

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Did Arthur Miller Believe in the American Dream?

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Did Arthur Miller Believe in the American Dream?

“ I know that my works are a credit to this nation and I dare say they will endure longer than the McCarran Act” (Miller as qtd. in Playwright) was a bold quote from American playwright Arthur Miller on account of his written works being an important and enduring contribution to his country. Most of his writings were manifestations of his political beliefs. He believed that writers

of his generations who happen to live in the United States anchored most of their writings on the American Dream. He was quoted as saying “ Whoever is writing in the United States using the American Dream as an ironical pole of his story” (Miller as quoted in “ Biography”) His many works were a picture of his perception of the American Dream, a perception that is ironically different from what his grandfather must have dreamed when they chose to migrate from Poland into the United States. In most of his plays, he portrayed the vindictive aspect of the American Dream as he created characters that were made to suffer from antagonism, personal and social conflicts and the most that made his plays effective: tragedy.

The childhood years of Arthur Miller played a significant part in forming his character as a person, as well as his thoughts as a writer. He was born to a successful Jewish family in New York in the year 1915. However, the period of the Great Depression in the 1930s did not spare his fathers’ manufacturing business from failure. From a comfortable life, their family has to suffer the struggle of having to live with a meager income. Despite the financial difficulties, the young Miller was determined to complete his studies. He took lowly jobs such as being a truck driver and waiter to be able to finance his studies in Michigan University from which he graduated in 1938 (Miller)While at the university, he majored in journalism and wrote the play No Villain for the student paper. The effect of the Great Depression to his family and to others who suffered more than him made him more persistent to get over the situation.

According to commentators, Arthur Miller is a social dramatist, by which many who appreciate the beauty of the written literature would agree. He

was considered a writer who communicates his thought and feelings about the negative side of capitalism, critiquing the inclination of the society in appreciating and valuing materials possessions in this contemporary time. His plays are an exhibition of his disapproval against lack of fairness that most middle class people had experience during the first half of the 20th century. The impact of the society from which one belongs is generously present in most of Millers plays. He presents the effect of the society to an individual and also the ability of an individual to affect his society. Miller himself, as a young man was negatively affected by the Great Depression, but he managed to come out of it as a better person. This proves his view that people can do something to change for the better, as well as change the society they are in. Millers' plays also showed his Marxist tendencies and strong disapproval to capitalism, as depicted on the portrayal of his main characters who met their downfall due to their love for profit and material possessions. Whether or not Miller is a Marxist depends on the perspective of people who came across his works.

One of the famous plays written by of Arthur Miller was the All my Sons which was set sometimes in 1947 and has impressed the audiences with the seriousness and intelligence of the work (Yawale). The main character of the play was 61 year-old Joe Keller, who is a good family man. His character was portrayed so that his profound love for his family can make him give up his honor to provide well for his them. Miller has based the crime in the story of the All my Sons on a true story that happened in the war. The malfunction of the defective parts that were knowingly shipped by a businessman caused the death of several soldiers. The crime was soon uncovered and the

businessman was convicted. In the play, Miller “justified” the wrongdoing of the offender. Joe Keller was an owner of a business that makes aero engine parts. One production Keller decided to ship the parts. It resulted in the crash of several airplanes and death of the pilots. Keller and his deputy manager were arrested but the former implicated his deputy manager on the crime, making him free to go on with his business. The flow of events would uncover the lie that Joe and his wife had kept secret for a long time. Keller has two sons, the elder, Larry who served as a pilot during the war; and who committed suicide on account of knowing of his fathers’ crime. In the end, Keller’s crime was uncovered and in wanting his younger son, Chris, to understand him reasoned “you lay forty five years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty five years, let them take my life away” (as quoted in Yawale). Miller had portrayed Keller not an evil man at all, but one who was forced to do an evil act due to the dictate of circumstances. The circumstance in this case was the possible bankruptcy of his manufacturing business and the prospect of his family being poor as a result. The ironical tragedy of the play was that the family that Keller so loved and had wanted to protect from misfortunes was themselves the victim of his crime.

The All my Sons was a portrayal of Millers observance of the life struggle of families after the war. In the decision of Keller to ship the defective products, he chose the survival of his business and individual gain rather than that of the society. It portrayed Miles stance against capitalism, and his Marxist tendencies as seen in the tragedy faced by Keller and his family in disregarding societal impact of his action. Miller must have seen himself on

the person of Chris, the younger son of Keller who was angered upon hearing that his father shipped the defective products because of him (Chris). Chris rhetoric "What the hell do you mean. You did it for me? Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the World?" (Miller) In their conversation Chris sees individual interest as second only to ones responsibility to the society and ones' country. The tragic end of the story was a manifestation of Miller denouncing the greed for money and profit in which capitalism evolved. We can also see in the story the "fact that even those who do succeed are not any happier" (Reality). In the All my Sons, Keller became a successful businessman and had for several years enjoyed a comfortable life. But he became unhappy when he faced the truth that he had caused the death of his elder son. Though, this may be an extreme case, the truth remains that many who became successful in achieving the American dream remains unhappy.

The play that made Arthur Miller famous and has sparked his career in writing plays was the Death of the Salesman. The play was premiered on February 1949, with the Willy Loman as the main character. Willy, the 63 year old patriarch of a family from Brooklyn, was traveling salesman. The play starts with Willy coming home tired from a cancelled trip, and told his ever supporting wife, Linda that he's tired and he couldn't make the rest of the travel. His wife encouraged him to tell Howard that he should be given the opportunity to work in New York, from which Wily agreed.

The Loman family has two sons, Biff and Happy. Biff just arrived from his work as a farm hand in the west. The conflict of the story starts with Wily having trouble remembering things. With his age, he has been experiencing

mental wanderings. The father was critical of Biff who was settled to being just a farm hand, and not going into a successful business. Biff was a promising athlete back in high school, but it resents his old man that he never went to college as his parents specially his father, had wished. Biff and his father has a strained relationship because of the younger mans' inability to find himself a career to speak of. Biff is angry at his father for being so critical and for thinking of him as lazy man. Linda being the supportive wife that she is, told her sons, specifically, Biff that he needed to be serious about getting a job or he will be blamed for the unhappiness and deteriorating mental state. Billy then told them that he is going to meet up with his previous employer to ask for a loan. He had believed that the employer, Oliver, would willingly give him money to start a business. The patriarch was happy that the two brothers came up with a plan to put up a business of their own. The setting was such that the family of Willy was happy on their plan, and they have thought that their plan will all come into pieces. They have high expectations that all their hopes and their fathers dream will be fulfilled.

But things weren't meant to be as the family dreamed. When Willy went to Howard to ask for relocation within New York City, the boss did not obliged. Willy remarked " I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away- a man is not a piece of fruit! (Salesman)The meeting ended up with Willy being angry and getting fired. Biff, on the other hand, was given the cold shoulder treatment when he tried to borrow money from his previous employer. Upon knowing on his brothers' failure to get a loan, they planned to keep it a

secret to Willy. The plot showed Willy reminiscing the past, when his son caught him having an affair with another woman. Biff got very angry and the event made him stop idolizing his father and him ending up the dreams his father had wanted him to be.

The plot ends with Biff realizing that their family is living with a lie and told his Father that he is finished with it. Through the argument, Biff was able to tell his father that he just cannot be the person that his father wants him to be. Despite the argument between the father and his son, Willy found out that Biff loves him. Had this been the ending of the story, it would not have the effect the writer had wanted. Miller was known for the tragedy of his play, and what made *The Death of the Salesman* etched in the memory of the viewers was the tragic end that befalls the protagonist.

Upon knowing that he is still loved by his estranged son despite his shortcomings, Willy, the family man that he is, wanted to do something that can at least help his son. Despite the realization, Willy is still absorb with the idea that sis Biff will become successful. He had thought that the insurance policy upon his death would help secure his sons' future and so he made an uncommon sacrifice: that is of committing suicide.

The Death of a Salesman conveys a lot of aspect in the society. It had depicted the character of a failed businessman, of the role of a housewife during the 1940's as portrayed by Linda and the characterized relationship between fathers and sons among others. Miller had successfully portrayed the struggles of a middle class family during his time. The remark of Willy during his conversation with Howard where he said " you can't eat the fruit and throw the peel away" was an expression that Miller used to compare the

fruitful years and hard work he spent with Howard's company. His retort was an objection to Howard's attitude of rejecting him after having been useful during his younger years. The scene showed another capitalistic view as Howard does not see Willy to be of anymore use to his company, thus firing him immediately as a result of their argument.

Biff had wanted his family to live and accept the reality that he cannot be successful as what his father had wanted him to be. While Willy's dream, and also his dream for his son, was to become a success in the field of business. Biff had realized that his father was dreaming an empty dream. His father had spent his years as a salesman, hoping that someday he will see the fruit of his efforts. All his hopes had fallen apart when Howard, his boss, had put it bluntly that he has no use for him in his company. The Death of the Salesman was another way of Miller in critiquing the American Dream.

What is the American Dream? Did Arthur Miller believe in it? The American Dream is the roots of inspiration in America, it developed on the notion that "each person has the right to pursue happiness, and the freedom to strive for a better life through hard work and fair ambition" (Life). Miller must have believed in the American Dream. His persistence to finish his studies and come out a better person during the Great Depression depicts how he "strived for a better life through hard work and ambition". The thing with the American dream is that it has evolved into an overly ambitious and materialistic point of view. People became so obsessed in achieving a better life that the dream has now substantially evolved on owning material things and money. To most individuals, the American dream is associated with becoming wealthy and the ability to achieve everything if only one works

hard (American)

Arthur Miller has believed in the American dream. His written plays are manifestations of his intent to see the true spirit of the American dream, “the dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” (Adams as cited in The American Dream). It is a dream of achieving order in the society where everyone is given the chance to attain the fullest standing that they are determined of accomplishing.

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