

How does arthur
miller explore the
theme of masculinity
in a view from the
bridge...



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Masculinity is a very important subject in the play. Arthur Miller uses the three main male characters to show masculinity, whether it's through actions, or through words. Eddie, Marco and Rodolpho have different views on masculinity, and these change throughout the course of the play, as does their masculinity, which is questioned because of the views portrayed by the other characters in the play. There are other factors in the play that link to masculinity in different ways, such as; actions, speech, honour, betrayal, relationships, jealousy, aggression, loyalty, and many other factors.

The play was set in Red Hook in Brooklyn, New York, where all the people living there knew about the illegal immigrants from Italy. However, to keep the honour that they have established they will not tell the authorities that they are there.

In the play, Eddie mentions another character, Vinny; he lost his honour and therefore his masculinity, by telling the authorities that there were illegal immigrants living in the area, this is what could happen to any of the characters that we see in the play if they tell the authorities; so no-one will tell on the immigrants.

The entire world of the play is dominated by men. The men have to be big, strong, silent and hard working; this is a traditional thing for the male characters. Rodolpho isn't like the traditional men, as he seems more feminine as he sings, sews and cooks. At the time when the play was written, to be a real man you would need to maintain a certain level of dominance and power.

The actions and words used by the characters show the masculinity of themselves as well as the other characters; however it's not clear of the characters masculinity, as it seems to change through the play.

Eddie wants to see how masculine Rodolpho is, so wants to see if he can box, Rodolpho however, had never boxed before so wasn't very good at it, also he didn't want to hurt Eddie, as he has given Marco and himself a home. Eddie thinks that Rodolpho is gay because of this, and he has blond hair, and can sing, sew cook and clean, and these are normally things that women do. When the two characters were confronting each other the stage directions for Eddie were " He is sizing up Rodolpho, there is a concealed suspicion." This shows that Eddie wasn't sure about Rodolpho, and wanted to make sure he was normal, so to speak.

In the play, Marco challenges Eddie's masculinity by asking if he can lift a chair by only one of the legs, Eddie accepts his challenge, but fails to lift the chair. Marco then shows Eddie that he can lift the chair, so must have more strength, and be more masculine.

In the play Eddie thinks that Rodolpho is a homosexual; because he sings cooks and sews. When Rodolpho tells Eddie that he sings Eddie seems quite shocked, the dialogue between the two is " I am a singer also though" " You mean a regular-?" Eddie didn't seem sure if Rodolpho meant that he just sings around the house or as a job. He also questions Rodolpho, as he doesn't like working and also has bleach blonde hair; this makes him seem more feminine. Eddie comments on Rodolpho's hair by saying " With that wacky hair, he's like a chorus girl or sum'p" Eddie tests Rodolpho's

masculinity; as he has to teach him how to box, and also by kissing him on the lips in front of Catherine. The stage directions for this action are “ Eddie pins his arms, laughing and suddenly kisses him” This questions the masculinity of both Eddie and Rodolpho.

Both Eddie and Marco portray the themes of masculinity very strongly in the play; this also leads to aggression shown in different ways by the characters.

When Marco challenges Eddie to fight, Eddie takes out a knife; but Marco just fights with his hands. This makes you think that Eddie is less masculine as he takes out a weapon. This shows you that Eddie is more physically aggressive, but can be very loud, this is shown when he says “ Marco’s got my name” it shows that he is very angry and wants to get Marco back. Marco is more verbally aggressive as he threatens Eddie, and challenges him to a fight.

Eddie thinks more of protecting himself and hurting Marco in the fight, to keep his masculinity that he has established. Marco however just wants best for his family and wants to protect them.

Eddie had a knife trying to be masculine but this came across as aggression. During the fight Marco had the strength to turn the knife around when Eddie went for him, this makes Marco seem more masculine as he had the strength to do this.

Eddie took the knife out to use in the fight against Marco because he wanted to have the same ranking of masculinity as the ranking that Marco has.

Eddie's masculinity is questioned again when he cries, Beatrice didn't think he was the sort of person to cry as she says “ What're you cryin'?” And tells <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-arthur-miller-explore-the-theme-of-masculinity-in-a-view-from-the-bridge-essay-sample/>

the immigration officers of Marco and Rodolpho. Because of this he loses his honour, respect in the community, and most importantly to him; his masculinity. Generally, Eddie is a simple man who feels uncomfortable when the boundaries of his manliness are threatened. When he is confused he refuses to accept anything other than his own uncomplicated measure of masculinity.

Honour and betrayal are very important when it comes to masculinity. If someone betrays their family or friends they lose honour, and honour is a way of showing how masculine someone is.

Eddie loses his honour by betraying Beatrice, Catherine, Marco and Rodolpho by telling the immigration officers that Marco and Rodolpho are staying illegally in America, this also links to the theme of justice and law. Other people in the neighbourhood find out about what Eddie has done, and react to this, by not talking to him in a civil manner and by not treating him as one of their friends, they start to treat him as an outsider. Beatrice and Catherine are ashamed of what he did, because Marco and Rodolpho are family, so they start to push him away, this weakens the relationships between them.

Relationships are a quite an important part of the play. Eddie has different kinds of relationships with the other main characters. He is married to Beatrice, so treats her fairly well, but doesn't like it when she challenges him, or makes him angry, no matter what it's about. But they will always resolve it.

Although Catherine is Eddie's niece, he sees her in a way that uncles aren't supposed to look at their family. He has feelings for her, but tries to cover them, however quite often someone will pick up on things he says. Beatrice noticed how he was around Catherine, and noticed that he was jealous of Rodolpho, so said to Eddie; " Ah, go on, you're just jealous" This shows that Eddie wasn't covering his feelings as well as he thought he was, because Beatrice picked up on them as well as his jealousy. Because he feels this way about Catherine he is jealous of Rodolpho when he finds out about the relationship between Catherine and Rodolpho.

Eddie and Marco haven't really got on well since Marco and Rodolpho arrived in Red Hook, so they try and stay out of each others way, but are in some ways forced to talk, and at least be civil towards each other. But this isn't a honest relationship, and they will happily fight with each other, as we see at the end of the play. Eddie isn't sure how he feels towards Rodolpho, so sometimes he is kind, but other times he will challenge him, and be a but harsh to him. Rodolpho doesn't seem to mind, but Marco, Beatrice and Catherine will step in when Eddie is being horrible to him and stand up to Eddie for Rodolpho.

Marco and Rodolpho are very close, as they are brothers, and will always look out for each other and help each other. Marco has a family in Italy and just wants best for them, so will work as much as he needs to so that he can send money to them, so they can eat and live better than they were.

Rodolpho doesn't have a family, so seems to be a lot more carefree, and doesn't want to work as much, or as hard.

Marco doesn't like Eddie, and he makes his feelings clear when he challenges Eddie throughout the play. However he gets on with Beatrice and Catherine, and is grateful to them for giving himself and Rodolpho a home in America.

Rodolpho seems to get on well with everyone in the house, and even though Eddie and himself have their rough patches, and differences, they will still be civil towards each other. Rodolpho seems to really enjoy Catherine's company when they first arrive in America, and soon they are going out with each other, and they get married. Eddie isn't happy about this as he thinks that Rodolpho is gay, even though he's going out with Catherine.

Out of the three male characters, Marco seems to be the most masculine, as he stands up for people, works hard, cares for his family and has what seems like the most strength.

Eddie is in the middle, as sometimes he can seem quite masculine and other times, he seems to be quite feminine. He is probably the most unsure out of the three of his true masculinity.

Rodolpho seems like the most feminine, as he sings, sews, cooks and cleans, as well as the fact that he had bleach blonde hair and he is Italian, and most Italians have dark hair.

The language used by the characters also hint at masculinity. Rodolpho is a lively and witty character, this could make him seem more homosexual, but it is not clear of his true feelings. Catherine also speaks in a lively, but well educated tone. Eddie tends to speak in an aggressive, uneducated manner

to everyone throughout the play, but he will become more aggressive in his words as well as actions if someone upsets him, or makes him angry; this makes him seem quite masculine. Eddie has limited language skills but there is still a power in his words. Marco speaks in a heavy, serious tone, as he just wants everything to be okay for his family, and work is not a joke to him, it's something that he takes very seriously. Beatrice speaks in a very serious, quiet manner, she will only raise her voice when she feels that she really needs to get her point across to someone.

Alfieri is an important character in the play, as he is the lawyer that Eddie and Marco seek help from, but he is also the Greek chorus of the play, as he tells you what is going on, and how the characters as well as himself feel. He helps us understand the masculinity of both Eddie and Marco, as Eddie went to him for help, and was able to confide in him. Although he doesn't directly tell Eddie how he feels about the situation, he will either subtly drop hints whilst in a conversation with Eddie, or will tell us as the Greek chorus. Alfieri can feel the bad things that are brewing get closer, but he is powerless so cannot prevent them. He tells us important information and his advice; he is the person that tells us what he thinks will happen, and then explains it as well.

Eddie doesn't know what to do about the situation in hand and needs to confide in someone, so he goes to talk to Alfieri, a well respected lawyer. Alfieri tells Eddie that he shouldn't do anything that he would regret, but isn't sure if Eddie will listen to his advice. Alfieri is involved in many important parts of the play. But one of the main events is when Marco is in prison;

Alfieri is once again there to offer his advice. Marco is very angry because <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-arthur-miller-explore-the-theme-of-masculinity-in-a-view-from-the-bridge-essay-sample/>

Eddie betrayed them, and wanted revenge. But as Alfieri was there, and if a lawyer, he makes Marco promise not to harm Eddie. However, Marco thinks that if the law will not help him then he will take it into his own hands. As Marco is let out on bail until the court case, he goes to visit Eddie, and challenges him to a fight. Alfieri can't help Eddie, and can't stop Marco, so has to let fate happen.

Because Eddie told Alfieri who is involved in the law about the immigrants, we know that he betrayed his family before they all knew about it, this seems like he is a lot less masculine than what he seems to be. If he hadn't spoken to Alfieri about Marco and Rodolpho then Eddie may not have called the immigration officers and told them about the illegal immigrants.

Marco seems quite masculine because even though he had Alfieri to metaphorically speaking help with the situation, he wanted to take the law into his own hands, and sort it out the way that he believed necessary.

Arthur Miller explores the theme of masculinity in the play in many different ways. He uses the relationships between Eddie and Marco, Rodolpho, Catherine and Beatrice to show true feelings, that otherwise may have remained hidden. He uses different themes such as honour, betrayal, jealousy, aggression and loyalty. He also varies the way the characters act and speak to one another, which might suggest homosexuality, jealousy, aggression, honour and betrayal.

He shows us that characters like Eddie, may seem masculine and dominant, but they may not be sure themselves, and they may be more feminine than what they seem. And even if they seem masculine, they will always meet <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-arthur-miller-explore-the-theme-of-masculinity-in-a-view-from-the-bridge-essay-sample/>

someone that changes that, whether it is a very masculine man, or a very feminine man. People that you meet will change your views, maybe even your sexuality, in the play; this is shown by Marco, Eddie and Rodolpho. Eddie shows this, as he becomes less masculine and less dominant the longer he knows Marco and Rodolpho. Having Eddie as the tragic hero in the play also helps us understand the theme of masculinity, as he lost his honour because of his actions, and losing his honour led to the loss of masculinity.

I have found that Eddie seems most masculine, but isn't as masculine as he seems. Rodolpho may seem gay because of his looks, and hobbies but this may not be true, and we found this out because he married Catherine. Marco always seemed dominant but towards the end of the story he quietened down but still found ways to show his strength, and therefore show his masculinity.

By all of this I have learnt that people may try and seem better than they are to gain extra credibility, but at the end of the day, it's the people that are always themselves that come up tops in one way or another. Not everyone will get what they want, and not everyone will get what they deserve, but things happen for a reason and no matter how hard some one tries that can't be changed.