Studying All My Sons Notes

* All My Sons examines the morality of the man who places narrow responsibility to his immediate family above his wider responsibility to the men who rely on the integrity of his work.
* Joe Keller, The chief is a man who loves his family above all else, and has sacrificed everything including his honour, in his struggle to make the family prosperous.
* Kate Keller will not believe Larry to be dead as this would result in the intolerable thought that Joe has caused his own suns death. ‘Your brother's alive...because if he's dead, your father killed him. Do you understand me now?...God does not let a son be killed by his father’. p.156; p.66
* Just like the protagonist of an Ancient Greek tragedy or plays by Shakespeare, The protagonist ‘Joe’ has a fatal flaw which causes him to act wrongly. He is forced to accept his responsibility to the world. His suicide is necessary to restore the moral order to the universe, and allow his beloved son, Chris, to live, free from guilt.
* Similarly to Greek Tragedy’s the play goes over a less than 24 hour period.
* Joe Keller loves his family but does not see the universal ‘human’ family which has a higher claim on his duty.
* Chris Keller is angry at the world as the selflessness of his fellow soldier’s counts for nothing. He feels guilty to make money out of a business which does not value the men whose labour it relies.
* Dr Jim Bayliss is a man, who in his youth, shared Chris’s ideals, but has been forced to comprise to pay the bills.
* Jim is the voice of disillusioned experience. He is the character who represents Arthur Miller’s place in the play.
* Sue Bayliss is a materialistic woman who does not agree with Chris’s idealisms as it makes Jim restless.

Important Quotes:

* ‘...what the hell did I work for? That's only for you, Chris, the whole shootin' match is for you.’ –Joe
* It's wrong to pity a man like that. Father or no father, there's only one way to look at him. He knowingly shipped out parts that would crash an airplane.
* ...every man does have a star. The star of one's honesty. And you spend your life groping for it, but once it's out it never lights again...He probably just wanted to be alone to watch his star go out.
* ‘I know you're no worse than most men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father’ –Chris
Chris realises his father is no different to any other.
* Sure, he was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were