

Protagonist of All My Sons

Joe Keller, the tragic hero of Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, is a complex and compelling character whose virtues and flaws are deeply intertwined. In his sixties, Joe is an affable, warm-hearted man who finds joy in social life and embodies the values of a self-made, hardworking American. Having struggled to earn his livelihood from a young age, he is proud of his accomplishments and has built a successful business over four decades. Yet, despite his seemingly steadfast character, Keller is a man of limited intellect, bound by old-fashioned values and shaped by personal experience rather than wisdom.

Joe's love for his family is genuine, yet his perspective on morality extends no further than the walls of his home or the fence around his factory. For him, family loyalty is paramount, overshadowing his obligation to the broader society. Though he is devoted to his wife, Kate, and holds deep affection for his sons, his choices are clouded by an unwavering belief in putting his family first, even at the cost of ethical compromise.

During the war, Joe made a devastating choice, authorizing the supply of defective cylinder heads that led to the tragic deaths of twenty-one pilots. To protect his business and avoid bankruptcy, he shifted the blame to his partner, Steve Deever, who was left to bear the punishment alone. While Keller rationalizes his actions as a desperate measure to secure his family's future, he remains blind to the true extent of his betrayal and the catastrophic consequences it held for others.

Despite his warmth and affability, Joe is haunted by his actions, even as he clings to a narrative of self-justification. He portrays himself as a simple, well-meaning man who made a mistake under pressure, believing that his actions should be forgiven and forgotten. Yet, as the truth surfaces, especially in a letter revealing that his son Larry took his own life out of shame for his father's actions, Joe is confronted with the weight of his guilt and the realization of his moral failure.

In his final moments, Joe understands that his duty extended beyond his family—to the pilots who lost their lives and to the values he disregarded. The tragedy of Joe Keller lies not in his malice but in his moral myopia, his inability to see beyond the narrow confines of his own world. He is not a ruthless villain but a flawed man, bound by his love for his family yet ultimately destroyed by his choices. In the end, Joe's only path to redemption is his tragic acceptance of responsibility, an act that brings a heartbreaking resolution to his journey, evoking both empathy and sorrow from the audience.