

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION



I.1. Background of the Study

So many definitions about literature which have been given since it's known as a form and result of human expression. And it is quite true if said that "literature is social institution, using as its medium language, a social creation." (Wellek and Warren, 1978: 109).

Furthermore, literature may also be regarded as the chief art of mankind. It is the reflection of the author's experiences which contain the record of what he has thought and felt about life, his values, his problems and conflicts. This means that, most of but not all, the subject matter of literature is as wide as human experience itself. As Monroe C. Beardsley wrote in Theme and Form An Introduction To Literature:

Since the subject of all literature is human life, in one way or another every literary work deals with the condition of man, the natural, social, and cosmic situation within he acts and suffers, and wonder, irony, peril, or challenge of his predicament. But most literary works focus on particular aspect or segment of the totality of human experience. (1962: 207).

In this case, the author tries to reveal his own experience and imagination into a form of literary works. Even though it is just really the result of the author's own

contemplation and perception, his works usually have within it such universal human values.

One of the literary works is drama. It's probably more popular than another forms due to the fact that drama is designed for both reading and public performance as stated by Reaske in his How To Analyze Drama below:

Drama is a composition which delineates life and human activity by means of presenting various actions of- and dialogues between a group of characters. For drama is also entertainment, because it is basically to be designed not only for reading but also to be seen in public or theatrical performance. (1966: 5).

It also shows that drama rather presents human life and activity through the actions and dialogues of its characters that through the description as another literary works.

In the world of art, one of the (few) modern playwright who deserves some consideration as major dramatist is Arthur Miller. He is widely regarded as an intellectual of the postwar American theatre whose reputation rests on a handful of plays. His main object in writing drama is about the society and its problems which makes him known as a social dramatist. It is mentioned in A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama as follows:

Miller is a playwright who has consistently sought to translate the social world into private anxieties and to trace the connection between personal fallibilities



and public betrayals. Because he has chosen to write about a world of moral dilemmas and because he has always proved so sensitive to the pressure of history he has been seen as elevating himself to the position of social conscience. (1986: 136).

His being concerned with personal life is what interests the writer to discuss his plays, to understand more about him and his writing. However, his viewpoints on the troubled people in the depression time in America was still relevant to the present condition such as so many people of the world are suffering from the industrialism and consumerism. The clash between an individual and his environment occurs and cannot be avoided. Therefore, his concept of the relationship between an individual and his society might still be relevant to the present condition.

As a social dramatist, Arthur Miller knows more about the ideal values of the social life certainly such as man and his responsibilities. He convinced that man is an individual and also social, with his own right and in his own right, but he must responsible for others too. It means that to be responsible one should be responsible to someone or to another person. He finds meaning through cognition, yet he is fully understood and to be responsible when he defines the meaning of a situation by his action. Arthur Miller also regarded that as a member of a society, an individual has the social responsibility, and

it transcends his self-interest. This is the crucial point and the significance of the play which will be discussed further, namely All My Sons.

All My Sons was published in 1947, two years after the second World War when the effect of the war still fresh in people's memory. With the setting of Depression and the War time of America in mid-century, All My Sons talks much about the concept of moral responsibility in the family with the central attention on the conflict between self-interests and social responsibilities. More than that, this play also offers the noble lesson that we have to place the social responsibilities higher than self-interests. A man must recognize his responsibility to the world outside his home as well as in his own home. It means that the evasion of individual human responsibility is unforgivable despite the presence of extenuating circumstances, such as a sense of economic insecurity and a strong devotion to family as committed by Joe Keller, the main character of this play.

As a war time manufacturer of aircraft engine, Joe Keller allows his timid partner to take the blame for a war-time swindle. His firm had allowed cracked cylinder heads to be shipped to the Army and put in aircraft rather than ruin his company's business and losing the contract. These airplanes subsequently crashed and led to the death of twenty-one pilots. At the trial, Joe Keller'd denied

responsibility and causes his partner to be put in jail. Having been exonerated, he's successfully re-established his business. But, some three years later, Chris Keller discovers that his father had committed a crime which is morally wrong both to the society and family. Arrogantly, Joe Keller defends himself on the grounds of sound business procedure and the family responsibility which he claims as his motivating force.

Through this play we realize that life has its own ideal values which will limit, guide, and give the right direction for our better life. Miller's attention to the ideal values of social life and moral responsibility bring us to the awareness that such an individual as Joe Keller may also really exist in our society. Because, we have capacity to be a man who will give priority to his self-interests above his social responsibilities. Of course, sometimes this phenomena will cause a conflict within the human mind. On one side he wants to get and make real his own ideal or desire, but, in other side he has to face the reality that as a member of society he has the social responsibility. If there is a contradiction between self-interests and social responsibilities, certainly, there'll be an internal conflict that is, the conflict of desire within a person.

I.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is:

- 2.1. To find out the conflict between self-interests and social responsibilities in Arthur Miller's play entitled All My Sons
- 2.2. To know about the social condition and social life of American society through the work of Arthur Miller, All My Sons.

I.3. Significance of the Study

The final result of this study is expected:

- 3.1. To give a deeper insight about human problems and human characters.
- 3.2. To contribute the understanding of literature in general and American literature, particularly on Arthur Miller's works.
- 3.3. To provide better understanding about the ideal values of the social life such as the social responsibility.
- 3.4. To broaden our awareness towards the complexities in our social life.
- 3.5. To enlarge and develop our viewpoint about the reality behind our life activities.
- 3.6. To assist and support the further analysis on Arthur Miller's works.

I.4. Method of the Study

The research is library research. The writer collects the data and information which support the analysis from the reference books, dictionaries, encyclopedies, or other printed materials dealing with Arthur Miller's works, especially All My Sons and its criticism. The writer also tries to find out some information from other books dealing with the theory and approach used in analysis.

This thesis limits the analysis on the elements of the play, particularly on plot, setting, and character. Those three dramatic elements will be analyzed descriptively. So the method used in this study is Descriptive Analysis. The result of the analysis is the description based on the data which basically concerning with the events, actions, and dialogues from the play. Further, the quotations of the data in the genuine form are provided to confirm and support the analysis.

The writer also uses the Interpretative Analysis to interpret the data or symbol from the script which have the conotative meaning. It is especially used in analysing the setting of the play. The point discussed is the one behind the realistic view or it might called the symbolic setting. This symbolic setting denotes the values implied by the real setting. In other words, the

symbolic setting will be acquired by seeking whatever the real setting suggest behind them. The writer's interpretation do not contradict with the text and in accordance with the author's intention in writing the play.