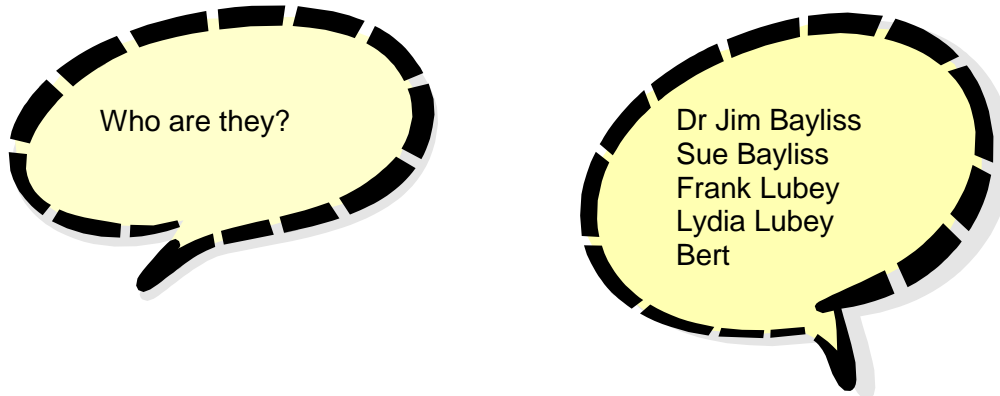


The rest of the cast

In *All My Sons* there are a number of characters who, whilst not playing a leading role, can be considered to contribute something important to the play in some way: maybe by developing the plot; giving us information about a character; representing a particular type of person; or signifying something about the context of the play.



1. Overall, what do you think these characters add to the play? What role do they have? What is Miller trying to show the audience through these characters that he can not show us through the main characters?
2. What are your first impressions, for example, when the curtain rises and both Joe Keller and Jim Bayliss are on stage? What does this suggest about the importance of 'friends' to the Kellers and, in particular, to Joe? Think about the fact that the men seem quite at ease with each other: they do not feel the need to speak, they are reading parts of the same paper and it is still early on a Sunday. Consider both the companionship this might hint at but also the need to always be slightly guarded. There is no privacy between these households and this is revealed more as the play progresses.
3. Look at Frank Lubey's entrance on p.6: '*FRANK LUBEY enters, from R., through a small space between the poplars.*' He does not call out or wait to be invited across; there is a suggestion that there are no boundaries between these neighbours. Is this just a lack of physical boundaries or is it metaphorical as well?
4. What do we learn about Frank's personality from the fact that he is not interested in reading the newspaper?
5. Why might the comment, 'Well, I was going to be a forester once,' make the audience laugh? Think about what sort of impression we already have of Frank.
6. On p.7 Frank makes a link between Larry's birthday and the tree blowing down. This suggests either that Frank knew Larry well or that the missing man is still talked about a lot. Which do you believe is the truth and does it make any difference to the way we view the characters?
7. Why might Jim's comment to Frank, 'And your trouble is that you don't believe in *anything.*' (p.8) be considered ironic in the context of the play?

8. The conversation between Jim and his wife, Sue, is both humorous and bleak. In what ways might you consider it a rather dark comment on humans and their emotions? Think in particular about the fact that Jim is a doctor and yet Sue does not seem sympathetic towards his patients.
9. On page 10 Lydia, Frank's wife, appears. What does it tell us about the neighbours' relationships with one another that she goes from laughingly reporting that the toaster is broken to asking about Ann? Note that Lydia calls her 'Annie': does this tell us anything about her attitude to the other woman?
10. What impression do you think Miller is trying to convey of Lydia? Think about the fact that she is wrong about the toaster being broken and the way her husband speaks to her about it. Does this suggest to you that Miller is sympathetic to these women? Is he patronising? Is he cruel?
11. On page 10 Bert, aged about eight, comes to see Joe. Do you find him a believable character or is he rather one-dimensional? What do you think his role is in the play? If you think he is out of place explain your reasons. Might Miller have wanted to draw attention to the rather tawdry aspects of Joe's life?
12. Think again about Miller's attitude to the female characters. On page 24 Jim's response to meeting Ann is to say, 'How do you do. [To CHRIS] She looks very intelligent!' (p.24) Why does he speak across Ann rather than to her?
13. How important do you think Jim's speech to Ann is (who he has only just met), 'When you marry, never – even in your mind – never count your husband's money.' (p.25) Does it add anything to the theory that the play is about dreams and hopes and the death of them?
14. In Act Two we simultaneously hear Lydia, offstage, calling her son into supper as Sue enters the Kellers' garden looking for her husband. At this point Chris has just gone in to the house and Ann is in the garden alone. What might be considered symbolic about hearing and seeing other families calling members home?
15. The conversation between Ann and Sue initially seems rather superficial but it soon turns to the subject of money and Sue asks Ann not to live locally once married to Chris. What does this suggest about the effect of the Kellers' on others and how other people really feel about the family?
16. On page 45 the conversation between the two women becomes quite ugly with Sue actually asking, 'Who is he to ruin a man's life? Everybody knows Joe pulled a fast one to get out of jail.' Why does Miller have her say this? What does it imply about her true feelings for Joe? If she really does feel antipathy towards him why do you think she is friendly when Joe is present? What does it suggest about Sue's integrity?
17. In Act Two there is a very overt show of friendship between Lydia and George. Why does Miller include this? Does it make George seem more or less isolated? What does it imply about the world the characters inhabit?
18. Does it change the audience's liking for Frank when Lydia says, '[a little apologetically]: No, he was always one year ahead of the draft.' (p.60)?

19. How does Frank's entrance with the horoscope, as Kate accidentally gives Joe away, on p.65 alter the atmosphere? What purpose does Miller intend in including Frank at this very tense moment?
20. Why do you think Miller chooses to have Jim as the one to speak first in Act Three?
21. Do Jim's comments about his patients add anything to the atmosphere at the opening of this scene? 'Half of my patients are quite mad. Nobody realises how many people are walking around loose, and they're cracked as coconuts. Money. Money-money-money-money. You say it long enough it doesn't mean anything.' (p.74)
22. Are you, as part of the audience, surprised when Jim tells Kate that he has 'always known' about Joe on p.74? How does this statement reinforce or destroy our opinions of the neighbours?
23. What do you think Jim means when he says, 'We all come back, Kate. These private little revolutions always die. The compromise is always made.'? What insight does this give into Jim's character? Do you believe he is making a statement about himself; about others in the play; or is Miller using him to make a comment about humans in general?
24. Do you think it is significant that the play opens with several of the neighbours present but finishes with only the Kellers? What might this imply about friendship and the depth of people's love for each other?
25. How different do you think the play would be without the supporting characters? Overall, what role do you think the neighbours play? Are they necessary to the success of the story?