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# UNIT 1 AMERICAN DRAMA : AN INTRODUCTION

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit will examine the growth of American Drama from its beginning in the 1700 Century till the 1940's, the era when the modern American drama emerged. American Drama achieved recognition with the realism of plays by Eugene O' Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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American Drama began in the American colonies in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and has continued developing to the present. The American Drama of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries mostly had British influence on it. In fact until 1910 the New York city theatre season presented more British plays than American plays. The common language and the ready availability of British plays and British actors was the reason for their domination. American Drama began to diverge from British Drama around the 1830's. Despite this growing divergence most American plays continue to copy British model till the early 20th century. For this reason critics claim that American Drama was born only at the end of World War I with Eugene O' Neill in the 1920's. By the end of the 19th century American Drama had moved towards realism. Realism dominated both comedies and tragedies even in the 20th century and as the century advanced, American Drama took up broader issues of race, gender, sexuality and death.

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## 1.2 AMERICAN DRAMA AROUND ARTHUR MILLER

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### Beginnings of American Drama: 1600s and 1700s

Little theatrical activity took place before the mid-18th century because the early settlers of American colonies faced harsh living conditions after

migrating to this alien land. Their belief in hard work, frugality and piety also disallowed them from indulging in theatrical activity so much so that the play *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb* produced in 1665 and probably the first theatrical performance in America led to the trial of actors. In the 18th century many colonies in America enacted laws forbidding the performance of plays, because of the puritan belief that the seventh of the ten commandments in the bible did not allow dancing and enacting plays. However, opposition to theatre did not last long. Aware of the new cultural beginnings, the colonies wanted to brush up their intellectual and oratorical skills by theatrical activities. The 17th century colleges in several colonies allowed theatrical activity after much hesitation which they thought could benefit students to utilize their speech skills in their careers such as business and law. To meet this requirement, the first play *Androboros* (1774) written by Robert Hunter, an English Governor, came as an attack on his political enemies, despite New York's Anti Theatre Law. This play established the tradition of political satire charting out the course that American Drama was to follow for the next two centuries. Several popular plays of this period were *The Paxton Boys* (1732), *The Trial of Atticus* (1771) whose authorship is not known and Robert Munford's *The Candidates of the Humours of a Virginia Election* (1770).

Before more plays appeared, a group of British professional actors formed a touring circuit in the 1750s and this group in the early 1760s was known as The American Company. In 1767 they staged a play *The Prince of Parthia*, a tragedy by Thomas Godfrey, the first professional production of a play written in America. During the American Revolution, many professional actors moved to Jamaica. During the period of American Revolution (1775-1783) satirical plays were written either supporting British control of the colonies or attacking it. The *Battle of Brooklyn* which was pro-British and written anonymously, satirized leaders like George Washington. Mercy Otis Warren, the strongest American dramatic voice of the revolution presented the revolutionary cause in her plays *The Adulateur* (1772) *The Defeat* (1773), *The Group* (1776) and *The Blackheads* (1776). A play by Robert Munford *The Patriots* (1779) attained true dramatic character by taking a neutral stance and attacking both sides for their intolerance.

The professional actors who had moved to Jamaica during the American Revolution were touring America again in the mid 1780s. America became a nation in 1783 through a victory against the British colonial power. Robert Taylor was the first playwright of the nation to write the finest American play of the 18th Century, *The Contrast* (1787). This five-act comedy that satirises the customs of the upper classes is written in the format of British Comedy owing much to Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* (1777).

### **American Drama: 1800s**

William Dunlop introduced melodrama in his plays, the most prevalent dramatic form in the 19th century. The credit for giving drama its most important characteristic, dramatic conflict also goes to him. Most of his plays were adaptations or translations from the French and German. The Protagonist Major John Andre in Dunlop's play *Andre* (1798) shows

admirable qualities by saving a young American Captain despite George Washington's unqualified antagonism towards him for conspiring to destroy an American garrison.

Majority of the plays written in America in the 19th century were largely produced for commercial purposes to benefit the heterogeneous public residing all over America whose primary interest was seeing the shows and their favourite actors performing in these plays. Most of the plays were not published but were meant only to be seen and not to be read; as a result they are now irrevocably lost.

One of Dunlop's contemporaries James Nelson Barker produced some of the best-known works *Marmion* (1812) and *Superstition* (1824). The latter a romantic tragedy based on specific American situations, was set in New England and explored the themes of isolationism, bigotry and intolerance. *The Indian Princess* (1808) written by him was the first play to explore native American themes and characters. It told the story of Pocahontas, a native American woman who married an English man. The most well-known of such drama was *Metamora* (1828) by John

Augustus Stone. The popularity of the Indian plays that began in 1820's continued through the 1840's.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century in American Drama, there is a shift in focus from a nationalistic cause to the aesthetic values of romanticism. Edwin Forrest, an immensely popular actor, encouraged the writing of American romantic play. The best American play of the time was *Francesca da Rimini* (1855), a romantic verse staged by George Henry Boker. *Brutus: The Fall of Tarquin* (1819) by John Howard Payne and *The Gladiator* (1831) by Robert Montgomery Bird were other American Romantic tragedies that merely promoted the aesthetic values of romanticism without furthering the cause of the American Drama.

In 1828 Edwin Forrest began to offer annual awards for new plays with American themes, the first to receive the award was *Metamora*. No one kind of drama appealed to the play-going masses of America; play-goers were ready to welcome any new type that the actors could perform well. The lampooning of the Indian Plays signaled their waning interests and by mid-century they started fading. Racial, social and economic tensions in America that brought about the civil war are well represented in Harriet Beecher Stone's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The adaptation of the novel for the stage by G. L. Aiken was a great success that was staged all over America and survived well into the twentieth century.

### American Drama in the Nineteenth Century

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the most pervasive dramatic genre was Melodrama. Similar to what we see in Hindi cinema where a heartless villain troubles the heroine who is finally rescued by a strong hero in the nick of time after fighting insurmountable odds. Melodrama addresses issues of family, social position and wealth, a preoccupation of every individual. 'Its appeal to the general public lay in its stereotyped, easily identifiable character types and in simple, formulaic plots that could be easily adapted to any

setting, character or event desired.’ (*American Popular Culture Through History : The Civil War and Reconstruction, Browne and Kreiser*)

The great flexibility of these plays made them easily adaptable to any type of audience, allowing actors to use their talents freely, taking advantage of a wide range of materials. The popular plays in this genre are Boucicault’s *The poor of the New York* (1857), Daly’s *Under the Gaslight* (1857), and Belasco’s *The Girl of the Golden West* and *The heart of Maryland* (1857). The popularity of melodramatic form that had begun in the 18th Century continued through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

### Realism in American Drama

Drama after the Civil war was marked by a steady shift towards realism illuminating the scene of humble life, criticizing social conditions and creating believable characters. Concerned with a faithful representation of life the playwright concentrated on middle-class life and preoccupations, avoiding larger and more dramatic issues. The scenes had three dimensional settings and the actors spoke authentic sounding dialogue. While the melodramatic plots prevailed, the playwrights gradually moved towards psychological realism, influenced by Henrik Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> Century works, Bronson Howard’s *Shenandoah* (1874). Steele Mackaye’s *Hazel Kirke* (1880) and William Dean Howell’s *Mouse Trap* (1889) are notable realistic plays. Bronson Howard was more concerned with morals than morality. Realism reached new levels in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century concerned with the social issues of the time. Benson Howard’s *A Texas Steer* (1896), *The Banker’s Daughter* (1873) and *Henrietta* (1887), *A Trip to China Town* (1891) Edward Harrigan’s *Dan’s Tribulations* (1884) and Benman Thomson’s *The Old Homestead* (1886), A. Herne’s *Margaret Fleming* (1890), *Shore Acres* (1892) and *Griffith Davenport* (1899). A. Herne known for powerful acting and excellent stage management wrote *Margaret Fleming* (1890) his greatest achievement. ‘He created an Ibsenesque heroine who was not merely capable by challenging convention but who deftly asserted her autonomy with marriage’. (*A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama* C. W. E Bigsby) His plays had clarity and simplicity.

Among the late nineteenth-century dramatists David Belasco, Steele Mackaye and William Gillette were closely associated with the theatre business, Belasco one of the most well known producers also directed his own play. His play *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905) deals with rural California in the mid-19th century Gold Rush Days. Mackaye mostly wrote romantic melodramas, among them the most powerful was *Hazel Kirke* (1880), a melodrama without heroes or villains. The play’s theme was familial misunderstanding. The play was also notable for its more natural dialogue. Realistic portrayals of sensational subjects were commonly used in the plays of this period.

Clyde Fitch in the early 1900’s wrote *The City* (1909), an entertaining satire using natural dialogues that delved into the evils of shady business and drug addiction. Fitch was also the first American playwright to write

a subtle kind of satire. Social tensions in America began to be explored by playwrights leading up to the First World War (1914-1918). William Vaughn Moody's *The Great Divide* (1906), Rachel Crothers' *A Man's World* (1909) and Langdon Mitchell's *The New York Idea* (1906) addressed social issues meaningfully while managing to entertain the audience. The American family, its development and disintegration that dominated the plays of this period also became a recurring theme of playwrights of the 20th Century.

In the early part of the 20th Century there was a new artistic awakening with a host of American playwrights forming an amateur group, the 'Province Town Players', for promoting American Drama and producing new plays exclusively by American playwrights. The efforts of this amateur group set a new course for American theatre in the modern period, while also launching careers of Eugene O' Neill and Susan Glaspell. Based on a journalistic investigation, Susan Glaspell's one-act play *Trifles* (1916) was among its first productions. The play's uniqueness comes out with the main character, the wife who is never present on stage. Eugene O' Neill's play *The Hairy Ape* (1922) was the first to introduce expressionism in American Drama. Developed in Germany in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, expressionism was a movement in the visual, literary and performing arts that expressed subjective feelings and emotions rather than depicting reality objectively. In expressionism the artist is not concerned with reality as it appears but presents the inner nature with the emotions aroused by the subject. Concerned with the nature of man and the forces that move him, Eugene O' Neill's plays involved characters on the fringes of society while including speeches in American vernacular for the first time. The other prominent playwrights were John Reed, Louise Bryant, Max Eastman and Ida Ruh and Edna St. Vincent Millay.

In the 1920's the most important plays were professionally produced in the New York City stage. The plays of the 1920s and early 1930s were incisive and exciting such as Laurence Stallings and Maxwell Anderson's *What Price Glory* (1924). Some remarkably fine plays were produced such as Eugene O' Neill *Strange Interlude* (1928), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), lightly satirical plays such as Philip Barry's *Holiday* (1928) and S. N. Behrman's *End of Summer* (1936) was produced. Paul Green's *Abraham's Bosom* included African American Characters in his plays. Lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II and composer Jerome Kern's *Show Boat* (1927), a musical production was adapted from a novel of the same name by author Edna Ferber, the first American musical to fully integrate music with meaningful and consistent dialogue.

The economic collapse of the great Depression of the 1930's led to the permanent closure of many theatres in America. The new sound technology in America gave voice to the motion pictures. As a result, the number of theatergoers declined severely in the 1930s. A new wave was seen in the drama of the 1930s that tackled economic suffering, left wing political ideologies and fears of another world war. Clifford Odet's *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) debated the pros and cons of capitalism while *Awake and Sing!* (1935) dealt with the 1930s anxieties. Lillian Hellman's play *The Children's Hour* (1934) displayed social conscience.

In the mid-40s the most striking new writings for theatre emerged in the works of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. The latter contributed many psychological plays of disillusion such as *A Street Car Named Desire* (1947), *Cat on a Hot tin Roof* (1955) and *The Glass Menagerie* (1944). Arthur Miller's modern tragedies *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) combined realistic characters and social issues. During the 1950's Miller's chief contributions were *The Crucible* (1953) and *A View from the Bridge* (1955), while Tennessee Williams played *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) received the Pulitzer Prize posthumously. Most famous among new playwrights, William Inge wrote *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1950), a realistic play. Late 1950's also saw new African American playwriting with Lorraine Hansberry's well-acclaimed play *Raisin in the Sun* (1959). A major dramatist of the 1960's Edward Albee wrote absurdist plays such as *Zoo Story* (1959) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962) that examined unsympathetically the modern conditions influenced by European playwrights Jean Genet, Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco.

The 1990s saw the exciting return of two notable playwrights who, thought critics, had finished their careers. Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass* (1994) and Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* (1994) received widespread acclaim with Albee's work winning the Pulitzer Prize while Miller's last play *Finishing the Picture* was produced in 2004. Albee continues to give biting satirical commentaries on modern society in new works such as *The Goat or Who is Sylvia* (2002).

Realism continued to be the primary form of dramatic expression in the 20th century and as the century progressed many talented new dramatists came to the fore with broad issues such as civil rights and the devastation wrought by the AID'S epidemic. In the mid-1990s and beginning of the 21st Century, blockbuster musicals eliminated new commercial theatre in the United States targeting the younger audience who were attracted more by films, television and computer entertainment. Economic difficulties resulted in plays with single setting and lesser characters that would make them less expressive but also less ambitious. Many playwrights started writing plays with film and television adaptation in mind to reach geographically diverse audience, making the American theatre specialized in its alternative

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### 1.3 ARTHUR MILLER: LIFE AND WORKS

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In 1920 when World War I had come to an end, it was time in America of the great depression that had deeply wounded the American economy and also its psyche. The U.S. prosperity in the 1930s had faced a steep though short decline. Throughout the decade around 600 banks failed along with 20,000 business concerns. Mining, farming and textile industry were on the decline. As a result there was unemployment. It was during this interesting period of history of America that Arthur Miller was born.

Arthur Miller (1915-2005) an American playwright, essayist and author was born of moderately affluent Jewish American parents Isadore and Augusta Miller on October 17, 1915 in Manhattan in New York City. His father was an illiterate immigrant from Poland but came to own a coat manufacturing

business employing a thousand workers, which was ruined with the 1929 Wall Street Crash. Thereafter, the family moved to a smaller house in Brooklyn. The sudden change in fortune had a strong impact on Miller. Miller was fortunate enough to withdraw his entire savings of twelve dollars a day to buy himself a bicycle before the United States Bank closed down. Miller, though, was not very lucky as his bicycle was stolen the same week and he realized that no one was immune from the disaster of Depression.

Because of the effects of Depression, Miller's condition was financially unsound and he could not attend the university in 1932 after graduating from high school. After talking admission at the University of Michigan in 1934 Miller took up a succession of small jobs such as delivery boy, dishwasher, waiter, warehouse clerk, singer in a local radio station, mice attendant in a laboratory, truck driver, tanker, seaman, factory labour, and shop fitter's helper to pay for his tuition.

Miller studied journalism from the University of Michigan where he ran a student newspaper with a group of others and became its reporter as well as night editor of the Michigan Daily that helped him earn money. Arthur Miller was greatly influenced by his critic and teacher Kenneth E. Rowe, of the University of Michigan Drama Department and after reading his book *Write That Play!* There was no looking back for Miller, He wrote one play after another and for two years he succeeded in winning the Avery Hopwood Award given yearly at Michigan for the best original play.

During one of the vacations, he went to Chicago and saw the performance of Clifford Odet's play '*Awake and Sing*'. The play's message 'Life should have some dignity' had a deep and lasting impact on him. Miller wrote his first work *No Villain* for which he won the Avery Hopwood Award. This play is about a small garment manufacturer and his University educated son, Arnold Simon, based on young Arthur. In 1937 Miller wrote another play *Honours at Dawn* which also won the Avery Hopwood Award. This play is about the Depression era, dealing with the hopes and heartbreaks of the Zabriski family. He won several other awards for play writing and with his record of prizes, he had little trouble joining Federal Theater Project, a nation-wide organization established to provide jobs in the theatre to unemployed writers, actors, directors and designers for a salary of \$ 22.77 a week. He had to report at the Federal Theater Project Office everyday and at night he continued writing plays on his own. He completed his play called *Montezuma* that concerned the conquest of Mexico. However the project had to close in 1940 as the congress worried about possible communist infiltration. Miller started working in Brooklyn Navy Yard. He also continued writing radio plays some of which were broadcast on CBS (Columbia Workshop).

On August 5, 1940, Miller married his college friend Mary Slattery, the daughter of an insurance salesman. The couple had two children Jane and Robert. Robert later became director, writer and producer of the 1996 movie version of *The Crucible*. Miller's injury in the left kneecap while playing football in high school exempted him from military service during World War II.

## Arthur Miller— All My Sons

In 1944, Miller wrote *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, which was produced in New York. It won the Theater Guild's National Award. Despite it being awarded, the play closed after only six performances. The next few years were a difficult time for Miller. He published his first novel *Focus* but the novel was little known. George Abbott's and John C. Holm's *Three Men on a Horse* was adapted by him for radio.

During wartime Miller wrote a play *All My Sons* that was produced at the Coronet Theater in 1947. It was an immediate success and ran for three hundred and twenty-eight performances. Despite receiving criticism for being unpatriotic, *All My Sons* won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and two Tony Awards in the year 1947. This play is about a factory owner who sells faulty aircraft parts during World War II.

In 1948 Miller built a small shed in Roxbury, Connecticut, in which he wrote *Death of a Salesman* became his best known work winning Tony Award for best play, New York Drama Critics Award and Pulitzer Prize. *Death of a Salesman* ran for seven hundred and forty-two performances.

Miller responded to the growing anti-communist hysteria of the early fifties by writing an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and *The Crucible*, set during 1692 Salem witch trials. In the play Miller likened the situation with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), (a committee of the House of Representatives which set itself to identify present and former communists and so called fellow travelers in all branches of American life) to this witch hunt in Salem. Though *The Crucible* was unsuccessful at the time of its initial release, running for mere one hundred and ninety seven performances, today it is one of Miller's most frequently produced plays.

In the early fifties Miller joined a group of writers, publishers and journalists whose objective was to write articles attacking Senator Joseph MacCarthy. No newspaper was willing to publish their articles. The FBI infiltrated their group as a result of which the group broke up. Miller was called before the HUAC in 1956 to identify those who attended the meetings which he refused and as a punishment he was fined and sentenced to prison for contempt of Congress and denied passport to attend the Belgium opening of *The Crucible* in 1954. In 1958 the court of appeal overturned his conviction, ruling that the chairman of HUAC had misled about Miller.

His last play of the 1950s *A View from the Bridge* opened in Broadway in 1955 in a joint bill with one of his lesser known plays, *A Memory of Two Mondays*. The following year Miller revised this one act version play and changed it into a two-act version which Peter Brock produced in London.

In June 1956 Miller divorced his wife Mary Slattery and later that month, married Marilyn Monroe. Miller had met Monroe for the first time in 1951 after which they had a brief affair and kept in touch with each other since then. After his conviction was overturned, Miller started work with his film *Misfits* in which his wife Monroe acted. He wrote this film as a gift for Marilyn Monroe who lost a child in pregnancy. Shortly before the film's premiere the two had already divorced. A year later Marilyn Monroe died

of overdose of drugs and in February 1962, Miller married for the third time, Austrian photographer Inge Morath. Their first child Rebecca was born in September the same year followed by their second child Daniel in November, 1966.

In 1964 Miller's next play *After the Fall* was released several years later after his last work. A strongly autobiographical work, it was based on his personal views of his own experiences during his marriage to Monroe. *After the Fall* was premiered at the Anta Theatre in Washington Square Park amidst outrage at putting a Monroe character, called Maggie, on stage. In the same year Miller produced another play *Incident at Vichy* which ran for ninety-nine performances. Miller was politically active throughout his life. In 1965, he was elected international Pen's president, an international writers' organization that spoke in defense of imprisoned writers.

*The Price* was his most successful play that appeared in 1968 since *Death of a Salesman*. This play was published in a year that was characterized by trauma in Vietnam and assassinations at home. *The Price* is based on two brothers who meet one another after years of hostility and separation.

In 1980 Miller returned to his past by writing a play *The American Clock* that is set during the depression years. In the 1990s Miller wrote plays such as *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* that was produced in 1993 and *The Last Yankee* produced in 1993.

In 1994 he wrote another play *Broken Glass* set in 1938 set in the times of Nazi persecution of the Jews, but relates to a moral and political paralysis recreated in contemporary Europe.

In 2002 Miller was the first U.S. recipient to be honoured with Spain's prestigious Principe de Asturias Prize for Literature. Miller's last play, *Finishing the Picture* was produced in 2004 and depicted the making of *Misfits*.

After Inge Morath's death in 2002 the eighty-nine year old Miller was in love with Agnes Barley, a thirty-four year old artist and intended to marry her after living with her at his Connecticut farm for two years.

Miller died of heart failure at his home in Roxbury, Connecticut, on February 10, 2005 at the age of 89. At the time of his death Arthur Miller was considered one of the greatest American playwrights. Throughout his life Miller remained socially active and wrote with conscience, clarity and compassion. His work is infused with his sense of responsibility to humanity and to his audience.

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## 1.4 MILLER'S MAJOR PLAYS

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*Death of Salesman* was published in 1949 and is considered a classic of American theatre. This play was a caustic attack on the American Dream of achieving wealth and success without regard for principle. Enthusiastic reviews were written on this play. *Death of a Salesman* was the first play to win three major awards. It received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1949,

Tony Award for best play as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play. *Death of a Salesman* helped Miller to become an internationally known playwright.

*Death of a Salesman* finds the main character Willy Loman in his sixties struggling to come to grips with the fact that his American Dream is unattainable. Willy places great importance on supposed native charm, ability to make friends, stating that once he was known throughout New England, driving long hours but making unparalleled sales, his sons Biff and Happy were the pride and joy of the neighborhood, and his wife Linda was smiling throughout the day. Willy Loman might have been a superb craftsman, but he is forced by the demands of a mechanized world to run in search of financial wealth.

Willy is a traveling salesman for Wagner Company for thirty four years. But as time passes, life for him seems to be slipping out of his control. He has worked hard his entire life and likes to think that he is indispensable to the company in the New England territory. He closes deals with contractors on the phone - since increasing episodes of anxiety and depression are impairing his ability to drive. Soon all of his aspirations fail and he is thrown out of his job as the owner of the firm that did not pay enough for his survival and told him that he could no longer represent the firm in New England because he was doing harm to the company. Loman's fortunes change drastically, he has to depend on loans from his friend Charley to make ends meet. His thirty-four year old son Biff is unable to settle down. The younger son is also on the look out for some job in order to settle in life. Charley on the other hand becomes a successful businessman. Bernard becomes an excellent lawyer.

Witnessing his failure, Willy clings to his sons hoping that they might succeed. Loman cannot accept that his life has been a failure and that Biff is not interested in big business. He decides to commit suicide in the hope that at least the insurance business will help Biff become successful. The play ends with his family and only friend Charley grieving by his grave side.

The play resembles a stream of consciousness account and Miller uses this device to contrast Willy's dreams and the reality of his life. It also helps to contrast the characters in sympathetic as well as villainous light while it unfolds the story. Miller does not allow the audience to be the permanent judge. Their opinions keep shifting about each of the characters.

*The Crucible* written in 1952 was first performed on Broadway on January 1953. The play is set during the 1692 Salem witchcraft trials of Salem, Massachusetts. Reverend Paris, a despised local preacher discovers that some young girls were performing a sinful dance with the slave Tituba in the woods. One of the girls was Paris's daughter, Betty who became unconscious on being discovered by her father.

The Villagers are in panic when they come to know that witchcraft is being practised. Reverend John Hale, an authority on witchcraft is sent for investigation. Abigail Williams, the unofficial leader of the group of girls is questioned regarding the incident that took place in the forest. Abigail denies that there was any kind of witchcraft involved, and says that she

and the girls were only performing dance. The girls actually lied following Abigail's instructions. Abigail and John Proctor were former lovers while working in his house and still she was obsessed with him.

The witch trial begins and Abigail and other girls lie and accuse others of witchcraft. Many villagers are found guilty of denial of witchcraft and are executed. Many *IN* men are brought to trial as well including John Proctor's wife. Judge John Proctor has to confess his adulterous relationship in order to save his wife from being hanged based upon the accusations brought by his own former lover. The Proctor's wife lies about the adultery in order to save her husband's name and the judges believe her. Proctor is given a chance to save his life on condition that he names people who practice witchcraft. Proctor chooses to die rather than to betray his friends and neighbours. The play ends with Proctor being led for execution.

*A View from the Bridge* is a play written by Arthur Miller in 1955 and was a one act verse drama on Broadway in 1955. In this play Miller takes illegal immigrants smuggled into the Brooklyn water front from Sicily through friends and relatives familiarly called 'Submarines' The protagonist of the play is Eddie Carbone who, in a passion of jealousy, informs on his wife's relative. He is an Italian American longshoreman who lives with his wife Beatrice and orphaned niece Catherine but as the play moves ahead his feelings for Catherine develops into an unwitting sexual attraction. Beatrice's two cousins Marco illegally from Italy in the hope for a better life here For Eddie 'It's an honour' to give the man refuge, after which Catherine instantly falls for the young and charming Rodolfo.

Eddie Carbone gets jealous and takes out faults with Rodolfo, accusing him of not being right (homosexual). He backs up his argument by using Rodolfo's effeminate qualities such as dress-making, cooking and singing.

When Catherine wants to marry Rodolfo, Eddie in his desperation to split them reveals to the Immigration Bureau that he is giving refuge to two illegal immigrants. Eddie is no longer respected by his friends and family for betraying the men. The elder brother vows revenge on Eddie once he is out on bail. Out on bail, Marco comes to Eddie who draws a knife in order to avenge him.

The play comes to a climax with the fight between Eddie and Marco. Eddie attacks Marco with a knife but stronger Marco turns the blade into Eddie killing him and Eddie dies in Beatrice's arms at the end of the play.

*All My Sons* opened on Broadway at the Coronet Theatre on January 29, 1947 and ran for 328 performances. The theme of the play is that of moral responsibility in the family, linked to the inner struggle of men in authority during the war. The play begins with a relaxed atmosphere in an American household of Joe Keller's backyard where neighbours gather on a summer's evening. Ann Deever is supposed to come from New York to visit Chris, Joe Keller's thirty-two years old son. She was previously engaged to Larry, brother of Chris and a pilot by profession. He lost his life in an air crash in the Second World War. Kate Keller, his mother refuses to accept that he is no more. Moreover, Ann is Joe Keller's business partner Steve

## Arthur Miller– All My Sons

Deever's daughter whose father is jailed for supplying damaged engines to P-40 fighter planes, killing twenty-one pilots. Keller was the one to have instructed Steve Deever to provide damaged engines after repair to the Air Force. On discovering the truth, George and her brother come to take away Ann from the Kellers. Despite knowing the truth Ann still wants to marry Chris. She has a letter that she shows to Kate Keller and Chris that reveals that Larry's death was a suicide. Ashamed of his father's criminal acts, Larry deliberately, air crashed his plane and died. Chris had a vague idea about his father's crime in the beginning but once it is confirmed, it horrifies him and he wants to send his father to prison so that he realizes that he is responsible not only to his family but to the society at large. Realising his guilt Joe Keller shoots himself. In this play Miller deals with the consequences of man's dereliction.

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### 1.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we have tried to sum up American Drama from the time immigrant settlers occupied American colonies from the 17th century to the 1940s around the period when renowned dramatists, Eugene O' Niell, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller reached profound levels of psychological realism.

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### 1.6 EXERCISE

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1. Name the major plays of Arthur Miller.
2. Name the first theatrical performance of America that led to the trial of actors.
3. Examine the growth of American drama during the seventeen, eighteen and nineteenth centuries.
4. How did Henrik Ibsen contribute to the growth of modern American drama?