All My Sons

**Exam Revision**



**Basic Essay Plans**

**Writing an Essay on Theme**

There are various themes in the play which you can discuss, all of which are explored through the conflict between Joe and Chris. Use the notes on theme you have been given and decide which ones best fit the question you are being asked. Consider:

* **The frailty of the American Dream**
* **Social responsibility**
* **Disillusionment**
* **War and those who profit and are damaged by it**
* **Denial (you will need to discuss Kate here too)**

Look over your **quotations** and **analysis** and decide which ones would be best for an essay on theme. The essay you wrote on 'conflict' will help here.

Look at the **Past Papers in your red handbook** to get an idea of the kind of questions which ask you to focus specifically on theme or conflict, and think about how you would plan such an essay.

Consider the following basic plan for an essay on theme. You will need to ensure that you **focus clearly on whatever the question asks of you**, so your essay may not follow this exact structure:

**Paragraph 1:** Introduction

**Paragraphs 2 & 3**: the opposing values of Joe and Chris. You may wish to discuss their close relationship at the start of the play so that you can focus on the development of conflict.

**Paragraphs 4 & 5:** discuss the turning point of the play and show how both characters reach crisis point; their relationship has been irreparably damaged. Focus on Joe's excuses and Chris's disillusionment in Act 3.

**Paragraph 6:** focus on the ending of the play, specifically on Joe's suicide and your own opinion/ reaction to the end - is it a positive or negative end?

**Paragraph 7:** conclusion (sum up your essay, focusing back in on the question and give a personal response.)

**Writing an Essay on Turning Point**

The turning point is extremely important in the play. Tension has been building for some time, and comes to a head with Kate's loaded words:

**"Your brother's alive, darling, because if he's dead your father killed him."**

In any essay, you will focus on this at some point, but if the question asks you specifically about the turning point, then that must be your focus immediately. You should then discuss the lead up to and aftermath of this crisis point, and never lose your focus on it.

You also need to consider themes in your essay, so you need to consider which ones your essay will focus on, and make sure you discuss these in depth:

* **The frailty of the American Dream**
* **Social responsibility**
* **Disillusionment**
* **War and those who profit and are damaged by it**
* **Denial (you will need to discuss Kate here too)**

Consider the following as a basic essay plan on turning point

**Paragraph 1:** Introduction

**Paragraph 2:** Explain that tension has been building for a while, but Kate's words near the end of Act 2 reveal the real truth about Joe's involvement in the incident with the cylinder heads. Explain why her statement changes everything.

**Paragraph 3:** The revelation of the truth completely changes Joe and Chris's relationship. Discuss their relationship before the turning point, and explain how it has now changed. Discuss their opposing views on social responsibility too and how the turning point affects this.

**Paragraph 4:** Discuss both Joe and Chris's actions after the turning point: focus on Joe's excuses and Chris's disillusionment. Explain that their relationship is ruined now, so the turning point is extremely significant.

**Paragraph 5:** Discuss the tragic ending of the play - it is a direct result of the turning point. Focus on Joe's realisation about social responsibility and Kate's final words.

**Paragraph 6:** Conclusion. conclusion (sum up your essay, focusing back in on the question and give a personal response.)

**Writing an Essay on Ending**

The ending of the play is extremely important, as it provides a resolution to the conflict. In any essay, you will discuss this, but is an essay asks you specifically about the ending of the play, then this must be your focus immediately. You should discuss the tragedy of the ending, and then focus on what has led up to this point, always keeping the end as your focus.

You also need to consider themes in your essay, so you need to consider which ones your essay will focus on, and make sure you discuss these in depth:

* **The frailty of the American Dream**
* **Social responsibility**
* **Disillusionment**
* **War and those who profit and are damaged by it**
* **Denial (you will need to discuss Kate here too)**

Consider the following as a basic essay plan on turning point

**Paragraph 1:** Introduction (explain briefly what happens at the end of the play, and what has led up to this. Mention themes)

**Paragraphs 2 & 3:** Discuss **Joe's flawed views concerning his family and the rest of society**. His views here reveal a fatal character flaw which directly results in his suicide at the end of the play when he fully realises the implications of what he has done. Discuss **Chris's opposing views** and explain that the realisation that he has lost both of his sons, and killed 21 more men causes Joe to feel unable to live any longer with such guilt.

**Paragraphs 4 & 5:** Focus on the turning point: Explain that tension has been building for a while, but Kate's words near the end of Act 2 reveal the real truth about Joe's involvement in the incident with the cylinder heads. Explain why her statement changes everything. Discuss the conflict which now comes to a head between Chris and Joe: Chris is devastated and disillusioned with life, while Joe's persistence in denying his guilt only makes matters worse. Joe cannot bear the thought of losing his son, which is essentially why he takes his life at the end.

**Paragraph 6:** Discuss Joe's admission of his guilt: when he realises that he is responsible for Larry's death, he finally understands the need to see outside his own family and accept responsibility for his part in the deaths of the pilots. Realising that he killed many young men who were also, metaphorically, his 'sons' results in him being unable to live with the guilt. Discuss your own reaction to the play's end.

**Paragraph 5:** Discuss the tragic ending of the play - it is a direct result of the turning point. Focus on Joe's realisation about social responsibility and Kate's final words.

**Paragraph 6:** Conclusion. conclusion (sum up your essay, focusing back in on the question and give a personal response.)

**Writing an Essay on Character**

Any essay which you write will focus on character, and will be specific to the question which you are asked.

You also need to consider themes in your essay, as Miller explores these through characters and the conflicts which arise between them. You need to consider which ones your essay will focus on, and make sure you discuss these in depth:

* **The frailty of the American Dream**
* **Social responsibility**
* **Disillusionment**
* **War and those who profit and are damaged by it**
* **Denial (you will need to discuss Kate here too)**

There is no basic plan as such for a characterisation question; this will depend on what the question asks, but you will likely focus on at least some of the following:

* Joe's inability to understand his responsibility for others outside his family. This is the fatal flaw which causes the breakup of his family and eventual suicide.
* Chris's idealistic views of the world which are crushed by his father's actions.
* Kate's denial of Larry's death and attempts to cover up Joe's crime.
* Jim and Sue Bayliss's views of the family (this links to the views of the community and the theme of disillusionment.)

If writing about Joe or Chris, which is most likely, you will need to focus more on the character which fits the question, and give more quotations and analysis for this, but you must also discuss this character's relationship with the other, so discuss them too.