

Is "the mirror" meant Why Miller Now?

to teach society a lesson? Do we learn through debate and argument?

In Ancient Greece, theatre was used to hold a mirror up to society—to provoke and debate, to ask important questions of where society was headed, but not necessarily to have answers. Arthur Miller's work was heavily influenced by Greek theatre, and his need to call into question the very fabric of society is a recurring theme through all of Miller's plays.

What sets Miller apart from his contemporaries and has cemented him among America's great playwrights is his ability to tackle these grand philosophical or ideological questions within the context of a family drama. The social conscience found in his work was forged by his experience of the Great Depression, which for Miller was the most impactful event on American society since the Civil War.

Writing plays, for Miller, genuinely had the potential to alter the course of the world. He believed that a playwright's responsibility equaled, if not exceeded, that of a doctor. A doctor, after all, can save lives. But a playwright can change lives.

Miller recognized how necessary drama was to help a society reflect on its own actions. *The Crucible* (1953) famously uses the Salem Witch Trials as a stand-in for McCarthyism and the deeds of the House Un-American Activities Committee. But Miller found that the allegory of the play reached far beyond the witch-hunt of his own time that he was trying to evoke. He said, "I can almost tell what the political situation in a country is when the play is suddenly a hit there—it is either a warning of tyranny on the way or a reminder of tyranny just past."

Miller's work, whether cloaked in allegory or in a seemingly traditional family drama, always has something deeper lurking beneath the surface. When society is facing a moment of change or trauma, we can continue to look to this great dramatist of morality for insight into the road ahead.

on (L) column write down words/phrases that answer the question below:

T-Chart

After reading "Why Miller Not?" on pg. 7 of All My Sons Companion packet on (R) column ↓

other than entertainment, what is theater's purpose?

Pull specific text from article "Why Miller Not?" that connects to words/phrases on (L).

examples:

- to teach a lesson

- "In Ancient Greece, theatre was used to hold a mirror up to society - to provoke and debate, to ask important questions of where society was headed, but not necessarily have answers." (paragraph 1)