



## Interrogative Literacy as Ethical Competence Probing the Culture of Silence in Arthur Miller's All My Sons

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**Abstract:** *This article employs a synthesis theoretical framework to reread Arthur Miller's All My Sons, arguing the Keller family's Culture of Silence serves as a literary case study in organizational and ethical pathology. The essay critically connects Schein's Organizational Culture Model with Interrogative Literacy (IL), investigating how the systematic suppression of inquiry undermines moral and communicative questioning needs. By mapping the Kellers' language and evasive strategies onto Schein's Artifacts, Espoused Values, and Underlying Assumptions, the work synthesizes research on organizational ethics and denial. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, we show how Joe and Kate Keller institutionalize denial, inhibiting characters like Chris from developing Interrogative Literacy. The tragic comprehension is only forced by the external, indisputable evidence of Larry's letter. The analysis concludes by reframing All My Sons to stress the necessity for institutions to actively cultivate Interrogative Literacy as a precondition for ethical viability.*

**Key words:** Interrogative Literacy, Culture of Silence, Organisational Ethics, American Literature, Business Ethics

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### Introduction

All My Sons by Arthur Miller (1947) is a cornerstone work in the canon of American drama because of its harsh assessment of the country's post-war ideological context in addition to its deft theatrical design. Staged barely two years after the close of World War II, the play is deceptively simple: it looks to be a home tragedy limited to the backyard of a successful middle-class family, the Kellers. Yet, underneath the peaceful façade of lush, domestic comfort, Miller begins a surgical inspection of the American Dream, uncovering the moral rot and systematic ethical failure that undergird the era of extraordinary national success. In post-war American dramas, the concept of the American Dream undergoes profound deconstruction, revealing its transition into something fundamentally degraded and hollow. Rather than representing the idealistic ideas of the founding fathers liberty, opportunity, and democratic aspiration, the post-war American Dream becomes materialistic, irrational, pointless, and weird (Zaheer & Din).

The post-war period in America was distinguished by a triumphal sense of possibilities. Economic progress was paired with an ideology that equated material success, the detached



house, the booming business, the nuclear family with moral righteousness. This was the quintessence of the American Dream: an implicit bargain where hard effort ensured not only comfort, but a place among the righteous. According to Miller, Joe Keller, the patriarch is the walking embodiment of this dream. His prosperity is evident in his profitable factory, secure suburb surrounded by trees, and his son Chris's steadfast devotion. He is, to the world and to himself, a success story, a self-made man who survived the Depression and gave security to his family.

Miller skillfully employs the setting and plot to illustrate that this gleaming covering is only an artifact concealing a highly toxic underlying premise. The plot hinges around a tragic, suppressed truth: Joe Keller intentionally supplied broken cylinder heads during the war, resulting in the deaths of 21 pilots. He let his partner take the blame while keeping his independence and business. The drama therefore shows the true cost of Keller prosperity: the deaths of twenty-one "sons" sacrificed for worldly gain.

This drama expands from the misery of a single guilty man to a critique of a culture that allows such guilt to exist. Miller examines "moral decay" as a failing of the American Dream's central tenet: the failure to integrate individual achievement with social duty. Joe Keller's justification is consistently a simplistic, materialistic echo: "*Nothing is bigger than Family*" (Miller. p. 64) Keller displays the national illness of valuing individual gain over public good by limiting his moral universe to the bounds of his property and personal family. In this light, the American Dream is a cover story for severe ethical abdication, rather than a tribute to moral fortitude.

Importantly, the play's emotional tension stems from the family's collective inability to confront this deterioration, laying the groundwork for the main point of the essay. This deterioration is caused by Joe and Kate Keller's strict enforcement of the culture of silence. Kate's persistent, almost desperate denial that her missing son, Larry, is dead is not merely a mother's anguish; it is a fundamental, self-preserving technique that freezes the past and precludes any Interrogative Literacy the moral and communicative will to ask challenging questions. Integrating critical thinking with disciplined inquiry mind-set enables people and organizations to challenge presumptions, gain a deeper understanding of themselves, and continuously grow and develop (Ravitch). Any such inquiry here that could jeopardize the basis of the Keller family's wealth is sidestepped, downplayed, or subjected to emotional blackmail. 'All my Sons' play demonstrates how corporate processes, rather than individual choices, can promote immoral behaviour. The Kellers' demise exemplifies a structural failure in which a corrupt, results-oriented culture normalizes transactional morality, allowing leaders to privatize repercussions, conceal accountability, and prioritize profit or image over social duty. The post-war dream exemplifies an immoral corporate culture in which maintaining a polished façade takes precedence over confronting the moral consequences of one's actions.

The quest of responsibility, whether in civic life, organizational management, or personal morality, requires the disclosure of hidden truths. Mark Bovens, a Dutch scholar of public administration emphasizes that accountability in complex organizations is hard to detect because many people contribute to choices, but maintains, that individual accountability works best when people are given meaningful opportunity to behave responsibly (Gilman). He then discusses what constitutes responsible behaviour, situations in which workers would have to defy commands, and how organizations can be built to encourage moral behaviour. This process can be characterized using a three-part theoretical model that connects oppressive situations, the skills required to navigate them, and the moral obligation to intervene. This theory contends that a Culture of Silence is maintained by inhibiting the development of



Interrogative Literacy, which prevents the realization of Critical Comprehension the intellectual and ethical antecedent to justice. The Kellers' environment, exemplifying any powerful entity that prioritizes self-preservation over moral rectitude, provides an important setting for investigating this dynamic.

i) Organisational Culture and Culture of Silence

Organizational culture is defined as a company's shared beliefs, conventions, and behavioural expectations that impact how employees think, act, and interact with one another, eventually influencing their openness to innovation and contribution to organizational performance (Schuldt & Gomes). The Kellers' culture places a strong emphasis on reputation, family loyalty, and the financial stability provided by the factory. At first, it seems harmless just a focus on hard work and tradition but it quickly turns into a harmful Culture of Silence. Instead than being passively silent, this setting is deliberately designed to stifle criticism and hide harmful information. It focuses on subtle and overt tactics of emotional and psychological control, where questioning the official narrative is linked with disloyalty, heresy, or outright treachery. The key characteristic is the development of a cognitive safety zone that favours psychological comfort and social concord over ethical truth.

The Culture of Silence serves as a psychological and social barrier, forcing individuals whether employees, family members, or concerned citizens to complicity. Breaking this silence comes at a high cost, often in the form of social isolation, economic ruin, or emotional breakdown, so conformity is the easiest path. This culture serves as the antagonist in our model, actively working to undermine any attempts at inquiry. It effectively instills a lack of courage and pervasive fear, preventing the first and most important step toward disclosure.

ii) Interrogative Literacy

Interrogative Literacy is an essential counter-agent to the Culture of Silence. This concept goes beyond basic curiosity; it is the sophisticated talent and moral will required to pose difficult, probing questions. Interrogative Literacy has two key dimensions: cognitive and moral.

Cognitive skill refer to the ability to ask deliberate, structured, and higher-order questions that aid in issue analysis, critical thinking, and the progression from basic comprehension to complicated reasoning (Rodriguez Sandoval et al.,). Then, in this sense the cognitive skill requires possessing the intellectual tools to ask questions that challenge erroneous assumptions, identify logical flaws, and progress beyond surface-level narratives. It involves the capacity to recognize evasive rhetorical methods and to seek evidence methodically. Second, moral will is the ethical fortitude the courage to raise those concerns in the face of institutional or familial pressure. In the Keller paradigm, this is the internal fight of characters like Chris, who must overcome years of entrenched allegiance and denial before even questioning his father's version of events. Activating Interrogative Literacy requires an individual to take the risk that the truth, once revealed, may drastically transform their environment and necessitate bold action.

Thus, the framework's central mechanism is interrogative literacy. It serves as the switch that activates the lights in the silent, dark chamber. The Culture of Silence is unquestioned if one lacks the ability to formulate the correct question one that pierces the underlying deception and the moral courage to ask it in public. Driven by a commitment to integrity over comfort, it is an active, deliberate, and morally grounded process of learning.

iii) Critical Comprehension – Analysing, Evaluating and Acting

The ultimate outcome of successfully applying Interrogative Literacy to a Culture of Silence is Critical Comprehension. According to Peter H Martorella, Critical Comprehension is not



merely the acquisition of facts, but the ability to analyze, evaluate, and act upon the synthesized truth. (Cunningham)

Simple knowledge and basic understanding are very different from critical comprehension. When someone discovers what went wrong, they acquire basic information that the engine parts were defective. When they comprehend the reasons behind it like greed, carelessness, fear of disaster, the ethical and societal ramifications of the loss of human life, the breach of the social compact, and their moral obligation in light of that reality, they attain Critical Comprehension. This degree of comprehension necessitates facing one's own and the system's moral failings. It requires comparing the discovered truth to a set of fundamental ethical precepts (Freire).

The Kellers struggle with the transition from knowledge to critical comprehension. Chris's basic awareness of his father's acts is terrible (Miller); his Critical Comprehension the recognition of the moral rot that underpins his entire existence is what sparks the subsequent catastrophe and the need for self-judgment. Critical comprehension, by definition, renders inaction impossible. Once the entire moral weight of the truth has been absorbed, the individual is obligated to reform the organization, seek justice, or engage in an irrevocable inward reckoning.

These three ideas work together directly, causally, and cyclically. The constrained environment is defined by the Culture of Silence. The active moral and cognitive force that opposes that environment is known as interrogative literacy. Lastly, the inevitable outcome of a successful interrogation is critical comprehension. The Culture of Silence endures in the absence of an established Literacy; once Literacy is implemented, Comprehension requires that the Culture of Silence be permanently destroyed. This approach offers a clear theoretical lens for identifying dishonest circumstances and recommending the required instruments brave, relentless questioning to attain genuine ethical clarity and fairness.

While Joe Keller's individual guilt is evident, limiting the play to a tragedy of personal failure ignores the play's significant critique of organizational culture and the systemic breakdown in ethical communication. The drama serves not only as a tragedy, but also as a disturbing case study exposing the catastrophic effects of systemic suppression of inquiry and dissent. The Keller machine the factory and the family unit creates a ubiquitous Culture of Silence, which is required for the cover-up to continue. ***This culture is based on a core organizational goal: survival and profit are placed before ethical accountability.*** The factory's initial action shipping substandard parts was made possible by the organizational structure, which allowed Keller to shift blame to Steve Deever while suppressing any internal or external inquiry.

The major mechanism of this suppression is emotional manipulation, which is most dramatically demonstrated by Kate Keller. She preserves the illusion of Larry's survival and Chris's emotional immobility, reinforcing the organizational lie and preventing the development of interrogative literacy. ***Chris's attempts to question the past are greeted with emotional blackmail and aggressive denial, limiting the moral will to ask difficult questions.*** The family unit serves as a microcosm of an organization that employs fear and devotion to conceal its central deceit.

Chris's collapse happens when he acquires sustained Interrogative Literacy. He forces his father to tell the truth and confronts the evidence the knowledge of the truth (Miller, p. 58-60) and the subsequent discovery of Larry's suicide note. This act of inquiry instantly leads to the final stage: Critical Comprehension. Chris recognizes that his father's crime was not only a



historical occurrence, but a living moral system that stained their entire shared existence (Freire).

The tragedy, therefore, is rooted in the organization's failure to self-correct. ***The Culture of Silence was so robust that it required an external catalyst (George Deever's visit) and an intense internal moral struggle (Chris's rebellion) to crack.*** The play asserts that when an organization be it a corporation or a family systemically suppresses the moral will to question, it inevitably substitutes self-preservation for responsibility, leading directly to organizational ruin and, ultimately, human tragedy. The twenty-one dead pilots serve as the ultimate evidence of an organizational culture whose toxic silence was deadly.

### **Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

Organizational culture is defined as the common assumptions, values, beliefs, and norms that emerge over time and shape how people perceive, think, feel, and conduct inside an organization (Schein & Schein) It functions as an unwritten social logic that moulds what is acceptable, essential, and *the way we do things around here*, going beyond apparent objects to deeper fundamental assumptions learned as a group solves challenges of outward adaptation and internal integration.

Schein & Schein states, culture are crucial to leadership because leaders originally establish culture and are subsequently restricted by it. Founders' assumptions become buried in tales, institutions, and everyday behaviours that subsequent leaders must grasp to conserve, evolve, or modify them. Leadership mistakes frequently result from misinterpreting the current culture or misunderstanding how deeply it determines identity and purpose for members. Culture also has an impact on workers' work experiences, such as psychological safety, trust, inclusion, and ethical behaviour, and it interacts with national and professional cultures in global businesses to influence cross-border collaboration. As a result, assessing and working with culture is vital for leading mergers, managing change, and achieving long-term adaptation rather than depending on cosmetic fixes.

Albert Bandura's theory of **Moral Disengagement** (1996) explains the process by which individuals convince themselves that ethical standards do not apply to them in specific contexts. Joe Keller achieves this critical psychological shift, which directly informs the Basic Underlying Assumptions of his organization.

Moral disengagement mechanisms systematically undermine moral agency by weakening self-sanctions, reducing prosocial tendencies, and promoting aggression-prone cognitive and affective states. Path analyses demonstrate these effects operate similarly for interpersonal aggression and delinquency, with moral reconstrual justifying harm via worthy purposes and victim vilification as the strongest drivers of detrimental conduct. Overall, it establishes moral disengagement as a robust psychological process that enables harmful behaviour by cognitively neutralizing moral prohibitions (Bandura et al.).

The organizational failure extends beyond the Keller family to the broader community, where the Culture of Silence is sustained by the **Bystander Effect** (Darley & Latane). The neighbours Frank, Sue, and others show passive complicity. They have knowledge or strong suspicions about Joe's involvement in the scandal, yet they remain purposefully silent. The mechanics of this communal silence include a) Diffusion of Responsibility, in which the community collectively expects that someone else (the courts, the government, the Deever family) will take the appropriate action, freeing any individual of the burden of speaking up. b) Pluralistic Ignorance, because everyone else is mute and outwardly accepting of the Kellers' wealth,



people conclude that the prevalent norm is to consent to forget, which suppresses any desire for Interrogative Literacy.

This investigation conducts a qualitative textual analysis of Arthur Miller's entire script for *All My Sons*, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) techniques to investigate how Joe and Kate Keller's language institutionalizes denial and impedes interrogative literacy. The analysis focuses on key dialogue exchanges during high-conflict moments that expose power dynamics and moral disengagement, including the heated confrontation between George Deever and Joe Keller (Act 2), where Joe's euphemistic deflections "*That's the business... Human!*" clash with George's accusatory interruptions, and the climactic father-son reckoning between Chris and Joe (Act 3), marked by Chris's anguished outburst "*Dad, you did it to twenty-one pilots!*" against Joe's desperate responsibility diffusion "*I'm in last place again!*".

Focusing on these key scenes exposes discursive strategies presuppositions, euphemisms, and victim displacement that mainstream Joe's guilt while repressing critical inquiry. Thematic coding identifies patterns of ideological control, connecting parental speech to Chris's blocked self-comprehension, with Larry's letter serving as the disruptive text that allows for breakthrough. This targeted method reveals how dramatic language reinforces dominance and impedes interrogative literacy in familial contexts.

**Analysis**

To move beyond Joe Keller's personal guilt and grasp the tragedy of *All My Sons* as a case study in organizational failure, we must use Edgar Schein's (2010) **Organizational Culture Model**. The three levels Artifacts, Espoused Values, and Underlying Assumptions do more than simply describe the Keller family; they depict a systematic, multi-layered structure meant to suppress Interrogative Literacy and reinforce the Culture of Silence. The table below depicts the apparent, stated, and subconscious features of the Keller organization, indicating precisely where and how inquiry is obstructed at each cultural level.

Table 1  
*Mapping the Kellers' Organization*

Schein's Level of Culture	Keller Organizational Manifestation	Mechanism for Blocking Interrogative Literacy
1. Artifacts (Visible)	<i>The Shield of Visible Success:</i> The prosperous factory; the immaculate, large two-story house; Joe Keller's genial, hardworking public persona.	<i>Psychological Deterrent &amp; Shield of Trust:</i> These visible symbols provide overwhelming evidence of success and normalcy, mandating the unspoken rule: "Do not look too closely, because what you see is good." Questioning the source of this wealth is deterred by the powerful inertia against upsetting the established stability and prosperity.
2. Espoused Values (Stated)	<i>The Weapon of Familial Loyalty:</i> The dominant value of <i>Family First; We take care of our own; Loyalty and hard work lead to success.</i>	<i>Moral Coercion &amp; Reframing:</i> This value is weaponized. Any attempt at Interrogative Literacy (by Chris or George) is instantly reframed by Kate Keller as an attack on familial unity and an act of disloyalty. The culture equates silence with loyalty, making



		ethical inquiries taboo and prohibiting moral dissent.
3. Basic Underlying Assumptions (Unconscious)	<i>The Ethical Firewall:</i> The core belief that material survival and economic security take precedence over universal human life and morality. Joe's expressed conviction: "I was a good son, I was a good father, but nobody could tell me that I wasn't a man of my family."	<i>Rejection of Universal Ethics:</i> This assumption forms an absolute firewall, justifying the crime a priori. It fundamentally rejects the premise upon which Critical Comprehension is based (Freire, 2000): that individual fate is inseparable from universal ethical obligation. Because the assumption is unconscious, the organization cannot conceive of the need for self-correction or inquiry.

The Kellers' failure is organizational because inquiry is obstructed at every level: the Artifacts distract and comfort, the Espoused Values moralize, and the Underlying Assumptions fundamentally reject the need for ethical responsibility. The Culture of Silence is the powerful force that keeps the truth hidden until Chris's extreme act of Interrogative Literacy shatters the system, resulting in terrible, unavoidable Critical Comprehension.

The effectiveness of the Culture of Silence within the Keller organization is best proven by examining the linguistic and rhetorical methods employed to undermine attempts at Interrogative Literacy (IL). It takes moral bravery to ask questions and intellectual agility to change the conversation from the superficial to the systemic. **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** (Fairclough) is the most effective way for showing how the Kellers, the dominant power structure, employ conversational methods to avoid accountability and redirect probing questions.

i) Demands of Interrogative Literacy

Interrogative Literacy necessitates a shift in the nature of inquiry, from descriptive *What?* to evaluative *Why?* and structural *How does this reflect our values?*

From "*What did you do?*" to "*Why did you do it?*" - The "What" question concerns facts and history - Joe admitted to delivering the parts. The "Why" question, compels Joe to examine his underlying moral system "Family First" justification.

From "*Is it true?*" to "*What does this truth demand of us?*" - This final, most challenging need pushes the transition from knowledge to critical comprehension, shifting the responsibility for reaction from the outward world to the interior, ethical self.

The Kellers' conversational strategies are especially meant to trap the interrogator in the *What* while avoiding the *Why*.

ii) Conversational Evasion Tactic 1: Rhetorical Shifts and Pragmatic Appeals

Joe Keller's principal strategy is the **Rhetorical Shift**, a language manoeuvre that reframes the moral dimension of the offense. When asked directly by Chris or George, Joe repeatedly shifts the focus away from the twenty-one deceased pilots - universal responsibility and onto his perceived personal requirement - pragmatic appeal.

For example, when Chris confronts him, Joe defends his motivation rather than the deed itself: "*I was terrified of the dark, Chris. I was afraid of the darkness.*" He seeks to substitute his personal worry and the family's economic requirements for the universal moral standard. This



rhetorical redirection is an effective CDA tactic because it a) Personalizes the Universal: It reduces a worldwide moral failure - delivering substandard goods to the US military to a human, sympathetic failure - a father rescuing his family. b) Substitutes Emotion with Ethics: It replaces the cold, hard logic of ethical accountability with the warmth of familial self-pity, thereby jamming Chris's Interrogative Literacy by making the ethical query feel cruel or dishonest.

iii) Conversational Evasion Tactic 2: Emotional Appeals and Ad Hominem Attacks

Kate Keller is the play's language defensive barrier, using Emotional Appeals and Ad Hominem Attacks to prevent inquiry. Her conversational style is based on preserving the play's fundamental fictitious discourse: Larry's comeback.

When George Deever tries to use facts to challenge Joe, Kate instantly launches an Ad Hominem Attack, questioning George's sanity, motivations, and sobriety: "You're a little preoccupied right now... You haven't finished your bachelor's degree." She shifts the focus away from Joe's criminal activity and toward George's character or emotional instability, effectively dismissing the source of the inquiry rather than addressing the substance of the query.

Kate's pervasive and continual admission of grief over Larry serves as an emotional buffer for Joe. Any inquiries regarding the damaged parts are met with a rhetorical wall about Larry's possible return. This approach, as evaluated using CDA, demonstrates how language is used to weaponize grief, resulting in a situation in which any successful act of Interrogative Literacy which would confirm Joe's guilt and Larry's death has a catastrophic cost.

This argument solidifies the Keller organization's downfall. The frequent rhetorical changes, emotional coercion, and ad hominem assaults create a rhetoric of silence, requiring the characters, particularly Chris, to use tremendous Interrogative Literacy to finally break the cycle of conversational suppression and achieve Critical Comprehension.

Interrogative Literacy requires the ability and moral bravery to question established narratives and go under the surface. The Keller organization's culture of silence frequently undermines this demand. The table below shows the failure to meet the demands

Table 2  
*The Demand of Interrogative Literacy: Challenge vs. Conformity*

<b>Interrogative Demand</b>	<b>The Culture's Counter-Tactic</b>	<b>Example in the Play</b>
Demand for <b>Clarity</b> (Skill to pose questions)	<i>Ambiguity &amp; Evasion:</i> Kate uses hysteria and illogical insistence (that Larry is alive) to replace concrete answers with emotional confusion.	<i>The truth about the defective parts is always met with a deflection back to the mystery of Larry's disappearance</i>
Demand for <b>Criticality</b> (Will to ask tough questions)	<i>Moral Blackmail:</i> Chris is told his questioning is "cruelty" and a betrayal of his father and mother.	<i>Chris struggles to ask the truth because it means attacking the foundational loyalty his father taught him</i>
Demand for <b>Accountability</b> (Acting on comprehension)	<i>Scapegoating:</i> The continued imprisonment of	<i>The organization maintains its innocence by making its</i>



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	Steve Deever allows the culture to point to an external source of blame.	<i>partner the "fall guy," eliminating the need for internal self-scrutiny.</i>
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These CDA-revealed tactics illustrate how parental discourse power stifles interrogative literacy, sustaining moral disengagement until Larry's letter fractures the ideology.

## Discussion

The culture of silence in Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* is a powerful anti-literacy mechanism that prevents the Keller family from engaging in critical inquiry, self-discovery, and ethical accountability. Based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and moral disengagement theories, this culture uses silence, denial, and euphemism language to suppress interrogative literacy the ability to ask probing questions and critically interact with truths that contradict prevailing narratives.

Silence is used to conceal embarrassing information about Joe Keller's involvement in the fabrication of defective aviation parts. Characters avoid or falsify information rather than engage in open dialogue. Kate's denial of Larry's death is an example of this: her furious insistence that "he's not dead, so there's no argument" substitutes emotional avoidance for factual reckoning. This silence is aggressively imposed through moral blackmail, with Chris Keller's demands for clarity and accountability labelled as "cruelty" and a breach of family devotion. The family's communication habits implicitly require acquiescence, effectively silencing criticism and inquiry.

Moral disengagement theory describes how such discourse allows silence to serve as an anti-literacy strategy. By discounting victims and dispersing or relocating responsibility Joe blaming wartime pressures or scapegoating Steve Deever the family neutralizes moral self-sanctions that would otherwise induce critical thinking and confession. Silence becomes a protective mechanism, protecting the family's manufactured reality while avoiding societal guilt.

This anti-literacy culture shows deeper social concerns, such as postwar American society's unwillingness to acknowledge responsibility in ethical failures and its preference for sanitized narratives over hard reality. Miller's representation demonstrates how silence and denial contribute to the perpetuation of institutionalized injustice, making interrogative literacy an essential but difficult act of breaking silence in order to restore moral agency. In the final analysis, the culture of silence in *All My Sons* functions as an ingrained anti-literacy mechanism, silencing questioning, dissolving accountability, and fragmenting ethical comprehension, exposing the significant human and societal costs of such repression.

## Conclusion

The Kellers' constant conversational repression required an external, uncontaminated document to eventually break the Culture of Silence. Larry's final letter acts as the ultimate tipping point, providing irrefutable information that undermines every psychological and verbal defense the family had put up. Unlike oral confrontations, which may be countered with emotional appeals or ad hominem assaults, the letter is pure, objective, and irreversible.

Joe Keller's final revelation, which ends with the statement "They were all my sons," marks a catastrophic, sad moment of Critical Comprehension (Freire). For years, Keller believed that his moral sphere terminated at his property line; the deceased pilots were abstract numbers, strangers whose fates had no bearing on his immediate life. This fundamental notion rendered him morally blind.



The letter compels him to move beyond basic information that he sent defective parts, to a complete, ethical understanding that the victims were his moral responsibility, just like his own son. This is the moment when the Ethical Firewall fails. However, this realization comes tragically late.

The play makes a compelling case that the systemic failure of Interrogative Literacy throughout the organization the years of Chris's suppressed questions, George's quiet truth, and Joe's own self-deception prevented the truth from being peacefully incorporated into the system. Because the Culture of Silence was so strong, accountability could only be attained through a violent rupture, which cost the organization the family its leader's life and ensured its irreparable demise. The tragedy isn't just that Joe sinned; it's that the culture he created made forgiveness or correction impossible until it was too late.

### **Research Implications**

The Keller machine case study has important and practical relevance for today's enterprises. The Culture of Silence is an on-going risk, expressing itself now in failures to address systemic harassment, environmental infractions, and financial malfeasance. *All My Sons* teaches us that organizational viability is determined by the ability to self-correct in a timely manner rather than the lack of errors. To avoid the disastrous consequences of forced Critical Comprehension, companies must actively institutionalize and foster Interrogative Literacy. This entails developing organizations in which questioning is not only permitted, but encouraged.

This remark has various in-depth and new implications for studies in Business Ethics and Organizational Studies, notably in terms of the interaction of culture, communication, and moral integrity. *Organizational Culture and Moral Decay* - by applying Schein's Organizational Culture Model to the Keller family's "Culture of Silence," this analysis provides a useful foundation for diagnosing ethical dysfunction in real-world firms. It contends that organizational cultures are more than merely innocuous descriptive terms; they may be systematically built to allow ethical violations. The Kellers' Artifacts - evasive language, Joe's routine, Espoused Values - family/business loyalty above all, and Underlying Assumptions - the self is the only relevant moral unit demonstrate how denial becomes an institutionalized defense mechanism. This necessitates a shift in organizational ethics research from focusing solely on individual bad apples to analysing the systematic cultural conditions that bake in denial, making ethical inquiry structurally impossible.

The Strategic Value of Interrogative Literacy (IL)

The core novel contribution is the introduction of Interrogative Literacy (IL) as a precondition for ethical viability. The analysis reframes *All My Sons*' tragedy as a failure of IL acquisition under communicative oppression. For researchers, this implies that organizations must treat the ability to ask morally challenging, critical questions and create systems that reward rather than punish them as a strategic resource and a governance requirement. The analysis indicates that without IL, organizations cannot achieve self-comprehension or recognize impending crises until external, indisputable proof like Larry's letter or a whistle-blower's report forces a tragic reckoning. Future research should develop metrics for assessing IL in organizational settings and investigate interventions like training, communication protocols designed to promote a *Culture of Questioning* as an essential safeguard against collapse.

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