Biographical Note

Arthur Miller was raised in a prosperous Jewish family in New York City. During the Depression, the family faced financial ruin and Miller worked in various manual labor jobs. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1938 where he began to distinguish himself as a playwright.

Due to an old football injury, Miller was ineligible for military service during World War II. He toured army camps and gathered material for a screenplay, *The Story of GI Joe* which was based on a book by the famous war correspondent, Ernie Pyle. In 1944, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, his first Broadway production, was not a commercial success, but suggested a theme that would occupy Miller in his more important works – the fate of the individual in society. *Death of a Salesman* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1949 and established Miller's reputation as a great American dramatist. It portrays the tragedy of the common man who loses his integrity due to social and economic pressures. *The Crucible* in 1953 explored this theme in the context of the 1692 Salem witch trials. Miller wrote this play during the McCarthy period when many of his friends were being attacked for their pro-Communist beliefs. It is ironic that Miller himself was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956, and like his protagonist in *The Crucible* refused to implicate others involved in activities condemned at the time by society.

In 1956 Miller married Marilyn Monroe. They divorced in 1961 after filming *The Misfits*, which he wrote for her. The character of Maggie in Miller's *After the Fall* in 1964 in part reflects the emotional troubles Marilyn faced during their marriage. This play also examines the theme of the individual's loss of integrity in the face of social hysteria and hypocrisy.

In addition to writing plays with strong social commentary, Miller has been politically active. In 1965 he was elected president of PEN (Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists), an international literary organization that he guided toward a platform of world peace and understanding, providing artists and writers a forum for expressing their views and fighting governmental repression worldwide.

Miller has continued to write powerful and successful plays during the last three decades. His focus on the individual in society has evolved to an understanding of social institutions as reflections of the good and evil residing in human nature. His autobiography *Timebends* (1987) gives insight into Miller's personal life and the experiences which have shaped his work.

Miller's major plays have been produced internationally and adapted for radio, television, and motion pictures. In 1993 he received the National Medal of the Arts from President Clinton. He continues to write and publish plays including *Broken Glass* (1994) written for his late father.