

Context – Arthur Miller

- The play was written by American playwright **Arthur Miller** and first performed in **1955**.
- Miller grew up during **The Great Depression** which lasted from 1929 – 1939, a time of great economic hardship in America and many other parts of the world.
- Many of Miller's plays feature working class men, like Eddie Carbone, as their protagonists (main character).
- The plots of Miller's plays challenge some of the ideals of **The American Dream**, the term James Truslow Adams first used in 1931 to describe the American belief that "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement."
- In 1956, Arthur Miller was called to appear in front of the **Un-American Activities Committee** and asked to name people he had seen ten years earlier at an alleged communist writers meeting. He refused to 'snitch' on his fellow writers.
- One of the play's key themes is loyalty. **Omerta** is the Mafia code of honour which demands loyalty and secrecy. The slang name for a police informer is a **stool pigeon**.

Key Quotations

- **Alfieri:** 'This is the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world.' (Describing the area of Red Hook.)
- **Stage direction:** *Eddie has risen, with iron control, even a smile.* (After warning Rodolpho not to attract too much attention to himself.)
- **Eddie:** 'he's only bowin to his passport.' (Eddie's warning to Catherine that Rodolpho is using her to gain US citizenship.)
- **Alfieri:** 'Pray for him...' (What the old woman he consults advises Alfieri he should do for Eddie.)
- **Eddie:** 'He's stealing from me!' (Eddie tells Alfieri he think Rodolpho is taking Catherine away from him.)
- **Stage direction:** *'They are like animals that have torn at one another'* (After Eddie has kissed Rodolpho.)
- **Eddie:** 'It's a shootin gallery in here and I'm the pigeon.' (Eddie describes how he feels shot down by Beatrice for everything he does.)
- **Beatrice:** 'You want something else, Eddie, and you can never have her!
- **Alfieri:** 'I...watched it run its bloody course.'
- **Marco:** 'I accuse that one!...he killed my children!' (Marco accuses Eddie of snitching on them to the Immigration Bureau.)

A View from the Bridge – Knowledge Organiser

Context – Greek Tragedy

- A View from the Bridge follows many of the conventions of the genre of **tragedy**.
- The **structure** of tragedy is exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement.
- Alfieri's character acts like a **Greek chorus** in the way that he is positioned at the front of the stage throughout the play, commenting at key moments on events, and representing the Red Hook community as a whole.
- **Protagonist** – the main character (often a hero) who faces difficulties in achieving his goals.
- **Hubris** – the excessive pride the protagonist feels in their abilities and the disregard they have for the God-given order of things.
- **Peripeteia** – the moment in the play which leads to the protagonist's inevitable downfall.
- **Catharsis** – the emotional 'cleansing' an audience is supposed to feel at the end of a tragedy.
- **Tragic flaw** – the weak spot in a protagonist's character which results in them making decisions with terrible consequences.

Plot – Act 2

- It's Christmas. Rodolpho and Catherine discuss marriage & Rodolpho explains he wouldn't to live in poverty in Italy with Katie.
- Eddie returns home to find Rodolpho and Catherine emerging from the bedroom. In jealousy, he kisses Catherine and then when Rodolpho comes to her defence, he forces a kiss on Rodolpho too.
- A few days later, Eddie visits Alfieri again. The lawyer warns him not to try to stand in the way of Catherine and Rodolpho marrying.
- Eddie reports Marco and Rodolpho to the Immigration Bureau.
- Beatrice decides it's best if Marco & Rodolpho move into the Lipari family's apartment which alarms Eddie as it means that the Lipari's will get in trouble with the Immigration Bureau.
- Marco & Rodolpho are arrested. Marco accuses Eddie of snitching.
- Alfieri gets Marco and Rodolpho let out on bail – Marco reluctantly promises not to go after Eddie.
- On the day of her wedding, Eddie tries to prevent Catherine & Beatrice leaving the house to go to the church. Rodolpho arrives and Eddie tells him he wants to have things out with Marco.
- Marco arrives at the apartment and Eddie accuses him of telling lies about him. They have a fight which proves fatal.

Plot – Act 1

- The lawyer, **Alfieri**, introduces the setting of **Red Hook**, an area near the Brooklyn Bridge in New York where dockyard workers (longshoremen) live and work.
- **Eddie Carbone**, his wife **Beatrice** and their niece **Catherine (17)** live together in an apartment. Beatrice is flustered because of the early arrival of her two Italian cousins, **Marco and Rodolpho**. They are entering the US illegally to work as **longshoremen** to earn money to send back to their families. The only work they can get in Italy is as harvest labourers or pushing manual taxis up the local hill to the hotel.
- Rodolpho hopes to become an American citizen and stay in the country. Eddie tells them they can expect to earn an average of \$30 - \$40 a week.
- Eddie warns Beatrice and Catherine not to say anything to anyone about Marco and Rodolpho's presence in the apartment in case the **Immigration Bureau** find out. He tells them an anecdote about **Vinny Bolzano**, a 14 yr old who was thrown out of his community for snitching on his uncle.
- Catherine tells Eddie she's been offered a job as a stenographer which will pay \$50 a week. Eddie is worried that Catherine will be around working -class men.
- Eddie grows jealous of Catherine's attraction to Rodolpho. He insinuates that Rodolpho is **homosexual** because he has blond hair and likes to sing ('**Paper Doll**' is his favourite song) and is only using Catherine to gain American citizenship.
- Beatrice tells Catherine she needs to stop being a '**baby**' and stand up to Eddie.
- He goes to Alfieri for advice, but the lawyer tells him he doesn't have any legal case against Rodolpho. Frustrated, Eddie pretends to teach Rodolpho boxing, using it as an excuse to punch him. He suggests Marco's wife might cheat on him while he's in the USA.
- Marco sends Eddie a warning at the end of Act 1 by showing how strong he is in a chair-lifting competition.

Techniques

- **Euphemism** – the use of a softer expression to say something that it rude or difficult, e.g. 'When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?'
- **Simile** – comparing something using 'as' or 'like', e.g. 'His eyes were like tunnels'.
- **Metaphor** – saying something IS something else: 'This is the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world.'