

Folder L

How crucial is Alfieri's role?

Miller makes Alfieri carry a subsequently important role in the play "The view from the bridge" receiving three major roles in the conduct of the the play. His most crucial quality is made to be the ability to serve as a symbolic "bridge" between the audience and the play.

As a narrator (his first role), Alfieri tells us the story from the past about a longshoreman called Eddie and his unlucky fate. The first time Alfieri appears as a narrator right from the beginning of the play where he introduces us to the first lines of the story and the place, where everything happened. What is very important about this part is that Alfieri already catches audience's attention and interest by telling us that "something amusing has just happened". Firstly, this is a very good example of foreshadowing. Alfieri tells the audience that something amusing has happened and the audience is left to wonder whether this is irony or they are about to hear a joke and the very seconds before he continues show some initial notes of tension. In other words Alfieri creates a strong sense of irony when talking about the story by saying that something tragic has happened and it is so ironic, it is "amusing", yet nobody had a clue that the story is truly tragic.

Sustained analysis of language + structure

Arthur Miller makes full use of Alfieri's narrator role and enhancing his "imaginary bridge" role by making him break the fourth wall and directly address the audience. As an example of this we can use his very first words in the play: "You wouldn't have known it, but something amusing...". here he talks directly to the audience. This starts off the play with audience knowing that they will be guided and with a correct use of Alfieri's narrator role to keep audience's attention, Miller achieves a high rate of interest right from the beginning.

Miller also uses a variety of metaphors in his speeches and not only as a narrator but as a character too, showing a contrast between the high articulate man, Alfieri, and the rest of the society he is surrounded by. For example, at the beginning Miller has Alfieri describe Red Hook as "the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world". This metaphor emphasises the importance of the Red Hook, making such a big aspect out of a small and poor cargo district, that it boosts the importance of the place in audience's mind to further increase their interest. This metaphor connotes that Red Hook is a place, easy to miss by looking and not knowing it's importance since all the cargo of New York goes through this place. This is a very good point to define the characters of the play since this is the most likely place that immigrants would go to to earn money and start a life over, just like Marco and Rodolpho did, relying on the low attention of everyone to this place and therefore low chances of getting caught.

fully relevant examples

In his second role, Alfieri is made to act as an advisor. Throughout the play, Eddie comes to visit Alfieri several times to ask him for an advice on what to do with

Rodolpho as he sees that Catherine gives him more and more attention and affection and he is slowly losing his authority over her.

It is in Eddie's and Alfieri's conversation where some very important tension is being build. In their first conversation Eddie was building up facts about Rodolpho like: "the guy is not right", that "everybody on piers laughs about him", picks on his skills in sewing and singing, almost trying to call him a woman (because of his thoughts that women should have these skills rather than men), and then suddenly he explodes with a phrase "goddamn thief" almost calling Catherine his property, while she even isn't his daughter. In a nutshell, Miller uses Alfieri to open Eddie up and to present his thoughts completely in front of the audience, which would be very unlike from Eddie under normal circumstances because of us knowing what personality he has (Eddie: "I don't even like to tell my wife this...") This creates a sense of dramatic irony as now audience knows what Eddie thinks, but no other character except Alfieri and Eddie himself do. This role is very crucial in the way it gives the audience an insight into the play, thus raising the interest of audience through one common human weakness - curiosity.

As the third, and a very important role, Miller has Alfieri act as an arbitrator between Eddie and Rodolpho. Instead of Eddie and Rodolpho solving their argument directly, each one goes for an advice to Alfieri. Eddie was much convinced that he is right to stop Catherine from marrying Rodolpho and even after Miller makes Alfieri tell him: "Eddie, take it or not, that's your business. Morally and legally you have no rights, you cannot stop it; she is free agent.", making us realise, and supporting our opinion that Eddie isn't right here. Alfieri's speech is made clear by Miller when Alfieri has to say: "This is my last word!". However, Eddie is not going to stop on his cause and he continues to try to prevent the marriage. Here Miller reinforces our beliefs and we, audience, feel pride and satisfaction in having guessed correctly, yet we realise where the things are going. The tension between different aspects of this effect that every member of the audience feels is the key that Miller uses to make the audience want to know even more.

This technique being used when Miller gives Alfieri a very important role of setting the mood and mostly he does that while performing the role of the advisor and arbitrator, thus making these two roles as important as the role of narrator where Alfieri acts as bridge between the audience and the characters, as an arbitrator he acts as a bridge between two 'fellas', Eddie and Rodolpho too, further emphasizing the name of the play - "The view from the bridge".

In conclusion, Alfieri's role has a very big impact on how Miller delivers the story to us, the audience, and the level of understanding and feelings we can have while watching or reading the play, because Alfieri acts as the foundation on which the bridge stands, from which we have a clear sight on the Red Hook and it's neighborhood - the bridge that Miller wants to lead us across and show all the views

thorough knowledge

discriminating use of relevant examples

close evaluation of language form + structure

NOT really

that we can observe from this perspective. This all leads to one clear connotation of the Brooklyn Bridge, which is right above the Red Hook and which provides us with the view, and this in my understanding is the idea of the role of Alfieri, to help us "walk" the Brooklyn Bridge as he did in his story, and 'see' the story with our own eyes.

(Part of this idea comes from the interview with the actor who pictured Alfieri in the play "The view from the Bridge", Michael Brandon, uploaded to YouTube by 'Theatreclub' on the 26th of March, 2015)

(Other ideas taken from the interview with Arthur Miller, the author of "The view from the Bridge", by BBC, 1986)

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