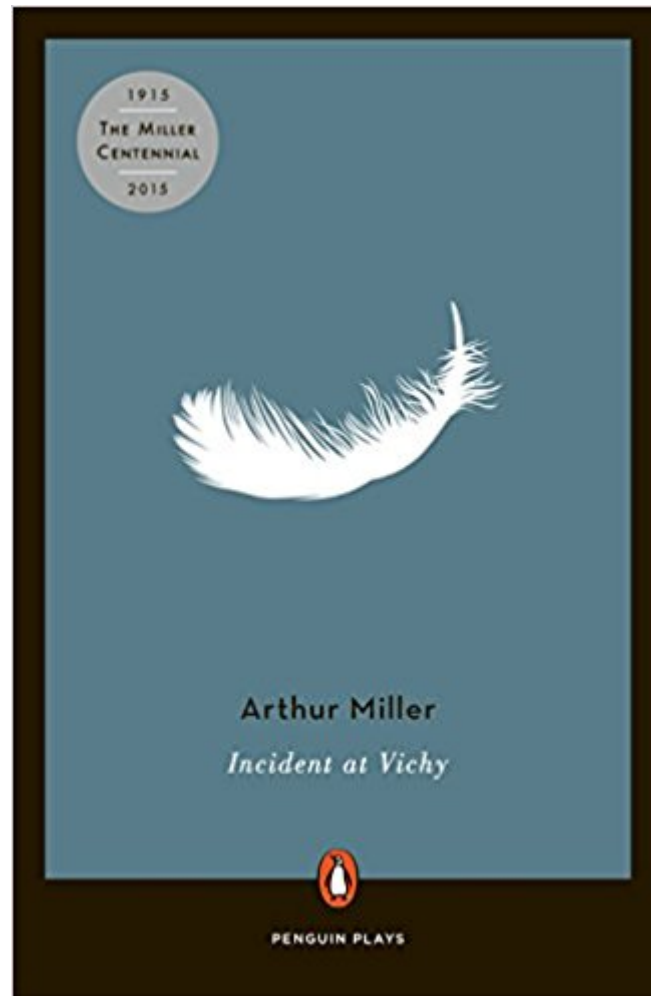




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# Incident At Vichy: A Play



## Synopsis

In Vichy France in 1942, eight men and a boy are seized by the collaborationist authorities and made to wait in a building that may be a police station. Some of them are Jews. All of them have something to hide—if not from the Nazis, then from their fellow detainees and, inevitably, from themselves. For in this claustrophobic antechamber to the death camps, everyone is guilty. And perhaps none more so than those who can walk away alive. In *Incident at Vichy*, Arthur Miller re-creates Dante's hell inside the gaping pit that is our history and populates it with sinners whose crimes are all the more fearful because they are so recognizable. "One of the most important plays of our time . . . *Incident at Vichy* returns the theater to greatness." —The New York Times

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Arthur Miller was born in New York City in 1915 and studied at the University of Michigan. His plays include *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953), *A View from the Bridge* and *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), *After the Fall* (1963), *Incident at Vichy* (1964), *The Price* (1968), *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972) and *The American Clock*. He has also written two novels, *Focus* (1945), and *The Misfits*, which was filmed in 1960, and the text for *In Russia* (1969), *Chinese Encounters* (1979), and *In the Country* (1977), three books of photographs by his wife, Inge Morath. More recent works include a memoir, *Timebends* (1987), and the plays *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1991), *The Last Yankee* (1993), *Broken Glass* (1993), which won the Olivier Award for Best Play of the London Season, and *Mr. Peter's Connections* (1998). His

latest book is *On Politics and the Art of Acting*. Miller was granted with the 2001 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. He has twice won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, and in 1949 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

Arthur Miller has never been afraid to speak out. In 1948, Ella Wheeler Wilcox said, "To sin by Silence when we should speak out makes cowards out of men". She could not have been speaking of Arthur Miller, as that was the year that "Incident at Vichy" premiered. And if silence is a sin, Miller is sitting in heaven on the right hand of God with plenty of parchment, a full ink well and let's face it - a MacBook Pro. During the Occupation of France during World War II, the Nazis established the city of Vichy as a place to "check papers" and to deport hundreds of thousands of people by train to south east Poland to be exterminated. This play moves without a break - yes, the audience is just as much prisoners as the dozen or so men who wait to be interrogated on stage. We get to know them all, but some much better than others and we learn that one of our favorites will no doubt be gassed within days. He is a Jew in southern France with bogus papers. He had a good hiding place with his wife and children but ventured out that morning to try to find codeine for a toothache that had become infected in his wife's lower jaw. On the street, he was detained, his nose was measured and he was brought to this detention center. In a way that only Arthur Miller could do, we are right there with them as the arguments and discussions go on between them while one after another is taken into the office behind them. There are some we know will die; some we know will not. Those in question we form our own opinions about them but in the end it comes down to the morality of two men and the answer to the question, "What then must we do?" This is an all male cast, so it's a fantastic project for a male prep school or college (How many times can you do *Twelve Angry Men*) Arthur Miller is timeless and always remains fresh on the stage.

This is the first of Miller I have read. It's remarkable how Miller can develop such rich characters and such a moving drama in so few pages. I don't know. Maybe it's not. Length and emotional gravity may be independent of one another. Anyway, I enjoyed reading it. It's both a reminder of man's potential for cruelty, and an appeal to his potential for compassion. Beautiful.

Great little book. Great seller.

I think this is Arthur Miller at his best. Outstanding dialog, poignant themes, unrelenting tension. Acting is superb, and I am once again grateful to LA Theater Works for producing such a marvelous

list of theater productions. In this claustrophobic play nine men find themselves trapped in a room after being picked up during document checks in occupied France, during WWII. What do the Germans want from them? Are all those impossible-to-believe rumors about trains transporting Jews to concentration camps in Poland true? Why do people spread such unbelievable but terrifying rumors about furnaces to burn people in their thousands? One by one the men will enter an adjoining room where a "doctor" and a German officer will examine their papers and maybe something else to separate the "undesirable" from the rest. The ones that remain in the room are left wondering about their and Europe's future, the reasons for their arrest, the truth about the terrible rumors about concentration camps, the role of choice and individual responsibility in front of senseless and systematic cruelty. A wonderful and poignant play, highly recommended.

Brilliant Play! Saw it, then bought a copy. Older play but very timely, the way art works.

Arthur Miller. When I think of him, I think of Marilyn Monroe, *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Our Town*... But he was Jewish, and as with many Jewish artistic elites, he was painfully aware of what was happening, what had happened in Europe under the Third Reich. He also knew that the crimes extended beyond the boundaries of Germany. There is something chilling in the stark simplicity of this play that needs a revival - to remind us that no country is so educated or sophisticated that it is beyond complicity with Evil and Hate.

This play by Arthur Miller, one of the foremost American playwrights, tells about men who were snatched off the streets and dragged to a room in Vichy, France, to be interrogated in 1942 to find out if they are Jewish. Only three of the men turn out not to be Jewish, a pompous businessman, a thieving gypsy, and an Austrian prince who was picked up because he had an accent. The prince is very intelligent, strongly anti-Nazi, and wept when his Jewish servants were arrested by the Nazis. There is also a fearful Marxist, a bearded, sick, elderly man who looks Jewish, an actor who had a chance to escape but wanted to stay to act, a waiter, an artist, a psychiatrist who comments on the lives of the others, and a fifteen year old boy. There is a German major among the interrogators who is strongly opposed to what is happening, but who sees no way, at least until the end of the play, how he can oppose the majority. The prisoners learn about the death trains and the murders in furnaces in the concentration camps. Some of them believe it, others say they do not. Yet it is clear that this is only wishful thinking. Miller raises many issues such as the existence of harsh discriminatory practices in every culture that are bad even though not as bad as those of the Nazis.

He ends his play by dramatically answering the question, is the prince somehow also to blame for the Nazi acts?

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