

= Willy Loman =

William " Willy " Loman is a fictional character and the protagonist of Arthur Miller 's Death of a Salesman , which debuted on Broadway with Lee J. Cobb playing Loman at the Morosco Theatre on February 10 , 1949 . Loman is a 63 @-@ year @-@ old travelling salesman from Brooklyn with 34 years of experience with the same company who endures a pay cut and a firing during the play . He has difficulty dealing with his current state and has created a fantasy world to cope with his situation . This does not keep him from multiple suicide attempts .

= = Description = =

Willy Loman is an aging suburban Brooklyn , New York salesman whose less than spectacular career is on the decline . He has lost the youthful verve of his past and his camaraderie has faded away . His business knowledge is still at its peak , but without his youth and heartiness , he is no longer able to leverage his personality to get by . Time has caught up with him . The play presents Loman 's struggle " to maintain a foothold in the upward @-@ striving American middle class " while combating his own self @-@ doubt that plagues him in reminders from the past that his life rests on unsolid ground . According to Charles Isherwood , Loman is the play 's dominant character because " It is his losing battle against spiritual and economic defeat that provides the narrative spine of the play . " Loman is a symbolic representation of millions of white collar employees who outlived their corporate usefulness . He lives in a world with delusions about how popular , famous , influential and successful he is and about the prospects for the success of his sons . His wife not only allows these delusions , but also she buys into them , somewhat . His misplaced values of importance and popularity were shaken to the core by his declining ability to leverage those self @-@ perceived traits successfully as he grew older .

Loman 's world crumbles around him during the play . According to Associated Press correspondent Cynthia Lowry 's review of the drama , " we watched an aging , defeated traveling salesman move inexorably toward self @-@ destruction , clinging desperately to fantasies " . The play begins with the 63 @-@ year @-@ old Loman dealing with a recent paycut after 34 years on the job at a time when he is having difficulty meeting his financial responsibilities . In the second act , he deals with being fired . The firing was at the hands of the son of the person who had hired him 36 years prior . In the play , Loman reveals his past in scenes from his memory that the audience is challenged to judge for accuracy . Loman had succeeded in large part due to popularity , which is a value he attempted to instill in his sons .

Although the play was performed earlier in Philadelphia , the February 10 , 1949 Broadway opening is considered the debut and on February 11 , Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times said the following : " Mr. Cobb 's tragic portrait of the defeated salesman is acting of the first rank . Although it is familiar and folksy in the details , it has something of the grand manner in the big size and the deep tone . " While reviewing a touring production of Death of a Salesman , Los Angeles Times critic Laurie Winer described Loman as " ... the saddest , self @-@ centeredest soul in American drama , a character who will continue to haunt the landscape as long as there are fathers and sons . " United Press International critic Rick Du Brow described Loman as " ... the aging failure of a salesman who has wasted his life by living in a world of delusions and shallow values ... " Willie is described as a " suffering . . .middle @-@ aged man at the end of his emotional rope " . Lowry described the production as depicting " the end of a man when his dream world is shattered " .

Creator Arthur Miller described the role as one for a large character in a small physical body and noted he had difficulty finding the right actor at first . Loman 's Brooklyn accent is part of the challenge of the role . In 1950 , Miller described Loman as a man who upon hearing society 's " thundering command to succeed " found himself staring at a failure in the mirror . The Amazon.com editorial review by Ali Davis states that " Willy Loman is a salesman desperately hustling for a living even as he slides into old age . " Rovi Corporation 's Matthew Tobey describes him as an everyman who has to cope with the sudden realization that he is over the hill and does so with a fantasy world in which he remains important . The Huffington Post 's theater critic , Wilborn Hampton , describes

the role as " one of the most complicated characters in dramatic literature " , making it a draw for the great actors .

The play is a statement on the idea that a man is valued by his position in life . Loman never matures enough to realize that being popular without any substance or skill is meaningless in the end and Miller uses Loman to make his point against the anti @-@ intellectualists . In the end , Loman gives way to the belief that his inability to be a successful man and father is condemning .

= = Family = =

The marriage is described as " symbolic " . Linda is a devoted wife who understands that he has issues . Linda has emotional scenes as she attempts to manage Willy 's emotional collapse and deals with her two adult sons whose lives have been wasted following the easy road of pursuing popularity as guided by their father . She breaks down as she confides in her sons about Willy 's disintegration and reveals his attempts at suicide .

Willy has always made the point to his sons that being popular and having contacts is the key to success . His older son , Biff , causes " old hopes and boiling resentments " to return by visiting home . Willy is loved by Biff , who nonetheless does not get along with him . Their relationship is the emotional lynchpin of the production . ? In fact , Willy 's logical mind becomes blind ? ? Biff attempts to help his father see what has become of him . In the end , Biff decides that he must force his father to see the truth rather than his fanciful images , for his own good , regardless of its toll on his father . This is the emotional climax of the show as he bares his soul saying " Pop , I 'm nothing ! I 'm nothing , Pop ! Can 't you understand that ? There 's no spite in it any more . I 'm just what I am , that 's all . " At Willy 's funeral , Biff states that " He had the wrong dreams ... He never knew who he was . " .

Although his younger son , Happy , is self @-@ absorbed , he attempts to humor Willy . He views his Uncle Ben ( his father 's brother ) as his role model rather than his father because Ben went out to the world as a teenager and was rich by the age of 21 . He repeatedly reminds Willy of this . In the end , he is determined to not only adopt his father 's dream ( even when it killed him ) , but to surpass him as he states " It 's the only dream you can have -- to come out No. 1 man . "

= = Critical history = =

Loman is the central role of the only play that has won a Tony Award for Best Broadway Production four times ( Best Play , Best Revival and twice Best Revival of a Play ) .

Each of the four Broadway revivals has brought critical acclaim to the role . In addition , the role has been reprised in film with six English @-@ language film portrayals of this character , at least four of which received critical acclaim . Three actors have won Golden Globe Awards playing the role , two have won Drama Desk Awards playing the role and actors playing the role have also won a Primetime Emmy Award , a Screen Actors Guild Award and a Tony Award . The role has been nominated for an Oscar Award , a BAFTA Award , a Grammy Award , three Tony Awards and three Primetime Emmy Awards . At least two West End productions have earned Olivier Awards for this role .

Although Cobb did not earn critical acclaim when he originated the role , he did when he reprised it for television . Other actors who have played the role on Broadway or in English @-@ language cinema have almost all received critical acclaim . On Broadway , the role was reprised by George C. Scott ( 1975 , Tony nomination ) , Dustin Hoffman ( 1984 , Drama Desk award ) , Brian Dennehy ( 1999 , Tony and Drama Desk awards ) , and Philip Seymour Hoffman ( 2012 , Tony nomination ) . In cinema , the role has also been highly acclaimed : Fredric March ( 1951 , Golden Globe award and both Oscar and BAFTA nominations ) , Cobb ( 1966 , Emmy and Grammy nominations ) , Rod Steiger ( 1966 ) , D. Hoffman ( 1985 , Golden Globe and Emmy awards ) , Warren Mitchell ( 1996 ) and Dennehy ( 2000 , Golden Globe and SAG awards and Emmy nomination ) .

= = = Awards = = =

Fredric March won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor ? Motion Picture Drama at the 9th Golden Globe Awards and was nominated for Academy Award for Best Actor at the 24th Academy Awards and BAFTA Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role ( Foreign ) at the 6th British Academy Film Awards .

Brian Dennehy won Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play at the 53rd Tony Awards in 1999 , while Philip Seymour Hoffman was nominated for the same award at the 66th Tony Awards in 2012 and George C. Scott was nominated for the award at the 30th Tony Awards in 1976 .

Dennehy also won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor ? Miniseries or Television Film at the 58th Golden Globe Awards in 2001 and the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Miniseries or Television Movie at the 7th Screen Actors Guild Awards in 2001 and was nominated for the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie at the 52nd Primetime Emmy Awards in 2000 .

Dustin Hoffman and Brian Dennehy won Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Actor in a Play at the 1984 and 1999 Drama Desk Awards .

Hoffman also won both the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor ? Miniseries or Television Film at the 43rd Golden Globe Awards in 1986 and Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie at the 38th Primetime Emmy Awards in 1986 .

Lee J. Cobb was nominated for an Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Single Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Drama at the 19th Primetime Emmy Awards as well as a Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word , Documentary or Drama Recording at the 9th Grammy Awards in 1967 .

Warren Mitchell earned the Laurence Olivier Award for Actor of the Year in a Revival in 1979 for his West End theatre performance of the role . Dennehy earned a Laurence Olivier Award for Best Actor in 2006 for his reprisal of the role in the West End .

= = = Commentary = = =

Time described Scott 's performance as " ... a performance of staggering impact .... When his head is bowed , it is not in resignation but rather like that of a bull bloodied by the picador yet ready to charge again . " Philip Seymour Hoffman 's performance came at a time when the Occupy Wall Street ongoing echoed the play while its actors could not afford the \$ 120 ticket price . The March version of Loman presented him as a bit more of a lunatic than other versions .

= = Influences = =

Miller noted that although he wrote the play in 1947 and 1948 , the play grew out of his life experiences , that included his father losing everything in the 1929 stock market crash . Miller claims that the role was actually modeled on one of his uncles .

Dustin Hoffman says that the play was the first one he ever read and predated his interest in becoming an actor . He noted that the play resonated with him because his father was a travelling salesman and he had an older brother . Hoffman eventually played the role in a high @-@ school production . In 1965 , Hoffman served as the assistant director in an off @-@ Broadway revival of A View from the Bridge at the Sheridan Square Playhouse with a cast that included Robert Duvall and Jon Voight . The show 's director Ulu Grosbard suggested to Miller that Hoffman had the potential to make a great Willy Loman . Miller was unimpressed and later wrote that " My estimate of Grosbard all but collapsed as , observing Dustin Hoffman 's awkwardness and his big nose that never seemed to get unstuffy , I wondered how the poor fellow imagined himself a candidate for any kind of acting career . "