

# **Death of a Salesman**

## **Arthur Miller as a Dramatist**

### **Miller's Works**

As the criticism goes, Arthur Miller is the most prized of American dramatists. Born in 1915, Miller is one of the top most American playwrights. He is bracketed with Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams, and is one of the five major American dramatists of international repute, namely Eugene O'Neill, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Edward Albee. During the last two decades a whole host of playwrights have had to face the oblivion of anonymity while Miller's plays continue to attract, arouse amuse and provoke the readers and the audience alike.

Marching ahead with greater determination, steadier steps and increasing boldness, Miller has continued to maintain his pace in the glorious high road of American drama. As time rushes on its winged chariot, the plays of Arthur Miller seem to ooze out more and more relevance. Francis Nelson says: "As time goes by, his plays continue to endure, many of them in fact gaining in strength and impact". Miller is the fountainhead of heat and energy, enthusiasm and bubbles, creativity and controversy in the field of dramatic literature. Despite this, Miller has been able to maintain his faith in values like courage, trust, responsibility, and faith.

### **Miller's major works are:**

- (1) *All My Sons*
- (2) *Death of a Salesman*
- (3) *The Crucible*
- (4) *A View from the Bridge*
- (5) *The Misfits*
- (6) *After the Fall*
- (7) *Incident at Vichy*
- (8) *The Price*

Miller's works, if taken together as a bulk, show Miller's own sense of involvement with modern man's struggle to be himself... "which has made him one of the modern theatres most compelling and important spokesman".

### **What Miller Thinks of Drama**

To quote an author is perhaps the best, surest and the shortest way to know and explain an author and his works. Miller says: "My approach to playwriting and the drama itself is organic; and to make this glaringly evident at once it is necessary to separate drama from what we think of today as literature. A drama ought not to be looked at first and foremost from literary perspectives merely because it uses words, verbal rhythm, and poetic image. These can be its most memorable parts, it is true, but they are not its inevitable accompaniments.

"I am not calling for more ideology... I am simply asking for a theatre in which an adult who wants to live can find plays that will heighten his awareness of what living in our time involves. I am tired of seeing man as merely a bundle of nerves".

### **Common Man as a Subject:**

Miller has, very emphatically and lucidly conveyed his conviction that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy as kings were. The tragic feeling does not anchor on the social status of the protagonist. It is aroused in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life to secure his personal dignity. Miller feels that tragedy is the consequence of man's total compulsion to evaluate himself. Man constantly fights back the hostile cosmos, tries to get the better of the strangling, choking environment, and from this springs the terror and fear associated with classical tragedy. Tragedy is "the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly, his destruction in the attempt, posits a wrong or an evil in his environment". And this is precisely the morality of tragedy and its lesson.

An otherwise ordinary and common protagonist may rise to the stature of a tragic hero because of his extraordinarily intense zeal and fervour and the sincerity of commitment to his goal—his eagerness to give up anything required in this battle of achieving his proper place in this world. Apparently a paradox tragedy implies more optimism in its author than does comedy, and its final result ought to be the reinforcement of the onlooker's brightest opinions of the social animal. The pathetic is achieved, when the protagonist is, by virtue of his witlessness, his insensibility, or the very air he gives off, incapable of grappling with a much superior force.

### **Recognizable Features of Miller's plays**

The plays of Arthur Miller are never devoid of social context. So Miller feels that the protagonist of the drama must be a part of meaningful social relationships. A lonely, isolated individual living in his own ivory tower or an individual marooned on an island or sailing in the vast seas—any individual, so to say bound by any type of physical or mental confines—is not suitable for a play. Normal man lives in society and the play should depict the interaction between the individual and society. Miller's characters have served this purpose. His characters possess "the worth, the innate dignity, of a whole people asking a basic question and demanding its answer". The playwright and the protagonist join hands and try to find an answer to the question: how may man make for himself, a home in that vastness of strangers and how may he transform that vastness into a home?"

### **Exploring the Realism**

Miller owes a lot to Chekhov, Ibsen and the German expressionists like Ernest Toller. In an attempt to explore the realms of realism, he has widened their horizons. Realism was like an elastic which he pulled hard and expanded on both the ends. From the beginning of his literary career, Miller attempted to endow the realistic style with an "evaluation of life", a conscious articulation of critical, ethical judgment. The other, and perhaps more important, being the use of expressionism: Miller uses expressionistic techniques to present the mental and emotional state of the protagonist, not the physical. In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller performs an inimitable feat—he blends the rhetoric, the realistic, the expressionistic into a beautiful, unified, coherent whole. In these experiments, Miller has been led by one motive—to declare the objective truths about man in society. He tries, (and succeeds in his attempt) to strike a balance between the subjective and objective truth.

### **Art as a Piece of Advice**

Miller, then, does not believe in art for art's sake. Most of his plays can be blown down to a piece of advice. Most of his plays emerge from real images. His characters find their origin in the real, contemporary world of today. They face problems, predicaments and situations, which a common man might have to confront. His plays are realistic, naturalistic and expressionistic.

Shaw is concerned about the intellectual, the social, the moral; Eliot with the moral, the religious; Williams with the psychological. But Miller embraces all these within his sweep—the intellectual, the social, the moral, the religious and the psychological.

### **The struggle of the Individual**

The central issue of Miller's plays is: "The struggle of the individual attempting to gain his rightful position in his society and his family." Miller, however, does not make out society to be the sole villain. The society finds it easier for its hostility to work because of the tragic flaw or the weaknesses of the characters. An individual can maintain his own and society's stability by resisting hatred and exclusiveness, or an individual may upset social equilibrium by enforcing the exaggerated demands of an inflated ego. Though Joe Keller (*All My Sons*) and Willy Loman (the *Death of a Salesman*) adopt popular norms, they get estranged from themselves and their families because of their stubbornly uncompromising self-will. Miller's characters are life-like. Drawn from the contemporary American society, they verge on the border of universality. They represent their counterpart, at least in their own country by facing similar dilemmas, similar predicaments and similar options. The protagonist does not and cannot function without entering into social relationships. Miller's plays are concerned with rebellious sons, betrayed fathers, down-trodden workers, persecuted citizens and the like. Miller tries to achieve a harmonious blend of 'I' and 'We'. Miller is one who may be compared to his nearest associate Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill fails to connect his characters with the social environment, while Miller comes out triumphant.

### **Metaphors and Images**

The metaphors and images in Miller's plays serve to explicate his essential theme: to show the "gap between the private life and the social life". In *Death of a Salesman*, the images are all symbolic: "green leaves" blotted out by the hard outlines of apartment buildings, a flute-song displaced by childish nonsense on wire recorder, a wife's praise erased by a whore's laughter.

Most of the important characters in Miller's plays are from the business community. Another profession towards which Miller's interest seems to be guided magnetically is Law. Miller's characters are typically American, they are materialists or are trying to be.

### **Untraditional Plots**

Miller's plots are definitely not traditional. They are thin but compactly woven. Miller avoids any kind of superfluity. He is a deliberate and conscious artist and his plays are remarkable for their tautness of construction. There are no loose descriptions or unnecessary details creeping in the plots. His plays lack spontaneity but this is more than compensated for by the outstanding piece of art that he ultimately creates. Miller tries to adhere to the unity of time and place at the cost of unity of action. So much so, that sometimes the action on the stage appears to be absurd and incomprehensible to the readers as well as the audience. Miller's plays are poor narratives. Indeed he has never been rated very higher as story-teller. Miller's plays suffer from a terrible setback: they have little or no comic relief; they are as grim, intense and compact as Sophoclean tragedies. Sometimes Miller has to postpone his climaxes in order to sustain the interest of the readers or the audience.

### **Experiments with Dramatic Form**

Miller experimented with the dramatic form, to a very large extent—to an extent that he became almost a master of it. But he deploys similar narrative-schemes in most of his plays. They are tormented and oscillated on the horns of dilemma: whether or not to confess, when to confess...The initial stage is that of hesitation when they try to keep things normal; to keep the appearance and the reality as far from each other as is feasible. Revelation of the truth, or

confession on behalf of the hero is bound to bring about some change in some field or the other. All this holds the audience in suspense. Hostility developed at the beginning of the play yields way to an opposition which is more urgent in nature. So Miller delays climaxes.

Miller's dexterity at plot-construction is very aptly summed up in these words of Leonard Moss. "Miller's construction, if rarely flawless, is never formless; his metaphors, if sometimes obvious, are sometimes subtle. It is the dialogue that swings between extremes of brilliance and insipidity. Colloquial speech may be heard in an amazing variety of accents".

Miller combines in him the common speech, a poetic expression, ancient power to understand the anguish of soul, ideas, self-justification by the hero, brilliant and pointed dialogue, rich imagery and minimum of symbolism, realism naturalism, rhetoricism and expressionism, real characters springing for unreal things....

"I can't live apart from the world" said Miller and he has justified this in his plays.

### **Theatre and the Public**

Miller's greatest asset as a playwright is his knowledge that the theatre must dedicate itself to public causes. His plays literally overflow with theatricality. He believes that the theatre should popularize ideas that are in the atmosphere, and not enunciate new ideas; he has synthesized psychology and society. His drama presents a viable contrast between the past and the present. Miller's is a theatre of 'heightened consciousness and 'Passion to know'. But it is only *The Crucible* that has achieved both critical and popular appeal. Generally, Miller does not explore and expose a character fully.

Miller has a moral and message to offer, but it lacks depth and zeal of soul. He offers irony and pathos more than pure tragedy. His heroes generally do not achieve tragic dimensions. His plays have limitations which can easily be transcended with a little effort.

### **Summary**

Willy Loman, a mercurial sixty-year old salesman with calluses on his hands, returns home tired and confused. His wife Linda greets him, but worries that he has smashed the car. He reassures her that nothing has happened, but tells her that he only got as far as Yonkers and does not remember all of the details of his trip; he kept swerving onto the shoulder of the road, and had to drive slowly to return home. Linda tells him that he needs to rest his mind, and that he should work in New York, but he feels that he is not needed there. He thinks that if Frank Wagner were alive he would be in charge of New York, but his son, Howard, does not appreciate him as much. Linda tells him how Happy, his younger son, took Biff, his eldest son, out on a double-date, and it was nice to see them both at home. She reminds Willy not to lose his temper with Biff, but Willy feels that there is an undercurrent of resentment in Biff. Linda says that Biff is crestfallen and admires Willy. They argue about whether or not Biff is lazy, and Willy believes that Biff is a person who will get started later in life, like Edison or B.F. Goodrich.

Biff Loman, at thirty-four, is well-built but not at all self-assured. Happy, two years younger, is equally tall and powerful, but is confused because he has never risked failure. The two brothers discuss their father, thinking that his condition is deteriorating. Biff wonders why his father mocks him, but Happy says that he merely wants Biff to live up to his potential. Biff claims he has had twenty or thirty different jobs since he left home before the war, but has been fired from each. He reminisces about herding cattle and wistfully remembers working outdoors. Biff worries that he is

still merely a boy, while Happy says that despite the fact that he has his own car, apartment, and plenty of women he is still unfulfilled. Happy believes that he should not have to take orders at work from men over whom he is physically superior. He also talks about how he has no respect for the women he seduces, and really wants a woman with character, such as their mother. Biff thinks that he may try again to work for Bill Oliver, for whom he worked years ago but quit after stealing a carton of basketballs from him.

The play shifts in time to the Loman house years before, when Biff and Happy were teenagers. Willy reminds the teenage Biff not to make promises to any girls, because they will always believe what you tell them and he is too young to consider them seriously. Happy brags that he is losing weight, while Biff shows Willy a football he took from the locker room. Willy claims that someday he'll have his own business like Charley, their next door neighbor. His business will be bigger than Charley's, because Charley is "liked, but not well-liked." Willy brags about meeting the mayor of Providence and knowing the finest people in New England. Bernard, Charley's son, enters and tells Willy that he is worried that Biff will fail math class and not be able to attend UVA. Willy tells Bernard not to be a pest and to leave. After Bernard leaves, Willy tells his sons that Bernard, like Charley, is liked but not well-liked. Willy claims that, although Bernard gets the best grades in school, in the business world it is personality that matters and that his sons will succeed. After the boys leave, Linda enters and Willy discusses his worry that people don't respect him. Linda reassures him and points out that his sons idolize him.

Miller returns to the more recent past for a short scene that takes place in a hotel room in Boston. A nameless woman puts on a scarf and Willy tells her that he gets lonely and worries about his business. The woman claims that she picked Willy for his sense of humor, and Willy promises to see her the next time he is in Boston.

Willy, back in the kitchen with Linda, scolds her for mending her own stocking, claiming that she should not have to do such menial things. He goes out on the porch, where he tells Bernard to give Biff the answers to the Regents exam. Bernard refuses because it is a State exam. Linda tells Willy that Biff is too rough with the girls, while Bernard says that Biff is driving without a license and will flunk math. Willy, who hears the voice of the woman from the hotel room, screams at Linda that there is nothing wrong with Biff, and asks her if she wants her son to be a worm like Bernard. Linda, in tears, exits into the living room.

The play returns to the present, where Willy tells Happy how he nearly drove into a kid in Yonkers, and wonders why he didn't go to Alaska with his brother Ben, who ended up with diamond mines and came out of the jungle rich at the age of twenty-one. Happy tells his father that he will enable him to retire. Charley enters, and he and Willy play cards. Charley offers Willy a job, which insults him, and they argue over the ceiling that Willy put up in his living room. Willy tells Charley that Ben died several weeks ago in Africa. Willy hallucinates that Ben enters, carrying a valise and umbrella, and asks about their mother. Charley becomes unnerved by Willy's hallucination and leaves.

The play returns to the past, where Willy introduces his sons to Ben, whom he calls a great man. Ben in turn boasts that his father was a great man and inventor. Willy shows off his sons to Ben, who tells them never to fight fair with a stranger, for they will never get out of the jungle that way. Charley reprimands Willy for letting his sons steal from the nearby construction site, but Willy says that his kids are a couple of "fearless characters." While Charley says that the jails are full of fearless characters, Ben says that so is the stock exchange.



The play returns to the present, where Happy and Biff ask Linda how long Willy has been talking to himself. Linda claims that this has been going on for years, and she would have told Biff if she had had an address at which she could contact him. She confronts Biff about his animosity toward Willy, but Biff claims that he is trying to change his behavior. He tells Linda that she should dye her hair again, for he doesn't want his mother to look old. Linda asks Biff if he cares about Willy; if he does not, he cannot care about her. Finally, she tells her sons that Willy has attempted suicide by trying to drive his car off a bridge, and by hooking a tube up to the gas heater in the basement. She says that Willy is not a great man, but is a human being and "attention must be paid" to him. Biff relents and promises not to fight with his father. He tells his parents that he will go to see Bill Oliver to talk about a sporting goods business he could start with Happy. Willy claims that if Biff had stayed with Oliver he would be on top by now.

The next day, Willy sits in the kitchen, feeling rested for the first time in months. Linda claims that Biff has a new, hopeful attitude, and the two dream of buying a little place in the country. Willy says that he will talk to Howard Wagner today and ask to be taken off the road. As soon as Willy leaves, Linda gets a phone call from Biff. She tells him that the pipe Willy connected to the gas heater is gone.

At the office of Howard Wagner, Willy's boss, Howard shows Willy his new wire recorder as Willy attempts to ask for a job in New York. Howard insists that Willy is a road man, but Willy claims that it is time for him to be more settled. He has the right to it because he has been in the firm since Howard was a child, and even named him. Willy claims that there is no room for personality or friendship in the salesman position anymore, and begs for any sort of salary, giving lower and lower figures. Willy insists that Howard's father made promises to him. Howard leaves, and Willy leans on his desk, turning on the wire recorder. This frightens Willy, who shouts for Howard. Howard returns, exasperated, and fires Willy, telling him that he needs a good, long rest and should rely on his sons instead of working.

Willy hallucinates that Ben enters and Linda, as a young woman, tells Willy that he should stay in New York. Not everybody has to conquer the world and Frank Wagner promised that Willy will someday be a member of the firm. Willy tells the younger versions of Biff and Happy that it's "who you know" that matters. Bernard arrives, and begs Biff to let him carry his helmet to the big game at Ebbets Field, while Willy becomes insulted that Charley may have forgotten about the game.

The play returns to the present day, where the adult Bernard sits in his father's office. His father's secretary, Jenny, enters and tells Bernard that Willy is shouting in the hallway. Willy talks to Bernard who will argue a case in Washington soon and whose wife has just given birth to their second son. Willy wonders why Biff's life ended after the Ebbets Field game, and Bernard asks why Willy didn't make Biff to go summer school so that he could go to UVA. Bernard pinpoints the timing of Biff's failures to his visit to his father in New England, after which Biff burned his UVA sneakers. He wonders what happened during that visit. Charley enters, and tells Willy that Bernard will argue a case in front of the Supreme Court. Charley offers Willy a job, which he refuses out of pride. Charley criticizes Willy for thinking that personality is the only thing that matters in business. Willy remarks that a person is worth more dead than alive, and tells Charley that, even though they dislike one another, Charley is the only friend he has.

At the restaurant where Willy is to meet his sons, Happy flirts with a woman and tells her that Biff is a quarterback with the New York giants. Biff admits to Happy that he did a terrible thing during his meeting with Bill Oliver. Bill did not remember Biff, who pocketed his fountain pen before he

left. Biff insists that they tell their father about this tonight. Willy arrives and tells his sons that he was fired. Although Biff tries to lie to Willy about his meeting, Biff and Willy fight. Biff finally gives up and tries to explain. As this occurs, Willy hallucinates about arguing with the younger version of Biff. Miss Forsythe, the woman with whom Happy was flirting, returns with another woman and prepares to go out on a double date with Happy and Biff. Happy denies that Willy is their father.

Willy imagines being back in the hotel room in Boston with the woman. The teenage Biff arrives at the hotel and tells Willy that he failed math class, and begs his father to talk to Mr. Birnbaum. Biff hears the woman, who is hiding in the bathroom. Willy lies to Biff, telling him that the woman is merely there to take a shower because she is staying in the next room and her shower is broken. Biff realizes what is going on. Willy throws the woman out, and she yells at him for breaking the promises he made to her. Willy admits the affair to Biff, but promises that the woman meant nothing to him and that he was lonely.

At the restaurant, the waiter helps Willy and tells him that his sons left with two women. Willy insists on finding a seed store so that he can do some planting. When Biff and Happy return home, they give their mother flowers. She asks them if they care whether their father lives or dies, and says that they would not even abandon a stranger at the restaurant as they did their father. Willy is planting in the garden. He imagines talking to Ben about his funeral, and claims that people will come from all over the country to his funeral, because he is well known. Ben says that Willy will be a coward if he commits suicide. Willy tells Biff that he cut his life down for spite, and refuses to take the blame for Biff's failure. Biff confronts him about the rubber tube attached to the gas heater, and tells his mother that it was he, not Willy, who took it away. Biff also admits that his parents could not contact him because he was in jail for three months. Biff insists that men like he and Willy are a dime a dozen, but Willy claims otherwise. Biff cries for his father, asking him to give up his dreams, but Willy is merely amazed that he would cry for his father. Happy vows to get married and settle down, while everybody but Willy goes to sleep. Willy talks to Ben, then rushes out of the house and speeds out away in his car. Happy and Biff come downstairs in jackets, while Linda walks out in mourning clothes and places flowers on Willy's grave.

Only his wife, sons, and Charley attend Willy's funeral. Linda wonders where everybody else is, and says that they have made their final house payment and are free and clear after thirty-five years. Biff claims that Willy had the wrong dreams, but Charley says that a salesman must dream, and that for a salesman there is no rock bottom in life. Biff asks Happy to leave the city with him, but Happy vows to stay in New York and prove that his father did not die in vain. Everybody leaves but Linda, who remains at the grave and talks about how she made the final house payment.

## **Character List**

### **Willy Loman**

A sixty year old salesman living in Brooklyn, Willy Loman is a gregarious, mercurial man with powerful aspirations to success. However, after thirty-five years working as a traveling salesman throughout New England, Willy Loman feels defeated by his lack of success and difficult family life. Although he has a dutiful wife, his relationship with his oldest son, Biff, is strained by Biff's continual failures. As a salesman, Willy Loman focuses on personal details over actual measures of success, believing that it is personality and not high returns that garner success in the business world.

### **Biff Loman**

The thirty-four year old son of Willy Loman, Biff was once a star high school athlete with a scholarship to UVA. But he never attended college nor graduated from high school, after refusing to attend summer school to make up a flunked math class. He did this primarily out of spite after finding out that his father was having an affair with a woman in Boston. Since then, Biff has been a continual failure, stealing at every job and even spending time in jail. Despite his failures and anger toward his father, Biff still has great concern for what his father thinks of him, and the conflict between the two characters drives the narrative of the play.

### **Linda Loman**

The dutiful, obedient wife to Willy and mother of Biff and Happy, Linda Loman is the one person who supports Willy Loman, despite his often reprehensible treatment of her. She is a woman who has aged greatly because of her difficult life with her husband, whose hallucinations and erratic behavior she contends with alone. She is the moral center of the play, occasionally stern and not afraid to confront her sons about their poor treatment of their father.

### **Happy Loman**

The younger of the two Loman sons, Happy Loman is seemingly content and successful, with a steady career and none of the obvious marks of failure that his older brother displays. Happy, however, is not content with his more stable life, because he has never risked failure or striven for any real measure of success. Happy is a compulsive womanizer who treats women purely as sex objects and has little respect for the many women whom he seduces.

### **Charley**

The Lomans' next door neighbor and father of Bernard, Charley is a good businessman, exemplifying the success that Willy is unable to achieve. Although Willy claims that Charley is a man who is "liked, but not well-liked," he owns his own business and is respected and admired. He and Willy have a contentious relationship, but Charley is nevertheless Willy's only friend.

### **Bernard**

Bernard is Charley's only son. He is intelligent and industrious but lacks the gregarious personality of either of the Loman sons. It is this absence of spirit that makes Willy believe that Bernard will never be a true success in the business world, but Bernard proves himself to be far more successful than Willy imagined. As a grown-up, he is a lawyer preparing to argue a case in front of the Supreme Court.

### **Ben**

Willy's older brother, Ben left home at seventeen to find their father in Alaska, but ended up in Africa, where he found diamond mines and came out of the jungle at twenty-one an incredibly rich man. Although Ben died several weeks before the time at which the play is set, he often appears in Willy's hallucinations, carrying a valise and umbrella. Ben represents the fantastic success for which Willy has always hoped but can never seem to achieve.



### Howard Wagner

The thirty-six year old son of Frank Wagner, Willy Loman's former boss, Howard now occupies the same position as his late father. Although Willy was the one who named Howard, Howard is forced to fire Willy for his erratic behavior. Howard is preoccupied with technology; when Willy meets with his new boss, he spends most of the meeting demonstrating his new wire recorder.

### Stanley

Stanley is the waiter at the restaurant where Willy meets his sons. He helps Willy home after Biff and Happy leave their father there.

### The Woman

An assistant in a company in Boston with which Willy does business, this nameless character has a continuing affair with Willy. The Woman claims that Willy ruined her and did not live up to his promises to her. When Biff finds the Woman in Willy's hotel room, he begins his course of self-destructive behavior.

### Miss Forsythe

An attractive young woman at the restaurant, who serves the play by allowing Happy to demonstrate his womanizing and seduction habits.

## Themes

### The Dangers of Modernity

Death of a Salesman premiered in 1949 on the brink of the 1950s, a decade of unprecedented consumerism and technical advances in America. Many innovations applied specifically to the home: it was in the 50s that the TV and the washing machine became common household objects. Miller expresses an ambivalence toward modern objects and the modern mindset. Although Willy Loman is a deeply flawed character, there is something compelling about his nostalgia. Modernity accounts for the obsolescence of Willy Loman's career - traveling salesmen are rapidly becoming out-of-date. Significantly, Willy reaches for modern objects, the car and the gas heater, to assist him in his suicide attempts.

### Gender Relations

In Death of a Salesman, women are sharply divided into two categories: Linda and other. The men display a distinct Madonna/whore complex, as they are only able to classify their nurturing and virtuous mother against the other, easier women available (the woman with whom Willy has an affair and Miss Forsythe being two examples). The men curse themselves for being attracted to the whore-like women but is still drawn to them - and, in an Oedipal moment, Happy laments that he cannot find a woman like his mother. Women themselves are two-dimensional characters in this play. They remain firmly outside the male sphere of business, and seem to have no thoughts or desires other than those pertaining to men. Even Linda, the strongest female character, is only fixated on a reconciliation between her husband and her sons, selflessly subordinating herself to serve to assist them in their problems.

### Madness

Madness is a dangerous theme for many artists, whose creativity can put them on the edge of what is socially acceptable. Miller, however, treats the quite bourgeois subject of the nuclear family, so his interposition of the theme of madness is startling. Madness reflects the greatest technical innovation of *Death of a Salesman*--its seamless hops back and forth in time. The audience or reader quickly realizes, however, that this is based on Willy's confused perspective. Willy's madness and reliability as a narrator become more and more of an issue as his hallucinations gain strength. The reader must decide for themselves how concrete of a character Ben is, for example, or even how reliable the plot and narrative structure are, when told from the perspective of someone as on the edge as Willy Loman.

### Cult of Personality

One of Miller's techniques throughout the play is to familiarize certain characters by having them repeat the same key line over and over. Willy's most common line is that businessmen must be well-liked, rather than merely liked, and his business strategy is based entirely on the idea of a cult of personality. He believes that it is not what a person is able to accomplish, but who he knows and how he treats them that will get a man ahead in the world. This viewpoint is tragically undermined not only by Willy's failure, but also by that of his sons, who assumed that they could make their way in life using only their charms and good looks, rather than any more solid talents.

### Nostalgia / regret

The dominant emotion throughout this play is nostalgia, tinged with regret. All of the Lomans feel that they have made mistakes or wrong choices. The technical aspects of the play feed this emotion by making seamless transitions back and forth from happier, earlier times in the play. Youth is more suited to the American dream, and Willy's business ideas do not seem as sad or as bankrupt when he has an entire lifetime ahead of him to prove their merit. Biff looks back nostalgic for a time that he was a high school athletic hero, and, more importantly, for a time when he did not know that his father was a fake and a cheat, and still idolized him.

### Opportunity

Tied up intimately with the idea of the American dream is the concept of opportunity. America claims to be the land of opportunity, of social mobility. Even the poorest man should be able to move upward in life through his own hard work. Miller complicates this idea of opportunity by linking it to time, and illustrating that new opportunity does not occur over and over again. Bernard has made the most of his opportunities; by studying hard in school, he has risen through the ranks of his profession and is now preparing to argue a case in front of the Supreme Court. Biff, on the other hand, while technically given the same opportunities as Bernard, has ruined his prospects by a decision that he made at the age of eighteen. There seems to be no going back for Biff, after he made the fatal decision not to finish high school.

### Growth

In a play which rocks back and forth through different time periods, one would normally expect to witness some growth in the characters involved. Not so in *Death of a Salesman*, where the various members of the Loman family are stuck with the same character flaws, in the same personal ruts throughout time. For his part, Willy does not recognize that his business principles do not work, and continues to emphasize the wrong qualities. Biff and Happy are not only stuck with their childhood names in their childhood bedrooms, but also are hobbled by their childhood problems:

**Biff's bitterness toward his father and Happy's dysfunctional relationship with women. In a poignant moment at the end of the play, Willy tries to plant some seeds when he realizes that his family has not grown at all over time.**

## **Death of a Salesman: American Dream**

The *tragedy of Willy Loman*, says Arthur Miller, is:

**“Willy gave his life, or sold it, in order to justify the waste of it...”**

*Willy represents Every low-man in America.* Hence, it is a tragedy of every American. The play is *really a challenge to the American Dream* because it is the tragedy of a man troubled by the society. Willy believes in American myth that *"Success is obtained by being well-liked"*. His dream ends up in nightmare. So the play challenges to new American capitalistic concepts.

*American dream means* the dream of becoming *rich overnight*. The scale and merit of success is *money, big house, a costly car and other material things*. *Nobility, truth, honesty* are not merits. *Values have been changed* through this dream. Instead of hard work and courage, *there is salesmanship*. It implies *fraud*, the ability to *sell a commodity* regardless of its intrinsic uselessness. The goal of salesmanship is to *earn a profit*.

So, in these circumstances, *man* ceases to be *man* and *spiritually* he is *hollow*. He constantly *wears a mask* hiding his deceptive frauds. The only reality, the only goal is that of material success. The same situation happens *with Willy Loman*. By this way, Willy, to a large extent, represents Every Low-man in America. His fall, *his death* reflects the total break down of the concept of *salesmanship*, an integral part of *America setup*.

*Willy believes* that life's problems can be solved by looking "Well-liked". But he does not realizes the fact that *the age* in which he is living, the *good looks* does not matter, what matters is *the wealth you have*. By *wealth* you can buy anything. All relations are useless before *almighty dollar*. He receives his *severest blows* when he *needs* the greatest amount of love and care. He is *unable to travel* extensive. He makes a *request* to his young employer to relieve him of such a tiring burden and give him a *comfortable job*. But, for the capitalism businessman no moral or legal obligation can be biding. To him, *Willy is commercially as useless* as the peels of a fruit. So, he says:

**I can't take blood from a stone".**

In fact, "*Death of a Salesman*" is *ared light* for American society. It shows that all Americans adopt one million ideas and dream for success. Everyone wants to become the *president of America*, but when he fails to achieves his dreams, he becomes frustrated. Willy's suicide is a *caution* for such modern values.

*Eugene O'Neil* comments on the failure of American dream in following lines:

**"I am going on the theory that the United States, instead of being the most successful country in the world, is the greatest failure"**

*In conclusion* we can say that Miller in "Death of a Salesman" has tried to show the failure of American dream. Implicitly, he tells us tht man is not a machine, he has emotions too. Thus placing all the values on riches is wrong. The whole situation he sums up in Biff's remark who says on his father's death.

**"He had the wrong dream. All, all wrong."**

### **Death of a Salesman: Time Motif**

Half way through the first act, the reader hears something about a brother Ben. Willy wishes that he had gone to Alaska with his brother Ben. At the same time he speaks of Ben's having walked into a jungle and when he came out Ben was rich. In the next speech, Happy tells his dad that he is going to retire him for life. Willy flares up and tells both his boys that:

**"... the woods are burning. I can't even drive a car".**

All of these ideas and images emerge into one. Ben becomes Willy's ideal. Here was a man who had nothing and ended up rich. The jungle that Ben walked into is symbolically the jungle of life.

Thus when Willy says that the woods are burning, he mans that life is closing in on him. Whereas, Ben conquered the jungle of life, Willy can only be trapped by the burning woods. Consequently the phrase "the woods are burning" suggests that time is running out on Willy. He no longer has enough time to do anything. This concept of time hurrying past man is again emphasized by Ben. Every time we see Ben, he has his watch out and keeps saying that he has only a few more minutes or that he has to catch a train. He is always on the move while Willy remains stagnantly still. What Ben stands for is captured in his phrase:

**"When I was seventeen, I walked into the jungle and when I was twenty-one I walked out ... And by God I was rich".**

Here was a man who utilized time while time has simply passed Willy by.

When Howard fires Willy, he has nowhere to turn. Now the woods are really burning. He must now rely upon boys, but his boys are not reliable. So when Biff tries to tell Willy the truth, Willy maintains that he is not interested in the past.

**"... because the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today."**

Willy then has spent his life "rising up a zero" and now there is no place for him to go. Therefore he conceives of a way out of his burning woods. This involves suicide. Through suicide he would be able to leave his sons twenty thousand dollars. But as Ben says:



**“It does take a great kind of a man to crack the jungle”.**

But here the jungle is no longer the jungle of life; instead it is the jungle of death. This jungle “is dark but full of diamonds”: that is, the diamonds represent the insurance money. And to Ben frantic calling that it is “Time, William, time”. Willy drives off to his own death.

Therefore, for Willy, the jungle was a life that he could never conquer and instead it became a type of burning woods that was constantly closing in upon him. But in the end, when time had completely overtaken him, the jungle became the darkness of death which Willy thought he could mistakenly conquer by suicide.

### **Death of a Salesman: Symbolism**

*Symbolism* is a technique, employed by a large number of playwrights, in which an object or a metaphor is described having meaning and implications beyond its apparent meaning.

Many of the symbols used in “Death of a Salesman” have specifically *American connotations*. The play opens with reference to cars. *Car* is an American symbol of *individual mobility, freedom* and *social status*. But Miller uses it in a negative and ironic manner. In the very beginning of the play Willy comes home exhausted with driving. His *exhaustion with driving* symbolizes his *tiredness from life*. The *car is going out of control*. This symbolism gets its final intensity in the climax of the play when Willy drives his car out of the house into darkness and death.

Even *in the setting* of the play symbolism and expressionistic technique are obvious. There is an angry *glow of orange* in the environment in which the apartment houses are bathed. When *Willy is lost in his memories* of the past, the house is draped in a *mantle of green*. Similarly when *Biff and Happy* picks up two women at the restaurant callously ignoring their father, the stage directions demand “*lucid red*”. Finally when Willy appears to be at his wit’s end trying to *sow seeds*, the stage is flooded with “*blue*” simultaneously suggesting moonlight and his *desperate mood*.

*There are references* to stockings. These references have a narrative and psychological function in the play. *Stockings symbolize Willy’s guilt*. Willy gives new stockings to the woman as a presents while his wife has mend for her old stockings. Stockings make Willy nervous and his reaction is sudden.

**“Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I am in the house. It gets me nervous.”**

Even the *sound of flute* in the play is symbolic. The play *opens with a melody of the flute*. Here is a symbolism that subtly supports the meaning of the play. As the play closes with Linda leaving Willy’s grave the only thing left on the stage is the sound of the flute playing a rather sad dirge. Thus the melody of flute opens and closes the play or it may be said to encompass the entire drama. But the use of symbol of flute becomes more important when we come to know that *Willy’s father used to make and sell flutes*. In this way he was also a

salesman but he used to sell flutes prepared by his own hands, whereas, Willy sells wares of some other person.

Half way through the first act, the reader hears something about *Willy's brother Ben*. Willy wishes that he had gone to Alaska with his brother Ben. At the same time he speaks of Ben's having walked into a jungle and when Ben came out he was rich. Happy tells his dad that he is going to retire him for life. Willy flares up and tells both the boys that:

**"Woods are burning. I can't even drive a car."**

*Ben becomes Willy's ideal*. Ben is a man who has nothing in the beginning but he ends up in riches. The Jungle than Ben walks into is symbolically the jungle of life. But the jungle becomes the woods for Willy. Thus when Willy says that 'the woods are burning' he means that life is closing in on him. Whereas, Ben conquered the jungle of life, Willy was trapped by the burning wood. Consequently the phrase 'the woods are burning' suggest that time is running out on Willy. He no longer has enough time to do anything. This *concept of time* is again emphasized by Ben. Every time we see Ben, he has his watch out and keeps saying that he has only a few minutes or that he has to catch a train. He is always on the move while Willy remains stagnant still.

The temporary optimism at the beginning of Act II is conveyed partly by references to seeds and tools. Willy imagines that he can make seeds grow in, but he can't do so because of the hardness of earth. This implies that his *life is a barren thing*. But it is already too late and his gestures of planting in the hope of future growth are desperate and futile.

Finally it is possible to treat *Willy as a symbolic character*. Willy may be regarded as an *American everyman*. Willy is much more emphatically a representative figure, than any of Miller's other characters. This means that *Willy's problems are much less personal dilemma* than they are public issues.

## **Death of a Salesman: Modern Tragedy**

Arthur Miller is a great modern American dramatist who keenly observes the *ambitions and ideals* of an individual as well as the *internal and external* forces which are responsible for the tragic failure of these ideals. "Death of a Salesman" is a beautiful example in this regard in which the protagonist of the play, Willy Loman, intensely desires an outstanding success for himself and for his sons but this desire is thwarted by *powerful social and commercial forces* which causes a tragic defeat of Willy Loman's dreams.

"Death of a Salesman" is one of those great pieces of art which have been the subject of *hotly debated controversy*. Arthur Miller calls it a tragedy and there are several critics who see eye to eye with him but these are sources of highly learned critics who bring *certain allegations* to prove that it falls far short of having the status of tragedy. First of all they reject it on the basis of *Aristotelian concept of tragedy and tragic hero* and assert that, instead of being a king or prince, Willy Loman is a *common man* who remains unable to *arise required tragic feelings*. Therefore, it cannot be placed among great *Sophoclean and Shakespearean tragedies*.

There are certain critics like Eric Bentley and Eleanor Clark who regard Miller's socio-political philosophy. They think that the play cannot attain the stature of a *genuine tragedy* because of its *extreme awareness*, not it can be a social drama because it is *inflated by its tragic aspirations*. They say that the *theme* of "Death of a Salesman" is the little, *man as victim and protagonist is too passive and too little* to play the tragic hero.

Now we consider the other side where Miller himself and certain other critics are clarifying all these charges. First of all, they *scrutinize Aristotle's concept of tragedy and tragic hero* and says that in modern world royal system is finished and kings, queens and princes etc. are not present with *ancient pomp and show*. So their modern presentation with *ancient glorification* will make the plays *unrealistic*. Furthermore, a common man can also be the hero of a tragedy because common people also *suffer like royal figures*. So the concept that royal figures are necessary for tragedies should be changed according to the demands of time and age.

Bentley says this play evokes *pity but not terror* and if we watch it carefully we notice that it arises both *pity and fear* because the play shows individual against "the seemingly stable cosmos surrounding us". From this total examination of the "unchangeable environment comes the error and fear that is classically associated with tragedy". Miller shows the position of an ordinary man, his passions, feelings and dreams against machines and flat system where all relations have cost their meanings and importance.

Traditional subjects for tragedy were *royal environment and war of achieving throne* but now these subjects have no attraction for us. Now these subjects look to us *alien* however today we have fear to *lose position in society* and to cause our ownself in the ocean of machines. So, now with the course of time *subjects of tragedy should be changed*.

The play has a *tragic end* too. Willy dies and gives up his life but does not give up his *dream*, does not leave his *values* and his *past*. Some critics say that *Willy's sacrifice is useless* and all his *values, ideas and spirit dies* within him but when we think that the same may happen with us we feel pity and fear. In our society anyone of us can become Willy Loman anytime. Miller says:

**"Willy Loman has broken a law, without whose protection, life is insupportable and incomprehensible to him and to many it is the law which says that a failure in society and business has no right to live."**

To *conclude* we may say that arguments of both sides are *strong*. No doubt, "Death of a Salesman" is not a *typically traditional tragic play like Shakespearean tragedies and Aristotelian Tragedies* but it has *tragic theme, tragic character and tragic end* that arouse *pity and fear*. We can call it a *modern tragic play* or to be more exact, a *modern social tragic play*.



## **Death of a Salesman: Social Drama**

Arthur Miller "Death of a salesman" is *not a tragedy* according to the *conventional* concept of tragedy in which the *hero and fate* come into conflict and fate causes the tragedy of the hero or the central protagonist.

The play cannot attain the stature of a genuine tragedy because of its *extreme social awareness* nor can it be a *social drama* because it is fitting to call it a *social tragedy* and it is. Social tragedy is a modern kind of tragedy in which the conflict *between the central protagonist and society* is depicted and the protagonist becomes the *victim of society's ill-treatment*.

Arthur Miller in his drama "Death of a Salesman" depicts the conflict *within the family* and the conflict between *protagonist and the society*. He is misfit in the capitalist society. He is the victim of a *social injustice* and this social injustice causes his tragedy.

Willy Loman, the protagonist, has been working in a company for almost thirty-six years. He introduces the firm in many cities. He often says to his colleagues that he is *a vital man* for the firm. It is only due to Willy's effort that the firm has been introduced in many cities of America.

Willy Loman in his life, keeping *David Singleman's* charming personality *as a model* before him, *dreams of success* which is for a *big house, a beautiful car and a good job* which earns him a lot of money. But despite his head-long service for thirty-six years, he is *unable* to achieve his goals of success. He is *misfit* in the capitalistic society in which for being *successful* one has to be *practical and hardworking*, whereas, a *dreamer* like Willy Loman is sure to be a *victim of failure*. At the age of sixty three he is working on *commission* and his salary is so little that he cannot pay his installments of insurance and of other households. He often has to *borrow money* from Charley to pay his installments.

His *own failure* in achieving his goal of success and his *son's failure* in getting settled is *frustrating and maddening* him. He is in the verge of *mental collapse*. He *cannot concentrate* on his car driving and smashes *his car* for two or three times. Willy makes up his mind to see his employer, Howard, and ask him to give him a *non-traveling job* in New York and to increase his salary.

He considers himself *a vital man* for the firm but he is not aware of the fact that in the capitalistic society a man is needed *so long as a man can raise profit* for the firm. The sooner he is *incapable of raising benefit* for the firm, the sooner he is *fired out*. Willy realizes the fact when instead of considering his plea on the humanitarian grounds, *Howard fires him out*. Howard *totally ignores* his forty years service for the firm. As Willy can no more raise benefit to the firm so he is no more wanted at all. Howard says:

**"I cannot take blood from a stone."**

Willy realizes that he is *not a vital man* at all for the firm and speaks the beautiful line, a satire on capitalistic society, that *these capitalistic profiteers eat the fruit and throw the peels*



away.

To conclude we can rightly say that "Death of a Salesman" is a *modern social tragedy* in which conflict between *man and society* has been depicted. Willy Loman, the protagonist, becomes the victim of social injustice which compels him to commit suicide.

**Miller's Death of a Salesman is a challenge to the American dream. Illustrate.**

**Or Explain "the great American dream". How does Arthur Miller prove that the dream is illusory?**

**Miller's Death of a Salesman is a challenge to the American Dream**

***The American Dream*** refers to the ideals of freedom, equality, and opportunity traditionally held to be available to every American. It provides the Americans the opportunity of achieving prosperity through hard work. The idea of the **American Dream** is rooted in the United States Declaration of Independence which proclaims that "all men are created equal" and that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights" including "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Arthur Miller's ***Death of a Salesman*** challenges the effects of the American Dream and shows the cost of blind faith in the **American Dream**. Willy Loman, the protagonist of the play is on a quest for the American Dream. But his dream is a fruitless pursuit. Time and again, he wants to make sure his boys are well-liked and popular. Of course, Willy's version of the American Dream never works out. Both Willy and Biff are failure because of the American capitalist system. Willy has rendered valuable services to the Wagner Company for thirty-four years. In his old age, when his sale is not up to the mark, he is put on commission. When he asks his boss Howard for a non-travelling job, he is fired by Howard. Similarly, when Biff goes to his former boss Bill Oliver to borrow money so that he can start a sporting goods business, Oliver even did not recognize him because he was only a shipping clerk. Thus, because of the capitalist system, they cannot achieve success Offered by the American Dream.

Willy constantly tries to be a better man. He dreams to become rich and prosperous, to be liked by everyone, and to be successful in his work and life. But the American society shatters his dream. At last, he tries to capture a small fragment of his American dream by committing suicide so that Biff can start a business with the insurance money. He hopes that his funeral will be attended by hundreds of people; but after his death only Linda, Biff, Happy, and Charley and Bernard attend his funeral. Even there is no indication that the insurance company paid the money. Most likely, the company refused to pay because Willy's death was a suicide, not an accident. Thus, Willy is deceived by the American Dream.

*In **Death of 'a Salesman***, Miller has shown the failure of Willy who is a staunch believer of the American Dream. On the other hand; he has shown the success of Charley, Bernard and Ben. Charley and Bernard do not believe in the American Dream. They are realist. Charley has become successful businessman because of his careful and cautious approach to life and Bernard has become a well-respected lawyer through hard labor.

Thus, through the failure of Willy and the success of Charley and Ben, Miller shows that the **American Dream is illusory**. His dream ends up in nightmare. So, the play challenges to new American capitalistic concepts.

## What Makes Loman a Tragic Hero?

### Loman a Tragic Hero

Arthur Miller is one of the advocates of a modern conception of **tragic hero**. His fall from happiness to misery arouses pity and fear in the audience and brings about the purgation of such emotions.

Willy Loman differs in several ways from a traditional **tragic hero**. The main difference is that he is not a man of high stature; he is a mere salesman. Miller says that the common man can be a proper tragic hero if his story engages

issues of importance, such as the sense of Personal dignity, the survival of the race, or the relationships of Man to God. As a hero Willy does not fully fit into the traditional pattern, but in some respects he comes out as a tragic hero.

According to Aristotle, a **tragic hero** is neither too good nor too bad and Willy is not thoroughly good or thoroughly bad. He wants to see his sons in great positions. But at the same time he has a secret relation with a woman. Thus he combines both the good and bad qualities. But once-again the elements are very modern in nature. The extramarital affair is certainly a modern problem.

Like a traditional **tragic hero** Willy also has a tragic flaw, which brings about his downfall. His flaw is that he lives in a dream world and has strong belief in American Dream. He cannot face reality. He has always had excuses for his own failures and has ruined Biff's life by indulging him in any whim including theft. He believes that he and his sons are well-liked and surely will achieve success because of their personal attractiveness. This wrong conception leads him to the act of suicide. His "hubris", his arrogance, lies in his thinking that he could reach the top in that society. So, Willy dies at the hands of his tragic flaws.

According to Aristotle, tragic heroes also have a moment of recognition, or anagnorisis. This is supposed to be a moment where the hero realizes his terrible mistake and usually moans about it a lot. Willy has a small realization near the end of the play. He never says it directly, but at some point-probably after Howard fires him-he must realize that he is just never going to succeed in business. If he didn't come to this realization, then he wouldn't decide to kill himself so Biff could use his life insurance money.

Thus, though Willy Loman does not fulfill all the requirements of the classical **tragic hero**, we can call him a modern tragic hero. Through Willy, Miller creates a "tragedy of the common man", in order to show that the sorrows of a common 'man are just as Worthy, of dramatization as those of kings.

## Analyze Miller's Use of Dramatic Technique in Death of a Salesman.

### Miller's Use of Dramatic Technique in *Death of a Salesman*

*In Death of a Salesman*, Miller employs several dramatic techniques. In the play his dramatic technique is a mixture of various techniques such as realism, naturalism, expressionism all together directed towards enhancing the tragic effect of the play.

Realism attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. It concentrates on middle-class life and criticizes social conditions. Realism is extremely prevalent in the play *Death of a Salesman*. Willy is middle-class salesman. Lack of money is one of the problems, which is a problem for many people. The most realistic part of the play may have been about how much Willy loved his children and how he wanted their life to be better than his own. The main reason Willy ends up killing himself is because he thinks it will help Biff start his own business with the life insurance money. Willy did everything with the best of intentions and thought his actions and decisions would benefit his children. Most parents are the same way and will do anything in their power to help their children.

Naturalism was developed from realism. *In Death of a Salesman*, Willy is a victim of both the American Dream and the American capitalist system. Willy lives in a society where service is counted. He renders valuable services to the Wagner Company throughout his life; but when he is old enough to do hard work, he is put on commission. Even when he asks for a non-travelling job, he is sacked by the company. Thus, Willy's course of action is determined by the capitalist society. Being deprived of his desired sympathy from the society, he feels compelled to commit suicide so that his son can start a business with the insurance money.



Expressionism is a style of play writing and stage presentation stressing the emotional content of a play, the subjective reactions of the characters, symbolic or abstract representations of reality, and non-naturalistic techniques of scenic design. The expressionistic techniques used in *Death of a Salesman* are:

- (a) In an expressionistic play, the time of the action of the plot may be past, present or future. In *Death of a Salesman*, the action flows without interruption from one time period to another.
- (b) There are frequent changes of locations.
- (c) Music and light are used to indicate a character's state of mind.
- (d) The action is represented as a dream or a vision.
- (e) Setting is non-realistic or partly realistic.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller also employs the technique of mobile concurrency which means that the past and present are shown together on stage. Willy Loman has destroyed the boundaries between past and present and is attempting to live in a zone characterized by both elements. The play does see a combination of time shifts.

Thus in *Death of a Salesman*, Miller blends realism, naturalism expressionism. He combines the objective reality of social aspects with the subjective reality of Willy's up.

### Character of Willy Loman - "Death of Salesman-Arthur Miller"

"Death of Salesman" by Arthur Miller is an interesting study of American society. It is a great tragedy of modern man and shows the social reality of common man. It deals with the theme of the individual versus society. Esther Jackson rightly remarks

**"Death of Salesman represents**

**‘perhaps most nearly nature  
myth about human suffering  
in an industrial age.’**

The characters in this play are mostly types rather than individuals. They are subtle and psychosocial characters. The main characters in this play are Willy Loman, Linda, Biff and Happy. Willy Loman is the protagonist of the play. He is a traveling salesman in Wagner Firm for past 34 year. He thinks himself to be a very successful salesman but it is his self-deception as in reality he is nothing. Now we discuss some traits of his personality.

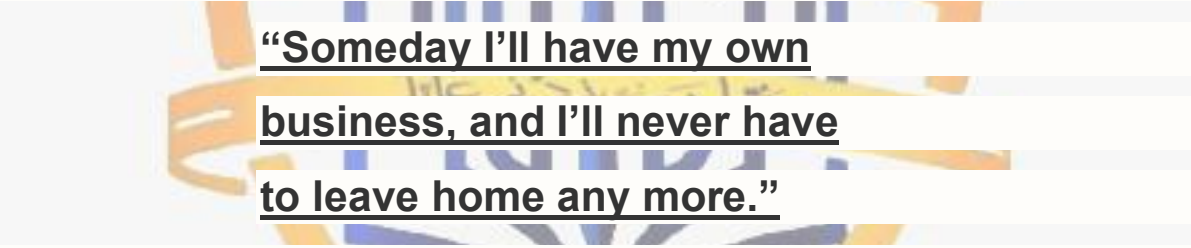
Willy is a representative of Everyman American. He represents the whole mass of American civilization, ‘a slogan out of the 1930s’, ‘a banner of liberate people’, ‘a criticism of society.’ He is indictment of American modern civilization to which thousands of Lemans are becoming victim’s everyday. He is an indictment against the machine-civilization of America which has deprived man of his real content and peace of mind. According to Robert Garland,

**“Willy Loman is, I think a  
person who embodies in him  
self some of the most terrible  
conflicts running through the  
streets of America today.”**

Willy is a victim of materialism who is surrounded by the illusion of “Maya” which he regards as a key to success and happiness in his life. His values are essentially the values of American everyman of today. He believes in the myth of success and “Carishma” of personality. In a fact, he is a man who has been left far behind in

the race of life. Willy suffers the sense of economic and social insecurity. With all his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, he is a failure in life. He has failed not only as a salesman inviting the displeasure of his boss to dismiss him but also has failed as a father.

Willy is a modern man who represents the failure of the American dream. He has accepted whole-heartily the twentieth century version of 'The American Dream.' American Dream is the belief that a man can rise in life through personal attractive and a certain degree a personal initiative. Willy has been working and thrifty he admired the business's virtues. He has tried to be 'Well liked'. He is living in a dream of all through his life.



**"Someday I'll have my own  
business, and I'll never have  
to leave home any more."**

He never comes out of the world of dreams. He boasts to his sons and wife and tells them that people all round the place he visits known him. But when he dies, there comes hardly any mourner to shed tears.

There are three reasons for his failure. One reason of his failure is his misplaced faith in the power of personal attractiveness. Second reason is his extra-ordinary concern for the well being of his sons. He does not allow his children freedom to find out their own values. On the contrary, he wants to bring them up in his own image of illusions and false beliefs. He never lets them reality. Thirdly, he is a victim of his society. It is the world competition that has caused his doom.

Willy Loman is a man full of contradictions. There are many examples where we can see the state of Willy's mind. On one hand, he says about Biff that he is a great football player and would go very high in future and on other movement, he regards him as a good-for-nothing. At times, Willy does not appear to be likable man because he leads a double life. He gives high sermons to his sons, but his own life is full of moral lapses. While preaching to his son's clean living friendliness, sportsmanship and honesty, his life denies these qualities.

There are many reasons for this condition but main reason is the loneliness and not accepting the reality.

Willy Loman suffers from a sense of alienation, insecurity and loneliness. The sense of alienation that he suffers from is born out of his realization that he is without root and moorings,

**"I've got to get some seeds,  
right away. Nothing is planted.  
I don't have a thing in the ground."**

This remarks show that Willy Loman is in search of seeds so that he too may plant himself somewhere in this wild world. He fails to identify himself; he fails to establish a harmonious and balanced and rationalistic relationship with the society.

Willy's life is dominated and governed by his dead brother Ben. Ben Loman had the left home for business of the age of 17 and went to the jungle (business world) to earn and at the age of 21 he became a rich man. But now Ben is a dead man and Willy considered him as his idol and used to talk and discuss his views in important decision taking. Originally it was an illusion of Willy.

Willy used to plan out things and his confusion with Ben-the Dead brother. Willy had very ideal thought for Ben,

**“Ben! That man was a genius.**

**That man was success incarnate.”**

There are many evidences of Willy’s dilemma like his continuing self-delusion and his occasional self-awareness, out of which he can not come out. His whole personality is sentimental. He is fit neither for himself nor his sons. He is torn between fact and fictions. He is a groundless man and we can see that he also fails to offer anything to his sons to give them a start, but by paying the price of his life, he could at least leave twenty thousand dollars insurance to settle his children. Here we compared Willy with a Shakespeare’s ‘Julius Caesar’ as like a Caesar, dead Willy is more powerful than living Willy.

A tragic hero is supposed to arouse pathetic feelings of admiration. Willy Loman is not hero of that caliber. But In spite of that, he is able to arouse our pity. The flood of facts and lies, of reality and fantasy, of the actual and the potential that made him and killed him is a great tragedy. Willy is who first sells commodities and then sells himself as a commodity. Gerald Weales,

**“Willy is a corpse who happily  
refuses to stay dead, has come  
back to elicit sympathy evoke  
pity, provoke anger, stir up  
controversy, ask for judicial  
appraisal.”**



To conclude, it appears that Willy would become in future as immortal a tragic character as Orestes, Hamlet, or Macbeth. He is not merely an individual, but an identification of the common man. As a tragic hero, he represents the common man.

Willy himself creates awkward conditions and these conditions were responsible for his death. Here we compare Willy with a candle sticks. And his character expressed the reality and critical condition of ordinary man in modern era. Finally to conclude in the words of A Haward Fuler,

**“Truly Willy does represent  
any man whose illusions have  
made him incapable of dealing  
realistically with the problems  
of everyday life. He has sold  
himself by taking an artificial  
personality that is wholly  
unrealistic.”**

### **The theme of ‘Death of Saleman’**

#### **The theme of ‘Death of Saleman’**

Arthur Miller, one of the most successful American dramatists, had distinction of being the most outspoken American writers of the last four decades He belongs to the expressionistic school of drama and has insisted that courage, truth, trust,

responsibility, and faith must be the central values of men. As a socialistic dramatist, Miller says,

**“The greatest dramatist seems to have been speaking for some fate-making power behind the social force itself.”**

‘Death of Salesman’, Arthur Miller’s third play, had 742 performances in Broadway theatre in New York. The common theme of ‘Death of Salesman’ is the individual versus society. Like Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy, Miller also deals with social problem of modern men. He broaches the questions of a social status, social honour and recognition which expand its vision. Let’s discuss the theme of the play in a detailed.

‘Death of Salesman’ deals with the common theme of the individual versus society. Like Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy Miller also deals with social problem of modern men. The play is not so much concerned with the life of an individual-Willy Loman but with the life of a section of society, which the representative of Willy is. The play is a good example of so called ‘middle class tragedy’, having social impact on it. It depicts the fate of a commonplace man in a common place environment. In words of John Mason Brown, “Saturday Review of Literature”

**“Death of Salesman broaches the questions of a social status,**

**social honour and recognition,**  
**which expand its vision and**  
**lift it out of the merely parti-**  
**cular towards the fate of the**  
**generality of men.”**

In 'Death of Salesman, Miller depicts hollowness of American Dream. Willy Loman is a victim of the American Dream. Much of Willy's suffering is due to the nature of American society. One of the most dominant beliefs of American society goes by the name 'the great American Dream'. It means the view held by most Americans that it is possible to for a man to rise to the top through good looks, personality, attractiveness, winnings manners, and social contacts. Willy Loman is a fervent believer in the romantic American Dream. He believes, "Success falls inevitably to the man with the right smile, the best line, the most charm, the man who is not only liked, but well liked."

An overriding theme of the play, Dillingham says the theme of the play is 'loss of conscience'. It highlights the terrifying consequence of man's littleness of his failure to be himself or to belong to the human society. Willy Loman is in search of seeds so that he too may plant himself somewhere in this wild world. He fails to identify himself; he fails to establish a harmonious and balanced and rationalistic relationship with the society. This way,

the significant aspect of the play is the search of man for 'personal dignity'.

'Death of Salesman' is deals with the evils of Capitalism. Howard's treatment of Willy shows us how an innocent man is made victim by selfish and harsh society. Howard doesn't pay any attention to Willy Loman and is fully absorbed with a toy like machine. Willy tells him to give him travel. But Howard suggests a cut in salary from sixty to forty dollars a week.

Howard grants none of Willy's requests and casually dismisses from the company. Willy fails to convince Howard. Willy remembers Howard's father but Howard doesn't move. We see Willy caught by evils of Capitalism. In this way, the play can be regarded Communist propaganda denouncing the evils of Capitalism. In a word of Eleanor Clare,

**"The play is a crude Marxist attack on the brutal capitalist system in America.."**

The "Death of Salesman" is a criticism of American System. Willy is a victim of this merciless social system which drives people to frantic, all-consuming dreams of success. The commercial society gives importance to success, appearance, ambitiousness and self interest. Willy is ruined by all such forces. He loses his life in seeking his place

in that society. Thus the American Social System leads Willy to kill himself as he is unable to provide comfort and he gives it after his death as insurance amount. Willy's fate shows that Miller seems to be disapproving a system that demands total commitment to success without regard to human value. Esther Jackson rightly remarks

**“Death of Salesman represents  
‘perhaps most nearly nature  
myth about human suffering  
in an industrial age.’”**

There are some others critics who have interpreted the play in Freudian term and attribute it another abstruse psychological theories. Most of action of the play takes place inside Willy's mind and the technique adopted is similar to that of the stream of consciousness which presents both past and present of a character's life together and simultaneous. Magnificent transitions of action are achieved through a psychological conflict. That is why, Daniel E. Schneider remarks, “The play is an analysis of the ‘Oedipal’ father –son relationship.”

‘Death of Salesman’ can be interpreted as an indictment of the modern urban civilization to which thousands of Americans are becoming every day men. Willy is a representative of Everyman American. He represents the whole mass of American civilization, ‘a slogan out of the 1930s’, ‘a banner of liberate people’, ‘a criticism of society.’ He is an indictment against the machine-civilization



of America which has deprived man of his real content and peace of mind. He is indeed, an average of American. The play deals with social problem of modern men.

Thus 'Death of Salesman' is a great work of art, a major play which can never be dated. Miller presents the relationship between a man's identity and the image those society demands of him. It deals with Willy Loman's loss of identity. It illustrate failures and strength of 'the hero of American Society.'-the salesman. Miller was trying in "Salesman" to set forth what happens when a man does not have a grip on the forces of life. Finally to conclude in the words of William Hawkins.

**'Death of Salesman' is a play written alone the lines of the finest classical tragedy. It is the revelation of a man's downfall, in destruction whose roots are entirely in his own soul.**

## **Critical Appreciation of Death of Salesman**

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Arthur Miller, one of the most successful American dramatists, had distinction of being the most outspoken American writers of the last four decades. He belongs to the expressionistic school of drama and has insisted that courage, truth, trust, responsibility, and faith must be the central values of men. As a socialistic dramatist, Miller says,

**“The greatest dramatist seems to have been speaking for some fate-making power behind the social force itself.”**

‘Death of Salesman’, Arthur Miller’s third play, had 742 performances in Broadway theatre in New York. It has invited much heat, criticism, and controversy as well as praise and laurels. It stands for a modern typical tragedy which is an exceptional good example of so called “middle-class tragedy. Let’s critically appreciate the play in a depth.

In the all work of English literature, title is always very apt and suggestive. It always taken

from central idea, theme or a hero. Here the title 'Death of a Salesman' itself indicates the tragic end of Willy. The sub-title also suggests that the drama is about Willy's illusions; side-by-side it also shows the structure of the play.

A tragic hero is supposed to arouse pathetic feelings of admiration. Willy Loman is not hero of that caliber. But In spite of that, he is able to arouse our pity. So he would become in future as immortal a tragic character as Orestes, Hamlet, or Macbeth. He is not merely an individual, but an identification of the common man. As a tragic hero, he represents the common man. Willy is who first sells commodities and then sells himself as a commodity. To quote Gerald Weales,

**"Willy is a corpse who happily  
refuses to stay dead, has come  
back to elicit sympathy evoke  
pity, provoke anger, stir up  
controversy, ask for judicial  
appraisal."**

'Death of Salesman' deals with the common theme of the individual versus society. Like Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy Miller also deals with social problem of modern men. The play is not so much concerned with the life of an individual-Willy Loman but with the life of a

section of society, which the representative of Willy is. Esther Jackson rightly remarks

**“Death of Salesman represents  
‘perhaps most nearly nature  
myth about human suffering  
in an industrial age.’”**

Another important theme of the play is depiction of hollowness of American Dream. It presents ‘loss of conscience’. It highlights the terrifying consequence of man’s littleness of his failure to be himself or to belong to the human society. The play also deals with the evils of Capitalism. There is a various interpretation of the play.

The structure of the play seems somewhat complex. The play begins in the present as Willy is shown in conflict. We don’t yet know its reason but we just have to understand it through the flashbacks and daydreaming of Willy. The setting changes from Willy’s house to Charley’s office, Howard’s office and the hotels of Boston. The drama takes place in two acts without particular scene division. The writer also presents his central character in the midst of a crisis that he resolves through suicide.

We find the psychological aspects in the play. Most of action of the play takes place inside Willy’s mind and the technique adopted is similar

to that of the stream of consciousness which presents both past and present of a character's life together and simultaneous. Magnificent transitions of action are achieved through a psychological conflict. That is why many critics have interpreted the play in Freudian term and attribute it another abstruse psychological theories. Daniel E. Schneider remarks, "The play is an analysis of the 'Oedipal' father –son relationship."

The technique of 'Death of a Salesman' is a blend of a realism and expressionism. The play was published in 1949; it is the time following the Second World War. The drama reflects many other characteristics of the modern American Society. e.g. industrialization, competition, science and technology etc. The scholars like Darwin, Marx and Freud also influence American society of modern times. Willy is very angry with American culture when he says,

**"There was respect and comradeship**

**and gratitude in it. Today, it's all cut and dried, but there is no change for bringing friendship to bear or personality."**

The use of different dramatic technique shows that 'Death of Salesman' is a



modern play. e.g. In the very first scene when Willy enters home in a very tired condition, he says to Linda,

**“I am tired to Death”.**

As soon as he utters the last word ‘death’, music suddenly increases which shows the end of his life. The entry and departure of each character is shown with the use of light and sound.

In the end, when Willy commits suicide, it is not shown through any dialogue but only the sound of crashing the car is heard and in the very next scene his family is gathered for funeral which shows the end of his life. There are many dramatic techniques are used in the play. Symbolism, Imagery, tragic-comic element.

Symbolism is a remarkable dramatic technique used by Miller. He used many symbols in the drama that have many meaning. e.g. Seeds; In the last scene will wants to plant seeds in the backyard. But actually it is the symbol of his life, he says, **“Nothing is planted.”**

The stocking; which Linda mends also have significant. The stocking Willy brought for Lind, he gives to Miss Francis and when Biff knows it he is shocked shouts, “you have her mama’s stocking’. Willy’s car is the symbol of American modernity. It is the symbol of the hectic and racy competition in which Willy is too deeply involved.

Imagery is another aspect, which attracts readers the play. Miller used one very important imagery and that is through Willy's dialogue, **"Woods are burning"**

Here 'woods' is not about the jungle but it is used for the business world, which is full of competition and Willy thinks that this world for him is burning. It means that now he is unable to enter the business world.

The play contains some of the Tragi-comic elements that Ibsen used so effectively in his social play. For instance Willy tells Linda that he is "very well liked" in Hartford, adding immediately **"You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me"**

We find the same element when Willy says the Chevrolet is the greatest car ever built, and then immediately goes to says that they ought to prohibit the manufacture of that car

'Death of Salesman' is a great work of art, a major play which can never be dated. Miller presents the relationship between a man's identity and the image that society demands of him. It deals with Willy Loman's loss of identity. It illustrate failures and strength of 'the hero of American Society.'-the salesman. Miller was trying in "Salesman" to set forth what happens when a man does not have a grip on the forces of

life. Finally to conclude in the words of William Hawkins.

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### **Character of Linda Loman**

#### **Character of Linda Loman**

"Death of Salesman" by Arthur Miller is an interesting study of American society. It is a great tragedy of modern man and shows the social reality of common man. The characters in this play are mostly types rather than individuals. They are subtle and psychological characters. The character of Linda is Miller's mouthpiece. She has been identified with all the best values in American society-care, love, courage and humanity. She constantly pleads for harmony and understanding between her husband and sons. Now we discuss her character in light of the play.

Linda is a truly a devoted wife to Willy. We can see the devotion of Linda toward her husband in the very opening dialogue when Willy has

unexpectedly returned after having left in the morning for business trip. She anxiously asks him if he had an accident with the car. She continues her inquire that he need a change of glasses. She says to Willy

**“Well, you’ll just have to take  
some rest Willy, you can’t  
continue this way.”**

Linda suggests Willy to ask Howard for a job at New York instead of traveling. She also offers to make a sandwich for him. We can see that the patience of Linda in dealing with Willy seems to be unlimited. Willy is also aware of Linda’s devotion to him and he acknowledges this fact in the following words, “you’re my foundation and my support, Linda.”

Linda is also an affectionate mother too. She is quite indulgent towards her two sons. She urges her husband not to lose his temper with Biff because he says, “he’ll find his ways.” Both Biff and Happy have opinion about their mother. Biff often addresses her as ‘Pal’ and does not want her to feel unhappy. Happy also thinks and believes that his mother is a woman of character and he will marry only that girl, who may have character like his mother. Happy has very high opinion about his mother,

**“What a woman! They broke**

**the mould when they made her. You know that Biff?"**

Linda almost becomes eloquent in her defense of her husband. She always tries to create respectful image of her husband in eyes of her sons. She asks Biff why he is so 'hateful' towards his father. She tells him that her husband is 'the dearest man in the world' to her, and that she will not have 'anyone making him feels unwanted and low. Even when Biff tries to prejudice her against Willy, she continues to defend Willy. She also says,

**"I don't say he is a great man.**

**Willy Loman never made a**

**lot money. He's not the finest**

**character that ever lived. But**

**P he's is a human being and**

**a terrible thing is happening to**

**him, so attention must be pain."**

Linda tries to make both her sons feel ashamed of their indifference towards Willy. She asks them what medal they have given him as a reward for his having worked for their benefit. Still later she plays an important role in bringing about reconciliation.



For Linda, Security the most Important Goal of Her Life. Paradoxically, Linda genuinely loves and respects her husband, but she is a contributing case in his tragedy. From the first she believed in Willy's Super-salesmanship. She thinks Willy is a well-liked super salesman. When Willy complains of his small number of sales, her confidence in him is unshaken and she says, "Well, next week you'll do better." And when Willy has a change to give up selling to go to Alaska, she convinces him that he should not go because security is everything. What one should find out is whether she is Willy's constant mainstay. The critic T.C. Worslery remarks,

**"the perfect wife, a contributing force in this fatal commitment to the wrong dream."**

Linda is a passive character by nature. She always with her husband in all his 'sun' and shades'. Linda never argued or questioned regarding anything to her husband. She always nodded to 'yes' to everything Willy said. She believed in a theory that may be so but Willy can never be wrong. She knew that Willy was wrong sometime but she never discourage him. She stood by his side till last.

Linda; Her grief: Her real love can be seen at the grave of Willy. She gives an outlet to her suppressed sorrow even though she is unable to cry. She is puzzled by Willy's action in having killed

himself: Why did you do it? I search and search and I search and I can't understand it Willy.' She tells her dead husband that she has made the last payment on the hours but that he will no longer come home. Her brief soliloquy by the side of Willy's grave is deeply moving.

To conclude, All through we admire Linda for becoming a great wife and mother. We cannot help feeling that she is somewhat timid and passive individual. She falls so under her husband's influence that she becomes a sharer of all his illusion. In other words, she becomes an unthinking partner in his fantastic dream and unrealistic hopes. Also she shrinks as much as Willy from taking any risks in life. To conclude in the words of the critic E.R. Wood, \_

**"Linda is perhaps too completely the understanding wife not only inside Willy's head; but also inside the author's. She knows her husband through and through."**

## **Biff Loman - “Death of Salesman-Arthur Miller”**

### **Biff Loman**

“Death of Salesman” by Arthur Miller is an interesting study of American society. It is a great tragedy of modern man and shows the social reality of common man. It deals with the theme of the individual versus society. Esther Jackson rightly remarks

**“Death of Salesman represents perhaps most nearly nature myth about human suffering in an industrial age.”**

The characters in this play ‘Death of Salesman’ are mostly types rather than individuals. They are subtle and psychosocial characters. In the character of Biff, Arthur showed the different variety of life. Biff is the only one character who can accept the reality of his life and also tries to show the real condition to his father. Now we discuss the character Sketch of Biff in detail.

Biff is a victim of the maddening world of competition. He feels suffocated in such a world of competition and fails to find out real and permanent joy in nature. His life is a tale of emptiness and frustration; it is like a tale told by an idiot full of sound signifying nothing. We meet him in the play;

he is already thirty-four and a good-for-nothing. He tells Happy,

**“I’ve always made a point  
of not wasting my life, and  
every time I come back here.  
know that all I’ve done is  
to waste my life**

He does not even know that his dreams and desires should be. He is a lost, a lost man. In this way, He suffers from a sense of lostness, of futility and of aimlessness. Failure and waste are the hallmarks of his life. There is the nightmare of despair and nothingness in his life.

As a boy, Biff was thought to be almost a prodigy of his father. Willy lionized his son and kept telling him that he had a great future before him. Willy found in him a rich potential. Willy says that Biff is a very hard working young man with a lot of a personal attractiveness. He says about him,

**“There is one thing about  
Biff-he’s not lazy.”**

He distinguished himself in sport and became the most sought-after football player. His schoolmates idolized him and felt proud to carry his kit. The girls were crazy about him and were willing to spend their own money on his to have his company. He never chased any of the girls. Willy also praised that he seemed to possess all those

qualities which indicate a bright future for a growing young man.

There is evidence much earlier that Biff like his father was a dreamer who lives into illusions. Biff began to nurse certain illusions about himself and his future. On entering the arena of life, he found all his dreams of a rose future dissolving into thin air. He wandered from place to place, took up joy after joy, but failed to make good. He has not been able to find 'himself' yet. He speaks of buying a ranch and raising cattle because he believed that men built like him and his brother Happy should be works out in the open.

Biff is quite fond of his mother and is on very cordial term with her. But he is indifferent towards his father. The reason for his indifferent attitude towards his father is revealed to us in a kind of flash-back when we learn that he had discovered his father with a strange woman in a Boston hotel where he had gone to see Willy in order to inform him of his failure in the examination. Since that shocking discovery, Biff has not been able to reconcile himself to his father. However, a very late stage, it appears that he has always loved his father after all.

Before the end of play, we see that his character contradicts to his father. We have been a witness to Biff's disillusionment with the false hopes



and dreams that he has been cherishing. Biff's eyes have been opened by his disastrous meeting with Bill Oliver. Biff breaks away from his father's dream of him and from his self justifying dreams of himself. In the poignant confrontation with his father, he shatters the Loman Myth.

**"I'm not a leader of men, Willy and neither you. You were never anything but a hardworking drummer who landed in the ashcan life all the rest of them!"**

We must give Biff the credit for having realized how foolish those dreams of his father were. We begin to feel by the end of the play having discovery of the reality, Biff is now in a better position to build up his life.

To sum up, Biff seems a representative of the sons of the middle class for who the middle class dream has failed. The people of younger generation see in him a reflection of their own predicament. His failure in life a terrible illustration of the tremendous waste of human resources in a world maddening competition. By using the character of Biff Miller tried to show the situation of American Society:

**"There is the small hope that Biff may overcome his retardation; alternatively, he may**

remain a misfit in any society;  
he will not possess the same  
wrong dreams as his father.”

## **Happy - “Death of Salesman” by Arthur Miller**

### **Happy**

“Death of Salesman” by Arthur Miller is an interesting study of American society. It is a great tragedy of modern man and show the social reality of common man. It deals with theme of the individual versus society. The characters in this play ‘Death of Salesman’ are mostly types rather than individuals. They are subtle and psychosocial characters. In the character of Happy, Arthur showed the different variety of life. It is only one character of Happy who is seemingly more content than any other character. Now we discuss his character in the detailed.

Happy Loman is Willy’s second son. Happy looks tall powerfully made young man. Sexuality is like a visible colour on him, or a scent that many women have discovered. He, like his brother, is lost, but in a different way. For he has never allowed himself to turn his face towards defeat and is thus more confused and hard-skinned, although seeming more content.

Happy is a classic girl-hunter. But his knowledge about women probably has come to him from his elder brother, Biff. Happy frankly states to Biff,

**“...You taught me everything I know about women. Don’t forget that.”**

He adds that he gets the girls any time he wants. His capacity to become quickly acquainted with woman is brought out in the scene in which he meets a girl in a restaurant and within minutes, induces her to go out with him. Making love to women is a kind of game for him. He tells his brother that somehow or other he has developed an excessive sense of competition where girls are concerned. He has already seduced three girls who were engaged to be married.

Happy is a dreamer too, but more contemptible because he deceives himself more successfully or more insistently than Biff. He is not satisfied with what he has achieved. He is making enough money but he thinks that he can not go higher in life unless the merchandise-manager in his firm dies. He has got his own apartment, a car, and plenty of women, but still he feels ‘lonely’. As he says,

**“I can outbox, outrun and outfit anybody in that store....**

**Everybody around me is so false that I'm lowering my ideals..."**

+Happy admits plainly that money and sex have failed to provide him relief from boredom and ennui. He indulges in sex to overcome his sense of disgust and loneliness. He particularly spoils such girls are engaged to big executives of his company. Possibly it gives him some sort of vengeful satisfaction. He can leave his father in a pitiable condition in the hotel where a dinner is arranged for the Loman and go out with girls to enjoy their company. Sex is his greatest weakness.

Happy has never been given much importance by his father who has always doted upon Biff. Happy is full aware of the fact that Biff is the favorite son. This does not, however, make him feel bitter. He remains quite cheerful and even tries to make his father feel interested in him. It is he who defends his father's view after Willy has committed suicide. Biff says that Willy had all the wrong dreams. Happy tells his brother not to talk like that and is ready to fight with him. Contradicting Biff's view Happy says:

**"I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy**

**Loman did not die in vain.”**

To sum up, Happy contrasts with Biff and holds in the background of the dramatic action because he is seemingly more content, the main features of his frustration are outlined. In a short, Happy is a trickster and a deceitful person. Biff has a moral sense, a prick of conscience, but Happy has none. It is a prototype of his father in certain respects and most so in sex

