

# Illusion of the American Dream in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman"

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## **Abstract**

*"Death of a Salesman" narrates, almost poetically, the tragic tale of Willy Loman, a traveling salesman who has dedicated his life to pursuing happiness and prosperity. Willy Loman is very similar to Miller's father: His family's unfortunate circumstances are the result of his flawed mindset. Willy Loman retells his experiences in a number of vividly dramatic settings that the dramatist has created. In the end, he kills himself because the American dream and the dream of achievement are unreal. Death of a Salesman is a brilliant drama by Arthur Miller that has won numerous awards and accolades. The action describes an elderly salesman's mental and moral collapse, which ultimately results in his suicide once he realizes he has lived his life on erroneous principles. Almost nothing can be said about Loman, who has no belief or ideology of life other than making money and lies to himself as well as to others.*

## **Key Words**

*American, dream, Death, Money, Success,*

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Brooks Atkinson thought Willy was a respectable man who embodied the friendly, modest, and homely qualities of a middle-class society. The New York reviewers saw Willy as the embodiment of a significant portion of American culture, while the Englishman treats him without consideration for his American background. The play's hero appears insufficient when compared to Greek and Elizabethan drama, according to literary critics who concur with the English assessment. The salesman is a little man who is unable to adapt to his surroundings when viewed from a broad historical perspective and without the American setting. For better or worse, however, Miller's hero is more than just a person who has set a goal and fights valiantly to achieve it; he is also an example of the American character, the salesperson who has agreed to a predetermined ideal. This ideal is the matrix that determines fate and gives rise to Willy. The success myth is personified by Arthur Miller's salesman, who is dedicated to its goals and characterized by its traits. The success myth is hidden behind the action's surface; the playwright intentionally employs it to illustrate the plot situation, create the hero, and plan the action's happenings.

"Success is a requirement Americans make of life. Because it seems magical, and inexplicable as it is to Willy, it can be considered the due of every free citizen, even those with no notable or measurable talent... The citizen, may justly and perhaps even logically ask Edison, Goodrich and Red Grange can make it, why not me, why not Willy Loman." (Dos, 151)

The main focus of the drama is Willy's search for the key to success. Miller bases his dramatic form on a popular formula and the general public's perception by selecting this moment. The origins of the legendary phrases may be traced back to bourgeois England in the 17th century. The founding fathers brought them to this continent, and Ben Franklin later popularised them as their best example. The country of opportunity provided sufficient confirmation of the doctrine's fundamental principles to guarantee its success in the eyes of the public. The public idolized the successful man; the path to success was outlined from a pulpit, in the marketplace, and by the home fireplace. From Franklin through the 19th century and well into the 20th, the success myth and the possible variations on it did not lack prophets and interpreters. The success developed a basic outline in the early Colonial period and its essential shape has not changed since.

The description of religious alliances in terms of commerce took an odd turn in the second half of the 1800s. The blessings of religion were no longer extended to business; instead, religion was explained in terms of commerce. With the boom of the 1920s authors like Babson, Marsden and Bruce Barton kept the success doctrine

before the public, whether they advocate success of the reward of virtue or as the result of strength or as the same. Thus before the god-opportunity, all are equal. The mysterious qualities of character virtues, and personality are the gifts of a true believer. This myth is deep-seated in Americans which provides the raw material for *Death of a Salesman*. In the hands of the playwright, the success myth serves as a model for the storyline, the circumstances, and the hero's personality. The development of the hero is reflected in the play's events. The story of Willy Loman starts at the end of the queue, where a weary salesperson with sixty years of experience and sample cases enters in place of the youthful, determined salesman. As he has failed to attain the phantom success he has sought throughout his life, the events that follow depict him failing to conquer each obstacle. He braces the Bose to increase his pay after returning from a trip without closing a single deal, and as a result, he gets fired. In closing, Willy races the terrible reality that his entire life has been a lie. In *The Collapse of the Salesman* Miller attempts to illustrate the collapse of the myth.

*Death of a Salesman* is divided into two parts: the real world of the Brooklyn little brick enclosed house and the dream world of the success myth, which blends past triumphs. The salesman's world is warped and distorted by Willy's experience and his fantastical outlook. The traits that define Willy Loman's persona place him in the mythological hero or anti-hero traditions. The name accurately describes Willy's social and economic inferiority. His wife Linda, who understands him well, refers to him as a "small man." Although Willy's family history and social standing are normal, his identity as a salesperson is much more conventional. He comes from a producer-consumer culture where the intermediary plays a crucial role. In addition to accepting the label that society gave him, Willy has dedicated himself to the principles and goals that society has presented to him. Willy becomes the salesman when he accepts this. He is now the representative of a society that has molded him by firmly and confidently believing in the concept of success. Uncle Ben represents to Willy the accomplishment that was achievable in this previous culture. Ben exudes a sense of accomplishment. He has the priceless key to success. Ben proves the broad fact that any man can know, While Ben establishes the general fact that any individual can succeed, Willy views Ben as the evidence of his ideology. Willy Loman does not embrace it. He has been a strong supporter of the American idea that success comes from being liked and popular, and his two kids, Happy and Biff, have been brought up with this mindset. The secret is hidden by his trust in his personality. There are some observable indicators that indicate a successful personality. In his sons, Willy finds them. The boys are beautiful, well-built, and physically robust. The salesman discovers the traits that lead to success in his sons.

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"He says: Bernard can get the best marks in school, 'understand, but when he gets out in the business world, 'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want."

Willy's commitment to the success ideology directed the education of his sons. Even if success passes him by, he can still look forward to as vindication of his life in them. They have been instructed in the virtue and personality school. The boys have been brought up to respect the success ideology. Willy's whole life has been shaped by his commitment to success ideology.

His present condition is shown. To be the inevitable consequences of this commitment. Willy cannot understand his defeat. He still preserves the hope of Biff's success and the prospect of the big dinner. The meeting in the restaurant is an ironic reversal. When Biff breaks down and weeps on his father's shoulder, there are sudden revelations that Biff likes him which Willy can understand. Despite his shortcomings at the workplace and on the road, Willy's son Biff likes him. All of the 19th-century self-help prophets made promises similar to Ben's. In Brooklyn, the salesman hoped to find success. Ben gives him a chance. Willy smashes his automobile into the wall in an attempt to attain the success that has eluded him up to this point. His motivation is the same as it was when he drove off to New England, according to the tale. The money that will eventually set him on the path to success is twenty thousand dollars in insurance money, which his child adores and deserves. He dies with his ambition ignited because of his

A successful idea is greater than reality.

The critic recognizes right away that the play's success structure is not a whole salesman story. The playwright's influence on the culture that molded the salesman's personality results in the American viewing him as a pitiful figure, while the English critic views him as a despised small guy. The salesman mystique was formed by the pressure of urban society's economic expansion, and the failures are inevitably punished by these same pressures. Willy is exposed to the large gods because of his belief in the myth. No success myth truly prepares anyone to handle these forces. Miller's portrayal of excellent neighbors dramatizes this response. Bernard and Charley. As an alternative to the success myth, Bernard is a successful lawyer and Charley is a successful businessman in a small sense. In a trade-oriented culture, Miller suggests a return to a non-competitive profession. "The Play presents the failure of the success myth by destroying the image of a common man," Miller

says. All Americans entangled in the myth and the moral difficulties it creates are symbolized by Willy the salesperson. He is a product of external social and economic factors, but he has struggled with them. Willy is a suffering person as well. The different facets of Willy's personality are shown throughout the Requiem. Willy, the carpenter and outdoor enthusiast, may have been Biff's epitaph. In contrast, Charley reads Willy's apologies.

"Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a Salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He doesn't put a bolt to a nut, he doesn't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman has got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory."(Dos, 221, 22)

This speech defends Willy in the context of myth and morality, but it fails to take into account the person who endured suffering throughout his life and concludes with a zero. The salesman's interpretation of the success myth demonstrates that the personality is susceptible to erroneous ideals that only annoy. Miller dramatizes the issue of guilt and the fact that Willy suffers because of his principles, but despite his best efforts, he is unable to help Willy come to an understanding of his mistake or come up with a social solution that will free him of it. "The traditional tragic pattern of action demands an epiphany, purgation and a renewal that does not cancel the suffering of the protagonist, but that does make sense of it" Miller recognizes this demand of the form and struggles to fulfill it, in the end the myth defeats him. At the level of analysis, the conscious treatment of values, Miller tries to find a replacement for the success myth and fails. The false values, in Willy's personality are clearly destructive.

Miller used a well-known template for the plot of his drama in *Death of a Salesman*. Even though the cult of personality, or the Date Carnegie method, is declining in the current generation, its success is still very much alive.

The audience recognizes the illusion and sympathizes with the visionary because of Willy's predicament, which is rooted in the excesses of a former generation but is encouraged by attitudes that are still prevalent in the current generation. Willy's pain is genuine and profound. The success myth is unacceptable to America. Miller's drama is built on the American dream, and it resonates deeply with the audience. The modern American, unable to resolve the problem either, becomes embroiled in Willy's agony as he watches the death of Willy the salesman.

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