

Willy Loman: A Man With A Dream

A common idea presented in literature is the issue of the freedom of the individual in opposition to the controlling pressures of society. Willy Loman, the main character in *Death of A Salesman* by Arthur Miller, epitomizes this type of person; one who looks to his peers and co-salesman as lesser individuals. Not only was he competitive and overbearing, but Willy Loman sought after an ideal that he could never become: the greatest salesman ever. Determined to make money, Willy became uncontrollable and somewhat insane. Through his dialogue and actions, Willy Loman portrays a character of insecurity, persistence, and unknown identity.

From the very beginning of his life, Willy Loman experienced problems with his popularity and personality. His last name is a pun on a "low man." He is at the bottom of the business world as an unsuccessful salesman. In addition, his theories on life and society prove to be very degrading, not to mention influential to his mind set every day. Willy believes that being well-liked and having a personal attractiveness, together, can bring success, money, and many friends. Ironically, Willy does not have many friends and many people do not like him. With a beauty unlike others, Willy thinks that doors will open and problems will all disappear.

As a salesman, Willy developed many hindrances that caused his mind to deteriorate. His life as a salesman was built on a dream that he witnessed as a child. At an early age, Willy heard of a salesman, Dave Singleman, who could make his living out of a hotel room. Singleman was very successful and when he died, people from all over the country came to his funeral. It was this ideal that Willy Loman sought after. All he ever wanted was fame, popularity, and a few friends. Unfortunately, when Willy died, not a single person went to his funeral. His life, one that was spent trying to become another person, namely Dave Singleman, was a waste as no-one even wanted to see him buried.

In reflection of his career with the Wagner Company, many other problems arose that forced economic difficulties on him and his family. He was determined to live by ideals that placed him above everyone else. It was with these lies and illusions that Willy's life began to lose its' air of reality. He lost his identity, courage, and dignity throughout New England as a salesman. And as he explained often, "I have friends...They know me up and down New England." Realistically, though, Willy was not successful. He did not have friends and people did not like him in New England.

"With his self-identity weakened and undermined, Willy lost his grasp of things in general." (P.P Sharma, critical analysis) He spent hours on hours dreaming of the past. Thinking of himself and his son Biff who had potential, but did not take advantage of it. Biff was Willy's inspiration as a father. He had the determination to become a great football player, not to mention make something with his life

and the Loman name. However, Biff flunked math and threw all of his opportunities away. It was with these circumstances that Biff and his father began to separate. Willy always promised his sons prosperity and good-fortune, but he could not give that to him and when he lost Biff, his life became an even larger failure.

In other memories and illusions, Willy often replays the moments with his brother, Ben. Specifically, the time when Willy was offered a job in Alaska; the job which would have made him an enormous amount of money haunts Willy every time he tries to sell his Wagner stockings, only to have his sales come up lame. With low sales and age, Willy decided to ask for a job in New York. And it was at this time that his company decided to stop paying by salary, but solely on commission. And for a man who cannot sell well, the loss of a salary is very detrimental to his well-being. "Although Willy is aware, maybe dimly and imperfectly, that he is not cut out for success in the world of trade and commerce, he nevertheless nurses the dream of getting the better of everybody else. And this leads him into an alienation from himself, obscuring his real identity." (P. P. Sharma, critical analysis)

Willy's life would have been more satisfying had he engaged himself in more physical work that would occupy his mind. His life was situated on a dream for success and prosperity. When it never arrived, Willy spent a lot of time, just brainstorming how to make his life what he wanted it to be. Putting his family aside, Willy committed a terrible sin. In Boston, during one of his business trips, Willy cheated on his wife. He met a woman who would be very cheap for an evening, and as a boost of confidence, Willy spent the night with this low-class woman. Unfortunately, his son Biff, who was surprising his father in Boston, walked in on the two, thus causing a situation that would forever haunt Biff. His thoughts of his father as an influential salesman in New England were all lost. What appeared, instead, was the belief that his father was a loser with no potential to ever support his family. It was at this time that they their lives spread apart.

Using that situation as a downfall and the many others that occurred in Willy Loman's life, it was not surprising when he killed himself. In search of happiness, Willy believed that he could give his family what they wanted if he only left the world. But, his dreams were wrong, as his family did not even care enough to go to his funeral. He died for things that he had lived for- his sons and illusions of prosperity. Ironically, though, his life was not worth the happiness of his son's. And his life was definitely not worth the sacrifice that he made for them his entire life.

Willy Loman died still unsure of his status in the business world. He wanted success and money, but at the age of sixty-one, he realized that these goals would never be reached. His identity was lost and his presence on earth unknown. Willy Loman was influenced by society in that he could not overcome the pressures of selling and making money. His life long dream was happiness, but that never came either. The pressures of society killed a man who once had courage and determination. But, as his life moved

further, Willy Loman lost his ability to see the world clearly. All his eyes could observe was despair and insecurity. It was through his beliefs that he decided to end his unhappiness, by ending his life. Willy Loman died a lost identity, but one that found himself for a brief period of time; long enough to end his life forever.