
The Misguided American Dream: Criticism of 'the American Dream' in 'Death of a Salesman'

The American dream is something every American strives to achieve. "Most American believe that everyone has the right to pursue success but that only some deserve to win, based on their talent, effort, or ambition. The American dream is egalitarian at the starting point in the 'race of life,' but not at the end". The American dream is a happy way of living where a hard-working person becomes very successful in their own way: having a well-paying job, a loving spouse, a gorgeous home, fancy car, beautiful children and a stable income. "the materialism of American society has led to the development of a problematically selfish, materialistic and success-oriented ethics". Families push too hard to get to the place where they feel that they have to achieve this dream when they do not realize that they are living the American dream becoming materialistic, greedy, and power hungry; this case in the life of the Loman Family.

Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," tells the story of a man, Willy Loman where his American dream is different from the true definition of the American dream, but most of us relate to Willy's dream of triumph. We are all partners of the American dream where sometimes failures must outnumber successes. The Loman's are the stereotypical American family in the 1940s. Linda and Willy are a middle-class family with two sons named Biff and Happy. "Willy's own career as a salesman begins in the early part of the twentieth century, when it was, as Willy tells his sons, 'personality' that was considered the salesman's greatest asset. His job was to make friends with the buyers and merchants, so they would buy what he was selling was selling. The product itself was not all that important. With the growth of mass production, however, the pressure increased on the salesman to move merchandise in order to keep up the volume of prod Willy's generation came into its maturity, married, and raised children during the 1920s, there was a good deal of pressure to sell merchandise, but it was relatively easy to do since the American business economy was enjoying one of the greatest periods of prosperity". Willy is a traveling salesman who is the breadwinner in the family while Linda, a housewife who cooks, cleans, and takes care of her full-grown children, sounds like a happy normal family, but Willy is disappointed in his sons especially Biff because they do not meet their father's specifications of his American dream. "Biff Loman is lost. in the greatest country in the world a young man with such-personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There is one thing about Biff- he is not lazy". In Willy's eyes, Biff is a bum because he is living with his parents at the age of thirty-four not finding himself. "How can he find himself? Is that a life? A farmhand? In the beginning, when he was young, I thought, well, a young man, it is good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs. But it is more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week. Biff's dream is to work on the farm because he is very good working with his hands. Willy considers him a failure in his eyes and Biff is betraying him because he will not follow his father's expectations being well-liked by others in order to be successful in life. "You and Hap and I, and I will show you all the towns. America is full of beautiful towns and fine, understanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people. And when I bring you fellas up, there will be sesame for all of us, 'cause one thing boys: I have friends". In Willy's perspective to obtain the American dream is that any man who is appealing, valiant and well-liked deserves success and will obtain it. "Willy believes that life's problems can be solved by looking 'Well-liked.' But he does not realize 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".

Willy also focused on getting his sons to follow his American dream ideas, he raises them to believe that they will be very successful in life and school is the least important, it is very important to liked by everyone. "Buff Loman when, as an athlete, he evoked affection and admiration from the people around him. His life seemed full of promises, with a choice of three college scholarships to signify the abundance of future success life can offer the already successful". Being well-liked is not the key to the American dream, Willy did not believe that school was important to obtain success, however, school plays a major role to obtain the American dream, being highly educated, with scholarship opportunities and people who admire you are key factors to obtain the American dream. Biff was following the right path to the American dream but it contradicts Willy's perspective of the American dream.

Happy Loman, Willy's youngest son Happy resembled him in many ways. "Happy is still deluded into thinking that the only important dream is to come out number one man". He believed his father's theory that success comes from being well-liked by others. Willy always bragged and boasted about Happy having all the women. Being a womanizer was a part of Willy's dream, which is not what the American dream is. "I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have- to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him". "Happy is essentially the embodiment of his father's views, thus further emphasizes the narcissism caused by it. This is evident by their shared traits that could be regarded as narcissistic. Consequently, he displays many similar traits of narcissism seen in Willy". This shows that Happy is following his father's footsteps. He will try to succeed but will eventually fail. Willy did die in vain and there is nothing he can do to change that.

Willy Loman is living a lie. He pretends that he has all the things he needs to complete his American dream, "struggling to be at one with society". Willy struggles to be happy, he is always depressed. He tries to make himself feel better by lying to himself. In his world of concoction, Willy is a very successful salesman, "I was sellin' thousands and thousands", "The consequences of failing to attain prominence and to transform society into a home are loneliness, frustration, and ultimately despair. Because Loman deeps gratification to take social form, his life is crushed by indifference, criticisms, rejection, and abandonment". "Willy's self-esteem is unstable, ranging from extreme arrogance too, at times, desperate self-pity". He is very arrogant telling everyone he has two sons who are also very rich and successful in life, but in reality, Willy is not popular, or well-liked and he never will be. "I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog". Willy's failure was caused by poorly chosen life goals. He begins to believe that the American dream and the promise that anyone appealing, well-liked and valiant is nothing but a tall tale. "Willy is unsuccessful to the extent that he cannot make a living and has to be supported by others, and eventually loses his job; he is unpopular to the extent that almost nobody attends his funeral; and as a father he witnesses his young sons turn into dropouts, good-for-nothings, who are full of hostility against him". "The two failures that Willy experiences – the mental and the economic – are staged by Miller as intrinsically related to each other on the ideological and psychological level: it is partly due to his economic breakdown that Willy becomes increasingly irrational, and partly due to irrationally that he fails in business. Both failures make his life worthless, painful, and unjustifiable in his own eyes". In a war with himself, he refuses to accept what he truly is a

normal, old middle-class man, so his inner and outer conflicts destroy him.

Linda Loman had beliefs in the American dream. She believes that anyone can achieve it. She always criticizes her sons for not living up to their father's potential and not being more attentive and understanding. "You're doing well enough, Willy"! "Linda remained loyal, but her constancy cannot help Loman. She can play no significant role in her husband's dreams; and although she proves occasionally capable of dramatic outbursts, she lacks the imagination and strength to hold her family together or help Loman define a new life without grandiose hopes of Biff". Linda loves her husband very much, she always have her husband's back, however, Willy is having an affair with another woman. Having many women was another part of his American dream which is unacceptable. Will becomes more erratic and his dementia becomes worse than ever and begins to talk to himself; creating an imaginary world where his sons are living his America dream. "He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue. You've got to make up your mind now, darling, there's no leeway anymore. Either he's your father and you pay him that respect or, else you're not to come here. I know he's not easy to get along with – nobody knows that better than me". Linda believes if her sons follow their dad's path and become successful, Willy's psychological problem will heal itself. She does not believe Willy's meaning of the American dream, but she believes her sons are the only hope for Willy's mental health.

Willy's Chevrolet was very superior to him. In the 1490s, Chevrolet made the best-selling cars in America; they symbolized suburbia and the American dream. "Chevrolet, Linda, is the greatest car ever built". Even though cars that Willy's is a dream come true; however, cars begin to break down as the age. "That goddam Chevrolet, they ought to prohibit the manufacture of that car". Once again nothing was good as it as what Willy dreamed, everything does not last forever and that is something Willy has trouble realizing it. Willy uses the car to draw attention to his condition. "He explicitly views himself in an idealized manner as a successful father and salesman, but his suicide attempts, which occur when he is in a semiconscious dream-state, suggest the presence of deep-seated feelings of self-doubt. throughout the story, Willy had multiple accidents in the car which were failed suicide attempts. The car symbolizes power and mobility which are symbols in Willy's desperate, unmeaningful, crumbling life.

Throughout Willy's life, he tried to obtain the American dream but failed numerous times. His life became nothing but a heap of futility. He realized that his life was filled with loneliness and darkness. The loneliness and bitter darkness destroyed his happiness. To redeem himself from the pain and failures, he commits suicide by crashing the car. Willy spent his life trying to obtain the American dream but fails because in this his American dream is being good-looking, valiant, and being well-liked by others is not the American dream. Willy was not liked by many people. No one even showed up to his funeral except his family. "in 1928 I had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commission". Willy's mind was getting the best of him, In his man he was living his American dream but in reality, he was willing an ordinary life that filled with deceit and darkness.

Willy Loman was an average American who wanted to pursue the American dream, where a person has a well-paying job, family, car, and children. Willy did not see the true meaning of an American dream. In his mind, being successful is being well-known by many people but in reality being wealthy is the American dream. Willy was not wealthy, he has been living a lie throughout his life pretending to be a successful salesman with successful sons who also did not find their American dream which made him crazy and delusional. Will push too hard to get to

the place where they feel that they have to achieve this dream when they do not realize that they are living the American dream. Willy would have had a better life living the American dream if he did was not so self-centered and letting his children live their own lives instead of living through theirs.

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