

Argue why Willy
commits suicide



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Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller: Why Did Willy Commit a Suicide? 2007

Willy Loman is a man in his search of meaning. Having deceived himself through his whole life, Loman tries to acquire meaning and weight through death. Willy's suicide is the character's attempt to prove that his life wasn't that fruitless and meaningless and that his belief in American Dream, which served as the basis for his worldview, is real.

Loman confesses to his elder brother Ben that he feels “ kind of temporary about” himself. Willy dreams of becoming great, taking Singleman as his cult figure. Indeed, even Willy's surname means “ low man”. Willy badly orients in the world, looking at it through pink glasses of his interpretation of the American Dream. His perception is childish and mythopoetic, and as all of us he is awfully afraid that his world can be broken, while as all of us he is not able to find his place beyond the mental frameworks he has built his life on. Loman's interpretation of the American Dream makes him measure happiness in terms of success and material wellness that can be reached, as in a fairy tale, due to luck and favorable appearance. Abandoned by his father and elder brother, Loman strives for being “ well-liked”. Unable to realize his dreams himself, Willy puts great hopes onto his sons, who fail to justify them. Frightened and directed by false visions, he is constantly lying to himself and people surrounding him. This way he tries to blind himself. “ We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!” - exclaims Biff. Loman has no friends. At last Willy is abandoned even by his sons.

His suicide is first of all his childish attempt to be loved at last. Planting the garden at night, Willy imagines his funerals: “ Ben, that funeral will be massive! Theyll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the old-timers with the strange license plates—that boy will be

thunderstruck, Ben, because he never realized—I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey—I am known, Ben, and hell see it with his eyes once and for all. Hell see what I am, Ben! Hes in for a shock, that boy!” Death is an opportunity to make his sons regret of him and see that his life had meaning. Naively Willy associates his funerals with those of Singleman, to which “hundreds of salesmen and buyers came.” Funerals are to become Willy’s triumph. In fact, all his life is waiting for those funerals, demonstrating that he is “well-liked” and respected, that he has achieved much in life. Willy commits his suicide in hope that his family will get insurance money. This is the quick way to richness and success. Willy is unable to deny his life-long belief in the American Dream. He has not understood till the end that good appearance and luck are only tiny ingredients of the American Dream, presupposing hard work and persistence. To recognize that he was not right means to admit that his life was a big mistake. Willy’s will is too weak for this. He prefers to die in the name of his self-delusions.

Willy strives for acquiring meaning of his life. “After all the highways and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive,” complains Willy to Charley. In search of meaning Willy plants his garden. This act, preceding his suicide, points to Willy’s desire to change his life or at least to deceive and comfort himself again. At the very beginning of the play, speaking of the effects of urbanization he says: “The grass doesn’t grow any more, you can’t raise a carrot in the back yard.” Despite this, early in the second act, Willy decides to plant a garden. “Gee, on the way home tonight I’d like to buy some seeds,” he says to Linda. His wife reminds him of what he knows already: “Nothing’ll grow any more”. However, garden symbolizes the same illusive hope that his suicide. “You wait, kid, before its

all over were gonna get a little place out in the country, and Ill raise some vegetables, a couple of chickens,” tries to deceive himself Willy. Even after his expectations have wholly failed, abandoned by his sons in the café, Willy asks the waiter: “ Is there a seed store in the neighborhood?” He is disturbed by the fruitfulness of his life: “ Nothings planted,” he says: “ I dont have a thing in the ground.” Planting seeds Willy, in fact, confesses his failure. Committing the suicide, Willy makes the last attempt to win. Willy’s suicide bears an epic character for him. This way he not only proves the rightness of his life and Dream, but also glorifies himself as a martyr, while his death is meant to continue and change the life of his sons. “ The jungle is dark, but full of diamonds”, says Ben. Willy’s noble death is “ not like an appointment at all” but like “ a diamond... rough hand hard to the touch”. So Willy committed a suicide because he perceived it as his last chance to acquire meaning and love, and to prove that the American dream he believed in was real.