

# Willy loman : the tragedy of the american dream assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

American society is exemplified with Miller's story and demonstrates how a dream could turn into a nightmare. Arthur Miller's, "Death of a Salesman", is a play that portrays the author's life and the psychological problems that brings the collapse of the American Dream for this in a lower-middle family in an economical depression. There are two Willy Lomans in this play: the financially burdened and emotionally exhausted man in his sixties, near the end of his life, and there is the more confident, vigorous Willy Loman of some fifteen years before, who appears in flashbacks in the story.

Moreover, the psychological view of Willy Loman is shown as a person who works as a traveling salesman and decides to commit suicide because the "American Dream" evenness him. As Charley says in the story: "the only thing you got in this world is what you can sell". He is a normal person who embodies traditional American values to success. In fact, Willy Loman wants to a great extent believe that he is one of the finest salesmen, a winner in life and a great father. For Mr. Loman, the accomplishment of the "American Dream" is so important that he is battling between life and death.

In his last years of work, he notices how his presence in the business of selling goods is falling down. First, his body is not as young and energetic as it used to be. Second, he is no longer able to financially support his family. For him, this is a humiliation because having a tumbling career was not seen as a successful life to others or, even worse, he is not giving the right image to his family as the producer of economic wealth. "A man's descent to failure is horrendous to contemplate; therefore, Willy Loman tries to hide the truth to his family for a while until it is obvious to them.

Moreover, his life is surrounded by a self-doubt Of his identity, because he lives for what he was and not for who he is now. He does not accept that he is growing Old fast The dreams that he has in the car Of the past represents the desire to be young and the reality of the unwanted present. Loan thinks that killing himself is the only way left of showing his masculinity; but instead, it is a very coward way to escape from the family and economical problems he has. In a deeper view, what Wily Loan cannot accept is that when we “ buy” the “ American Dream” we usually don’t see the small print of the contract.

We are born, we study, we work, we have a family, we raise our children, we get older and we eventually die. This is the cycle of life; but within this cycle of life there are ore cycles. Gore example, when we get older new and younger people can do the same job faster and for less money. The pursuit fifths dream forces Loan to to act and do the same things as when he was twenty years younger, when he was a fuller man. Wily Loan represents a man who does not have his “ feet on the ground”; because he is blind to what is going on with his life.

For example, his wife Linda has to mend her stockings in order to save money and help Wily with the economical situation. But Wily is unwilling to see or accept the reality of why she is doing it. They do not have money not even for a pair of socks. But he is so rood that the reader is astonished when Wily says “ you end up worth more dead than alive;” he knows committing suicide that was the only way that he had let to support his Tamil and to be remembered as a man who did something tort them. Not only is Wily

demanding with his life, but he also expects his two sons to become more successful than he is and to follow his beliefs.

However, Biff and Happy do not accomplish Will's hopes to have very successful sons. Biff Loan is a thirty-four year old, rough, good-looking former star athlete. He is also a moody and troubled man. Like his father, he is worried both about the family emissions and about work. He was a very promising football athlete, but his life changed completely when he discovered that his father was cheating with another woman. Biff drifted and left home and traveled around seven states to get a better job but could not. He also went to jail for stealing a suit.

In fact, Biff “utterly failed to live up his father's expectations.” He has an internal struggle trying to know What to do With his future. The main conflict between them is that Wily sees Biff as a person with a lot of possibilities for his life, but the truth is that he sees himself as a “nobody”. On one side, he feels the pressure that he has to please his father's wishes; and on the other hand, Biff wants to do what he thinks it is right for his life, his own dreams. But Wily does not want to believe that a member of the Loan family could be or is a “nobody” or a “loser” in life.

However, this illusion is gone at the end of the story for both. And Wily is not open to listen to his sons and to realize, as Biff says, “he never knew who he was.” Biffs brother, Happy Loan, who is the elegant “assistant to the assistant” buyer, shares with Biff an affection for a rough outdoor living but has a stronger sire for material success. He has his own car and his own

apartment. He is also an accomplished liar who has all but convinced himself that he is slated to become the store's next merchandise manager.

He has always felt to be the "second son" in the family. Happy always tries to do things to be noticed with his father when he was younger saying: "I'm losing weight now, you notice?" and now saying "I'm going to get married, just you wait and see." Happy, as his father, is similar, both live in a dream world. When Willy dies, Happy cannot see reality as it is because he thinks, "Willy Loman did not die in vain." Biff and Happy feel as though their father is only going to be happy if they have achieved a materialistic life and accomplished the American Dream.

Willy does not pay a lot of attention about what kind of person they are, just to what they have achieved. Biff at the end of the story realizes that he will do what he wants to do when he says "I looked up and saw the sky and realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been." On the other hand, Happy continues with his father's dream, exemplified when he expresses: "My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women, and still, goddamn, I'm lonely." The idea of the dream by itself is empty if the reader understands that "things" can only make us happy for a short period of time and they usually come and go.

Willy's wife, Linda, plays the role of peacekeeper between her sons and Willy. In order to relieve the strain between them, she takes care of Willy, accepting what he does and not trying to interfere with his wishes and beliefs.

Moreover, she knows that her husband is at the end of his life. Linda knows that Willy is willing to commit suicide, even though it is not the first time, but

she loves him so much that she cannot put him in an embarrassing situation in front of anybody. She understands that the Loman name represents so much for him that she is unwilling to hurt his dignity.

When Willy was very young, his father left him and his brother Ben alone in the world without any money or any family background; an event that marked Willy till his death. Moreover, his older brother Ben leaves Willy again but now when he goes to Alaska for a better future. One could see how Willy is marked psychologically when he is completely alone because he therefore thinks about the “American Dream” as the golden goal to accomplish, the ideal of a perfect family and a secure future. The “American Dream” for Willy is something that could only be achieved if you are “well liked” and if you are “personally attractive”.

Therefore, a person who works for a business and has such physical traits will achieve a life full of luxuries and will belong to the “American style” of life. Obviously, Willy thinks that he has it and his sons also; that is why he is so obsessed with trying to attain it. He is the product of his own illusions and of a society that believes that with hard work everything is possible. The reader can understand that Willy's skewed perspective toward the “American Dream” is due to his distortion of his life and the dream that he thinks he lives in everyday.

Willy Loman longs for the success of his brother Ben, but refuses to accept the drudgery in the work of his friend, Charley. Essentially, Willy wants the freedom that Ben has by leaving for Alaska on a whim, ending up in the wrong place, and still succeeding on his own without the responsibility and

hard work that Charley puts in to be modestly and stolidly successful, The incongruity in Will's wishes 0 that Wily wants all the glory without any of the guts 0 leaves him in a place where, truly, he is still a child. And, like a child, Wily could never live like Ben because he needs the security of a job and life like the one Charley has.

As the play Winds on, Wily cannot wake up from his fantasized version Of true American success and, ultimately, allows Miller to illustrate the shallowness of the American Dream. Ben represents success based on the benchmarks Wily has created: that if a man has a good appearance and is well liked. He will thrive in the business world. Yet, the amount of truth in Ben's character is questionable. More likely, Ben has been idealized in Will's mind to become a mix between truth and antsy CLC one who exemplifies the principles that Wily lives his life by and bestows on the Loan boys.

In fact, either Ben leaves out the part of the story where he worked tirelessly for four years in the jungle to make his fortune or this is another example to Wily nurturing his fantasies in his own idealized hallucination of Ben. Either way, Wily cannot wake up from the dream world his head is in involving the seemingly effortless success that comes about his brother Ben, nor can he realize that, at least in his world, success is based on more than projecting a good, confident appearance and being well-liked: it involves hard work and effort.

And, while he idealizes Ben and raises him to the point of symbolic greatness, he idealizes Dave Signalman (single-man), vivo, at the age of eighty-four, can " go into any city, pick up the phone, andjmake his living,"

<https://assignbuster.com/willy-loman-the-tragedy-of-the-american-dream-assignment/>

because he represents the only solid example of success under Willy's principle II and even then, Willy is alone. At face value, Willy rejects Charlie's job offer as a matter of childish pride.

Beneath this pride, however, the mundane, restrictive, slogging labor that a job with Charley would entail is not only against Willy's formula for success (good appearance + popularity = success), but it is totally foreign to him. As an audience, we have already become aware that Charlie's offer is really exactly what Willy wants, for he, in just the previous scene, requested from Howard precisely what Charley is offering.

Willy's life is full of disillusion: he is torn, frequently against his will, between the idealized fantasy that Ben represents and the solid, responsible reality that Charley symbolizes. Essentially, Willy longs for the freedom and success of his brother Ben, without being ready to commit himself to the drudgery of Charley. And, it is during the few moments in the play when Willy realizes the disparity between the two CIA fantasy and reality that his character becomes truly tragic. His brother, Ben, traveled abroad and was immediately successful.

Yet, Willy often drives seven hundred miles and returns with nothing, unable to live up to his own expectations as derived from and represented by Ben. Even Ben points out that "a diamond is rough and hard to the touch," (Act 2) explaining that even the greatest wealth is hard to come by, but Willy doesn't pick up on it, Willy's inability to commit himself to any line of work that involves manual labor is essentially, where one must use something



other than his appearance and amiability to succeed, such as a job with Charley leaves him without any foundation upon which to build success.

He is a skilled carpenter, as Charley points out when he says, “ That’s a nice piece Of workflow to put up a ceiling is a mystery to meg how do you do (Act 1) unfortunately, Wily could never be a carpenter because he is too deranged and caught up in his fantasy about instantaneous wealth and greatness to bother himself with a more menial, but still successful job as a carpenter. The battle in Wily between the freedom and success that Ben represents and the drudgery and reality that Charley symbolizes, coupled with his inability to have either, leaves Wily childish.

Throughout the play, Will’s behavior and the way he is handled by others suggests that he, in fact, has never really grown up. Charley asks him the very question, “ Wily, when are you going to grow up? ” (Act 2), Sadly, Wily knows that he is unstable, telling den that he still feels “ kind of temporary about himself,” and even both Howard and Bernard rater to Wily as a “ kid. ” (Act 2), Similarly, Linda, for much of the play, not as a wife, hut s a mother figure, mending Will’s clothes, protecting Wily from his sons and keeping him grounded and organized in reality.

Because of his childlike behavior and the conflict within Wily that is based on his inability to have neither the life of Ben nor of Charley, he is plagued by contradictions when reality encroaches on his fantasies and vice versa; he hates stealing, but encourages the kids to steal sand from the construction site; he calls Biff a bum, but then says that fifty men in New York City would

love to hear from him; he says that the “ old Chevy” was a spectacular car, but then calls it the Worst car ever made.

Alas, Will’s distorted and disillusioned perception of reality is fueled by his childish inability to work, through drudgery and slog, towards true American success. This view of American success reflects Miller’s condemnation with the shallowness of the language Of the click?? American Dream: Wily believes that just going out “ west” or “ into the jungle” will automatically mean striking gold or finding diamonds. Through Wily, though, Miller points out that what the language of the American Dream leaves out is that, to achieve the American Dream, you have to put in incredible amounts of drudgery and, sometimes, painful work.