

Free argumentative essay on the death of a salesman

[Family](#), [Father](#)



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Introduction

Loman family is composed of four members, mother –Linda, father – Willy and two sons – Biff and Happy, each of them being the representative of social constructions. As such, Linda is the caregiver, being dedicated to the domestic sphere, loving and caring for her husband and their two sons. She sees and understands the challenges that all of them face and she behaves as the leant between all the members of the family, determined to maintain a peaceful home. Willy, on the other hand, is the family head, the one who has the responsibility of taking care of the family needs from a financial point of view. For fulfilling this social and familial objective, he travels daily by car to his work. Arthur Miller’s playwright “ The Death of a Salesman” describes the psychological difficulties that Willy faces in accomplishing is role as the head of the family. As such, he expresses signs of dementia by talking to himself, or deliberately crushing his car on the way to work, to make it look like accidents caused by his tiresome. While Linda naturally and remorseless plays her role as a peacekeeper, her husband Willy finds difficulties in adjusting to what society wants from him: being the family provider.

Nevertheless, their characters prove family dynamics of trying to cope with these socially designed gendered roles.

Body

Linda knows her place in the family and she developed a specific motherly attitude for exerting her peacekeeper traits. Each time the members of Loman family face a problem or an internal quarrel, she is the one that seeks for reaching a compromise, in order to settle any dispute. Similarly, she tries to find solutions so that each Loman family member to be pleased with their life.

“ Willy, dear. Talk to them again. There’s no reason why you can’t work in New York” (Miller 9). This is how Linda encourages her husband after understanding that he faces serious problems because of his tiresome and that he is experiencing psychotic episodes also. Worried about how his mental and physical health might evolve while he is away from home, she pleads for his comfort, suggesting that he should not leave the domestic space, and to work from home, instead of traveling to work. She is clam, conciliatory, possessing all the features of a good wife and mother. As Bloom (19) notes, Linda’s character is perceived either as an “ admirable and selfless” women, dedicated to her family, either as “ pathetic and marginalized”, a shadowed presence for the men in the play.

Translating her true character based on her actions and attitudes, Yasinski (38) states that Linda is “ the most rational person” in Loman family, considering the fact that she can juggle assertiveness with managing the household’s finances, taking care of Willy and their sons.

Although critics perceive her as unaware of what is happening around her, like a person who gave up her own dreams and ideals for the sake of her family, she is, in fact, highly grounded, as Miller himself suggests in the play: “ Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to Willy’s behavior” (Miller 8). In other words, Linda is very much aware of her husband’s character, but she chooses to tolerate it and not argue it, although, as the playwright indicates, she would have solid reasons to argue Willy’s behavior. Instead, she adopts a stress resilient attitude, being the comfort that her adultery husband needs, taking care of him with a deep affection. This is an indication that she considers her husband’s behavior (his affairs and apparent dementia) as flaws or as signs of an illness. Although she knows that these signs of illness will never disappear, she continues to comfort her husband whenever he feels down. This attitude reflects the fact that she is a peacemaker, aiming to protect her man by the external vicissitudes.

In relation with her sons, Linda is also a peacemaker. As such, she gets involved in the disputes between Biff and Happy or between any of her sons and their father, Willy. When her son Biff cannot admit that he loves her father just as he loves her, Linda tells him: “ Biff, dear, if you don’t have any feeling for him, then you can’t have any feeling for me.” (Miller 43). Again, Linda uses a calm, soft tone, for educating her son on the paternal love, and for conciliating Biff, making him aware of his love for his father. Like this, she aims to erase the misunderstanding between Biff and his father, serving her peacemaking role.

Sterling (12) perceives Linda as the “ embodiment of society’s perception of

women” and criticizes Miller for describing her as an object and not as a subject. Nevertheless, she is the strongest character in Miller’s “ Death of a Salesman”, because she is the only one who knows what she wants and has a strong reasoning for setting the peace in her home through wise speeches and an assertive personality.

Although Willy is the one, who, according to the social perception on men, should exert power, authoritative presence and firmness into the household, his role only resumes to being the household provider. His character is weak, as he does not have sufficient strength for accomplishing his dreams. Unlike his wife Linda, who is rational and pragmatic, he is an idealist, having bold dreams for him and for his sons, which he cannot accomplish. This is what makes him sad, and his day to day sadness gradually accentuated in madness. Bloom (18) remarks that “ the name ‘ Willy Loman’ has become almost synonymous with the American Dream – both the high hopes and the hopes dashed and all the energy associated with this attainment”.

Willy’s vision of himself as the breadwinner, the provider of his family, is fulfilled by his aspirations of achieving professional greatness, the others’ respect admiration and the self-actualization, according on the individual’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow 64). Only that Willy never attained self-actualization, or his peers’ respect. In his own perception, he failed his role of provider when he realized that he is not able to reach higher on the hierarchy of needs, and this pushed him to commit suicide.

Not only does Willy have dreams for himself, but for his older son Biff also, whom he considers the inheritor of his dreams and ideals. He aims to persuade Biff to reach higher, for attaining the greatness that he could not

reach. Living in an illusion until his last breath, Willy Loman invests in his own ideal of greatness when he commits suicide, so that his son Biff can inherit his insurance money and invest in his own business.

Hence, as much as he could, Willy was the provider of his family. An idealist provider, a husband dependent on being cared, protected and comforted by his wife, he nevertheless found ways to provide for his family.

Conclusion

The socially created standard that makes the women dedicated to their household, accomplishing the role of the peacemaker is very well outlined in “The Death of a Salesman”, through the character of Linda. Likewise, Miller portrays the masculine perception according to which men are the providers, through his character Willy. Despite the simple apparently roles that they fulfill in the family dynamics (Linda as the peacekeeper and Willy as the provider), Miller’s characters are more complex than they seem. While Linda is more independent and more rational than it seems and Willy is more dependent on Linda and too idealist, they nevertheless manage to accomplish their duties, playing after the family dynamics, according to which the wife (and mother) is the peacekeeper and the husband (and father) is the provider.

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