

A discussion of symbols in a death of salesman

[Life](#), [Death](#)



The seeds embody Willy's ambition to be both a good father and a "well-liked" salesman. Willy's nocturnal futile attempt to grow vegetables clearly demonstrates his failure in achieving the American Dream.

Another perspective is to see seeds as the pure embodiment of Biff. Willy makes a hard attempt to raise and nurture Biff but despite all his desperate tries, Biff turns out to be a lazy bum. In the same way, Willy tries to grow vegetables but he fails.

The other important fact about this symbol is that huge towering shapes behind Willy's house constrict the garden in which vegetables will grow. Because of the limiting space of the garden, nothing substantial can grow. This can be interpreted that the competition, the clemency lacking quality of the American Dream (represented by the towering buildings) ultimately leads to Willy's downfall (the futile seeds). This is a crucial point in understanding and evaluating the play because the American Dream that Willy thought as infallible, in the end proves to be fallible by leading Willy to his downfall.

Linda's And Woman's Stockings

Reference in the play: (To Willy) Biff: You - you gave her mama's stockings!
[His tears break through and he rises to go]

Discussion:

The stockings in this play, in my opinion, represent sexual infidelity. Willy is accused by Biff for giving her mother's stockings to a woman. The important factor here is that Willy could have given the Woman any stocking but vividly

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in order to empower the symbol, Arthur Miller makes sure that Willy gives the Woman Linda's stockings.

It is important to note that right after the Woman in the flashback thanks Willy for the stockings (" Woman: And thanks for the stockings"), Willy notices that Linda is mending stockings and is nagged by this fact: " Willy [angrily taking them (stockings) away from her]: I won't have you mending stockings in this house! Now throw them out!" The stockings are absolutely reminiscent of Willy's betrayal. Of course, faced alone with this fact, Willy cannot stand it and therefore commands Linda to throw them out. This depicts Willy's ambivalent character. One Willy betrays Linda. The other Willy cannot stand this fact.

Diamond:

Reference in the play: Ben [With greater force]: One must go in to fetch a diamond out.

Discussion:

The diamonds embody the power of tangible wealth or money. In a sense, the diamonds are the solidification of American Dream. Willy invariably, has failed the American Dream and therefore doesn't possess the diamond. The diamonds that made Ben rich also remind Willy that he is a failure.

Further qualities of the diamond are revealed by Ben's sentences: " Ben: A diamond is rough and hard to the touch." I think what Ben wants to say is that the diamond isn't easy to get (represented by its roughness) but once

possessed, it's a valuable asset. " Ben: It's dark there (jungle, Africa) but full of diamonds" From the wanton, debauched way that Ben wrestles and horses around with Biff (i. e. the way he trips him), it can be concluded that Ben isn't a moralpersonality. The result of this conclusion is that Ben wasn't very honest when obtaining the diamond.

The darkness in this sentence represent the immoralities or the dishonesties one must go through before one can obtain the diamond. Willy's personality, on the other hand, lacks immorality. He has always " played it fair", the only exception being his betrayal to Linda. Willy's chronic honesty in business causes him to fail and so he doesn't obtain the diamond. Whereas on the other hand, Ben succeeds.

The Rubber Hose:

Reference in the play: " Biff: All right, phony! Then let's lay it on the line. [He whips the rubber hose out of his pocket and puts it on the table]

Discussion:

The rubber hose is an object that Willy tries to inhale gas with. The significance of this object is that it reminds the audience of Willy's failing attempts to commitsuicide.

The rubber hose , in a way the seeds do, represents Willy's failure. Willy tries to commit suicide but even fails that. However, unlike the seed which symbolized Willy's failure to achieve the American Dream, the rubber hose symbolizes Willy's failure to be harmony, in union with himself. Willy

ultimately fails to commit suicide because he is ambivalent to the idea of suicide. The rubber hose symbolizes Willy's ambivalence and his failure to find himself, an observation that Willy accused Biff of.

The Car and the Chevy:

Reference in the play: Biff [rushing down the stairs]: Pop! [As the car speeds off, the music crashes down in a frenzy of sound]

Reference to Chevy: Willy: I was thinking of that Chevy. Nine-teen twenty-eight... when I had that red Chevy - [Breaks off.]

The car is Willy's ambitions and feelings in life. In the past, he had a Chevy as a car, and Biff used to simulate it. Willy Loman as a young man had ambitions and thought that he was going to thrive and flourish. The Chevy symbolizes all together Willy's ambitions, hopes, dreams as a young man.

However as Willy gets old, he suddenly realizes that he isn't the successful businessman he dreamt that he would be. This transformation of Willy's feelings about his life can be paralleled with the transformation of the Chevy into an old rusty car. When Willy suddenly can't take it anymore, he commits suicide with his car. This translates into saying when Willy can not stand the idea that he failed, his feelings (his car) lead him to suicide.