

# Free death of a salesman essay example

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Death of a Salesman is a story that represents the real and contemporary American society and their dreams and aspirations. It is a story of the common people and their dreams. The title itself reveals the tragic end of the protagonist Willy. As far as the tragic flow of the story is concerned, it can be studied as the modern version of the Aristotelian tragedies, though it can be a comparative analysis with some resemblances and some differences. The story fulfils many parameters of the tragedy. Only the difference is that unlike the typical Aristotelians tragic hero, Willy does not belong to the noble or royal family. He is a common man. The term “Hamartia” can be applied while describing the story of Willy. The Hamartia or a tragic flaw in the personality of hero obstructs him from achieving his goals.

The main cause of Willy's tragedy lies in his specific characteristic. Willy is simply a good character. He is an ordinary man. He is married and he has two grown up sons. He loves his sons. He is the person, who is yearning for the love and caring from his wife and his sons. He is neither completely good nor completely bad. Like a typical ordinary American man, he also has the common dreams. But still he is a good human being. While describing the quality of Willy, Linda, his wife says,

Don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot 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 to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must finally paid to such a person. (Act 1, 44)

Irrespective of the good qualities in Willy's personality, he has to suffer

failure which eventually ends his life. It is because Willy's shortcomings or errors of his personality are dominant. As a human being, Willy is very good, but he is not able to face the reality of his life. It is because he constantly denies accepting the realities of life. He deceives himself by constantly living in illusion or a world of dream. He always thinks that it is your personality, which is important than your work.

Loman says; “. . . because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want”. (Act 1, 25-6)

Unfortunately, he cannot influence his boss with the help of his personality and he is fired ultimately. His false dreams or illusion are not limited to himself but he lives in the same illusion about his two sons. He convinces himself that his son Happy would one day become a store manager. He is not ready to accept the reality that like Willy, Happy also suffers failure. Happy also lives in the world of dream. His second son Bill is a very good athlete in school. But still he is also a loser in his life. The major cause of Billy's failure again was his father Willy. Bliff's life suddenly changes when he saw his father with another lady in Boston. He completely lost his enthusiasm in which he had had once in his school days. He lost the parental respect too. Billy also has a habit of stealing and due to this, He loses every job. But Willy is not ready to accept the fact. In the end, Willy commits suicide so that his son Bill would get the money of his insurance.

According to the Aristotelian definition of tragedy, Willy is a tragic hero and he himself is responsible for his tragedy. He is also responsible for the downfall of his son as he always misguides them and shows them wrong

dreams and the path of illusion.

The tragic flaw of 21st century Americans occurs due to the persuasion of false dream and wrong path of life. Willy has chosen the wrong path and always leads a life that was against his temperament and real likings.

There was a debate among the circle of the critics on the issue whether death of the Salesman can be called a tragedy. Some argued that it cannot be the tragedy in traditional sense as the protagonist does not have the noble connection. Willy's tragedy is not the individual tragedy, but it is the common story of millions of common American people. As an individual the character of Willy is too insignificant to be called a tragic hero, but it is not just Willy's story, it is the story of millions of American and when it becomes the story of millions, it becomes social tragedy. In such case the protagonist is not a particular human being but it is the entire society.

For Willy, Uncle Ben is the ideal person. He is a successful businessman and has achieved the American dreams. It is because Bill has realized how to cope with American capitalism and established by adopting the capitalism and materialism. Willy always wants to be like Uncle Ben. He shows that he is not against capitalism and materialism. He wants that he would be a person with high reverence. People should respect him and he should be a celebrity. He does not like his status as a common man. He expects that even after his death, he should be honored by loads of people and his funeral should be attended by a huge mob. It was his fantasy and false dream.

But the funeral—[Straightening up] Ben, that funeral will be massive! They'll come up 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 he'll see it with his eyes once and for all. He'll see what I am, Ben! He's in for a shock that boy! (Act 2)

If we study the character traits of Willy thoroughly, we find that there is not a single Hamartia in case of Willy. He has many tragic flaws such as disloyalty, short tempered, proud, deceiving, and headstrong mind. One more difference is there between Aristotelian concept of tragedy and this tragedy is that, in Aristotelian tragedy, eventually, the hero learns lot of things from his mistakes and he is shown as an enlightened person in the end. But in Willy's case, till the end of his life, he is unable to be enlightened and he never comes out of his illusion. He has never gone from the phase of self-realization. In the end the audience feels sympathy for Willy which creates a sense of pathos (as termed by Aristotelian) among the audience. There is no twist to the tragic note of Willy, which may create fear among the audience, but there is a sense of pity for the Willy and his tragic end.

Millers play “ Death of the Salesman” depicts the tragic story of the common man in 1940's America, who strives to create his identity in the world of uncertainty. Willy is the modern tragic hero. The concept of Aristotelian tragic hero has been altered from modern perspectives. The whole society of common American people was adversely affected by the materialism and capitalism in America. The dreadful impact of WWII was still there and the dreams had been shattered and crushed by the capitalism. Hence Willy is the