

# Comparing death of a salesman and fences

Literature, Russian Literature



When it comes to comparing and contrasting two different cultures and morals the differences can be night and day. In *Death Of A Salesman* and *Fences*, these stories follow two middle-class families around the same time period (late 1940-1950's), who are both facing problems within their own household's. From marital issues to failing father/son relationships, both of these stories paint a picture to the audience of what life in an urban family living in that time setting was like through the author's eyes.

And even yet with all the things between these two plays that make them alike, there are also many things that make them very different. In *Fences* we follow Troy Maxon, an ex baseball player and hard headed "family man" who takes pride in providing for his family with his job as a garbage man. Along side him is his wife, Rose Maxon, a "tell it like it is" type of woman who cares for her family and wants nothing more than to keep it together. Their teenage son, Cory Maxon, a high school football player with college bound dreams and the talent to take him there.

And then there is Lyons, Troy's son from a previous relationship, and a talented jazz musician who has a hard time finding a source of income. In *Death Of A Salesman* we follow Willy Lowman, a troubled traveling salesman who wants nothing more than to see himself and his family succeed in the "American Dream". His wife Linda Lowman, a loving woman with a big heart, who would do anything to keep her husband and her sons happy. And their two sons Happy and Biff.

Happy being a sex crazy ladies man working in a department store, while Biff is an unemployed ex high school football star who turned to a life of stealing after failing high school and not graduating. Both Troy and Willy have two

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sons and even their children are alike in ways, both Biff and Corey played/play football and both were/are very good at it, but Biff lost his ambition soon after high school though his father wished he would have done better with himself. While Corey tried to use his talent at football to take himself places but Troy selfishly stood in his way.

Willy's son Happy constantly stands in Biff's shadow while Lyons is Troy's son from a different mother who never saw Troy through his childhood due to Troy being in jail, unlike Corey, so it's almost as if he stands in Corey's shadow as well though Troy nor Rose treats him any differently. Unlike Willy and Linda, who seem to put more attention towards Biff than Happy. So it seems that the boys all have similarities between them but the way they are treated by their mother and father are where the differences lay.

In *Death Of A Salesman* Willy treats his wife Linda, as though he does not appreciate her. He talks to her disrespectfully and even ignores her on occasion, and even though he does this blatantly she still stands by his side and acts as his support. In *Fences* Troy treats his wife Rose with a certain amount of respect but when he does step out of line Rose is not the one to take it. A perfect example of this would be the fact that both men had found a way to have an extramarital affair, and both for valid reasons. Linda chose to ignore the fact that Willy was having an affair.

By ignoring what was happening, Linda did not have to admit to herself what was going on, and saved herself some difficult choices. Linda was not strong enough to make those choices. When Rose found out that Troy had been unfaithful she chose to leave him. And even though it all she still chose to take care of the child he had with another woman, because in her eyes Troy

was guilty, and not the child. This shows how strong Rose is in comparison to Linda. Both *Death Of A Salesman* and *Fences* were very dramatic plays that touched on many subjects that people even today can relate to.

From infidelity, to fighting, to lost friendships/relationships and even death. both stories left the audiences with something to think about in their own personal lives and both stories made sure to create a character everyone could relate to in some way. there are common themes that run throughout both stories. Among these are two, hard working men that can be a bit disillusioned by life. The main characters of each story may be similar in many ways but both authors made it a point to highlight the differences between them and the differences between the stories themselves.