

Death of a salesman- the flute as a motif

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Death Of A Salesman The Flute as a Motif A motif is anything that occurs several times in the course of a literary work. Because they are repeated so often, motifs tend to show what is permanent in a character, a society or even the human condition. Even so, they also serve to establish a tone, a way of feeling about what is happening. In the story of " Death of a Salesman," the flute serves as a vital motif throughout the entire play.

Firstly, the flute is used to show failure to the past which Willy lived and it then begins to live it on the present.

Throughout the play, it is clear to see in many of the scenes, where Willy beings to drift off that the flute appears most of the time. This is a way to show that Willy is having a " regression" or a sort of failure. On page 18 of the novel, " He breaks off in amazement and fright as the flute is heard distantly (Miller, page18).

" This fact, that Willy breaks off, a sign of losing his temper and having one of his usual, but strange attacks, showing his sickness and the disturbance in his mind. The flute here is heard at a distance in order to show that Willy is slightly going out of his mind.

Also, the flute is also a way for Willy to remember his father who was one of Willy's most important role models. Throughout the play, it associates the playing of the flute with Willy remembering his father, who would make and sell flutes. So, while reminding him of his father, the flute takes him back in time to his young years and his childhood. " Father was a very great and a very wild-hearted man. We would start in Boston. And he'd toss the whole

family into the wagon, and then he'd drive the team right across the country; through Ohio, and Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and all the Western States.

And we'd stop in the towns and sell the flutes that he's made on the way (Miller, page 49). " So, this reminds him of his father and he wishes he could be just like him as he was " free" and fulfilled his goals and dreams. He's remembering his childhood as he talks about the different places that they traveled. Furthermore, the flute is used to show disturbance within the mind of a character or " sickness" which Willy is suffering. It's used to show the audience that Willy is sick and that his mind is also sick. Each time he dreams or drifts off to imagination, the flute is heard in the background or at a distance.

" From the right, Willy Loman, the Salesman enters, carrying two large sample cases. The flute plays on. He hears but is not aware of it (Miller, page 12). " The connotation of the flute here is being used as a way to show disturbance within Willy's mind because he is not aware of the flute although it is being played. " The flute has faded away. He sits on the bed beside her, a little numb (Miller, page 13). " Since the flute stops playing, he seems numb and seems to be imagining things, which is his sickness. Moreover, the flute is also used as a characteristic of Willy because each time Willy appears, the flute is there with him.

Even at his death, the flute seems to be there in the distance. " A melody is heard, playing upon a flute (Miller, page 11). " The opening stage directions begin with the flute and it is connected with the character entering as Willy is the first character introduced to the audience. " Biff remains a slight

distance up and left of Linda. She sits there, summoning herself. The flute begins, not far away playing behind her speech (Miller, page 139). " Here, the flute is being used as a characteristic of the character because Willy has already passed away and Linda remembers Willy.

In remembering him, the flute plays. Hence, it represents the flute as a motif associated with Willy Loman. Lastly, " Only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage as over the house the hard towers of the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus, and the curtain falls (Miller, page 139). " The play ends with the flute being heard in the background and once again Willy Loman is alone and dead while his family leaves. The flute still continues to play as the curtain falls. In conclusion, the flute is a vital motif in the novel " Death of a Salesman" because it represents many things.

It is important in showing the failure to the past which Willy lived and it then begins to live it on the present. Also, the flute is also a way for Willy to remember his father who was one of Willy's most important role models. Furthermore, the flute is used to show disturbance within the mind of a character or " sickness" which Willy is suffering. Lastly, the flute is also used as a characteristic of Willy because each time Willy appears, the flute is there with him. The flute has undeniably shown great importance and significance in " Death of a Salesman. "

Bibliography: Miller Arthur. Death of a Salesman, Penguin Books, 1976.