

# Death of a salesman review

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Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" It is often stated that society is very judgmental. It can be seen in movies, literary works, or just an everyday walk of life. Arthur Miller chooses to portray society's prejudice against the protagonist, Willy Loman, in his play, Death of a Salesman. Society, in this case, rejects Willy Loman because he isn't upper class, and because he is getting up in age.

Many occurrences highlight society's judging of Willy, including him being fired, the "spite" that he receives from his sons, and the way he alienates himself. All of these eventually lead to the downfall of a strong, determined, but confused character. Perhaps the most defeating action that happened to Willy was the loss of his job. All he had ever been in life was a salesman, therefore it was the only trade that he was any good at.

When he had the conference with Howard, he had his hopes up. Willy had regained his confidence in himself and was ready to take control of his life at a very crucial time. However, Howard crushed all of that by firing Willy, simply because he thought Willy, "needed some rest." Actually, Howard never intended to give Willy his job back. He was merely trying to take Willy's position because he didn't believe Willy could hack it anymore. This is a reflection of society's present day treatment of the elderly. Younger generations now, move older people into rest homes and try to keep them out of public view, for risk of embarrassment. This is reflected by Howard's statement, "I don't want you to represent us anymore." Society's assumption of Willy's capabilities, in this case, cost him his job. A second occurrence that displayed Willy's alienation happened in his own family. Biff doesn't believe whatsoever in his father and has no hope for him at all. Biff

even says in act one that his father has no character. Biff is a perfect symbol for society in the play. Biff knows his father has problems, but even as a son, “ can’t get near him.” Even though he accepts his father as a fake later in life, Biff tries over and over again to reach his father and to help him, but an unseen barrier prevents Biff from doing so. Happy is the type that knows what’s going on with his father, but won’t try to help him. Although it is never actually said verbatim, it is obvious that Willy has some kind of mental problem that needs some attention. Yet even in his own home, he can’t get any help because his family can’t bring it upon themselves to help him. This instance depicts the way society would rather, “ Let someone else handle it,” than take action and go against what is popular. This example is probably the saddest and most heartbreaking part of the play. A final instance of Willy Loman’s alienation is the way he excludes himself from society. Subconsciously, Willy knows what his capabilities and his problems are, and he exiles himself socially. That could very well be the reason behind the “ conversations” he has with himself throughout the novel; he feels like he can’t talk to anyone else. Willy has a war going on in his mind, and he is helpless toward ending it. He knows that he can do well in life and be the man he should be, but he just can’t seem to piece together the correct method of doing so. It’s because of this that he continually defeats himself, and repeatedly fails. Willy Loman wants to be the best at anything, particularly selling and being a provider for his family. However, his character is one who owns nothing and makes nothing, so he is constantly at the far bottom of the totem pole. Even the merchandise that he sells, which is his expertise, doesn’t belong to him, and just helps to keep him down in

the business world and away from society. Perhaps Willy's alienation is symbolized by the garden he wishes to grow in his back yard. His back yard is small, fenced in, and unable to bear a fruitful garden. Likewise, Willy Loman's position in the working world is constricted, away from everyone else, and won't let him become successful. Willy was his own worst enemy, a man who couldn't accept himself. Society added fuel to the fire by not accepting him either. It is human nature to be judgemental of things, and especially people. Willy Loman was no exception to this. Yet, Willy was already down, and society kept him there. He lost the job that he'd worked at faithfully for thirty-four years, simply because the younger owner couldn't bear with having an older, less successful salesman representing the company. Willy is sealed off from his family, especially from his sons, because of an unseen force that causes an inability to communicate. Finally, he can't fight the predicament that society placed him in, because deep down, he can't accept the fact that he's not what he wanted to be in life. All of the actions that alienated Willy Loman validate the prejudice and bias of society.