

Struggle of main character in miller's play

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



In the play, *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller shows that hard work does not always pay off in the working world. Set just after World War II, Willy Loman is working on the road to be able to provide for his family. Working long hours makes him go crazy and he struggles to realize how he really feels.

When reading the play, one will begin to see a constant theme of struggling with acceptance and a tone of sympathy throughout. This becomes noticeable when all the main characters struggle to accept certain things in some way and tend to look back on how things used to be.

In the play, Willy Loman is the main character that struggles to accept his personal conflict the most which is realizing he will not become the man he wants to be. He is seen reaching high and low points depending on what is going through his mind at the moment. This is seen in the text when he mentions, "Maybe I'll feel better in the / morning and, Oh, I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very / well liked in Hartford (Miller 23, 42). This constant change in behavior along with talking to himself throughout the play shows the reader that there is an underlying issue that is not being confronted. This thought is supported in *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* when stating, "Work-life imbalance can result in irritability, anxiety and depression and the number of hours worked correlates positively with hours spent worrying about work (Ashman and Gibson 127). With the amount of hours Willy works, he shows definite signs of all three behaviors including being suicidal. He strives to be the best man he can for his family, but he is too worried about work to accept the reality of not being the man he wants to be.

In his high points, one will feel that he is living a lie to himself and his family. This is because the reader already knows how Willy acts on a day-to-day basis. However, Willy contradicts himself when he has conversations with his brother Ben. He talks himself up when saying, "It's Brooklyn, I know, but we hunt too" (Miller 54). He tries to impress his brother, who is a successful man, in order to seem better than what he actually is. Not only did he talk himself up, he also talked up about his sons. This is also when Willy is trying to impress Ben by saying, "That's just the way I'm bringing them up, Ben" "rugged, well / liked, all-around" (Miller 53). Willy tries his hardest to be like his brother by showing off things he never does. These little white lies ultimately show the reader that this is another way Willy cannot accept that his hard work will not pay off.

One will see when reading that Biff is the next character that struggles with his personal conflict almost as much as his father. Biff is much like Willy with how he deals with situations along with his temper. However, Biff's conflict is commitment. Early in the play we learn that Biff is always on the move and has had twenty or thirty different kinds / of jobs (Miller 30). When each job results in the same outcome, we begin to learn that he struggles with commitment. Similarly, we can see this in his relationship with his family. During Willy's flashbacks, one notices that Biff and his father were inseparable when he was younger and sees his commitment issues begin when he finds out about his father's affair, Willy looks at Biff, who is staring open-mouthed and horrified at The Woman (Miller 113). From this moment the reader learns that the tension between Biff and Willy is caused by a

bigger problem. Biff's encounter with his dad keeps him from being able to have a stable job, stable relationship, and even a stable life.

Moreover, Miller's *Death of a Salesman* provides the reader with a sympathetic tone amongst the characters. In Willy's flashbacks, he is a completely different person than the one he is at the present time. For example, when he talks to Biff about girls he mentions, You want to watch your schooling / first. Then when you're all set, there'll be plenty of girls for a boy like / you (Miller 35). When Willy looks back on the past, he misses what he used to have with Biff. In these circumstances one will feel that he wishes he would have changed some of the choices that made in his life.

On another hand, Linda also portrays a sympathetic tone throughout the play. When dealing with Willy, Linda is always calm and collected and knows that she brings him help. This is shown in the beginning of the play when she says, Your mind is overactive, and / the mind is what counts dear (Miller 23). Linda acknowledges his feelings and realizes how to deal with Willy in his low moments. She keeps him from getting deeper into his thoughts by giving possibilities of why he is feeling the way he is. This is important because it shows the reader that Linda loves Willy under any circumstance, even though he does not treat her as well. Linda displays a sympathetic tone towards Willy even when not talking to him. While arguing with her sons, she questions, And what goes through a man's mind, driving seven hundred miles / home without having earned a cent? Why shouldn't he talk to him- / self? Why? (Miller 61). Linda wonders why her sons make fun of Willy after all that he has done to provide for them and feels sympathetic for Willy. She

takes up for him because she knows his hard work is causing him to struggle mentally and physically. This is important because it shows the reader that Linda wants Willy to know that she is there for him until the very end.

After reading the play, one will linger on the thought of why Miller Included the thought process of Willy throughout his life like he did. Nonetheless, they will take away the fact that they need to look for signs for mental health issues and be there for anyone that struggles with something they cannot achieve. It will be an acknowledgement of mental health that will save a life of someone who feels they have no worth.