

# Every father's dream

[People, Barack Obama](#)



Parents play an important role in the fulfillment of their children's dreams. Often, before a child can even start to dream, parents have already made a mental picture of what they want their children to be in the future. In Barack Obama's (2004) "Dreams from My Father," we see the important role a father plays in the success of the incumbent president. On the contrary, in Arthur Miller's (1949) "Death of Salesman," the author illustrates how a father's dream and example can sometimes destroy a son's future.

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In this paper, we compare and contrast the dreams of the fathers in the two works in order to derive a lesson every parent and child should know. Published in 2004, "Dreams from My Father" narrates the life of the 44th president of the United States. The novel is told by the president himself, who was then elected for the senate. In his story, Obama describes how his father's ambition and examples helped shape and made him realize his own dreams.

The story narrates the young Barack Obama Sr. as a clever and intelligent yet mischievous student during his early years.

Unable to finish college in his homeland, he lands a clerical job until two female missionaries help him find scholarship to a university in Hawaii. His perseverance to finish his studies later provides inspiration to his son, Barry. In his letter to his son, the father says, "Like water finding its level, you will arrive at a career that suits you" (45). This expresses the father's wish for his son to find his own destiny, his own place in society. Finding one's place in society is possible through education. Although Barack Sr.

does not emphasize to Barry the importance of education, the boy realizes this through his parents' examples. Specifically, the father's own perseverance to gain further studies serves as example for the son to follow. Likewise, his words during their last meeting echo and translate in Barry's mind as, " You do not work hard enough, Barry. You must help in your people's struggle. Wake up, black man (126)! " These words serve as Barry's motivation to persevere in all the struggles and responsibilities he has to face. In the play, " Death of a Salesman," the father, Willy Loman has the same dreams for his son, Biff.

He wishes for him to find his place in society, to be the best he can be. However, since Biff relies too much on his father's examples, he becomes disappointed when he finds out that all the while, his father has not been true to his mother. The scene in the hotel where Biff finds out about Willy's other woman devastates him, and ruins his life later on. Due to this, he decides not to attend the summer school and finish his studies. Considering his actions, Willy can be blamed for Biff's inability to reach his dreams. The boy's mindset is very much affected by his father's actions.

In contrast to Obama Sr. who serves his country and continues his studies, Willy shares in the disappointment of his son. These examples show us the important role of the father in giving advice to their sons, and in setting a good example. Despite the fact that Obama leaves his son to his wife, the good memory he leaves the boy serves as a good foundation for the child. Moreover, as the older Obama expresses in one of his letters to his son, for one to realize his place in society, one has to know one's people, where he belongs (66).

To do this, Barry searches for his roots and listens to what his grandmother's story. From this, he finds out the struggles of his grandfather and his father, and finds strength in their sacrifices and dreams. The dreams of his father to be fully educated and to serve his country are enough to inspire Barry to move on and be the best he can be. In contrast, the theme of knowing oneself in order to realize one's dreams is expressed differently in "Death of a Salesman." In the play, Willy's high expectations of Biff disappoint the son more. Biff insists to his father,

"Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more (99)" Despite this, Willy still believes in Biff. He believes that if given a chance and a big sum to start on his own, his son can be successful. This is the reason why Willy sacrifices his life at the end, so that his sons can have what it takes to start on their own. The legacies of the two fathers are totally different. Obama leaves to his son an identity and reputation he can live with, while Loman bequeathes a good sum, which he is unable to provide his sons during his lifetime.

Either way, the examples of the two fathers imply a general truth about fathers, that every one of them desires the best for their children.

References Miller, Arthur. (1949). Death of a salesman. Retrieved April 29, 2009, from [http://www.franklang.ru/download/Miller\\_Death\\_of\\_a\\_Salesman\\_\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.franklang.ru/download/Miller_Death_of_a_Salesman__pdf.pdf)

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