

Example of falsehood of the american dream in arthur millers death of a salesman ...

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Death of a Salesman, written by American playwright Arthur Miller, is a play that revolves around the life and times of Willy Loman. After failing to attain his goals in life, Willy degenerates into a state of denial and frustration. For instance, he is angry with his sons, Biff and Happy, because they have not amounted to anything. It is at this point that the two boys hatch a plan to pacify their father. Biff would go back to his former employer and make a business proposal. However, the plan does not materialize because the employer can no longer recognize Biff. Nevertheless, Willy, Biff and Happy later meet in a restaurant and a brief disagreement ensues. Upset by their father's admission to having an affair, the two boys' dash out of the restaurant leaving him behind. On reaching their home, however, their mother reprimands them for leaving Willy behind. Biff makes a return to the restaurant, hugs his father and makes an emotional plea to be accepted the way he is. Convinced that Biff will now become a successful businessman, Willy crashes his car intentionally so that Biff can use the car insurance to start a business. In Arthur Miller's Death of a salesman, the author uses literary elements such as symbolism, irony and characterization to develop the central theme of the false belief in the American Dream.

Willy strongly believes in the American dream. He harbors the view that a personally attractive and well liked man of his nature will certainly attain the promised American Dream. He also sets high standards for his sons, Biff and Happy. As a young man, Willy outlines his vision " What could be more satisfying than to.. be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people? When he died, hundreds of salesman and buyers were at his funeral". However, Willy's perspective of the American Dream differs

significantly from the conventional perspective. For example, he believes physical attractiveness will deliver his dreams in life. This is contrary to the traditional perspective of the American Dream that encourages people to work hard to attain their personal goals. It is also ironical that Willy dislikes people who work hard. For example, he hates Bernard because he considers him a nerd. The disparity between Willy's personal view and the conventional view of the American Dream reveals the use of irony as a literary device meant to develop the central theme. The author deliberately uses irony in order to juxtapose the false sense of the American Dream with the reality of living in the country. In the end, when he is unable to become the great salesman he always wants to be, Willy extends his own frustrations to his own sons. He expects a lot from them, while he himself did not have anything successful to show for his life.

Characterization is another literary device used to develop the central theme of blindly believing in the American Dream. For example, the author uses Willy's character to bring out the contradictions between his idealized life and the reality he finds himself. The contradictions bring out Willy's sense of despair for failing to achieve his life goals. During a conversation with his wife, Linda, for instance, the contradiction between Willy's idealized life and the reality becomes evident. He says " I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me". While Willy believes that he is well liked in Hartford, he also admits that people do not seem to recognize him. The despair in his voice reveals the deep-seated sense of failure within his heart. The life he wants to live is beyond him.

Apart from the use of characterization and irony, the author also uses symbolism to help to develop the theme of false American Dream. For example, to Willy, the seeds represent his ability to nurture his dreams and his family. The desperate attempt to plant seed vegetables at night signify Willy's shame for failing to feed his family and leave anything significant for them. Although he feels that he has worked hard enough, Willy does not have the material wealth to show for his efforts. He has also failed to nurture and bring up his family in the manner he wants. Although he believes in the infallible American Dream, he cannot pass the same to his sons because he is not successful himself. The realization that Biff will not turn into a football star makes Willy reflect on his own abilities as a father to nurture his children. When he eventually reconciles with his son (Biff), he plans his own death through a car accident so that Biff can use the compensation to start a business. However, Willy's vision can only be achieved through his youngest son, Hap, who vows "Willie Loman did not die in vain, he had a good dream. it's the only dream you can have- to come out number one man. He fought it out here, and I'm going to win it for him".

The Death of a Salesman busts the belief that anything is possible in the U. S. The author brings this reality to the fore using the life of Willy. Although Willy believes that the American Dream is infallible, he finds it hard to make a living within the country. As a result, his psychological state of mind degenerates forcing him to become bitter and weary. Through the use of irony, characterization and symbolism, the author manages to convey the message that achievement of the American Dream needs more than imagination and empty rhetoric.

Works Cited

Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. New York, NY : Penguin Books, 1998.

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