

Death of a salesman: biff sympathy essay

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



Biff is one of the most troubled characters in *Death of a Salesman*, along with his father Willy. Whilst the Play mainly focuses on the tragedy surrounding the decline and death of his father, Biff's story is arguably also a tragedy: going from having everything he could possibly want, with many universities interested in Biff, people throughout his school looking up to him as a role model, and generally his life being good to being sent to jail, moving from one low pay job to another, and finding out that his entire life has been one huge lie.

All this makes it extremely hard not to sympathise with Biff, who is just as troubled as his father, but copes and reacts better than him. Biff does sometimes make mistakes like his father does, but he usually tries his best not to. Because of his upbringing, in which Willy taught him it was fine for him to take and use things that don't belong to him, when Biff's interview with Bill Oliver goes badly wrong, not really even ever taking place, he becomes angry, and in his anger he takes Oliver's fountain pen.

This incident proves that the lies Biff was fed during his childhood still sometimes affects his behaviour almost twenty years later. This is one of the few cases where Biff does anything particularly bad, but this is caused mainly by his upbringing as opposed to being his own choice. Most of the time though, it's hard not to sympathise with Biff. The most horrifying experience for him obviously must have been when he went up to Boston to see his father, and finds him with the woman. This betrayal completely crushes Biff.

In the space of just a few short seconds, he finds out that his father, the man he admired and loved more than anyone else in the world, is a cheat, that he

has lied to Biff for his entire life, and that his father is nobody special, and certainly is not the amazing salesman that he claims to be. The other reason the experience is so traumatising for Biff is the guilt he must have felt afterwards: he doesn't tell Linda about Willy cheating on her, as he knows it would break her heart, but equally, by not telling her, Biff is left with a guilty conscience.

The long term effects of this incident are horrific for Biff. He practically gives up living, burning his favourite trainers, and not attending a summer school to re-sit his maths, leaving him with limited job opportunities. Whilst one could argue that Biff reacted negatively in the situation, personally I feel the trauma of the incident affected him so severely that he couldn't continue living his life the way he had. After this, he is left to enter the real world: alone, and with no experience.

He ends up jumping from one job to the next, trying to find what's right for him, but never managing to do so. Also, when he finally comes back home, and tries to repair his relationship with his father, no one listens to him or acknowledges what he says, particularly Willy and Happy. This means that whilst Biff and Linda can see the death of Willy approaching, they cannot stop it, the only possible way being for Biff to tell Linda about the woman which in actual fact would probably make things even worse.

In conclusion, Biff is a character that has my full sympathy. His behaviour is understandable in the circumstances he finds himself in, and the situation is one that no one deserves to be put in. Whilst he may have done some bad things along the way, Biff always has good intentions, and was even prepared to put the past behind him and rekindle his relationship with his

father “. The amount of suffering Biff has been put through is in truth, the second tragedy in Death of a Salesman.