

Character analysis

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Willy Loman Number Number Teacher's Due Willy Loman Arthur Miller's The Death of a Salesman is one of the most important texts of the twentieth century. It changes the definitions of the genre of tragedy and seeks to give the life of an ordinary salesman great importance. The protagonist of this play is Willy Loman. This character defines the direction that the play takes and also is the person who shall die at the end of the play, posing the important questions that the play has to offer. This paper shall look at the character of Willy Loman and his strengths and weaknesses.

The play progresses through the ambition of the protagonist to rise in life. He wishes to do so through his son, Biff who had shown great promise in his early life. Willy's ambition finds an outlet through his son, whom he hopes would become something more than just what he was, a salesman. This desire of his, however, stifles his son and he is not able to rise to his potential. He however, is able to see that he is like his father and this gives the reader an insight into the character of Willy.

I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them! I'm one dollar an hour, Willy I tried seven states and couldn't raise it. A buck an hour! (Miller, 98).

This outburst of Biff enables one to understand the reason behind the play's importance. The play talks about the character of a common citizen who is unable to accept his own circumstances in life. The life of the very ordinary Willy is deemed fit to be shown on stage and this, in a sense, satirizes the notion of the 'Great American Dream'.

The ordinariness of Willy can also be a negative aspect as it makes him

prone to what may be perceived as mistakes. His rendezvous with a young woman in a hotel is an example of this. This provokes the decline of his son, Biff, who no longer finds his father to be a role model for himself and loses direction in his life. This can be said to be similar to the life of Willy, who had to live his life without his father. The question of whether this affected his life is one that the playwright leaves unanswered. The character of Willy thus also symbolises the breakdown of the family as a social unit in the United States of America. The history of his family over three generations is able to exemplify this. The ordinariness of the character is something that Miller introduces so as to burst the bubble of American greatness that had emerged after the Second World War.

Most of the positives and negatives that the character of Willy Loman has within it can be attributed to the thematic innovations that Miller seeks to introduce into the play. The characteristics of Loman are designed to enhance his ordinariness, a feature that is the most important one in him.

Works Cited

Miller, Arthur. *The Death of a Salesman*. <http://cc.usst.edu.cn/Download/c849567f-a9d0-4250-9b4f-db3b7f3670ed.pdf> Accessed on 27th March, 2012.