

The sales. the winner  
of this competition



The main characters in the plays *Death of a Salesman* and *GlenGarry Glen Ross* pursue success as defined by their ability to make a sale and achieve material gain. The characters in both plays depend on their sense of confidence to close the deal. Confidence is critical to making the sale that they desperately seek in their quest for material success. *GlenGarry Glen Ross* is centered around 4 salesmen and their sales. These salesmen are trying to beat each other in a competition by attracting the most customers to score the most sales. The winner of this competition will win a Cadillac. One of the salesmen, Ricky Roma symbolizes the face of success in this play. He is a shrewd and calculating person. He has status among his peers. "You're sending Roma out. Fine. He's a good man. We know what he is." (15) We witness the subtlety of his sales technique through his interactions with a customer named James Lingk. When the reader first meets Roma and Lingk, the scene of the sale is taking place inside a Chinese restaurant. Roma is sitting alone in a booth, talking to Lingk who is in another booth. He's trying to seal the deal and convince Lingk to purchase a piece of land. Roma slyly says to Lingk, "When you die you're going to regret the things you don't do." (47) Roma is laying the groundwork for the deal by bringing up the feeling of regret. Roma then goes on a rant about the meaning of life, risk-taking and being in the moment. He's manipulating Lingk into taking action. Eventually, Roma takes out a map of the land and says to Lingk "Florida. Bullshit... what is this? This is a piece of land" (51). Roma convinces Lingk to purchase the land by playing to his insecurities. Roma's dominant personality, confidence, and drive is evident in this deal. Roma is at the prime of his game. Roma's assertiveness, bordering on aggression, is most evident in an interaction with his boss named Williamson. Williamson

exposes a lie Roma told to Lingk and ruins the deal for Roma. In retaliation, Roma verbally attacks his boss. "Where did you learn your trade... You idiot. Whoever told you could work with men?" (96) Most people would never have the guts to speak to their boss in this manner, but Roma's confidence permits him to behave abusively towards his superior. He views himself above Williamson. In *Death of a Salesman*, we follow Willy Loman a 60-year-old traveling salesman. Unlike Roma, Willy struggles to make his sales and his career is in decline. He suffers from constant self-doubt, confusion, and lack of confidence. He makes a decision then needs to be reassured that it's the right one. He's positive he's right, then in the next minute, he doubts himself and caves in to the opinions of others. He decides that he wants to stop traveling and get a raise to \$65 per week. Willy approaches his boss about his idea. When his boss rejects his idea, Willy speaks up for himself and argues why he should receive the raise. Willy says to Howard "In 1928 I had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions." (62) Howard responds that Willy never averaged this amount in sales. This throws Willy off his game and in desperation, he starts a screaming match with Howard. When the confrontation leads to Howard firing him, Willy begins to completely doubt himself. "What the hell did I say to him? My God I was yelling at him. How could I?" (62) His reaction was the complete opposite of Roma's conversation with his boss. NY Times best-selling author and coach Jack Canfield says, "Greater self-esteem produces greater success, and greater success produces more high self-esteem, so it keeps on spiraling up." The character Ricky Roma in *Glen Garry Glen Ross* uses his self-esteem and confidence in his ability to seal the deal and pursue his goal of material success. His

confidence spirals upwards, whereas Willy Loman suffers from a lack of confidence and this eventually leads to self-doubt, depression and a tragic suicide. Both plays address the theme that confidence, or lack of, have direct implication for an individual's ability to successfully seal the deal.