

Comparison essay between catcher in the rye and death of a salesman



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Pressures In Human Society A common idea presented in literature is the issue of the freedom of the individual in the constant pressures of society. In the play "Death of a Salesman" by, Arthur Miller, Willy Loman is a good example of this, as well as a sixteen year old boy named Holden Caulfield in the novel "The Catcher in the Rye" by, J.

D Salinger. They are both men living in a controlling society, and feel it is too hard to keep up with all of the expectations. Holden is always looking at the world in a negative way, pointing out the negativity in everyone, and everything around him. Willy on the other hand is an old man with two children, who is constantly pressuring his son Biff Loman to become something worth living for. They are both men in a monetary based society who are both looking for some respect, and can not cope responsibly with how they earn that respect.

In the novel Death of a Salesman the character named Willy Loman is an insecure self diluted traveling salesman who wants to achieve one thing in life, what he calls the American dream. Willy has deluded himself all his life about being a big success in the business world. Willy has a loving loyal wife, Linda, and two sons, Biff and Happy. Biff is his oldest son who is thirty four years old, and the one who Willy puts the most pressure on to do well in life.

Willy is constantly pressuring Biff to become something important, to go to university and get a well respected job, just so he will be accepted and "be somebody" in society. While Biff just wants to do what he loves, and could care less about being accepted in the materialistic world. . "I saw the things that I love in this world. The work, and the food, and the time to sit and

smoke, and I looked at the pen and I thought, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be . .

. when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am. "(Biff, A. Miller, page 132, 1949) Willy has this image in his head that if you have money, and object-oriented goods, that you are successful. Willy feels the need to provide materialistic things for his family, but doesn't have the money to do it.

. " Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground. " (Willy, A. Miller, page 122, 1949) This was a quote stated by Willy, referring to seeds; Willy felt that as long as he could provide little things such as seeds, then those things would grow into something bigger and better for Linda, Biff, and Happy and then they would be happier.

In comparison there is another novel *The Catcher in the Rye* where there is a character named Holden Caulfield. Holden is a sixteen year old boy who has had a different life growing up. He has parents who he barely ever sees and feels completely unattached to, a brother who prostitutes his writing talents for movies in Hollywood, and a younger sister named Phoebe who is the only person he is somewhat caring towards. Holden is a pessimistic teenager. Holden has been kicked out of many of his private schools, he does not try at all in school, and he has no friends. Holden feels the constant pressure to do well, and he hates it, he believes everyone else is phony for wanting to become something they don't want to become, which is why he tries to rebel by getting kicked out of all of his schools.

“ The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody’d move. . . .

Nobody’d be different. The only thing that would be different would be you. Holden just wants to be a teenage boy and hold on to his innocence of childhood; instead everyone around him is changing to become something bigger in the future. Willy Loman and Holden Caulfield are similar in a lot of ways. They are both men living in a materialistic society, whose lives are depending completely on success.

Holden has to be successful at his private schools, or he will be in trouble with his parents, and Willy has to be successful with work and money or he will be in trouble with himself and his own societal issues. “ Life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules. (Salinger, page 8, 1945).

Willy and Holden are just constantly living their lives revolving around these rules, whether they are avoiding them like Holden or following them closely, like Willy. Their backgrounds are actually not all that different either, Holden and Willy both have been abandoned by their parents. Willy’s father left when he was young to go sell flutes in Alaska, and Holden’s parents although at home, keep sending Holden far away to boarding schools. Holden and Willy both have troubles communicating their true feelings with others; they do not feel a rust with anyone but themselves. Holden and Willy are different in many ways as well.

Starting with age, Willy is a grown man considerably older than Holden,

which means he has had a lot more to deal with over his whole life span than <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-essay-between-catcher-in-the-rye-and-death-of-a-salesman/>

Holden has. There are also very different situations of why society is putting so much pressure on both Holden in *Catcher in The Rye* and Willy in *Death of a Salesman*. Willy was so driven by society's image of success that he ended up committing suicide to make sure that his sons would get the insurance money to make their life worth something. He had the wrong dreams. All, all wrong.

" (Biff, A. Miller, page 138, 1949) Biff stated at Willy's funeral, which was true Willy worried too much of the pressures of his surroundings, it was his life and his dreams. While Holden knows the pressures that his parents and others have placed upon him, and he despises them and rebels against everything that they represent instead of following the society rules. In conclusion, Holden and Willy were both irresponsible when it came to their life decisions.

Yes they had pressures, but so does everyone else. Willy and Holden needed to look at things from different perspectives, and needed to take responsibility for their actions. Instead of rebelling from their problems or from letting your societal problems take completely over your life, your own happiness, and your children's happiness, you should find a responsible way to deal with it all, maybe by realizing the important things in your life that you do have, like your family and loved ones, those are the things that matter most. Neither Holden in *Catcher in the Rye* or Willy in *Death of a Salesman* appreciated what was surrounding them, Willy with the love of his family and Holden with the privilege of wealth to become something good. Ironically Willy seemed to be striving for what Holden was rebelling against, wealth and privilege, and Holden was striving for what Willy already had, a <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-essay-between-catcher-in-the-rye-and-death-of-a-salesman/>

wonderful loving family that was happy being together and did not care about material things.