

Twentieth Century American Drama
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Lecture - 12
Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman - Part 7

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Act II

- A dejected salesman's final days
- Willy Loman destroyed by social energies
- Victims of false dreams of their nation?
- Willy's almost tormenting yearning to be popular, to be loved
- Not the death of a salesman, the death of a father

- Inevitable consequence of postwar capitalist competition in an expanding economy – Harold Bloom
- "These people were profound believers in the American Dream. The day the money stopped their identity was gone" – Arthur Miller



Hello, and welcome to yet another session of the NPTEL course titled Twentieth Century American Drama.

So, today we begin to look at the second act of the play *Death of a Salesman*, which we have been closely reading in the last few days. So, in Act II, we come to know that the play is reaching its culmination. Even at the beginning of Act II, we get that sense in their first couple of scenes itself.

So, it is this movement towards the final days of its dejected salesman and in retrospect, we also know that, you know, in this, it is technically his final day as well. His final day, in so many ways, is the death at so many metaphorical levels. It is not just the death of a salesman; it is not the just the death of the end of his career, it is the end of his life, and simultaneously, it is the end

of his identity as a father, as a husband, as a family man something which he will be aspired for as he was also building up his life gradually from his youth onwards.

So, we find that Willy Loman comes across as a person whose entirely destroyed by the social energies around him. So, there are personal failures to which, some of which he is completely in denial about. But, there are also a lot of social energies which he finds unable to cope with, and they also begin to lead towards his destruction. So, there has been a lot of debate about the notion of the American Dream and its critique as it gets presented in this play the death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller.

So, a number of criticisms have also come up in terms of wondering whether the play is actually presenting victims who nurtured false dreams of their nation. Because there are multiple ways in which you can begin to look at this play, whether Willy Loman could be seen as a prototype of an American individual, whether the Loman family could be seen as a prototype of a typical American family. There are a lot of such questions which have been debated about.

But, Harold Bloom one of the critiques of this play he has you know also argued that this at some level presence, the inevitable consequence of postwar capitalist competition in expanding economy, there is an inevitability about it. And what makes this more interesting is the fact that Willy Loman is among the very few in the system who are very sensitive, and who also has certain private personal ambitions in terms of becoming the best father, becoming a good husband.

So, that also works to his disadvantage because there is a certain fine blend that he aspires to reach by blending his own dreams into the dreams of the nation. And that is where the insecurity and that is where the failure and disillusionment and all of these things begin to collectively happen.

Also, Willy has an almost tormenting yearning to be popular, to be loved. There is a Shakespearean quality about it, and this torment this yearning to be loved becomes a central flaw as well. That is the most definite aspect about his character, which he strongly believes in. He also tries to teach his sons accordingly, to raise his sons accordingly.

And that becomes a central flaw around which the family collapses, as an individual, as a family man, as a salesman, he just collapses without any support. And the helplessness becomes almost tangible in the play from the beginning of Act II onwards. So, Arthur Miller himself has commented about Willy Loman and the likes of him that, "These people were profound believers in the American Dream. The day the money stopped, their identity was gone".

So, we find that a lot of things come together in the making of this identity, the identity of the salesman, a person like Willy Loman, but the same set of things also come together in his undoing. So, the dreams that he has, the memories that he has about Uncle Ben, about what he could have become, there is a certain materiality about it.

There is a certain materialistic quality about it, because, you know the corporate culture, the American Dream was also about making it big in a material sense. And success was measured in very tangible terms and it is that tangible quality that leads to the downfall of Willy Loman and his family too. When they are unable to get such tangible outcomes from the dream that they are pursuing they begin to fall apart.

And what comes across as very ironic is that in certain other aspects, Willy Loman and his family seem to be quite blessed, in terms of the togetherness that they have as a family. There is a certain support system that they have among each other, but they fail to recognize it, they fail to acknowledge it.

And, in this pursuit of these tangible dreams and tangible material comforts and by equating success to a lot of things that are part of the nation's big you know competitive capitalist dream. They lose sight of what they have as a family, as individuals and they lose sight of the little acts of kindness and the little acts of accommodation that they have, you know, among them.

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Scene 1

- Seem normal superficially
- But nothing has changed



So, when the scene 1 begins, scene 1 of act I begins there it seems for some time at the beginning of this scene that things are beginning to come back to normal. If you recall at the end of the final scene in Act I, there was some kind of peace and order which was momentarily restored. We also get a sense at it. It is very temporary, there is a momentary movement, a temporary movement towards a very calming, orderly family life, but that does not last for long either.

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ACT TWO

Music is heard, gay and bright. The curtain rises as the music fades away.

[WILLY, in shirt sleeves, is sitting at the kitchen table, sipping coffee, his hat in his lap. LINDA is filling his cup when she can.]

WILLY: Wonderful coffee. Meal in itself.

LINDA: Can I make you some eggs?

WILLY: No. Take a breath.

LINDA: You look so rested, dear.

WILLY: I slept like a dead one. First time in months. Imagine, sleeping till ten on a Tuesday morning. Boys left nice and early, heh?

LINDA: They were out of here by eight o'clock.

WILLY: Good work!



So, in the morning, the next day morning when Act I Scene 1 begins, there is a superficial kind of peace and sense of order, yeah. And if you look at the language which is used in scene 1 and in Act II it is also telling of the kind of mood which is there when the play begins.

But, we get you know that it is very, very temporary, shortly. So, Willy is Willy is looking very rested, and he is also saying that he slept like a dead one first time in months. Imagine sleeping till ten on a Tuesday morning boys left nice and early, yeah.

So, this looks like a normal family, yeah and they are having breakfast and having conversations about their sons who just left home for work.

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LINDA: YOU LOOK SO TUSCU, GEAR.

WILLY: I slept like a dead one. First time in months. Imagine, sleeping till ten on a Tuesday morning. Boys left nice and early, heh?

LINDA: They were out of here by eight o'clock.

WILLY: Good work!

LINDA: It was so thrilling to see them leaving together. I can't get over the shaving lotion in this house!

WILLY *[smiling]*: Mmm—

LINDA: Biff was very changed this morning. His whole attitude seemed to be hopeful. He couldn't wait to get downtown to see Oliver.

WILLY: He's heading for a change. There's no question, there simply are certain men that take longer to get—solidified. How did he dress?

LINDA: His blue suit. He's so handsome in that suit. He could be a—anything in that suit!

[WILLY gets up from the table. LINDA holds his jacket for him.]



And the vocabulary being used over here is also very promising, very positive and very bright, yeah. So, they are talking about as a family, husband and wife they are talking about their children. They are very hopeful about what the kids are about to do, and Biff also looked hopeful Linda is informing Willy.

And they do exchange, there is a way fine exchange over here like a normal family, and they are trying to be happy together too. And again you know Linda is always you know she over does it too when she is beginning to praise the children. And they are both talking about how a handsome Biff looked in the suit that he was wearing and it looks very promising and very bright that morning, a Tuesday morning we are told, but very soon we realized the ordinariness.

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but I imagine ten or fifteen thousand. You going to talk to Howard today?

WILLY: Yeah. I'll put it to him straight and simple. He'll just have to take me off the road.

LINDA: And Willy, don't forget to ask for a little advance, because we've got the insurance premium. It's the grace period now.

WILLY: That's a hundred . . . ?

LINDA: A hundred and eight, sixty-eight. Because we're a little short again.

WILLY: Why are we short?

LINDA: Well, you had the motor job on the car . . .

WILLY: That goddam Studebaker!

LINDA: And you got one more payment on the refrigerator . . .

WILLY: But it just broke again!

LINDA: Well, it's old, dear.

WILLY: I told you we should've bought a well-advertised machine. Charley bought a General Electric and it's twenty



The daily nitty-gritty they catch up to it they catch up to them. And they are soon caught up in this turbulent day where they are where you know a lot of discussion about the insurance premium, the car, the fridge.

So, those sorts of things begin to those, the mention of those material comforts or the lack of them or you know things going wrong. They soon almost completely swallow the seemingly normal mood which was there the seemingly promising mood which was there at the outset.

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finished paying for the car and it's on its last legs. The refrigerator consumes belts like a goddam maniac. They time those things. They time them so when you finally paid for them, they're used up.

LINDA [*buttoning up his jacket as he unbuttons it*]: All told, about two hundred dollars would carry us, dear. But that includes the last payment on the mortgage. After this payment, Willy, the house belongs to us.

WILLY: It's twenty-five years!

LINDA: Biff was nine years old when we bought it.

WILLY: Well, that's a great thing. To weather a twenty-five-year mortgage is—

LINDA: It's an accomplishment.

WILLY: All the cement, the lumber, the reconstruction I put in this house! There ain't a crack to be found in it any more.

LINDA: Well, it served its purpose.

WILLY: What purpose? Some stranger'll come along,



And Willy very soon you know gets back into his earlier mood where he begins to complain a lot where he begins to lament a lot. And Linda is again back to her own self trying to pull things together, trying to bring about reconciliation and being this very compassionate and very reassuring figure.

She almost begins to come across as very unreal when she is constantly in this mood of trying to make peace, where she rarely loses her cool unless you know that the only couple of places where she loses her cool is when she is worried about Willy. So, there is this almost unending compassion and kindness and understanding that seems to be having towards Willy as well as both sons.

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handkerchief]: You got your glasses?

WILLY [*feels for them, then comes back in*]: Yeah, yeah, got my glasses.

LINDA [*giving him the handkerchief*]: And a handkerchief.

WILLY: Yeah, handkerchief.

LINDA: And your saccharine?

WILLY: Yeah, my saccharine.

LINDA: Be careful on the subway stairs.

[*She kisses him, and a silk stocking is seen hanging from her hand. WILLY notices it.*]

WILLY: Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I'm in the house. It gets me nervous. I can't tell you. Please.

[*LINDA hides the stocking in her hand as she follows WILLY across the forestage in front of the house.*]

LINDA: Remember, Frank's Chop House.

WILLY [*passing the apron*]: Maybe beets would grow out there.

LINDA [*laughing*]: But you tried so many times.



A bit further into the play the moment Willy notices that she is again, Linda is again mending stockings, he begins to feel nervous, and he spells it out too. And he warns her to stop doing that, "Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I am in the house, it gets me nervous I cannot tell you, please". Linda hides the stocking in her hand as she follows Willy across the forestage and front of the house. In the previous in one of the earlier acts, in one of the earlier scenes, we noticed that she immediately hid the stockings into her pocket.

So, the sight of it triggers a lot of unpleasant memories for Willy and he does not want to be associated with those memories, much as you know they are the woman who was an escape into a fantasy world for him. He does not want to be associated with the woman or he does not want to be associated with those kinds of memories which would foreground his infidelity. That makes him a lesser man in his own eyes.

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[As WILLY vanishes, LINDA waves to him. Suddenly the phone rings. She runs across the stage and into the kitchen and lifts it.]

LINDA: Hello? Oh, Biff! I'm so glad you called, I just . . . Yes, sure, I just told him. Yes, he'll be there for dinner at six o'clock, I didn't forget. Listen, I was just dying to tell you. You know that little rubber pipe I told you about? That he connected to the gas heater? I finally decided to go down the cellar this morning and take it away and destroy it. But it's gone! Imagine? He took it away himself, it isn't there! [She listens.] When? Oh, then you took it. Oh—nothing, it's just that I'd hoped he'd taken it away himself. Oh, I'm not worried, darling, because this morning he left in such high spirits, it was like the old days! I'm not afraid any more. Did Mr. Oliver see you? . . . Well, you wait there then. And make a nice impression on him, darling. Just don't perspire too much before you see him. And have a nice time with Dad. He may have big news too! . . . That's right, a



So, towards the end of this scene, Linda continues to be in the sense of denial. So, in the previous scene, when the actor I even act I ended, we realize that the family discusses the suicidal tendencies that Willy Loman has. And Biff had removed that rubber hose which you know Linda feared that he would be using, Willy Loman will be using to kill himself, yeah. So, Linda of course, knew that Biff was the one who had removed it, but in this scene towards the end of scene one, she begins to act in you know complete denial, just the way she does most of the times.

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and lifts it.]

LINDA: Hello? Oh, Biff! I'm so glad you called, I just . . . Yes, sure, I just told him. Yes, he'll be there for dinner at six o'clock, I didn't forget. Listen, I was just dying to tell you. You know that little rubber pipe I told you about? That he connected to the gas heater? I finally decided to go down the cellar this morning and take it away and destroy it. But it's gone! Imagine? He took it away himself, it isn't there! *[She listens.]* When? Oh, then you took it. Oh—nothing, it's just that I'd hoped he'd taken it away himself. Oh, I'm not worried, darling, because this morning he left in such high spirits, it was like the old days! I'm not afraid any more. Did Mr. Oliver see you? . . . Well, you wait there then. And make a nice impression on him, darling. Just don't perspire too much before you see him. And have a nice time with Dad. He may have big news too! . . . That's right, a New York job. And be sweet to him tonight, dear. Be loving to him. Because he's only a little boat looking for a



If you look at this very brief excerpt this is Linda talking to Biff over the phone

"Yes, hello, Biff I just told him. Yes, he will be there for dinner at 6 o'clock I did not forget. Listen I was just dying to tell you, you know that little rubber pipe I told you about, that he connected to the gas heater? I finally, decided to go down the cellar this morning and take it away and destroy it. But, it is gone imagine he took it away himself it is not there". She listens, "When? Oh, then you took it, oh nothing it is just that I had hoped he had taken it away himself". So, she is living in this complete denial hoping that he will come back, he will recover from this mental deterioration that he has been suffering for some time now. "Oh I am not worried darling because this morning he left in such high spirits, it was like the old days".

So, she is willingly forgetting the second half of the conversation that Willy Loman and Linda had, where Willy was again beginning to deteriorate. You know because that is there you know these concerns and this sense of insecurity, the sense of failure, this disillusionment and his bad temperament its always there.

But Linda chooses to ignore it, yeah, and chooses to see only the bright side of things, which is not entirely, which does not entirely work to the advantage of the family either.

"Oh I am not worried, because this morning he left in such high spirit, it was like the old days, I am not afraid anymore".

And soon after that there are these moments, there are these tiny moments, these tiny pockets when she also realizes that he is a man who needs help.

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it's gone! Imagine? He took it away himself, it isn't there!
[She listens.] When? Oh, then you took it. Oh—nothing,
it's just that I'd hoped he'd taken it away himself. Oh, I'm
not worried, darling, because this morning he left in such
high spirits, it was like the old days! I'm not afraid any more.
Did Mr. Oliver see you? . . . Well, you wait there then.
And make a nice impression on him, darling. Just don't per-
spire too much before you see him. And have a nice time
with Dad. He may have big news too! . . . That's right, a
New York job. And be sweet to him tonight, dear. Be lov-
ing to him. Because he's only a little boat looking for a
harbor. [She is trembling with sorrow and joy.] Oh, that's won-
derful, Biff, you'll save his life. Thanks, darling. Just put your
arm around him when he comes into the restaurant. Give
him a smile. That's the boy . . . Good-bye, dear . . . You
got your comb? . . . That's fine. Good-bye, Biff dear.

*[In the middle of her speech, HOWARD WAGNER, thirty-six,
wheels on a small typewriter table on which is a wire-recording*



So, in her own words he is only a little boat looking for a harbor. So, they all realize the helplessness into which Willy Loman is falling steadily, but you know very, very slowly, but very very steadily.

And they are waiting for each other to you know raise to the occasion and help him, but no one really knows, because half of the time more than half most of the time they are all in this denial. And there are these very few fine moments when they come up together as a family who are not in denial and the conflict, and the pressure of it becomes a bit too much for them to handle. And then again they slip back into those comforting moments of denials.

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Scene 2



- Willy's world begins to crash very visibly



So, from here we move on to the second scene, it is you know in the office, and the movement is quite swift. And this is one of the most important scenes in this play where we find that, you know, Willy almost we find that this is the scene which marks the beginning of Willy's world beginning to crash. And this crash begins to happen in very visible terms from his office. And many other things, you know, most of the things that so far that the reader and the audience were aware of, just through Willy's recollections, we are now witnessing it. So, this is this exchange between Willy and Howard, and we realize that it is not a conversation which is going well, and Willy is about to lose his job.

But, Willy is also trying to buy time by you know bringing up very happy memories and hoping that he will be able to persuade Howard into letting him keep his job. But, we realize that none of these things works because they seem to be inhabiting two different worlds altogether. Their sense of logic, their value system, everything seems to be entirely different.

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party here? You said you'd try to think of some spot for me here in town.

HOWARD: With us?

WILLY: Well, sure.

HOWARD: Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember. Well, I couldn't think of anything for you, Willy.

WILLY: I tell ya, Howard. The kids are all grown up, y'know. I don't need much any more. If I could take home—well, sixty-five dollars a week, I could swing it.

HOWARD: Yeah, but Willy, see I—

WILLY: I tell ya why, Howard. Speaking frankly and between the two of us, y'know—I'm just a little tired.

HOWARD: Oh, I could understand that, Willy. But you're a road man, Willy, and we do a road business. We've only got a half-dozen salesmen on the floor here.

WILLY: God knows, Howard, I never asked a favor of any man. But I was with the firm when your father used to carry you in here in his arms.



So, when Willy is trying to convince him in very emotional ways by confessing that he is actually very tired,

“Speaking frankly and between the two of us you know I am just a little tired. Oh, I could understand that Willy, but you are a road man, Willy and we do a road business. We have only got a half dozen salesmen on the floor here.”

So, on the one hand, we find that Willy is trying to become very emotional over here, trying to get into a confessional mode and trying to share things very honestly. But it is almost like talking to a machine, Howard comes across as a very very efficient man whose running this perfect system, and he does not have it, he cannot accommodate a person like Willy.

And it is not that he lacks empathy, but it is not the kind of empathy that Willy needs at this point in time. His empathy works in a more professional sense, and Howard's empathy works in a more professional sense, it is also about being able to sustain his company for the larger interest.

And this is a language, this is an emotion that Willy cannot comprehend. And he tries to bring in the past over here at various points in time by talking about Howard's father, talking about his own father, his own family and reminding Howard that he was just a baby when Willy started working for his father.

But we find that Howard sticks to his gun and he seems almost stubborn in his decision to fire, to get rid of Willy. And Howard is trying to be there is a superficial nicety in this exchange, but that does not really help Willy in any way.

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and asked me what I thought of the name of Howard, may he rest in peace.

HOWARD: I appreciate that, Willy, but there just is no spot here for you. If I had a spot I'd slam you right in, but I just don't have a single solitary spot.

[He looks for his lighter. WILLY has picked it up and gives it to him. Pause.]

WILLY *[with increasing anger]*: Howard, all I need to set my table is fifty dollars a week.

HOWARD: But where am I going to put you, kid?

WILLY: Look, it isn't a question of whether I can sell merchandise, is it?



Howard says,

“There just is no spot here for you. If I had a spot I had slam you right in, but I just do not have a single solitary spot.”

So, while Willy seems to be using an emotional language, he seems to be relying on the past, on memory, and on finding human emotions and relationships Howard works in a very technical way.

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gotta put up with him.

WILLY [*desperately*]: Just let me tell you a story, Howard—

HOWARD: 'Cause you gotta admit, business is business.

WILLY [*angrily*]: Business is definitely business, but just listen for a minute. You don't understand this. When I was a boy—eighteen, nineteen—I was already on the road. And there was a question in my mind as to whether selling had a future for me. Because in those days I had a yearning to go to Alaska. See, there were three gold strikes in one month in Alaska, and I felt like going out. Just for the ride, you might say.

HOWARD [*barely interested*]: Don't say.

WILLY: Oh, yeah, my father lived many years in Alaska. He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family. I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was



Howard talks about business and Howard spells it out to Just when, you know, if we could go through this exchange. Willy begins to say, "Just let me tell you a story, Howard". And Howard interrupts because you got to admit business is business and at this point, Willy almost loses his temper too, "Business is definitely business, but just listen for a minute."

"You do not understand this, when I was a boy eighteen - nineteen I was already on the road. And there was a question in my mind as to whether selling had a future for me because in those days I had a yearning to go to Alaska. See there were three gold strikes in one month in Alaska and I felt like going out just for the ride you might say". And Howard is not even interested in these stories from the past that Willy begins to shame.

And now you know Willy steps back a bit and this is not his usual you know rivalry, this is not when memory begins to overlap with his present. He is consciously trying to remember a past, consciously trying to recall certain episodes which he holds will also help in you know and saving his job.

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go to Alaska. See, there were three gold strikes in one month in Alaska, and I felt like going out. Just for the ride, you might say.

HOWARD [*barely interested*]: Don't say.

WILLY: Oh, yeah, my father lived many years in Alaska. He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family. I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave,



And this is how he goes, "Oh, yeah, my father lived many years in Alaska, he was an adventurous man. We have got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family I thought I would go out with my older brother and try to locate him and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go when I met a salesman in the Parker House".

He is giving a history of how he became a salesman, and how he decided not to go out in search of his father. You know, this absence of a father figure is also one of the reasons why perhaps you know he feels insecure, why Willy feels insecure and like a failure all the time.

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he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers—I'll never forget—and pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without ever leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. 'Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eighty-four, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people? Do you know? when he died—and by the way he died the death of a salesman, in his green velvet slippers in the smoker of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford, going into Boston—when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. Things were sad on a lotta trains for months after that. [*He stands up. HOWARD has not looked at him.*] In those days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect,



He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family. I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave,



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he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers—I'll never forget—and pick up his phone and



"I was almost decided to go when I met a salesman in the Parker House, his name was Dave Singleman and he was 84 years old. And he had drummed merchandise in 31 states. And old Dave he would go up to his room and you understand, put on his green velvet slippers I will never forget pick up his phone and call the buyers and without ever leaving his room at the age of 84 he made his living. And when I saw that I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want yeah. Because what could be more satisfying than to be able to at the age of 84 into 20 or 30 different cities and pick up a phone and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people". So, this is what catches his attention.

So, we are getting into the heart of this matter now. So, now, in we get to hear this from Willy's own world. So, this is precise do you what drew him to this job to the job of a salesman to be remembered, to be loved and to be helped by and helped by so many different people. So, like we mentioned in the beginning of this session there is this almost tormenting quality about this yearning for being loved, this yearning for acceptance and that is what precisely calls his downfall as well.

So, when he gets very emotional while sharing this story, this back story about how he became a salesman and it also puts things into perspective for the reader. But, Howard definitely you know he does not have much time for this, and now Willy gets into you know his language changes entirely. Now, he moves back from that nostalgic mode and from that storytelling mode into just asking what he needs.

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days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it. Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance for bringing friendship to bear—or personality. You see what I mean? They don't know me any more.

HOWARD [*moving away, to the right*]: That's just the thing, Willy.

WILLY: If I had forty dollars a week—that's all I'd need. Forty dollars, Howard.

HOWARD: Kid, I can't take blood from a stone, I—

WILLY [*desperation is on him now*]: Howard, the year Al Smith was nominated, your father came to me and—

HOWARD [*starting to go off*]: I've got to see some people, kid.

WILLY [*stopping him*]: I'm talking about your father! There were promises made across this desk! You mustn't tell me you've got people to see—I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't



You know he just you know, puts it all out they are saying all that he needs is 40 dollars a week it is just a matter of sustenance, it just a matter of you know practicality about having some money to get by. And, Howard is quite stubborn, and he cannot be moved by any of these things that Willy is sharing with him, neither the past nor the contemporary please of our sustenance nothing moves him.

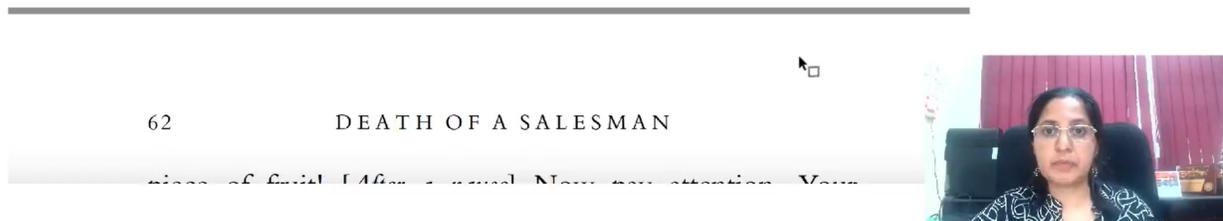
So, Willy is also you know, again tries a bit and perhaps you know it also comes very naturally to him and he is now thinking about how he was treated by Howard's father. And he does you know think about he is bringing in he is almost aggressive over here and it is a kind of tone that he otherwise he does not take in his office and here you know, he is beginning to share with this Howard about his father.

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Smith was nominated, your father came to me and—

HOWARD [*starting to go off*]: I've got to see some people, kid.

WILLY [*stopping him*]: I'm talking about your father! There were promises made across this desk! You mustn't tell me you've got people to see—I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a



"I am talking about your father there were promises made across this desk". You know he is also drawing upon this the past to talk about certain kinds of promises, to talk about a legacy. "There were promises made across this desk, you must not tell me you have got people to see I put thirty four years into this firm Howard and now I cannot pay my insurance".

So, this is a tragedy of this entire you know, this entire situation that he had invested 34 years into becoming a salesman. He had invested 3 decades of his life for us for you know working towards for a company. 3 decades trying to become a good father, good family man and he seems to have reached a point where he cannot this he cannot take this disillusionment and failure anymore .

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firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a



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piece of fruit! [After a pause] Now pay attention. Your father—in 1928 I had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions.

HOWARD [impatiently]: Now, Willy, you never averaged—

WILLY [banging his hand on the desk]: I averaged a hundred



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piece of fruit! [After a pause] Now pay attention. Your father—in 1928 I had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions.

HOWARD [impatiently]: Now, Willy, you never averaged—

WILLY [banging his hand on the desk]: I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in the year of 1928! And your father came to me—or rather, I was in the office here—it was right over this desk—and he put his hand on my shoulder—

HOWARD [getting up]: You'll have to excuse me, Willy, I gotta see some people. Pull yourself together. [Going out] I'll be back in a little while.

[On HOWARD'S exit, the light on his chair grows very bright and strange.]

WILLY: Pull myself together! What the hell did I say to



"You cannot eat the orange and throw the peel away a man is not a piece of fruit."

"Now pay attention, your father in 1928 I had a big year I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions".

And even these details, even money does not know, force Howard to pay attention to Willy, because Willy has made up his mind based on previous performances.

And Howard has this the mind of away he pragmatic businessman who needs to go ahead, who should not be swayed by this emotional talk, who should not be swayed by what a certain person had done for the company many years back. Or you know that is not how he counts, that is not how he calculates success. So, these seem to be on different pages altogether.

So, in what is more ironically over here is that Howard's model of doing business is something that even Willy would look up to, just that it is not working to his advantage. And this is a kind of American Dream that he wants to pursue where there is no past, where there is no legacy and there is nothing from the past that should pull you back. It is just about living in the moment and making the most of it.

So, that way, the two ironical sides of this dream begin to this notion of the American Dream begins to, you know, work as a dilemma, work, you know, in their posing conflict to each other. So, all of these characters they all have this immense faith in this system, in the notion of the American Dream; it just that, you know, when things do not work to their advantage, they seem to be losing faith not just in the system even in themselves as individuals.

So, that is perhaps the critique, the socio-historical critique, that this play is also trying to showcase. That the failure of a system and the failure of, you know, not becoming a success in a certain system begins to affect not just the career but also relationships and even one's own judgment of one's personal worth itself.

So, Willy soon realizes that he has been yelling at his boss, and he soon tries to, you know, pull himself up. And he even offers to go to Boston for work. This is when you know the world entirely comes crashing down before Willy.

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HOWARD: Why, you can't go to Boston or any—
WILLY: Why can't I go?
HOWARD: I don't want you to represent us. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now.
WILLY: Howard, are you firing me?
HOWARD: I think you need a good long rest, Willy.
WILLY: Howard—
HOWARD: And when you feel better, come back, and we'll see if we can work something out.
WILLY: But I gotta earn money, Howard. I'm in no position to—
HOWARD: Where are your sons? Why don't your sons give you a hand?
WILLY: They're working on a very big deal.
HOWARD: This is no time for false pride, Willy. You go to your sons and you tell them that you're tired. You've got two great boys, haven't you?
WILLY: Oh, no question, no question, but in the meantime



In this scene, we get to know that Howard tells this very clearly to Willy that they do not want, the company does not want Willy to represent them in Boston or anywhere.

So, this is where you know this is a very long conversation; at the end of it, we realized that Howard is firing Willy, and it begins to sink in even for Willy much later on. I do not want you to represent as I have been meaning to tell you for a long time now. So, it is not a decision that he took overnight this has been in his mind for some time things have been brewing.

"Howard, are you firing me? I think you need a long, good long rest Willy and when you feel better, come back, and we will see if we can work something out. But, I got to earn money, Howard, I am in no position to. Where are your sons? Why do not your sons give you a hand, they are working on a very big deal. This is no time for false pride.

So, this is where Howard also calls the spade a spade yeah, this is about false pride, this is about living in denial. And Howard will have no qualms in, you know, spelling this out to Willy.

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WILLY: Howard—

HOWARD: And when you feel better, come back, and we'll see if we can work something out.

WILLY: But I gotta earn money, Howard. I'm in no position to—

HOWARD: Where are your sons? Why don't your sons give you a hand?

WILLY: They're working on a very big deal.

HOWARD: This is no time for false pride, Willy. You go to your sons and you tell them that you're tired. You've got two great boys, haven't you?

WILLY: Oh, no question, no question, but in the meantime . . .

HOWARD: Then that's that, heh?

WILLY: All right, I'll go to Boston tomorrow.

HOWARD: No, no.

WILLY: I can't throw myself on my sons. I'm not a cripple!

HOWARD: Look, kid, I'm busy this morning.



"You go tell your sons and tell them that you are tired, you have got two great boys, have not you? Oh, no question, no question, but in the mean time". Then that is that, so he is in this mood to bring this conversation to an end.

And look at the statement he says, "I cannot throw myself on my sons; I am not a cripple". So, asking for help in his mind is something which is very, very demeaning and certainly not to his not to one's own children. For him he is this father figure that his children should look up to, he cannot be going to his children asking for help.

And even when he is thinking about his past memories it is always in such ways that it will not none of these memories hurt his ego, none of those memories hurt his pride. And he is you know willfully he recollects only those episodes from his life, only those memories from his life which will give him a feel-good factor. And for him asking for help even from his sons is like seeing himself as a cripple.

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ever you can this week, stop by and drop off the samples. You'll feel better, Willy, and then come back and we'll talk. Pull yourself together, kid, there's people outside.

[HOWARD exits, pushing the table off left. WILLY stares into space, exhausted. Now the music is heard—BEN'S music—first distantly, then closer, closer. As WILLY speaks, BEN enters from the right. He carries valise and umbrella.]

WILLY: Oh, Ben, how did you do it? What is the answer? Did you wind up the Alaska deal already?

BEN: Doesn't take much time if you know what you're doing. Just a short business trip. Boarding ship in an hour. Wanted to say good-bye.

WILLY: Ben, I've got to talk to you.

BEN [*glancing at his watch*]: Haven't the time, William.

WILLY [*crossing the apron to BEN*]: Ben, nothing's working out. I don't know what to do.



So, from this there is a switch to the past again, we find that you know Ben again makes an appearance this is largely in his recollection or his largely manufactured in Willy's memory. And we will find this time switch operating in very beautiful and subtle ways over here right after Willy faces, maybe you know, one of the biggest challenges in his life where he is almost fired from his job.

Where he realizes that his career as a salesman, his identity as a salesman has come to an end. And nothing they are the past memories, nor you know the invocation of the present value system. Nothing really comes to his aid. And this is the auto helplessness now that he finds himself in and the only repost that, he has at this point is to again fall back into his memories, where you know from where he hopes to get something to stay and curt and to stay connected with.

So, with this, we bring this session to an end. And we will continue to look at the play and examine the following acts in the coming sessions. I thank you again for your time, and I will look forward to see you in the next session.