



SCHOOL-SCOUT.DE

Unterrichtsmaterialien in digitaler und in gedruckter Form

Auszug aus:

Lektüren im Unterricht - "Death of a Salesman" von Arthur Miller

Das komplette Material finden Sie hier:

School-Scout.de





Death of a Salesman

Lektüren im Unterricht

SCHOOL-SCOUT.DE

Lektüren im Unterricht
Arthur Miller – Death of a Salesman
Literatur unterrichtsfertig aufgearbeitet

1. Auflage 2016

Copyright School-Scout / E-Learning Academy AG 2016

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Death of a Salesman – Aspects, understanding and possibilities	4
Main themes to explore in lessons	6
Exam Prep Suggestions	8
Teaching recommendations	9
Death of a Salesman Book Report	11
Order of Plot Events.....	15
True or false	17
Vocab-Rap	19
Vocab Match	21
Theme Exploration.....	23
Character Analysis of Death of a Salesman	25
Name Analysis	28
Conflict in Death of a Salesman	30
Literary Devices	32
Operation: Opinion.....	35
Death of a Salesman – Symbolism Chart.....	37
Quote Query.....	40
Willy Loman’s Last words	45
Story Writing	47
Writer’s Intentions & Viewpoint	48
Death of a Salesman Narrative Arc.....	50

Death of a Salesman – Aspects, understanding and possibilities

DEATH OF A SALESMAN – SOCIAL CRITICISM THROUGH DRAMA

Arthur Miller's tragedy, *Death of a Salesman*, is a play made up of two acts that ends with a Requiem. Having won a Pulitzer Prize among others, in 1949, it is still hailed as one of the masterpieces of modern American dramas even to this day.

The play primarily focuses on the so called "American Dream", critically reflecting on its influences on the American society, and showing the faults in American national values. The author also displays his obvious disapproval towards the man-eat-man aspect of capitalism that renders a common man dispensable, and towards mass consumerism that leads people into equating success with material wealth and goods, than with good education, good morals, and healthy family relationships.

By using the narrative device of flashbacks throughout the play, Miller introduces the readers to protagonist Willy's past. These flashbacks play a big role in providing insight into Willy's life, principles and his, as well as the American society's, psyche.

RELEVANCE TO LESSON PLANNING

With regards to the central Abitur in North Rhine Westphalia and the theme given to the English class, "The American Dream then and now", Miller's ideas in "Death of a Salesman" would play an important part in its deeper understanding.

If the lesson plan allows it, a multidisciplinary approach can be used in order to highlight the socio-historical and/or political aspects of this theme as well. The question of its practicality and the realization of the American Dream should then also be dealt with.

GENRE

Modern Tragedy

Death of a Salesman would basically fall into the genre of modern tragedy. Whereas in a Classical tragedy the protagonist was always of noble birth, such as a King, modern tragedy revolves often around ordinary people and their sufferings. Due to being ordinary themselves, the readers or the audience are apt to identify well with the characters and empathize with them.

Willy Loman does not possess a high social status, nor any noble qualities. He does however, have tragic flaws like the protagonists of Classical tragedies that lead him to his ultimate death, his self-deception and false idealism/ambitions.

Main themes to explore in lessons

AMERICAN DREAM

The prosperity that followed World War II in the U.S. led to people's belief in the immense opportunities for success, if they were to just work hard. No matter what social class they belonged to, they believed they could move up because of democracy, freedom and equality that America offered them.

The author criticizes the exaggeration of the above notion and in some regards, the typical "American Way of Life" as well that considers technology, living in cities and material success to be all there is in life. Miller warns that this can push people towards trying to be and do what others think as successful, rather than being who they really are and doing what they are in fact good at and what makes them happy.

He favours the simplicity of nature and farm life and physical labour as something that human nature needs and craves and looks down upon the industrial society, which sees the individual only as a functioning link in a chain that needs to be replaced in case of excessive wear.

Therefore, the principle which underlies the "American Dream", namely that every person can turn into a "big shot", regardless of their social and geographical origin is subjected to Miller's closer and critical analysis. Miller criticizes not the idea of the "American Dream" per se, but the misconstrued version of it that Willy Loman follows and measures his sons up against.

BETRAYAL: THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP

The theme of betrayal becomes especially apparent in the father - son relationship between Willy and Biff through the whole play.

Willy feels betrayed by his son Biff, as he was not able to fulfill Willy's expectations and dreams of his gaining success and fame.

On the other hand, Biff feels betrayed by Willy's false image, lies and illusions that he puts up. Upon finding his father with another woman in a hotel, Biff realizes what a "phony little fake" Willy is and is disillusioned by his betrayal as a father as well as a husband.

ABANDONMENT

The fear of abandonment is a huge drive in Willy's life that ironically pushes away the people he loves.

First, Willy's father and later his brother Ben abandoned him early in life and that is why he tries to hold on to Linda and his sons by lying to them. However, it is this very fear that forces Biff to abandon his father and all of Willy's hopes for Biff, once he finds out about his secret affair.

Death of a Salesman Book Report

Author's name:

Genre: _____

**Author's purpose
for writing:**

Summary:

Setting:

Characters:

Did you like the play? Why or why not?

What part of the story/plot event did you like the best? Why?

What quotation did you like the best? (Write it out)? Why?

DEATH OF A SALESMAN STRUCTURE

- The play is divided into two acts
- There is no subdivisions within the acts into shorter scenes
- The story runs chronologically through the three days, from the beginning when Willy returns from his unsuccessful sales trip, to his ultimate death
- The chronological narrative is interrupted by several flashbacks that Willy has
- Stage directions appear throughout in brackets and/or italics describing expressions, lightening, music and actions/movements of the characters
- The play ends with a short Requiem

PLOT OVERVIEW

Willy Loman is a 63 year old traveling salesman who lives in Brooklyn, New York with his wife Linda. Their two sons, Biff and Happy, live out of town, but are visiting their parents during the three day span in which the play takes place.

The play begins with Willy's return home from another unsuccessful sales trip, during which, as he admits to Linda, he completely zoned-out while driving, due to "strange thoughts". Linda recommends him to speak to his boss, Howard, to ask if Willy can work within New York City rather than having to travel out every week.

Willy then complains about his older son Biff who works for someone else at a farm, but still does not make enough money at the age of 34, but Linda defends her son. Biff and Happy discuss Willy's frequent babbling to himself especially about Biff's failures. The brothers discuss buying a ranch together as they are not pleased with their current jobs.

In a series of flashbacks that Willy has, the readers are then introduced to Willy's life-long chase after the American Dream, which gives insight into where he's coming from and what has lead up to his mental degeneration.

The readers find out from these flashbacks that Willy always wanted to open his own business, more successful than that of his neighbour Charley whom he is jealous of. Willy wants to get rich at all costs. That is why he lies to everyone and also the reason why he didn't stop Biff from cheating at school when he was younger. He always taught his sons what he believed to be true: that being "well liked" is more important than doing good in school, like Charley's son Bernard did.

Back in the present, Charley comes over to Willy's house and offers him a job, but Willy is offended by his sympathy for him and refuses, saying he already has one. Though Biff and Happy seemed to look up to their father when they were younger, Biff now calls his father a "fake", but does not tell anyone why he believes so. That is when Linda tells Billy and Happy that Willy has been borrowing money from Charley to pay the bills and has been contemplating suicide as she found a hidden

True or false

Circle true or false for each of the statements about the plot of Death of a Salesman. Next, write down a correct statement for all the false ones.

1. The main characters of the play are Willy, Linda, Biff and Happy.	T / F
2. The story takes place in Boston.	T / F
3. The truth about Willy's infidelity is not revealed until near the end in order to keep the suspense going, as to why Biff turned out a failure.	T / F
4. The ideals and opinions of Willy change when Biff explains to him that they are ordinary and replaceable people.	T / F
5. The audience is meant to empathize with Willy because they are also living in a world where the American Dream and materialism are alive.	T / F
6. The protagonist Willy wants to take care of his family the most in life.	T / F
7. Willy reconciles with Biff at the end but doesn't give up on his dream because Happy tells him not to.	T / F
8. Linda tries to discourage Willy from following his unrealistic dreams.	T / F

Vocab Match

Match the words on the left with the correct explanation of their meaning on the right. Please note (V) refers to verbs, (N) to nouns and (Adj) to adjectives, as there are certain words that are used both as a noun and a verb.

Find the correct words from the Vocab Rap that mean the same thing as the explanations below.

WORDS	EXPLANATIONS
1. to fade away (V)	a) a <u>slang</u> word for to <u>fail</u> in an <u>examination</u>
2. self-loathing (N)	b) to <u>understand</u> or realize something
3. yearning (N)	c) very <u>strong feelings</u> of <u>dislike</u> or hatred for yourself
4. to steer (V)	d) a <u>person</u> or an <u>organization</u> with a lot of <u>power</u> or <u>influence</u>
5. fake (Adj)	e) to <u>slowly disappear</u> , <u>lose importance</u> , or <u>become weaker</u>
6. towering (Adj)	f) to have a very high <u>opinion</u> of someone
7. to figure out (V)	g) very high
8. to flunk (V)	h) a <u>person</u> who pretends to be something he is not
9. big shot (N)	i) to <u>guide</u> or <u>control</u> the direction of something (eg a <u>ship</u> , <u>car</u> etc)
10. to think the world of someone (V)	j) <u>strong desire</u>

- The state of having a healthy, rational mind (N): _____
- To collect or increase something in amount as time passes (V): _____
- A feeling of uncertainty about the truth, reality, or nature of something (N) _____
- A kind action done for others e.g. to help them (N) _____
- A very slight or hardly noticeable amount (or another word for a clue) (N) _____

Theme Exploration

Read the Death of a Salesman quotes on the left and match with the corresponding theme on the right.

1. The man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want.
2. After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive.
3. I'm the New England man. I'm vital in New England.
4. I don't say he's a great man. Willie Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall in his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must finally be paid to such a person.
5. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have - to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him.
6. She's nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely.
7. Gotta break your neck to see a star in this yard.
8. You been jealous of me all your life, you damned fool. Here, pay your insurance. [*He puts the money in Willy's hand*].
9. BIFF: I stole myself out of every good job since high school!
WILLY: And whose fault is that?

BIFF: And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is!

10. I'm fat. I'm very—foolish to look at, Linda. I didn't tell you, but Christmas time I happened to be calling on F.H. Stewarts, and a salesman I know, as I was going in to see the buyer I hear him say something about—walrus. And I—I cracked him right across the face. I won't take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that.

Themes

Egotism/arrogance

—

Nature vs. City ___

Self-deception ___

Appearance vs.
Reality

—

Self-image ___

Worthlessness of life

—

Jealousy ___

False idealism ___

Human dignity ___

Retreat

DEATH OF A SALESMAN –ANSWER SHEET

SYMBOL	MEANING	QUOTE	Analysis
Seeds/Garden	symbolize Willy’s need to leave something worthwhile behind to be remembered by	I've got to get some seeds. I've got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground. (Willy, act II)	Seeds/garden represent growth, and also have a connection with food and sustenance. Since Willy has failed as a salesman, he wants to grow vegetables to provide for his family, and because he has failed as a father as well (since Biff and Happy also grew up to be unsuccessful), he wants to grow something better. Willy wants the garden to be the legacy he leaves behind, since he has gained no wealth or fame his family can be proud of.
Diamonds	symbolize wealth/ success and riches that can be left behind for others	Oh, Ben, that’s the whole beauty of it! I see it like a diamond, shining in the dark, hard and rough, that I can pick up and touch in my hand. Not like—like an appointment! (Willy, act II)	Diamonds are shiny, hard, and expensive. Therefore, they represent wealth, hope, and a bright and successful future. Unlike the money that is spent on buying household devices, diamonds can be kept and passed on. Willy is not able to attain any diamonds in life, and hence he wants to leave his life insurance money for Biff.
Stockings	symbolize the state of Willy and Linda’s relationship, and Willy’s betrayal	<p>WILLY [noticing her mending]: What’s that?</p> <p>LINDA: Just mending my stockings. They’re so expensive!</p> <p>WILLY [angrily, taking them from her]: I won’t have you mending stockings in this house! Now throw them out! (act I)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>WILLY: She’s nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terribly lonely.</p> <p>BIFF: You—you gave her Mama’s stockings! [<i>His tears break through and he rises to go</i>] (act II)</p>	Due to the fact that stockings are close-fitting and somewhat transparent, they represent, sexuality and femininity. Linda mending her stockings symbolizes her constant attempts at keeping her relationship with Willy intact. However Willy giving expensive stockings to another woman symbolizes his betrayal as he gave the Woman what was rightfully Linda’s. That is why the stockings disturb Willy, because they are a painful reminder to his unfaithfulness and of ultimately a cause of Biff’s failure in life.

QUOTE QUERY- ANSWER SHEET

Read these quotes from Death of a Salesman and answer the questions that follow.

1. Willy: I'm the New England man. I'm vital in New England. (Act 1)

Explain why this quotation is an evidence of Willy's self-delusional tendencies.

In this quote, Willy is still trying to stress the fact that he is "vital" as a salesman and especially well-liked in New England. In reality he knows that this is not in fact true, as he told Linda himself in the past that people in New England didn't seem to take to him and possibly laugh at him behind his back as well. Therefore, Willy telling Linda, and more so himself that he is still vital is a lie he wants to believe in, to escape into his illusions from the harsh reality.

2. WILLY: Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such—personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There's one thing about Biff— he's not lazy. (Act 1)

Which 2 qualities does Willy consider as the key to success (or to being "big")?

Willy considers hard work and not being lazy as one of the keys to being big, and 'personal attractiveness' or being well-liked and impressive as another.

3. WILLY: There's more people! That's what's ruining this country! The competition is maddening! Smell the stink from that apartment house! And the one on the other side... How can they whip cheese? (Act 1)

What does Willy consider as the reason for their family's lack of success?

Willy blames urbanization, growing population and hence the increasing competition as the reason for their failure; instead of their lack of good education, ethics and ideals.

WRITER'S INTENSIONS & VIEWPOINT- ANSWER SHEET

Explain why you think Arthur Miller chose to make certain decisions while writing Death of a Salesman and what his standpoint may be on certain issues mentioned below.

6. Why do you think Miller chose to name the play “Death of a Salesman“, rather than Death of a father, husband, or Death of Willy Loman?

Because the most important aspect of Willy's life and what leads to his eventual death is his job as a salesman. Being a successful salesman is all he had ever strived to be, rather than trying to be a good and successful father or a husband. He makes his job a determiner of his self-worth and hence keeps lying to others and himself that he is a well-known and well liked salesman.

7. Why did Miller choose not to give any name to ‘the Woman’ who Willy has an affair with?

Because the woman is not important for who she is but her function in the play. She is just an ordinary woman whom Willy has an affair with because he was lonely and wanted attention, but she ends up in fact ruining Willy and Biff's relationship, Biff's future and tortures Willy with a guilty conscience.

8. How does Miller view the ‘American Dream‘?

Miller views the misconstrued version of the dream as impractical and even destructive to individuals and to the society as a whole. He shows that the right way to follow that dream is through realistic goals, education and a positive attitude towards others.

9. What message does he give to the readers?

He reminds the readers to not fall into the trap of wrong dreams and to focus on what matters the most- family, peace, education and honesty, rather than living your life based on what others think of you or want you to be or do. He warns them against self-deception and running after money and material goods at the expense of everything and everyone else.

10. Why do writers sometimes choose to give characters those names that correspond with/ or that have a connection to their characteristics?

Writers want to add depth to the characters by giving characters significant names. They may hint at the characters personality, their position in society, or used to highlight some sort of an irony in the story.



SCHOOL-SCOUT.DE

Unterrichtsmaterialien in digitaler und in gedruckter Form

Auszug aus:

Lektüren im Unterricht - "Death of a Salesman" von Arthur Miller

Das komplette Material finden Sie hier:

School-Scout.de

