



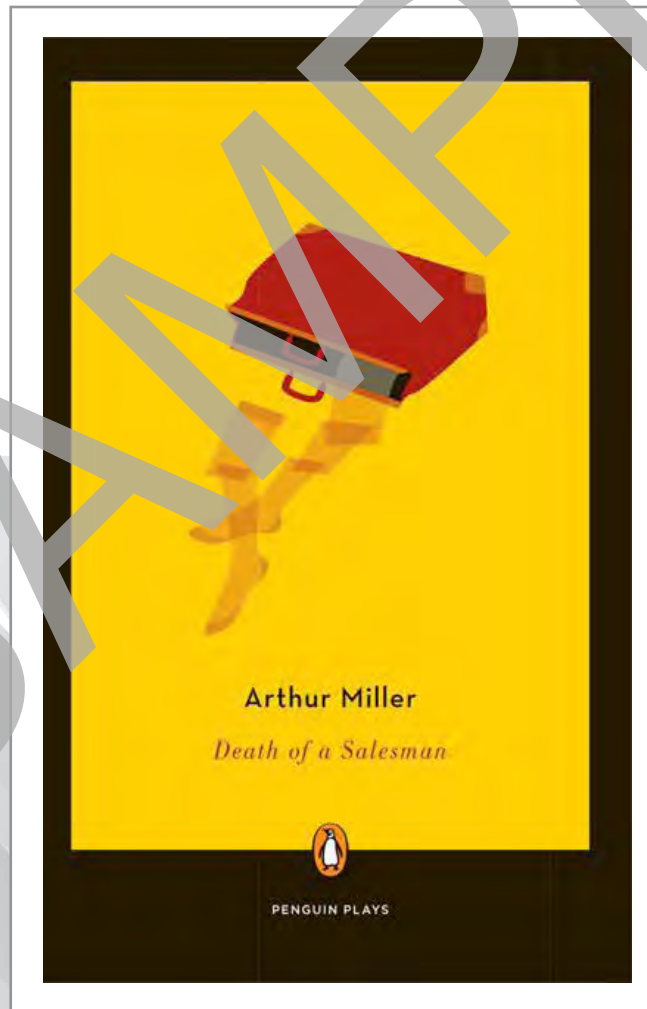
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Death of a Salesman

Arthur Miller



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Death of a Salesman

Arthur Miller

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

ISBN 978-1-50203-731-2

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2020 by Novel Units, Inc., St. Louis, MO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc.

Reproduction of any part of this publication for an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Conn Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

To order, contact your local school supply store, or:

Toll-Free Fax: 877.716.7272

Phone: 888.650.4224

3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

Table of Contents

Plot Summary	3
Background on the Playwright	5
Initiating Activities	5
Discussion Questions and Topics, Predictions, Interest Hooks, Anticipation Guide, Log, Verbal Scales, Brainstorming, Role Play, Geography, Debate, Free-write, Novel Detective, Dramatization Groups	
Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, Writing Ideas, Activities	
Act One, Pages 11-32.....	9
Act One, Pages 32-41	12
Act One, Pages 41-61.....	15
Act One, Pages 61-69.....	17
Act Two, Pages 71-87	19
Act Two, Pages 87-98.....	21
Act Two, Pages 98-116	23
Act Two, Pages 116-127	25
Act Two, Pages Pages 127-136 and Requiem.....	27
Post Reading Extension Activities	29
Discussion Questions, Further Reading and Viewing, Writing, Listening/Speaking, Drama, Language Study, Art, Music, Research, Current Events, Game/Quiz Idea	

Plot Summary

Act 1

Willy Loman, a 63-year-old salesman, returns home to his small New York City house and tells his wife, Linda, that he just couldn't drive all the way to Boston. Linda encourages him to ask his boss to cut down on his travel and turns the conversation to their two grown sons, Biff and Happy. Willy works himself up over the fact that Biff, at age 34, has returned home from Texas without a job. Willy loses himself in reminiscences about the "good old days" before the trees were cut down and the house was surrounded by tall apartment buildings. Upstairs, Biff and Happy talk about their futures; neither is content. Biff tries to convince Happy to leave his job in sales and buy a ranch out west with him. Happy replies much as his father probably would—he wants to make it big in sales and show everyone that he is a success. Biff decides to approach a former employer, Bill Oliver, for a loan to buy the ranch. He wonders if Oliver will remember his theft of a carton of basketballs.

In the darkened kitchen, below, Willy is lost in the past, talking to his idolizing young sons, praising them for waxing the car, giving them a punching bag. Young Biff reveals that he stole a football, and a tolerant Willy predicts that the coach will congratulate him on his initiative when he returns it. Biff shows Willy how he has printed "University of Virginia" on his sneakers, and Biff's young friend Bernard points out that Biff had better study his math or he won't graduate, UVA stamp or no. Willy points out that Bernard, like his entrepreneurial father Charley, is "liked but not well-liked" and will therefore never be as successful in the business world as the Loman boys.

Meanwhile, Linda asks Willy how much he made on his business trip and keeps a cheerful front as it becomes clear that he hasn't made enough to cover the bills. As he tells her how much he loves her, he thinks about the woman with whom he has been having an affair on his business trips to Boston. When Happy comes down to the kitchen, Willy snaps back to reality. He tells Happy he wishes he had gone to Alaska and with his brother Ben when he had the chance. Charley comes over and invites Willy to play cards. As they play, Willy talks aloud to the vision of his brother Ben. Charley ends up leaving when Willy accuses him of cheating. The flashback continues as Ben describes his detour to South Africa and his success in the diamond mines.

Willy goes for a walk outside in his slippers and Linda tells her sons that their father is under stress; he has been taken off salary and put on commission and there is evidence that a recent car accident was a suicide attempt. Biff reminds her that Willy has always "wiped the floor" with her and she tells him he can't stay if he continues to fight with his father. Distraught, Linda reveals that she has found a piece of rubber pipe behind the fuse box and worries about another suicide attempt. Biff tells an excited Willy about his plans to borrow money from Oliver.

-
12. **Novel Detective:** Suggest that students mark the following places, as they read. They will use these markings as supportive evidence in classroom discussion and writing about the story.
- places where characters face reality (R) and places where characters escape into fantasy (F)
 - places where characters are optimistic (O) and places where they are pessimistic (P)
 - places where you feel positively toward a character (+) and places where you feel negatively toward a character (–)
 - objects or images that appear repeatedly throughout the story (I)
13. **Dramatization Groups:** Divide the class into groups, each responsible for dramatizing one section of the play.

Vocabulary, Discussion Questions Writing Ideas, Activities

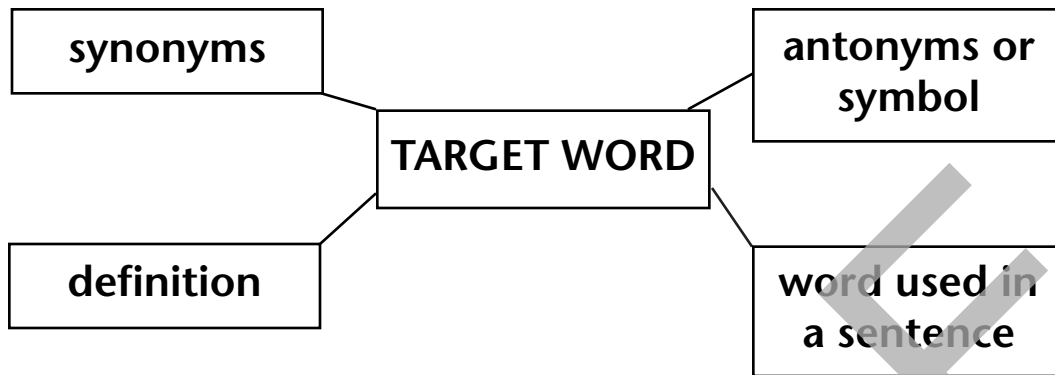
Act One, pages 11-32

Vocabulary

one-dimensional 11	locale 12	jovial 12	mercurial 12
repression 12	turbulent 12	trepidation 12	resigned 13
vital 14	accommodating 14	crestfallen 15	reminiscences 16
infinite 17	simonize 19	attentively 19	hard-skinned 19
sentiment 20	mockery 21	measly 22	agitation 22
idealist 23	avidly 23	enthralled 24	pompous 24
characteristic 25	indignantly 25	insinuates 27	immersed 28
chamois 28	approbation 28	cuffs 29	incipient 30
initiative 30			

Vocabulary Activity

Word mapping is an activity that lends itself to any vocabulary list. For words that have no antonyms, students provide a picture or symbol that captures the word's meaning. Divide the words on the vocabulary list and have students make word maps. Then have them share their maps with one another. A suggested framework is at the top of page 10.



Discussion Questions

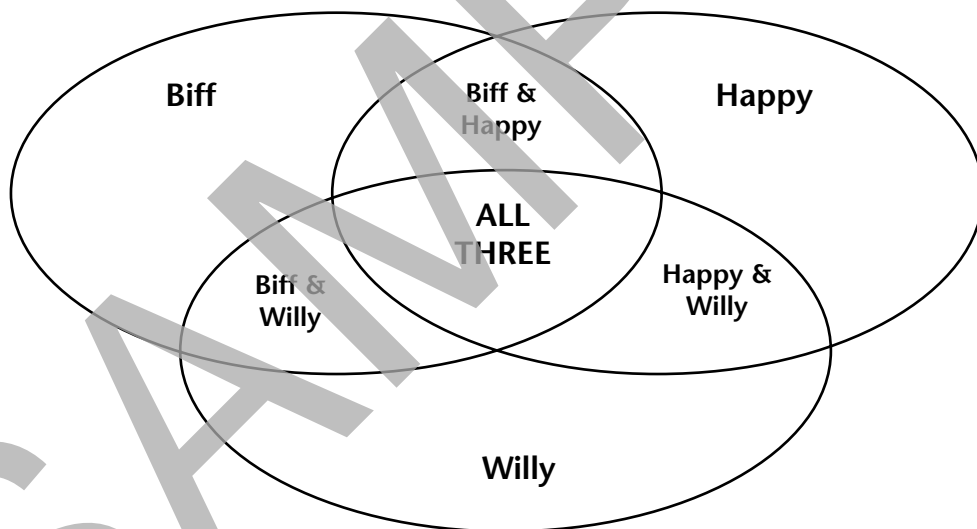
1. What is the play's setting?

SETTING:
 Time: 1940s
 Place: Loman's small house amid crowded apartment buildings—New York City

What do you see as the play begins? (the salesman's house; cutaway makes interior visible—two bedrooms, kitchen, entrance to living room) What do you hear? (flute music) What is the atmosphere like? (dream-like)

2. What do you learn about Linda's relationship with her husband from the stage directions? (p.12: Linda loves and supports Willy despite his temper and little cruelties.) What are your impressions of her, based on what she says and does in this section?
3. Where was Willy headed? (on a sales trip to Boston) Why did he come back? (He couldn't keep his mind on his driving.) How is he feeling? (agitated, upset)
4. Why does Linda tell Willy that he is "too accomodating" (p.14)? What does she want him to do? (She wants him to insist on a job in New York.) Do you think this is good advice? Does Willy think it is? (He prefers to think he is "vital in New England.")
5. According to Willy, how is Howard different from his father? (The father—"old man Wagner"—appreciated Willy.) Do you think Willy was happier when he worked for old man Wagner? In general, how do family-owned businesses often change over the years? Do you think employees in the past were rewarded for "loyalty to the company" more than they are today?

-
6. What does Linda mean when she says that “life is a casting off” (p. 15)? (Accepting loss is part of life; children grow up and separate from their parents.) Do you agree? Does Willy?
 7. How does Willy get along with his son, Biff? (There is a lot of tension between them; Willy feels that Biff is a failure.) What has Biff been doing with his life? (working at various menial jobs, trying to “find himself”) First Willy says that Biff is a “lazy bum” (p. 16) and then that “he’s not lazy.” How do you explain this?
 8. What is Biff’s brother Happy like? (salesman, big talker) What does he value? (independence, material success, women, being noticed) What does he have in common with Biff and with Willy? (All want to make money and be appreciated and respected.) How is each different from the others? (Biff is less self-assured than his brother, less of a conformist than his father and brother; Biff questions the importance of material success more than the others.)
(Have students complete a larger Venn diagram modeled on the one below.)



9. What is Willy remembering when his sons overhear him talking to himself? (days when his sons were boys and idolized him) How do they feel about their father’s behavior? (embarrassed, anxious) Why does Biff call his father “selfish” and “stupid” (p. 27)? (worries that his mother will be upset by his father’s strange behavior) Do you think he feels sorry for his father? Does this remind you of anything you have ever experienced?
10. **Prediction:** Do you think Biff will ever go out West with Happy? What will happen when Biff goes to ask Bill Oliver for a loan?