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***Death of a Salesman***  
BY ARTHUR MILLER

  
**Prestwick House**

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ISBN 978-1-60389-216-2  
Item No. 201190

# Death of a Salesman Activity Pack

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Reading****Research****Opinion**

**Objective:** Relating to a thematic concept in a work of literature by defining it through writing and art

**Activity**

One of the themes present in Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Death of a Salesman* is that of the "American Dream." Willy Loman, the central figure of the play, believes wholeheartedly both that he can achieve and that he deserves the American Dream.

Before reading *Death of a Salesman*, create for yourself a personal definition of what, exactly, the American Dream might be. Follow the steps outlined below.

- Begin by exploring the idea of the American Dream in a journal entry. What does the term "American Dream" mean to you? Do you believe that the American Dream varies from person to person? Is the American Dream the same thing that it was a hundred years ago? If not, how has it changed? What parts of the dream remain the same?
- Think critically about your own American Dream. If you could do anything, be anyone, and have anything you desired, what would these things be? What kind of future would fulfill your deepest ambitions? What would you need to do to realize your American Dream? Decide which steps are necessary for you to achieve this goal and outline these steps.
- Create a collage that illustrates your definition of the American Dream. This visual representation can be as general or as personalized as you would like it to be. Be creative and use all materials available to you for this activity, including old newspapers, magazines, and flyers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act One**

**Resumé**

**Objective:** Extending characterization by interpreting details from the text

**Activity**

Biff Loman is unhappy with his life as it is now. His father, Willy, is also not pleased. Both of their expectations for Biff's career far exceed the reality of the situation, and neither is able to fully come to terms with this disparity. After a discussion with his brother, Biff is ready to do something proactive about his future by finding an occupation that makes him happy and fulfilled. Help him do so by completing the resumé that follows.

Your first task in completing a resumé for Biff is to decide what occupation he will pursue. Resumés should be targeted toward acquiring a specific position. Re-read the conversation referenced in the previous paragraph to get a feel for what Biff truly wants to do with his future. Then, use Willy Loman's sample resumé as a guide for creating Biff's. You may use the form on the next page or you can type your resumé on the computer.

Include:

- Current contact information,
- An objective, which tells the prospective employer what position is sought and briefly summarizes your qualifications,
- Pertinent education or experience,
- Pertinent interests or activities that might intrigue a prospective employer.

<b>Willy Loman</b> "Salesman Extraordinaire"	
<b>Permanent Address</b> 1000 Easy Street Yonkers, New York 12345 (111) 222-3333	<b>Mobile Phone:</b> (444) 555-6666  <b>Email:</b> wloman@sales.com
<b>Objective</b> To utilize my gift for sales in a large market area.	
<b>Education/Experience</b> Graduate of Yonkers High School, 1908 Forty plus years of on-the-job experience with the Wagner Company. Experience includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making sales calls to independent companies</li> <li>• Following through with customers to insure satisfaction</li> <li>• Keeping up with associated paperwork</li> <li>• Taking initiative to find and keep new customers</li> <li>• Learning product lines inside and out</li> </ul>	
<b>Interests and Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treasurer of Yonkers Men's Group, 1940-1947</li> <li>• Active in other community organizations that require fundraising assistance.</li> <li>• Assistant Coach of sons' football team, 1930-1936</li> </ul>	
<b>References</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Howard Wagner, CEO Wagner Company (444) 555-6667</li> <li>• Mrs. Linda Loman, (111) 222-3333</li> <li>• Pastor Richard Brown, leader of Yonkers Mens' Group, (111) 222-3456</li> </ul>	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act Two****Review****Objective:** Increasing comprehension and retention through discussion questions**Activity**

Answer each question briefly and thoroughly.

1. Why is Willy in such a good mood at the start of Act Two? What event is he anticipating?
2. Who is Dave Singleman and how has he served as an inspiration for Willy?
3. What is Willy's impression of Bernard when he sees him in Charley's office? How is this ironic?
4. Why won't Willy work for Charley?
5. Explain Biff's realization that his life is a lie.
6. Why did Biff go to Boston? What does he discover there?
7. Why does Willy think Biff will be impressed with his funeral?
8. What does Biff intend to do when he tries to get his father to go inside and see Linda? Why does Willy refuse to do so?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Requiem****Eulogy**

Objective: Writing a eulogy

**Activity**

In the requiem, the Loman family alternately shows grief, anger, and confusion over Willy's chosen mode of death. Linda, in particular, cannot understand why no one attends the funeral and why no one seems affected by her husband's suicide. Biff and Charley, perhaps, come closest to understanding who Willy was and why he made the choice he made, while Happy is in furious denial. Write a eulogy that either Biff or Charley might have read at Willy's funeral. Eulogies should offer some insight into who Willy was as an individual and why he ultimately chose to take his own life. Your eulogy should be approximately one page in length.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Entire Play

### Viewpoints on Life

**Objective:** Comparing and contrasting mid-twentieth-century societal views with those of today

#### Activity

As the play progresses, the characters make a variety of statements that reflect both their own view and society's views of life. Some of these viewpoints have not changed significantly in the decades that have since passed, and some were not the views of a society at all, but rather were the products of delusional thinking.

1. First, select one of the statements from the list and think about its meaning.
  - What ideas come to mind when you read the statement?
  - What societal view is being expressed, or is this just one of Lomans' delusions?
  - How is this view similar to or different from our view today of a similar topic?
  - Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
2. Next, using the questions above as a guide, write notes on your reaction to the statement and prepare a short speech expressing your thoughts.
3. Give a three-minute speech on the statement to your classmates.
4. After each speech, discuss reactions to the statement as a class.

#### Statements that Reflect Societal Beliefs

- "To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two-week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off. And always have to get ahead of the next fella. And still—that's how you build a future."
- "That's why I thank the Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because 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." (
- "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You'll never get out of the jungle that way." )
- "...because it's not what you do, Ben. It's who you know and the smile on your face! It's contacts, Ben, contacts!"
- "No man only needs a little salary." )
- "It's the only dream you can have—to come out the number one man."