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Death of Salesman as a Tragedy

Title - 'Death of Salesman'  
Author - Arthur Miller

\* About Author :-

" Art is long, life is short "  
Arthur Miller

Born - 17 October 1915

died - 10 February 2005

Occupation - Playwright, Essayist

\* Early life and career

- Born in Harlem, New York

- Graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School.

Family lost everything in the wall street crash of 1929

Attended the University of Michigan  
Originally he majored in Journalism  
and got his Bachelor degree in English.

He had two siblings and three wife

Career :- Miller was elected the President of International PEN

## Awards

Theatre Guide Award For  
They too Rise

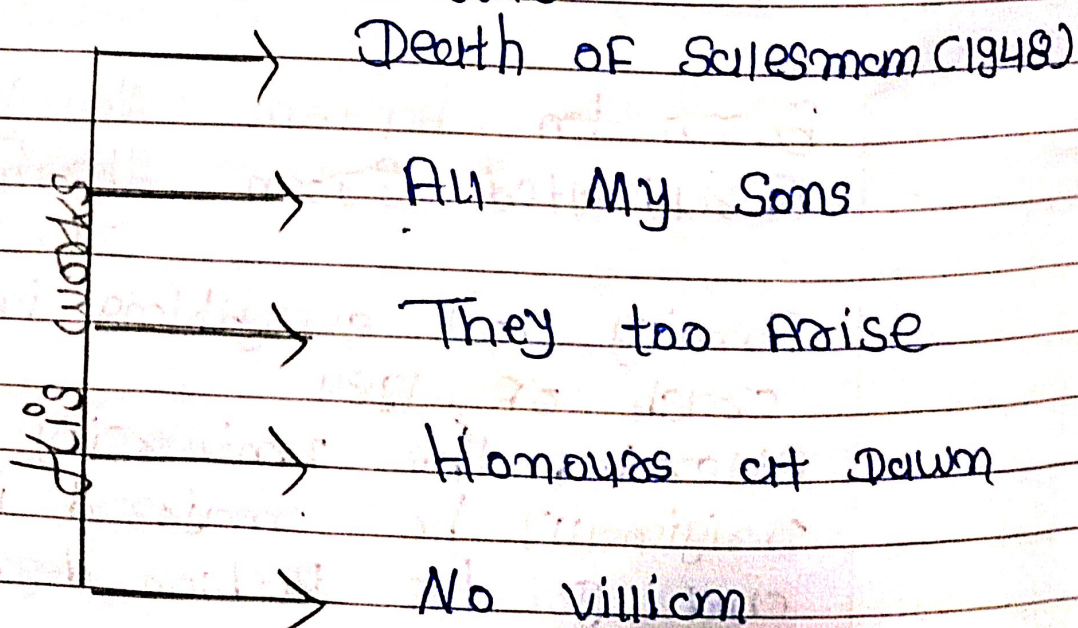
The New York Drama Critics Circle  
Award

The Pulitzer Prize - Death of a Salesman

## Legacy :

- He was considered one of the greatest dramatist of 20th century
- He wrote more than 35 plays.

## His Major Works:-



About 'The Death of Salesman'

The play had written at 1948 and appeared in 1949. It's forms are Tragedy, Social Contemporary Social drama. The play appeared at Moscow Theatre. It has won Pulitzer Prize

★ Introduction :-

The play 'Death of Salesman' written by Arthur Miller.

Arthur Miller's 'Death of Salesman' has been regarded as Family Drama, a Father-Son conflict, a Realistic Play, a play of a blend of Realism and expressionism and a tragic play from literary and artistic point of view. Some traditional critics are not prepared to call it a serious Tragedy. Some critics consider it as Pathetic Play and not also tragedy.

In this play Miller creates the process of Willy Loman's way of mind enacting his past assumption and values in the present.

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## \* Major Characters :-

- (1) Willy Lomam - The Salesman, Protagonist
- (2) Linda Lomam - Willy's loyal and loving wife
- (3) Biff Lomam - Willy's elder son
- (4) Happy Lomam - Younger son
- (5) Charley - Willy's Neighbour
- (6) Bernard - Charley's son
- (7) Uncle Ben - Willy's older brother
- (8) Miss Francis
- (9) Howard Wagner

## Points :-

- (1) Miller's views on Tragedy
- (2) IS 'Death of Salesman' a Tragedy?
- (3) The "Death of Salesman" is a modern Tragedy

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The Theme of Modern Age :-

As a Social or a Family Tragedy :-

Conclusion :-

(1) Miller's views on Tragedy

Miller says that tragedy brings not only Sadness, Sympathy, identification and even Fear, but it brings us knowledge or enlightenment. He calls it archaic, fit only for the very highly placed King, monarchs and Princes etc. Miller says common man is a proper subject for tragedy.

The tragic feeling aroused in us not only structure of hero, but by his willingness to lay down his life to secure a sense of Personal dignity.

Tragedy is a consequence of man's individual attempt to gain his rightful position in his society.

He believes that the feeling of terror and fear can be aroused by man's fight against the environment. Tragedy is a manifestation of truth.

( 2 ) Is " Death of Salesman " a Tragedy ?

Some critics regard " Death of Salesman " as a social tragedy. Some others says that it is not tragedy but sentimental play. The plot of " Death of Salesman " lacks high seriousness and magnitude. Its hero does not have a high stature. The play lacks certain requirements for the dramatic art and also probability. Moreover there is uncertainty of theme in the play. The play provides only pathos and not the real tragic element - a final recognition of its hero.

( 3 ) The " Death of a Salesman " is a modern Tragedy :-

In fact, " Death of a Salesman " is a real tragedy in the modern sense of the term. Miller never intended his play to be called a tragedy on the Aristotelian model. The classical Tragedy deals with a hero that falls from heights and evokes the feeling of pity and fear leading to catharsis. But Miller concerned

his tragedy is the tragedy of common man.

Unlike the dramas by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Miller's "Death of Salesman" is a tragedy set in our times. It is the tragedy of modern man. And modern man does not have the legendary status. "Death of Salesman" reveals Willy's mind, his conflicts, his ideals, his difficulties, his predicament, his agony and suffering, confusion, illusion, expectation and disappointment.

Willy's suicide can be described as an assertion of bravery. Willy's suffering is the suffering of common man. In India we have number of Willy in the form of Rickshaw-pullers and factory workers. No country is devoid them. Willy reflects the predicament of modern man.

140 The Theme of the Modern Age :-

From a catholic point of view the play has been regarded as a warning against meaninglessness of life where there is no religious faith. The

theme of the "Death of Salesman" is lose of conscience. It is an attack on American capitalism. It reveals some evils of contemporary American Society. The play is also about the relationship between father and son.

1.5) As a Social or Family Tragedy :-

Some critics considered "Death of Salesman" as a Social Tragedy or Family drama. It is a tragedy merely not only one person but tragedy of mother and son - Linda Biff. In the play the son looks to his father for moral direction but instead of morality he finds corruption in his father. Thus both father and son under go a crisis of self-knowledge.

Biff's discoveries about his father he suffers an emotional and moral shock like many Shakespeare's heroes. He begins to feel insecurity



indignation, disillusionment, despair and cynical sorrow in the end.

Miller has also touched upon the other family relationship - a husband, and wife and mother and son. The father dies just to see his sons well-settled.

\* Conclusion :

The death of Salesman is not a sociological study or a family drama, but it is also pure tragedy. The main purpose of Miller was to show what happens to a man when he loses the grip of the forces of life.