



# Willy Loman in Miller's "Death of a Salesman": An analysis of character portrayal

*Sarah Breitkopf*

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**Willy Loman in Miller's "Death of a Salesman": An analysis of character portrayal** Sarah Breitkopf Seminar paper from the year 2004 in the subject Interpreting / Translating , grade: 2,0, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Fachbereich Angewandte Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft), course: Highlights of Mid-20th -Century American Drama, 7 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Since the existence of life on earth there has been the struggle between the stronger and the weaker of all creatures. The species that had adapted best obtained the greatest chance to prevail in this "combat". In exactly the same way we can consider the history of mankind as a surviving of the fittest.

Nowadays it is not the physique alone that decides if somebody gets above the others or not. It's more or less the right combination of certain abilities, ambitions and values that make up the secret of success. Nevertheless we can still talk about a kind of natural selection. Although skills and knowledge can be trained, and abilities and competences can be improved by means of special learning methods, somebody who wants to be at the top must already have a certain biological and genetic qualification.

Willy Loman, the main character of the play Death of a Salesman, is a salesman past sixty years of age. In his youth he believes that he has found the secret to success. Willy is convinced that he will make it if he tries his luck in the business and starts his career in a selling firm. He never has any doubt about achieving his aim as he is of the opinion to have all traits of character and competences he needs. But in reality Willy can be considered as a loser and a poor guy who only claims himself to be at the top. He brings up his two boys in these illusions and is assured of having chosen the right way.

The paper deals on the one hand with the main character of the play himself, his dreams, illusions and wrong values that finally lead to his failure and suicide. On the other hand it treats the influence that these illusions exert on his two boys and their wrong upbringing.

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