

Study Questions for *Death of a Salesman*

Use these questions to check the accuracy of your reading of the play.

1. The unrealistic setting of the play causes some confusion for some readers. Pay particular attention to the importance of details of the setting. Note the importance of the following:

flute music

apartment houses

kitchen

silver trophy

2. Describe Willy's condition.

3. How does Willy see himself?

4. Provide evidence of Willy's contradictions.

5. Provide evidence that Willy feels entrapped.

6. What is Linda's relationship to Willy?

7. How does Linda treat Willy?

8. Contrast their sons Biff and Happy.

9. What does Biff think is Willy's problem?

10. What are Biff and Happy's frustrations?

11. Provide evidence of Biff's sense of guilt.

12. Background or exposition is given in the **first flashback**. Note the importance of each:

Polishing the car

Stockings

Punching bag

Theft of football

Emphasis on being “well-liked”

Willy’s exaggerations – What are they? Why does he exaggerate?”

Willy’s flashbacks — Of what do they consist?

Significance of “walrus”

Significance of “The Woman”

Biff’s wrongdoing

13. What is Willy’s saving lie?

14. What does Ben represent?

15. **Second flashback**

Ben’s formula for success

Willy’s mental confusion

16. What did Willy’s father do for a living? What is the significance of this fact?

17. How was Willy a failure in bringing up his sons?

18. What is the significance of “I feel kind of temporary about myself”?

19. What slurs at Charley does Willy make?

20. What is the significance of “A man is not a bird”?

21. What is Willy’s condition according to Linda?

22. Offer some evidence of Willy’s thoughts of suicide.

23. Why does Biff not fit into the business world?

24. What plans are being made?

25. What are Happy’s suggestions?

26. What are Willy’s instructions to Biff?

27. What are Biff’s plans for tomorrow?

28. What is Willy's unreal view of Biff?
29. What does Biff discover near the heater?
30. How have times changed in Act II?
31. What is the significance of things breaking down?
32. What are the details of the scene between Howard and Willy?
33. What does Dave Singleton mean to Willy?
34. What is Willy's view on how to get on?
35. What has become of Bernard?
36. Describe the relationship between Charley and Willy.
37. What can't Willy work for Charley?
38. What happened in Oliver's office?
39. What does Biff steal?
40. Why does Willy refuse to hear what Biff has to say?
41. In the **third flashback**, to what does Willy attribute Biff's not getting settled?
42. How does the flashback of the scene involving the Woman, Willy, and Biff explain the animosity between Willy and Biff?
43. What does Linda think of Happy's and Biff's leaving Willy at the restaurant?
44. What is the significance of Willy's planting seeds?
45. What are the ideas in Biff's self-recognition?
46. What is Charley's explanation of Willy?
47. What is the significance of Linda's final words: "We're free...?"