

Chasing the Dream:

The Representation of Major American Values in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

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The presentation focuses on how the characters in Arthur Miller's drama interpret and follow the three pairs of the most characteristic values in American society. These values, in a benefit-cost type of pairing, are individual freedom and self-reliance, equality of opportunity and competition, material wealth and hard work (Datesman et al. 32). They are, essentially, the set of "rules" which drive Americans towards achieving what is commonly called the American Dream. However, most major characters in *Death of a Salesman* seem to misinterpret these values and duties of their nation, or take them too literally, which has a detrimental effect on their course of life. The presentation explores how the Lomans, and especially Willy, are constrained by their own stubborn understanding of American values, and how supporting characters benefit from applying their own interpretations or rejecting these values completely, thus making the play a critique of the ideologically well-constructed path to achieving the Dream.

References:

Datesman, Maryanne Kearny, et al. *American Ways: An Introduction to American Culture*. 4th ed., Pearson, 2014.

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Tracy, Jessica L., and Richard W. Robins. "'Death of a (Narcissistic) Salesman:' An Integrative Model of Fragile Self-Esteem." *Psychological Inquiry*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2003, pp. 57-62., www.jstor.org/stable/1449043.