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Introduction to Act 2 The Fragile Nature of Dreams The Turning Point: Biff's Realization The Strain on Family Dynamics The Role of Betrayal Financial Hardship: The Ultimate Reality Check A Reflection on Masculinity The Symbolism Behind Seeds Conclusion: A Cycle Unbroken? References: Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" is a powerful exploration of the American Dream and the intricacies of familial relationships. In Act 2, we witness a significant evolution in both the characters and their relationships as they grapple with their aspirations and realities. This act serves as a turning point, pushing characters to confront their failures and desires, leading to critical thematic developments that resonate throughout the play. The Fragile Nature of Dreams One of the most compelling themes in Act 2 is the fragility of dreams. Willy Loman, the protagonist, has long held on to his vision of success—an idealized version of the American Dream where charm and personal connections trump hard work. However, as Act 2 unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that this dream is unraveling. Willy's optimism clashes with harsh realities; he struggles to accept that his son Biff does not share his vision for success or life. This rift highlights how dreams can be both motivating and destructive. Willy's relentless pursuit leads him deeper into despair when confronted with Biff's disillusionment. The Turning Point: Biff's Realization Biff's character development reaches a crucial moment in Act 2 when he finally confronts his own identity. Up until now, he has been living under Willy's shadow—a shadow cast by unrealistic expectations and dreams that are unattainable. During an intense confrontation with his father, Biff realizes that he needs to break free from Willy's delusions. This moment signifies not just personal growth but also marks a turning point in their relationship. It encapsulates one of the central messages of Miller's work: understanding oneself is essential for personal fulfillment. The Strain on Family Dynamics As tensions rise between Willy and Biff, we see how deeply flawed communication affects family dynamics. Linda Loman serves as a mediator throughout these conflicts but struggles to maintain harmony between her husband and son. Her loyalty to Willy often puts her in an uncomfortable position; she understands his delusions but also recognizes Biff's need for independence. The clash between parental expectations and individual desires creates a palpable tension that reflects real-life family struggles many can relate to. The Role of Betrayal Betrayal emerges as another significant theme in this act, particularly through the lens of relationships within the Loman family. Biff feels betrayed by Willy's unrealistic expectations, which led him astray from his true self over time. Meanwhile, Linda embodies betrayal too—loyalty towards Willy despite recognizing his flaws often leaves her vulnerable emotionally and physically as she tries to hold everything together while facing financial instability. Financial Hardship: The Ultimate Reality Check Financial Hardship: The Ultimate Reality Check Financial issues loom large in Act 2—the Loman family's economic struggles serve as constant reminders that their dreams may never materialize without tangible support or stability. As they navigate job loss and mounting debts, these realities become more pressing than ever before; they reflect how economic conditions influence personal aspirations directly tied back into larger societal constructs concerning success based on wealth accumulation rather than genuine happiness or fulfillment. A Reflection on Masculinity Miller intricately weaves themes surrounding masculinity throughout "Death Of A Salesman." In Act 2 specifically we see how traditional values shape both successful men like Charley contrasted against failure seen through figures like Willy himself who cling desperately onto false perceptions regarding strength associated solely with monetary accomplishments rather than emotional depth needed within strong families capable weathering storms together rather than succumbing individually unto themselves while trying attain unattainable goals set forth generations earlier. The Symbolism Behind Seeds A notable symbol introduced later during this act involves seeds which represents hope albeit misguidedly placed upon them since Willy believes planting seeds signifies securing future growth similar investing money gaining returns eventually however deeper interpretation reveals fragility inherent therein just like lives each member carries around themselves weighed down burdens hopes shattered realities colliding drastically limiting chances growth flowering amongst such adverse conditions ultimately leading toward unfulfilled promises lurking shadows even darkest nights signify absence warmth brightness represented nurturing mother who stood guard everything hopeful stood potential collapsed under pressure expectations imposed externally internally felt across board family unit thus further complicating matters at hand illuminating layers conflict resolution pathways reveal not only external struggles faced everyday yet internal ones fought quietly silence echoed lives lived accordingly questioning legitimacy worthiness amidst chaos surrounding every decision made hence forth making every second count something invaluable stripped away entire existence stripped bare naked devoid comfort lies told searching assurance promised long ago lost sight along way down forgotten paths taken forsaking truths knew existed all along hidden depths beneath surface yearning reach out grasp higher calling seeking liberation denied fearing unknown so intensely clinging what could've been instead whatever happened staying alive breathing taking breath awaiting next chapter unfold story continues... Keep in mind: This is only a sample. Get a custom paper now from our expert writers. Conclusion: A Cycle Unbroken? The climax reached through pivotal moments shared during exchanges laden beneath complex emotions underlying conversations elevates importance roles played during narrative journey culminating tension inherent existing relationship dynamics reflecting broader implications society faces tackling defining moments today juxtaposing historical contexts alongside modern perspectives makes tragedy timeless relatable touching hearts still echoes centuries later reminding us nothing comes easy though struggle might lead somewhere worth fighting keep hope alive midst hardships faced finding truth defines essence being human All the dreams of Willy have been shattered and have ended up in nothingness. Willy finds himself back into the world of reality. And the proof of reality now is the vision of Charley and Bernard. Though Biff and Bernard were class mates, they form a set of contrasts. Bernard is a rising star while Biff is in the oblivion of anonymity. Willy tries to know from Charley the cause of Biff's failure. Bernard is very clear-headed and outspoken. He points out clearly that Biff committed a serious mistake by not going to the Summer School, when his Mathematics teacher had flunked him. Willy is shocked by Bernard's frankness. Willy is pained to realize that despite a lack of interest in his son on the part of Bernard's father, Bernard has made distinctive progress. Charley condescends to offer fifty dollars to Willy, who is a grateful recipient. He assures Charley that he has been keeping an account of every penny that he has borrowed and will return every penny back. As he did earlier, Willy again tells lies to Charley about his job and earnings but is unable to conceal his sense of frustration and confesses to Charley. "I am stabbed, I am stabbed. I don't know what to do. I was just fired". Charley knows the pulse of the industrialized, capitalist society. He tries to bring Willy out of his delusions. He tells him that it is not because of one's charming personality, but because of one's money that one is liked in society. Charley once more tries to make Willy accept a job with him, but is helpless to see him adamant. This scene fades out and 'raucous music' and 'a red glow' take us to the Restaurant, where Happy and Biff have invited their father. The scene may be divided into four parts for comprehension and to avoid any confusion. In the first part Happy is seen talking to Stanley, a young waiter of the Restaurant who is disenchanted with life. When they are talking, a call-girl appears and Happy at once decides to captivate her. Happy's success in winning over the girl for date form the second part of this scene, during which Biff also appears. The third part of the scene comprises of Biff declaring that he has failed in his mission. Biff then plainly tells Happy that even after waiting for six hours, he did not get a chance to see him. He begins to dream again. He dreams of getting "a little place out in the country", of building "a little guest house" or two for his sons when they will visit him after getting married. Neither Biff nor the reader can account for this. Biff seeks Happy's help in telling his father all about it but Happy tries to dissuade him from doing so and requests him to tell Willy something nice and good. Happy knows very well that Willy is too weak to face reality. He has constantly been confronting and fighting the brutal side of reality. By now he has been weakened into timidity and a hard shell of illusions. Willy arrives on the scene and contrary to his expectations, confronts a worried Biff. Desperately trying to cling to optimism, Willy asks him if everything went alright. Biff manages to say that he 'had an experience today'. "Happy invites him to tell a lie by saying that it was simply terrific. Biff is perhaps tired of having to see Willy live on illusions; he is in a mood to prick the mighty bubble of Willy's illusions. He realizes that Willy must penetrate to the core of naked reality: kidding and self-illusion will no more do." "Let's hold on to the facts tonight. Pop." But Willy himself is already being tormented in the infernal fire of helplessness, worthlessness and despair. Had Biff said anything, it would just be the last straw on the camel's back. Willy shows his concern for Linda. Willy asks Biff about the results of his meeting with Bill Oliver, but while Biff is halfway through, Willy intervenes to make him say what he himself wants him to say. Biff is too distressed to be able to talk to Willy anymore. Now there is a small flash into the past. Young Bernard is telling Linda that Biff had flunked Mathematics. Willy now comes on the offensive and tells, Biff that if Biff had not flunked Mathematics, things might have been different. Seeing a pen in Biff's hand, he asks Biff as to where he found Oliver's pen. Biff tries to explain the circumstances but Willy Loman's anger remains unpacified. Seeing Willy in a state of anger and exasperation, Biff gets scared and worried. In order to calm him down, he lies. After some moments Willy begins to feel reassured and he requests his son to go and return the pen. Then Biff tells him frankly that there was no hope of Biffs improving his condition. Now Biff and Willy are at the climax of their women's and despair. They have reached a point beyond communication. Willy sinks into his dream world. In the meanwhile the two call-girls appear and a worried Biff leaves the place asking Happy to help his father. Happy also leaves the place after him, accompanied by the two call-girls. In a flashback we come to know what happened at Boston. We come to know that Willy had an affair with a woman. He now imagines that some woman was knocking at the door. When he opens the door he sees Biff standing before him. While conversing with him, Willy hears a woman's laughter intermittently. Biff tries to divert his father's mind from the woman, but lo and behold; she appears in person. Biff is shocked and surprised. Willy shows some presence of mind in saving the situation. Biff is completely shocked into stupor as he can not swallow the fact of his father's infidelity. All of Willy's attempts to justify himself and clarify the situation go waste. Biff is not to be convinced. Biff tells him that he does not intend going back to school as he was shocked by Willy's behavior. He expresses his shock particularly at his father's gesture of giving Linda's stockings to the woman. Biff is terribly angry and walks out shouting at Willy. "You fake, you phony little fake, you fake." Willy is left as lonely as ever. When the flashback is over, he shoots at Stanley and is informed that the boys had left and would meet him at home. Apparently irrelevantly, Willy asks Stanley if there was a seedstore somewhere nearby. This search of seeds on the part of the protagonist is symbolic of his desire to find his roots somewhere in this world, and to feel assured of having gripped the forces of life. At home Biff and Happy face a furious Linda. She rebukes them for having neglected their father. As usual, Happy is unaffected by her rebukes. But, Biff is filled with remorse and is eager to meet his father and to apologize. Linda stops him and tells him that he is planting the garden. Willy is shown sowing seeds in the backyard and is engaged in a crucial dialogue with Ben, his alter-ego. Here we get a glimpse of Willy's idea of committing suicide. Biff finally goes to Willy and tells him that he has come to bid him good-bye. He points out that it was he who was going to Bill Oliver. Willy is so enraged, that he pronounces a curse on Biff. Willy accuses - Biff of stabbing him but Biff replies that he himself is responsible for his own failure, and also that of Biff's. He confesses to his father that his own existence is worthless because he can not taste the good things which are available to him in life. This realization of his essential nothingness and the existence of positive side of life provoke him into a longing for their enjoyment. It is for this that he wants to live. An overjoyed Willy speeds off in his car and Act II ends with Willy's death. Linda and Willy have breakfast in the kitchen. Biff and Happy have left early, and Willy and Linda discuss their sons' potential. Willy says he wants to buy seeds and grow something. Hmm...Linda, blind to Willy's work situation, asks her husband to have Howard give him an advance payment. Today is also the day Willy is going to ask Howard for a local, non-traveling job. Linda lets her hubby know that Happy and Biff want to take him to dinner that evening—they're already planning on celebrating their successes. Now the scene shifts to Howard's office. Willy tries desperately to start a conversation with him, but Howard insists on demonstrating his new wire recorder and bragging about his wife and kids. Acting subserviently, Willy asks his boss if there's a place for him in the New York office. Howard tells Willy there's simply no job for him. Willy literally begs him, and at length, explaining that he'd held Howard in his arms when Howard was a newborn. (Howard's dad was Willy's old boss; Howard inherited the company from his father.) Now we get some insight into Willy's dreams when he tells Howard (who is totally bored) about Dave Singleman, a fantastic salesman. This salesman was so well-liked that when he died, his clients and coworkers mourned him for months. Willy wants to be like Singleman, but can't seem to get people to like him. He wants Howard to give him another chance. Howard refuses. Willy breaks down. Howard says it would be better if Willy left the firm since he isn't earning his keep. Willy begs to be allowed to keep his traveling job, offering himself at lower and lower pay rates. Howard refuses and walks out on Willy. Basically, Willy is fired. This situation is so distressing that Willy goes back into his imaginary world. He's talking with Ben again, asking Ben how he made it big. Ben asks Willy to join him in Alaska. Willy tries to convince imaginary Linda of the scheme, but she insists Willy's job and life are good enough as they are. Willy feels lost. High school-aged Biff and Happy enter and Willy starts boasting to Ben about how his kids can succeed solely on the basis of being attractive and well-liked. Struck by another wave of self-doubt, Willy begs Ben to stay and help him raise the boys. He feels unsure of himself. More imaginary people enter: Bernard runs onstage as Ben leaves. He wants to carry Biff's shoulder pads into the clubhouse at Ebbefts Fields where Biff, a star football player, is preparing for a game. Willy acts like Biff has just won the Super Bowl, and Charley teases Willy about his enthusiasm. Willy overreacts and tells Charley to shut up. Enough football, we're back to the real world. We hope you enjoy the trip. Willy is now outside of Charley's office, arguing wildly with the people in his mind. Charley's secretary asks Bernard, who is now a respectable, grown man, to deal with Willy. Bernard starts chatting with Willy. Bernard tells Willy that he's about to catch a train to Washington D.C. for a case he has. Willy wants to learn more about Bernard's case, but Bernard avoids telling him what he's up to. Bernard asks about Biff. Willy vaguely says that Biff's up to big things. Willy cracks. He asks Bernard what the secret to his success is and confesses that Biff isn't accomplishing anything with his life. Bernard recalls that Biff flunked math his senior year of high school, but intended to take the summer course to make up his credits and go to college on a football scholarship. Before starting summer school, Biff went to visit Willy in Boston, and was completely changed when he came back. Biff burned his favorite shoes (a major sign of angst, we gather), and had a huge fistfight with Bernard. Bernard wants to know what the deal was with all that. Willy is nervous and angry. He defensively says that nothing happened between him and Biff. Charley comes in and tells his son Bernard to hurry to catch his train. Charley tells Willy that Bernard is heading off to argue a case before the Supreme Court. Willy is astounded that Bernard didn't mention this huge accomplishment himself. Could it be that some people don't need to talk endlessly about themselves? Charley interprets Willy's pride as a personal insult and Willy takes Charley's job offer as an attack. The men shout back and forth until Willy breaks down and Charley gives him some more money. Now it's the end of the day. Remember how everyone was planning on having so much to celebrate? And how the boys were going to take their dad out to dinner? Good. So we're now at Frank's Chop House. Happy chats with a waiter named Stanley. They spot a beautiful girl coming into the restaurant and give her the up-down. Happy (the ladies' man, remember?) shamelessly flirts with her, lying through his teeth about himself and Biff. Apparently, Happy now goes to West Point and Biff plays for the NFL. Biff shows up and wants to talk to Happy. Happy is distracted by a girl; he's convincing her to bring a friend for a double-date with him and Biff. The girl agrees and leaves to call one of her girlfriends. Biff tells his brother what happened with Oliver: Biff waited six hours to see the man, and when he finally did, Oliver had no idea who Biff was. Biff realized that he'd been living in a fantasy world, imagining (with the help of his dad) that he'd been a salesman for Oliver. In fact, he had only been a no-name shipping clerk. In a fit of rage over the whole (short) meeting, Biff stole Oliver's fancy fountain pen and ran out of the building. Biff wants to tell Willy about the meeting and make his dad face reality. Happy thinks that's an awful idea because their dad should only hear good news. Biff tries telling his honest story, but is consistently interrupted by Willy's and Happy's hopeful insistence that everything went wonderfully with Oliver. Biff repeatedly begins to lie like a Loman, but consciously stops himself. Too late—Willy's back in his visions again, where high school-aged Bernard rushes in to inform Linda that Biff flunked math. Back to reality. Willy hears enough of Biff's story to realize that Biff stole Oliver's fountain pen, which was clearly the most exciting bit of the tale. Poor Willy loses it. He keeps repeating, "I'm not here" aloud, imagining that a telephone operator is trying to track him down. Confused and horrified by his father's behavior, Biff promises to do better. Happy tries to lie on Biff's behalf and say that everything went well with Oliver. At the same time, Biff tries desperately to hold onto the truth. The hot chick that Happy had been flirting with returns with her friend. Willy continues to have vivid flashbacks, hearing the voices of an operator and a woman. The scene shifts fully into Willy's flashback. He is dressing and chatting with a woman in a black slip. Yes, that's the same woman we saw him with before in the stockings episode. As they chat, it becomes evident that she thinks Willy is the cat's meow. She's been stroking his ego. We hear repeated knocking on the lovers' hotel room door. Willy finally agrees to get the door and insists that the woman hide in the bathroom. He opens the door and finds Biff. Extremely worried, Biff explains that he failed math and begs Willy to talk to his teacher. Guilty Willy tries frantically to usher Biff out of the room, but the woman walks out of the bathroom and Biff sees her. Willy's desperate attempts at a cover-up aren't working on Biff. Biff may have failed math, but he's not dumb. He realizes his dad is having an affair and breaks down, screaming at Willy for giving the woman his mom's stockings. Willy's mind is now back in reality. But his sons bailed on him, preferring a double-date to their suffering father. Willy pulls himself together and urgently asks Stanley (the waiter) where the nearest seed store is (remember how he wanted to plant things earlier that morning?). (Click the summary infographic to download.) After their night on the town, Biff and Happy return home to their angry mother. Linda shouts at Biff and Happy for ditching Willy at the restaurant for some stupid girls. Biff demands to see Willy, but she won't let him. Biff finds his dad out back on his hands and knees planting seeds. He's talking aloud to himself. Back in Willy's tormented mind, Willy is having a conversation with Oliver. Biff still wants to make it big. Because there is no financial support from—Oliver, Willy feels killing himself is the only option. That way, Willy can make money to set up a successful business. Ben tells Willy it's a cowardly idea. Imagining his own funeral with a horde of mourners, Willy tells Ben it will tear him apart and for all how well-known and teleked Willy is. The scene shifts back to reality. Things are not looking so good. Biff stands over his father, says good-bye, announces he's leaving for good, and openly takes the blame for his own inability to make something of himself. Biff and Willy enter the kitchen, where Linda is waiting. Unwilling to react to Biff's attempts to say good-bye, Willy keeps asking about Oliver (which is just about the worst possible topic). Now the emotions really come out. Willy accuses Biff of being spiteful; they argue aggressively. Biff whips out the piping that his father tried to kill himself with. Willy denies the suicide attempt while Biff accuses him of trying to be a martyr. Biff lays all of his feelings out in the open. He says that the family is always lying to themselves. Sick of lying, Biff screams that he's stolen from every employer since high school and has even served jail time. (Click the summary infographic to download.) Biff has had some serious epiphanies: he says that Willy taught him to be so arrogant that he could never take direction from an employer. He adds that he's finished with trying to be something (something = business man) he never wanted to be in the first place. No longer willing to pretend, Biff demands that Willy stop expecting him to accomplish the impossible. Biff is by now sobbing. (Who wouldn't be?) Willy, astounded at Biff's emotional explosion, finally realizes that Biff loves him and wants his approval. Yay, everything is great! No, wait, everything is not great. Love, it turns out, is not all. Willy still hears Ben (in his mind), urging him to come find diamonds. With diamonds (diamonds = life insurance policy) on the brain, Willy refuses to come up to bed and remains absorbed in his visions and love for his son. Willy understands that his son loves him, but can't stop dreaming about Biff making it big. He converses again with Ben, who this time tells him that "the jungle is dark but full of diamonds." He jumps up and runs out of the house. Linda and Biff shout after him, realizing that he has sped off in the car. They remember of Howard's father bringing Howard as a new hire to the office and his own role in helping to name the boy. While personally relevant, in terms of the business world this fact bears little weight. The scene opens with a hopeful, well-rested Willy sitting down to breakfast. His wife Linda is sprightly too and the couple discuss their sons again—they are hopeful and dream of retiring in the countryside. Their happy conversation soon turns to a stressful one about finances; from having to pay insurance premiums to fixing household items—they seem to be struggling to pay for anything fully. They are one last payment away from paying off the mortgage on their house and finally owning it. As Willy leaves for work, Linda informs him that his sons want to take him out for dinner—just the men. This makes Willy so happy that he convinces himself to ask his young boss for an advance payment and to take him off the road as a travelling salesman. Linda gets a phone call from her son Biff, who is waiting at Ben Oliver's office, for a meeting and a job. She enthusiastically tells Biff that Willy himself removed the gas rubber pipe (which he had placed as a suicidal attempt to die from gas fumes) but Biff tells his mother it was he who did it. Linda's high spirits are not subdued by anything though, because she has seen her husband happy and hopeful after a very long time. As this scene fades, Howard and Willy come onto the stage. Howard is busy plugging in a wire recorder and makes cordial small talk with Willy. However, he is too excited by his new gadget to pay any attention to Willy's interjections or conversation. Eventually, Howard gets down to business, wondering why Willy is not in Boston on a sales trip. Willy finally talks openly to his boss about getting a more permanent posting in the city instead of having to travel at his age; Howard is not keen to consent to this. Willy reminds the young man that he has seen him as a toddler and worked for his father. However, this has no appeal or effect on Howard who is strict in running his business. Willy is upset but controls his anger and begins to tell Howard of his dreams of going to Alaska—following in the footsteps of his father and brother. However, whilst on the road as a young man himself, he had met an aged salesman who was still working at the age of eighty-four years. He had died on the road and his funeral was attended by many in his business industry. It was this old man who had inspired young Willy to pursue a career in salesmanship. In Willy's youth, there are friendship, loyalty and camaraderie in one's business which has now been replaced by cut-throat competition and a lack of personality. Willy complains that he is not recognized anymore. Howard takes his cue from this statement and tries to shrug off the old employee—much to Willy's mounting desperation and anger. As politely as he can, Howard fires Willy from his job. And Willy falls back into the abyss of his imaginary world—first seeing Howard's father Frank and then his brother Ben. Ben had offered Willy work in Alaska but since the latter was doing well at the time and had hopes of becoming a partner in his firm, he had denied his brother's offer. Willy's wife Linda too had played a crucial role in this decision—convincing her husband to stay. He also remembers his older son Biff's glowing athletic career in football and how he had offers from three different universities, even before graduating from high school. At the time, the sky had seemed the limit for the Loman family. Willy is now back in the real world and is going to meet his neighbor Charley, who is a successful man. His son Bernard has grown up to become a confident and fine young lawyer who travels for work and lives a materially rich life. He is cordial with old Willy Loman, as they wait to meet Charley. Bernard wonders why Biff never went to summer school to make up for lost grades and reminds Willy that Biff had gone to Boston to meet his father and returned, a very changed and dejected man. He seems to be alluding to finding Willy having an affair in Boston—an incident that must have devastated young Biff who hero-worshipped his father. Willy asks Charley for more money and the latter offers him a job which Willy resolutely refuses, much to Charley's annoyance. Willy recognizes Charley as his only and closest friend and sarcastically comments that a man is worth more dead than he is alive. The scene now moves to Baff sitting in a restaurant with a waiter named Stanley, who is his friend. They are chatting aimlessly until a beautiful woman walks into the restaurant and Happy flirts with her. He is soon joined by his brother Biff who seems to be in love spirits. Biff tells Happy that he waited six hours to meet Ben Oliver who eventually left the office and did not even recognize Biff outside. Biff's whole life has been a lie in believing that Ben Oliver would remember him as a salesman. In his hurt and bewilderment, Biff stole a fountain pen from Ben Oliver's office and ran off. He is deeply upset at his own behavior and wants to tell his father everything. Willy joins his sons and cuts Biff short to inform them that he has been fired from his job. However, Willy is keen to hear of his son's impending success and does not let Biff tell him the truth of how his day went. It is saddening to see the ageing father holding on to non-existent rays of hope for his sons. If they are unable to give him happy news, Willy assumes the role of a berating father. He can now only remember the time when Biff had failed in mathematics and thus had begun his downfall. Willy is in a terrible mental state where his reality and his imagination keep colliding severely, even in the middle of the day. Biff and Happy do their best to control Willy who cannot seem to deal with his circumstances anymore. Biff and Happy are joined by some girls again and as the young people flirt, their moods are lifted. Willy, however, is distracted by the memory of being caught by his young son, having an affair with another woman in Boston. Biff loses his temper at Happy for only caring about having affairs and not being concerned for their father and everyone eventually leaves the restaurant. In Willy's imaginary world, he remembers consistent knocking on his hotel room door at night. He is with another woman who hides in the bathroom as Willy answers the door to find his young son Biff. Biff informs him that he has failed in mathematics and was probably failed because he made fun of his teacher. Willy promises to speak to the teacher to help Biff graduate. Young Biff is ecstatic but is distracted by sounds from the bathroom and is horrified to see a semi-naked woman emerge. The woman does little to hide her relationship from the young boy even though Willy tries to make excuses desperately. The woman demands her stockings, as had been promised to her, and Willy hands them to her, wanting her to leave immediately. It is after this gesture that Biff freezes, tears streaming down his face. Although his father is urging him to help him pack his suitcases, Biff finds himself unable to move. He yells at his father for giving the stockings meant for his mother, to another woman. Biff is acutely aware that his mother Linda is always mending her stockings to support her husband and to waste money. He calls his father a liar and this brings the man to his knees. In the real world, Willy is kneeling in the restaurant, calling after his son. He is shaken out of his reverie by Stanley the waiter who informs him that his sons have left and he should go home too. Willy asks for directions to a seed store, muttering that he needs to start planting a garden soon. The scene now moves to the Lomans' home where Linda is awake, late in the night, caressing her husband's coat. As her sons return, drunk and with a bouquet of flowers for her, Linda loses her temper at them for not caring if Willy lives or dies. She cannot believe that her sons would leave their own father, in his mental state, alone in a restaurant just to have a good time with some young women. Linda refuses to let her sons see Willy but does tell them that he is busy planting his garden, even in the middle of the night. As Willy plants in his garden, he is conversing with his deceased brother Ben, about his own funeral and the twenty-thousand dollars his family will receive as insurance, when he dies. Even in his imagination, his brother Ben warns Willy to not consider it as his sons will brand him a coward and a fool. Biff enters the garden to help his father back inside whilst Happy just retires to his bedroom. Willy is unwilling to go inside and meet Linda; Biff informs Willy that he will leave the house for good and never return. He is exhausted of the lies he has lived since he was a teenager and wants a fresh start in life. The father-son duo fight again whilst Happy and Linda watch, helplessly. Biff confronts his father on his suicidal tendencies which the latter denies vehemently. Biff is in a rage over being a part of a family that never tells the truth and in the pursuit of success is always lying. He calls Happy out as a "phony" and asks his mother to stop crying. He also admits to having been in prison for theft and accuses his father of having made him too proud to take orders in any job. Biff tries to make his father understand that they—the Lomans are not special but, very ordinary men with ordinary lives; they are not meant for greatness. With this, Biff crumbles and begins to cry, much to his father's bewilderment. His deceased brother Ben's ominous voice rings in Willy's ears again and Linda is painfully aware of it. Willy is considering suicide so that he can leave behind twenty-thousand dollars to his son Biff. Happy, in an effort to lighten the mood, also vows to work harder and also get married. Willy, however, returns to morbid thoughts of suicide in the hopes of leaving an inheritance to his son that will, presumably, skyrocket him towards fulfilling the great American dream of financial success. He takes off in his car, at full speed. The play is now nearing its end with a scene of mourning in the Loman household. In this act, Willy and Linda continue to worry about their depleting finances and the futures of their sons, Happy and Biff. Willy is laid off at work, when he goes to ask for a favor to be taken off the road as a salesman. Typical corporate behavior is apparent in how he is dealt with—there is no respect for his decades of service, only a need to get rid of him as he is not useful to his company anymore. Willy suffers from intense guilt—of having let down his family and for having had an affair in his younger days. It was Willy's affair in Boston that scarred his son Biff, to the extent that Biff became a permanent wanderer and could never stick to a job. Happy, the younger son, was a fat child and did not receive the same accolades or attention from his father, as his older brother did. Consequently, Happy is not emotionally invested in his family, in his adulthood. He has a stable job and only cares about getting physically intimate with as many women as he possibly can. Linda comes across as the stressed out yet deeply empathetic wife who understands every mood of her husband and is fully devoted to him. She is constantly trying to play mediator between her husband Willy and her older son, Biff. Linda, however, is not aware that Willy had had an affair in their younger days, behind her back. This is a secret that Biff too carries and the burden of it crushes him into ignominy and hatred towards his father, who he views as a "phony." In pushing the great American dream of success onto his sons, he has failed them. He cannot see Biff or Happy as individual personalities—only as young Loman lineage destined for fame, success and respect if they would merely pursue these tenets of life. It is not failures and frustrations alone that push Willy Loman towards suicide. By making the dream for financial success the epicenter of his life, Willy has already failed in being happy or satisfied. In wanting and dreaming big for himself and then his sons, he has diminished his own understanding of what it means to be alive, to have a family and to have a humble home. Willy cannot deal with rejection—for either himself or his sons. Hence, when Biff does not land a meeting with a big business tycoon, Ben Oliver, Willy is thrown into reveries of imagination and mental degradation. He lives in lies and imagined memories of Biff being popular and automatically successful; of assuming his own importance in a company, based on very small incidents of intangible success, that eventually meant nothing. It is abundantly clear that Willy only cares for Biff—perhaps because he is the older son and also because Biff harbors the secret of his father's romantic affair in Boston. The act ends with Willy's suicide and a somber funeral which leaves his wife Linda terribly alone and devastated. It also deeply impacts his sons, Happy and Biff.