

## Module 7: Balancing the Individual and Society

### Topic 5 Content: Main Characters in *Death of a Salesman*

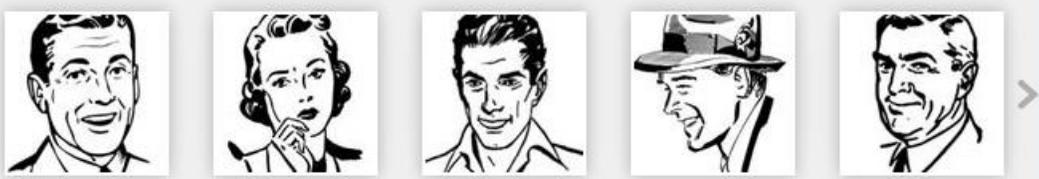
#### Introduction

#### Main Characters in Death of a Salesman

##### Introduction



In this interactivity, click the image thumbnails or the **NEXT** button to learn more about the main characters of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*.



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#### Willy

#### Main Characters in *Death of a Salesman*

Willy



Willy Loman has put in many years as a traveling salesman, but he does not earn enough money to pay the bills. He is disappointed in his oldest son, Biff, for whom Willy held aspirations for success and wealth. To avoid the failure and disappointment in his life, Willy lives in denial and covers up the truth with lies and excuses. He often hallucinates about the past or about imaginary conversations with his successful brother, Ben. His wife, Linda, encourages him to take a local sales position so that he will not have to travel so much. She has noticed that lately Willy is suicidal.



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**Linda**

**Main Characters in Death of a Salesman**

Linda



Linda is Willy's wife and mother to their two sons, Biff and Happy. She lives in the suburbs with Willy in a house whose mortgage is nearly paid off. Her family used to live in a great neighborhood with enough land and space that it felt as if they lived in the country, but through the years many housing developments have sprung up around the house. Linda tries to reconcile the tense relationship between Willy and Biff, and she has also noticed recently that Willy is showing suicidal tendencies.



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**Biff**

**Main Characters in Death of a Salesman**

**Biff**



Biff is Willy's oldest son. In high school, he played football and had plans to attend college. However, he failed a math class and ended up working low-wage jobs as a ranch hand throughout the country. He struggles between living up to the expectations of his parents and doing what actually makes him happy. His mother pressures him to make amends with his father, so he agrees to stay home and try to get a respectable job and earn money.



Biff is Willy's oldest son. In high school, he played football and had plans to attend college. However, he failed a math class and ended up working low-wage jobs as a ranch hand throughout the country. He struggles between living up to the expectations of his parents and doing what actually makes him happy. His mother pressures him to make amends with his father, so he agrees to stay home and try to get a respectable job and earn money.

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**Happy**

**Main Characters in Death of a Salesman**

**Happy**



Happy is Willy's second son. He gets along well with his brother, Biff, and tries to walk in his father's footsteps. Happy values achieving success as his father defines it, earning enough money to afford his car and apartment. He also thinks it is important to have a lot of girlfriends and to be popular with everyone, but he finds that these accomplishments still leave him lonely and unsatisfied with life.



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**Charley**

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Charley



Charley is Willy's neighbor and "only friend," in Willy's words. He loans Willy money and repeatedly offers him a secure job, which Willy pridefully refuses. Charley tries to persuade Willy that his priorities are not in the right place, but he is usually rebuffed. He has an intelligent and hardworking son named Bernard.



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**Bernard**

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**Bernard**



Bernard is Charley's son and neighbor to the Loman family. He went to high school with Biff and Happy and tried to help Biff study for his math class. As an adult, Bernard is a successful lawyer and even argues cases before the Supreme Court. Willy used to look down on Bernard as not being popular like his son, Biff, but now Willy is jealous that Bernard has made something of himself.



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