

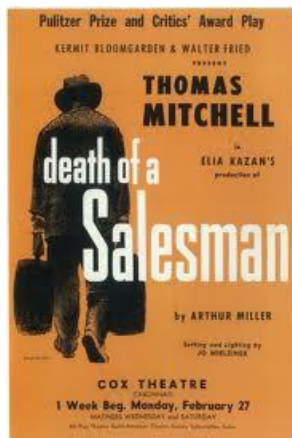
Working with tools and building things is one [motif](#) that is repeatedly mentioned in the play [Death of a Salesman](#), by [Arthur Miller](#). The entire [play](#) is about Willy Loman's struggle as a common man with the [American Dream](#) and his own personal dreams which is to work with his hands.



What Willy says and what he does are two different things. He talks about his true dream, but he follows the American Dream, and society's standards.



During a game of cards with Charley, Willy reveals what he believes a true man is and he tells Charley, [“A man who can't handle tools is not a man.”](#) (1888) Willy believes a true man can work with tools and fix things, and that is what Willy loves to do, and that is his true destiny. Throughout the play, such as when he told Linda he put so much reconstruction into the house that a crack couldn't be



found in it anymore, he reveals how much pride he takes in his work, but yet he doesn't do it for a living. If Willy works with his hands he won't be [“well liked”](#) which he tells his sons is very important. Being well liked is what Willy believes society wants of him, and Willy--as a common man doesn't want to be a [“dime a dozen”](#). (1936) Instead Willy wants to be successful and have

money and be well liked which is the American Dream. So even though inside Willy loves to work with tools, he resorts to being a traveling salesman to fit into society's

standards and follow the more appropriate American Dream.

Willy makes real progress throughout the play as he moves towards his true dream. In one of his flashbacks, Willy tells his sons “Someday I’ll have my own business, and I’ll never have to leave home anymore.”(1881) That younger Willy from the past just wanted to be a success, much like his idol [Dave Singleman](#). At that point Willy believed that having people show up at your funeral was the most important thing in life. With such a successful brother, who went into the jungle and came out rich, Willy tried to copy that success by becoming a traveling salesman. Arthur Miller specifically put that into the play to show how Willy couldn’t succeed in the business world like his brother Ben, because Willy lacked that ruthless quality, and on top of that, the profession of the [traveling salesman job itself, was dying](#). Willy is just a common man who followed a



false dream that wasn’t his, but the American Dream instead. Towards the end of the play however, when Willy’s flashbacks were less prominent, Willy’s chosen dream



began to change. He told Linda, “I’d build a little guest house. ‘Cause I got so many fine tools, all I’d need would be a little lumber and some piece of mind.” (1903) [It as at that point he was moving towards his own personal dream, instead of the American Dream](#). That part of the

play is important to show the progress Willy had made from his younger self in the flashbacks, to his current, enlightened self, which was slowly allowing his true dream to creep into the picture as his American Dream was quickly dying.

Arthur Miller does a phenomenal job in portraying Willy's struggle with the false American Dream and his own dream, through the motif of working with tools and building things. All of it was to show how following your own dream is what is best, not society's standards and the American Dream. Even though Willy never did truly give up the American Dream, he did however begin to change throughout the play to allow his own personal dream to show.

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