

Name _____ Hour _____

DEATH OF A SALESMAN and **A RAISIN IN THE SUN**

by Arthur Miller

by Lorraine Hansberry

Pre-Reading Questions

1. If you could have any job for your future—something that would be based on what you would love to do rather than income—what would that job be?
 - A. What factors in your life right now could make getting that job easier?
 - B. What factors in your life right now could make getting that job harder?
2. If you could change anything in your life right now, what would it be? Why?
3. When it comes to getting ahead in the US, what is the primary trait/characteristic a person must have? Why?
4. Which parent do you get along with best? Why?
5. If you wanted something very badly, but found that it was impossibly out of your reach, how would you respond? Would you keep after it or would you move on? What are the positive and negative sides to either reaction?

Background Knowledge: Write notes in the boxes based on what you read and the class discussion

American Dream

Elements of Realism/Naturalism

The Setting of the Play: Time

The Setting of the Play: Place

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Willy Loman:	the salesman who is past his prime and who was never an exceptional businessman in his prime
Linda Loman:	Willy's wife who loves him despite all of his difficulties
Biff Loman:	Willy's eldest son for whom he had dreams of greatness
Happy Loman:	Willy's younger son
Charley:	Willy's neighbor
Bernard:	Charley's son
Ben:	Willy's brother who left home when young and became tremendously wealthy; appears only in Willy's daydream
Howard Wagner:	son of former owner of the Wagner Company; he now runs the firm and is responsible for putting Willy on straight commission
The Woman:	Willy's mistress from Boston
Miss Forsythe and Letta:	two women whom Happy picks up in a restaurant

Act One ~ pgs 1 – 23

Answer each question using complete sentences in your response.

Cite evidence from the text (use page numbers) to support your interpretations.

- Describing the Loman's home, Miller calls it "fragile" and says it is a "dream rising out of reality" (1). What does this opening description tell us about the Loman family?
- Why did Willy return home so early from his trip?
- Willy says he opened up the windshield, yet later says it's impossible to do so on his car. He calls Biff "a lazy bum" (5), yet later says "one thing about Biff—he's not lazy" (6). What do these contradictions tell us about Willy's character?
- Willy complains about the surrounding apartments that have sprung up around them saying, "The way they've boxed us in here. Bricks and windows, windows and bricks" (6). How might this be symbolic of what's happened to Willy's life?
- Describing Happy, Miller writes "he has never allowed himself to turn his face toward defeat and is thus more confused" (8). Why would never feeling defeat cause him to be confused? What can a person learn from defeat that makes life clearer?

6. Biff and Happy are both older than our first impressions might tell us (they're in their 30s). What's wrong with them?

A. How might Willy have had a part in what is wrong with them?

7. In what ways are Biff and Happy exactly like Willy?

8. How would the young Biff and the young Happy describe their father?

9. What advice does Willy give to his boys about personality on pages 20 and 21?

A. What do we later find out about Willy during his conversation with Linda on page 23?

10. Willy's claim of "five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston" later becomes "roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip" (22). How does Linda respond to Willy's stories?

A. What does Linda's response to Willy's stories tell us about her?

Poetry Response #1

For the assigned poem, write a paragraph (6-8 sentences) on a piece of paper that does both of the following:

- Gives your reaction to the poem. How did it make you feel? What message does it have? What are some poetry elements you thought were used well?
- Compares the poem to the play so far. What are the similarities in the relationships between family members? How are they different?

Identify the author and title of your selected poem at the top of your response.

Use the space below to document your prewriting process

Act One ~ pgs 24 – 51

Answer each question using complete sentences in your response.

Cite evidence from the text (use page numbers) to support your interpretations.

1. Why is Willy so upset when he sees Linda mending her stockings?
2. Willy is thinking about his brother, Ben, because Ben died a few weeks ago. What is the other reason Willy is thinking about Ben at this point in his life?
3. How does Willy respond as a parent to Biff's constant thefts?
4. In a very passionate speech, Linda talks about Willy and says, "attention must be paid...Attention, attention must finally be paid to such a person" (40)? What does she think we should do for a man like Willy Loman?
5. We've come up with all sorts of theories as to what might be wrong with Willy. What does Linda see as Willy's problem?
6. What does Linda think of her sons? Why?
7. Why was Willy's salary taken away from him?
8. What new plan do Biff and Happy come up with that will hopefully cheer up Willy and give Biff a path?

9. What does Linda suggest Willy do in the morning to help himself?

10. A tragedy must have a tragic hero – a hero who is greater than other men, but with a flaw that destroys him. In what way is Willy greater than other men?

11. Symbols in Act One: explain what each person or item symbolizes...
 - a. The Loman's house –
 - b. Stockings –
 - c. Ben –
 - d. Biff stealing things –
 - e. The furnace –

Act Two ~ pgs 52 - 109

Answer each question using complete sentences in your response.

Cite evidence from the text (use page numbers) to support your interpretations.

1. Willy is feeling upbeat at the beginning of Act Two. Why? What does he expect will happen?
2. During his conversation with Howard, how does Willy try to bargain his way into keeping his position?
3. Why is Howard firing Willy such a blow to Willy?
4. During the flashback to Biff going to Ebbets Field, what criticism does Charley offer about Willy?
5. How does Bernard's present life compare to how Willy's sons turned out?
6. Willy's willing to take Charley's money, but he won't take Charley's offer of a job that will keep him in New York. Why?
7. In the restaurant, how does Happy reflect Willy's values?
8. What does Biff want to tell Willy about what happened with Bill Oliver? What does Hap want to tell Willy about what happened with Bill Oliver? Compare/contrast the brothers' responses.

--	--

9. What does Hap do to Willy at the restaurant?

10. Biff threw his life away. Why? What did he realize about his father that made him that made him turn his back on everything Willy ever taught him?
11. Willy keeps planting seeds where they've never grown before and where they can never grow. What does this symbolize in the play?
12. Why does Ben think Biff will hate Willy and call him "a damned fool" (101)?
13. Why doesn't Willy want to see Linda?
14. Biff confronts Willy and Happy and even goes so far as to bring out the rubber hose. What is Biff trying to accomplish?
15. What does Biff tell Willy will be the reaction if Willy commits suicide?
16. What does Biff mean when he asks, "Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, what all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am!" (105)?
17. What does Biff mean when he cries to his father, "I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them" (105-106)?
18. What is Biff asking for when he asks his father, "Will you let me go...Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?" (106)?

19. What role does Ben play in the play's final scenes?

20. What event or memory finally sends Willy over the edge?

REQUIEM ~ pgs 110 – 112

21. What does Biff conclude Willy's ultimate problem was?

22. How does Biff show himself as the only dynamic character at the end of the play?

23. How does Happy show himself as a static character at the end of the play?

24. How do Charley's lines, "No man only needs a little salary" (110) and "A salesman is got to dream, boy" (111) summarize the character of Willy Loman?

25. What is the irony of Linda's last speech?

Poetry Response #2

For the assigned poem, write a paragraph (6-8 sentences) on a piece of paper that does both of the following:

- Gives your reaction to the poem. How did it make you feel? What message does it have? What are some poetry elements you thought were used well?
- Compares the poem to the rest of the play. What are the similarities in the relationships between family members? How are they different?

Identify the author and title of your selected poem at the top of your response.

Use the space below to document your prewriting process

Poems for Poetry Response: Read all six poems and choose two to analyze for your two responses.

THE SECRET HEART by R. Tristram Coffin Across the years he would recall His father one way best of all. In the stillest hour of night The boy awakened to a light. Half in dreams, he saw his sire With his great hands full of fire. The man had struck a match to see If his son slept peacefully. He held his palms each side the spark His loved had kindled in the dark. His two hands were curved apart In the semblance of a heart. He wore, it seemed to his small son, A bare heart on his hidden one, A heart that gave out such a glow No son awake could bear to know. It showed a look upon a face Too tender for the day to trace. One instant, it hit all about, And then the secret heart went out. But it shone long enough for one To know that hands held up the sun.	FIRST LESSON by Phyllis McGinley The thing to remember about fathers is, they're men. A girl has to keep it in mind. They are dragon-seekers, bent on improbable rescues. Scratch any father, you find Someone chock-full of qualms and romantic terrors, Believing change is a threat— Like your first shoes with heels on, like your first bicycle It took such months to get. Walk in strange woods, they warn you about snakes there. Climb, and they fear you'll fall. Books, angular boys, or swimming in deep water— Fathers mistrust them all. Men are worriers. It is difficult for them to learn what they must learn; How you have a journey to take and very likely, For a while, will not return.
MOTHER TO SON by Langston Hughes Well, son, I'll tell you: Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it, And splinters, And boards torn up, And places with no carpet on the floor— Bare. But all the time I'se been a-climbin' on, And reachin' landin's, And turnin' corners, And sometimes goin' in the dark Where they aren't been no light. So boy, don't you turn back. Don't you set down on the steps 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard. Don't you fall now— For I'se still goin', honey, I'se still climbin', And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.	TAUGHT ME PURPLE by Evelyn Tooley Hunt My mother taught me purple Although she never wore it. Wash-gray was her circle, The tenement her orbit. My mother taught me golden And held me up to see it, Above the broken molding, Beyond the filthy street. My mother reached for beauty And for its lack she died, Who knew so much of duty She could not teach me pride.

MY PAPA'S WALTZ
by Theodore Roethke

The whisky on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

THOSE WINTER SUNDAYS
by Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.
I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,
Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?