

Biff Loman Scene Analysis

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1. The inciting incident actually occurs before the play begins. Happy and most importantly Biff, mediocre salesman Willy Loman's two sons who he's very disappointed in, have come for a visit. This sets their efforts to please him by finding a job, confrontations between Biff and Willy, and other revelations about the brothers' and Willy's internal motives to eventually come to light. The crisis is the back-and-forth between Biff and Willy during Act 2 of the play, where Biff finds out that the business contact Willy hoped would loan him and Happy money turns out to have never even met Willy and was entirely imagined. Biff is conflicted over whether to disappoint his delusional father and tell him the truth, and bats between this as he angrily argues with his extremely disappointed father. The climax occurs when Biff blows up at Willy for the last time, finally telling Willy the truth about how he feels and his past failings, shattering Willy's hopes that Biff had any aspirations of fulfilling Willy's dreams for him and his last grip on reality. This is what leads to Willy promptly afterwards suicidal driving away, the end of the climax. The breezy denouement occurs in a section called "requiem" where Linda, Biff, Happy, and Charley mourn Willy's passing, and the group lament how far he had fallen in his final moments, with Linda ending the play by noting "we're free".
2. My scene is the start of the climax. Biff, having earlier discovered that his father has lost his job as a salesman but stubbornly refuses to take a job with his friend Charley because of his misconceived conceptions of being successful, loses his temper at Biff and confesses everything about how he feels about life and what he wants. He lays out thoroughly just how much Willy's dreams are incompatible with who he, Biff is as a person.
3. In Willy's mind, man vs. man. Willy wants so desperately to achieve his vision of the American Dream by seeing his sons become wealthy and beloved by all and for his legacy to be enshrined forever. He sees his sons' failures to land "good" jobs and stable income and their general laziness as obstacles to his goal. However, ultimately it's man vs self, as Willy's decreasing sanity prevents him from being able to truly listen to his friend Charley's desperate attempts to salvage his life by taking him to a new job, his sons' ever futile attempts to communicate with him, and Linda's desperate efforts to rekindle their connection with each other. His continual dives into the realm of memory and fantasy as an attempt to distance himself from a cruel reality leads to him failing his dream of becoming "successful" as he crashes his car and dies.
4. The Death of a Salesman is a tragedy, as Willy ultimately fails his super objective in every way one can look at and dies without any hope of ever achieving any kind of goal.
5. Arthur Miller hoped to capture the futility of single mindedly obsessing over a narrow view of "success" without considering what success means in life. In a late 1940s America often preoccupied with the "American Dream", a snapshot into the ideal American's life which often involves a nuclear family, a middle-class job, and a well-educated family. Willy takes this idea to the extreme, refusing reality so he can dream about the good ol' days and what might have been. However, Miller noted that this was merely an example of how the American Dream might be twisted by people like Willy with baggage and the stress it puts on people, not a critique of the ideal in U.S. culture itself. This did not stop the U.S. government from bringing him in for questioning in regard to his potential ties to Communism thanks to the contents of

Death of a Salesman. Interestingly enough, it was in response to this experience that Miller decided to write "The Crucible".