

Death of a Salesman: The Relationships Father and Son

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Willy Loman has the ups and downs of someone suffering from bipolar disorder: one minute he is happy and proud- the next he is angry and swearing at his sons. Their relationships are obviously not easy ones. Willy always has the deeper devotion, adoration, and near-hero worship for his son Biff; the boy, likewise, has a great [love](#) for his father. Each brags on the other incessantly, thereby ignoring the other [son](#)- Happy- who constantly tries to brag on himself in order to make up the lack of anyone to do it for him. This turns sour however, after Biff discovers the father he idolizes was not all he had thought him to be. Afterward, familial dynamics are never the same, as Willy continues to hope that Biff will succeed, ignorant- perhaps purposely so- that his son is failing out of spite, knowing that all his father's hopes are resting on his shoulders. Willy's relationships with his two sons are tentative at best, but Happy and Biff are partly to blame for this downhill spiral- as their relationship is just as complex.

In the play, "Death of a Salesman," Willy Loman remembers scenes from years previous, particularly idyllic times when his two sons were still young and full of promise. Willy's memories focus on Biff: Biff's chances at success, Biff's talents, Biff's popularity. Happy

is always in the background, talking to no one- hoping to be noticed. But he never is. Happy is always second to Biff, even when he had done something a parent could be proud of, like when he continually claims, "I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?" (1222) Because Willy pays little to no attention to Happy, their relationship grows especially distant as time passes. Happy seemingly cares little for his father as an adult, as is obvious when he cho...

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...ed: each one layered on deep love and faith; lies and hurt. Willy gambles everything he has- and more- on Biff, even though he seems to hate his son at times. This is most likely because Willy knew Biff knew his dirty little secret, and could not stand to think that his actions may have harmed his child's balance. Yet it is ironic that Willy Loman's legacy, based on the insurance money- is not used by the son he loved best, but by the one who always came in second. It leaves the audience wondering if Happy loved his father more than the worshipped Biff, or if Biff loved his father so much he could not stand to touch the money, knowing that his father had killed himself solely for his benefit. Though the characters in "Death of a Salesman" are often at odds with each other, Willy and his sons love and care for each other in a way worthy of a Shakespearean tragedy.

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