

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Teri Shoemaker; Lauren Fisk	School:	OHS
Book Title:	Death of a Salesman	Genre:	Dramatic Play
Author:	Arthur Miller	Pages:	112
Publisher:	Penguin Classics	Copyright:	2003

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

Willy Loman, the protagonist of *Death of a Salesman*, has spent his life following the American way, living out his belief in salesmanship as a way to reinvent himself. But somehow, the riches and respect he covets have eluded him. At age sixty-three, he searches for the moment his life took a wrong turn, the moment of betrayal that undermined his relationship with his wife and destroyed his relationship with Biff, the son in whom he invested all his faith.

Miller's masterpiece has steadily seen productions all over the world since its 1949 debut. As the noted Miller scholar Christopher Bigsby states in his Introduction, "if Willy's is an American dream, it is also a dream shared by all those who are aware of the gap between what they might have been and what they are."

(Taken from back cover of the book)

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

As noted in Appendix B of the Common Core Standards, plays of literary merit are recommended for students at the sophomore level. *Death of a Salesman*, though suggested as a text at the junior level, is still suitable to Honors/ CP students at the sophomore level. Certainly this is a text that is also taught in college as an honored and respected piece of writing and, thus, could easily be recommended for the 12th grade level as well.

Standards that support the use of this text are as follows:

RL. 9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL. 9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

RL. 9-10.4 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be “cut and pasted” (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

Library Journal

This 50th-anniversary edition of Miller's masterpiece, which certainly is a contender for the finest American drama of the 20th century, includes the full text of the play, a chronology of its productions, photos from various stagings including the current Broadway revival, and a new preface by Miller himself, all in a quality hardcover for a reasonable price. Bravo, Penguin.

Review #2

New York Times Book Review
A contemporary classic

"By common consent, this is one of the finest dramas in the whole range of the American theater."
—Brooks Atkinson, The New York Times

"So simple, central, and terrible that the run of playwrights would neither care nor dare to attempt it." —Time

Review #3

<http://www.usfca.edu/jco/arthurmiller/>

Nearly fifty years after its composition, *Death of a Salesman* strikes us as the most achingly contemporary of our classic American plays. It has proved to have been a brilliant strategy on the part of the thirty-four-year-old playwright to temper his gifts for social realism with the Expressionistic technique of experimental drama like Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and *The Hairy Ape*, Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*...for by these methods Willy Loman is raised from the parameters of regionalism and ethnic specificity to the level of the more purely, symbolically "American."...As we near the twenty-first century, it seems evident that America has become an ever more frantic, self-mesmerized world of salesmanship, image without substance, empty advertising rhetoric, and that peculiar product of our consumer culture "public relations" a synonym for hypocrisy, deceit, fraud. Where Willy Loman is a salesman, his son Biff is a thief. yet these are fellow Americans to whom "attention must be paid.": Arthur Miller has written the tragedy that illuminates the dark side of American success which is to say, the dark side of us.--Joyce Carol Oates

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

Title: **The Crucible**

Author: **Arthur Miller**

Title: **The Glass Menagerie**

Author: **Tennessee Williams**

Title: **Fences**

Author: **August Wilson**

Title: **A Raisin in the Sun**

Author: **Lorriane Hansberry**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Mild profanity

Protagonist kills himself

Disfunctional family

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable):

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 30 September 2014

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults