

# DEATH OF A SALESMAN

9 Feb — 2 Mar Playhouse, QPAC

By Arthur Miller  
Directed by Jason Klarwein



### About the Play

As the death-rattle of American optimism echoes through the land of the Free Market, travelling salesman Willy Loman loses himself in the halcyon haze of the past.

Once the king of the road, Willy is veering off it. Time was, he could sell anyone anything, and his reward was the whole package: wife, two sons, the car, the white picket fence. But now he's feeling his years. He's behind on the mortgage, he's sidelined by his wet-behind-the-ears

boss, and the final straw is when his adult son Biff – once a sporting prodigy, now a directionless disappointment – lands on the doorstep, further loosening Willy's grip on the reality of his broken-down life.

Arthur Miller's towering classic is a timeless meditation on the human need to feel special, a withering commentary on capitalism, and a tragic portrait of a fallout between father and son.

### Information

#### CURRICULUM LINKS

Years 10-12; Tertiary

Syllabus link: Realism/Naturalism

For studies in: Drama; English/English Literature

#### SUITABILITY

*This play contains mature themes including references to identity, loss and suicide. This production contains smoke, haze and use of herbal cigarettes.*

#### RUNNING TIME

Approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes including a 20 minute interval.

### The requiem for the American Dream that defined the 20th Century

#### CAST

CHARLEY Charles Allen

UNCLE BEN Kevin Hides

WILLY LOMAN Peter Kowitz

BIFF LOMAN Thomas Larkin

HAPPY LOMAN/HOWARD

Jackson McGovern

LINDA LOMAN Angie Milliken

THE WOMAN/MISS FORSYTHE

Sarah Ogden

BERNARD/STANLEY Ilai Swindells

JENNY/LETTA Gemma Willing

#### CREATIVES

DIRECTOR Jason Klarwein

SET DESIGNER Richard Roberts

ASSOCIATE DESIGNER/COSTUME

DESIGNER Anthony Spinaze

LIGHTING DESIGNER Verity Hampson

COMPOSER/SOUND & PROJECTION

DESIGNER Justin Harrison

STAGE MANAGER Marnie McDonald

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER Pip Loth

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Damian Tatum

# DEATH OF A SALESMAN

By Arthur Miller

Directed by Jason Klarwein

American Classic

Realism

1940s

Term 1

## Before the show

### Watch

Death of a Salesman – Thug Notes and discuss why you think this story is still relevant in 2019.

▶ [queenslandtheatre.com.au/thugnotes](https://queenslandtheatre.com.au/thugnotes) *Warning video content contains censored expletives.*

### Read

Download a copy of the **Death of a Salesman** program and read Jason Klarwein's Director Note.

Discuss what you think he means when he says, "That the perception of substance is more important than substance itself." Do you think this idea is relevant to your life or the life of your peers?

### Discuss

Watch the Prezi presentation **Realism and Naturalism in Death of a Salesman**. Make a list of the conventions of Realism and Naturalism.  [queenslandtheatre.com.au/doasnotes](https://queenslandtheatre.com.au/doasnotes)

### Do

As a class read the following stage directions from the opening of **Death of Salesman**. Highlight the key words that provide information on how the characters move. Working in pairs, physicalise the opening scene. After, compare and contrast how the two characters move. What does their movement tell you about the characters? What mood does this create for the top of the play?

*From the right, WILLY LOWMAN, The Salesman, enters, carrying two large sample cases. The flute plays on. He hears but is not aware of it. He is past sixty years of age, dressed quietly. Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the house, his exhaustion is apparent. He unlocks the door, comes into the kitchen, and thankfully lets his burden down, feeling the soreness of his palms. A word-sigh escapes his lips. He closes the door, then carries his case out into the living room, through the draped kitchen doorway.*

*LINDA, his wife, has stirred in her bed at the right. She gets out and puts on a robe, listening. Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to WILLY'S behaviour – she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end.*

### Insight

When you come to see the show, keep an eye out for the following dramatic conventions:

- ✘ Director Jason Klarwein creates mini picture frames of key moments of dramatic action throughout the play. Discuss how this convention directs focus, impacts the telling of the story and comment on what insight this gives us into the characters.
- ✘ The concept of being "well liked" appears throughout the play. Discuss how this concept impacts each of the characters differently.
- ✘ Biff and Happy each have very different relationships with their Dad. Discuss the contrasts between the two relationships. Why do you think they are treated differently?
- ✘ Lighting designer, Verity Hampson has used contrasting lighting states to create a distinction between the real and delusional worlds of Willy Lowman. Discuss the lighting choices throughout the play and the dramatic meaning created through Hampson's design.

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