



# Death of a Salesman

A Postmodern Play

# The Other Side of the Coin

- If *Catcher in the Rye* and represents the anxiety associated with growing up, then *Death of a Salesman* represents the very lies, self-deception, and hypocrisy associated with adulthood that Holden fears
- *Death of a Salesman* gives us the story of Wily Loman, a man who, in his desperate pursuit of the “American Dream,” has surrendered to the very conformity and materialism against which Holden rebelled



# Willy Loman's World

- Late 1940s Brooklyn
- Blue-collar, ethnically diverse borough of NY
- With the economic boom that follows WWII, Americans have come to believe in the "American Dream"
  - Hard Work = Success
  - Success = Money
  - Money = Power
  - Money & Power = Happiness



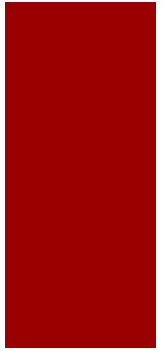
# Themes

- Reality and Illusion
  - Deception and Self-Deception
  - Denial and Escape
- The American Dream
  - Capitalism and Materialism
  - Ambition and Opportunity
  - Expectations
- Family
  - Loyalty and Betrayal
  - Appreciation and Guilt
- Masculinity
  - Respect, Money, Popularity, Power



# Motifs

- Brand Names
- Mythologizing
- Distant Lands
  - American West
  - Alaska
  - African Jungle
- The Garden
- Stealing
- “Kid” or “Boy”



# Symbols

- Seeds
- Diamonds
- Stockings
- Rubber Hose
- City Living



# Style and Structure

- Two Acts and a Requiem
  - All action takes place in a 24-hour period, between Monday night and Tuesday night—except the requiem, which happens days afterward
- Realism and Expressionism
  - Though the play is anchored in an objective and present reality, Willy's inner turmoil and psychological meltdown are represented through a series of flashbacks and daydreams
- Tragedy
  - A tragedy of the “everyman”

