



# Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

**Family Relationships**

**By**

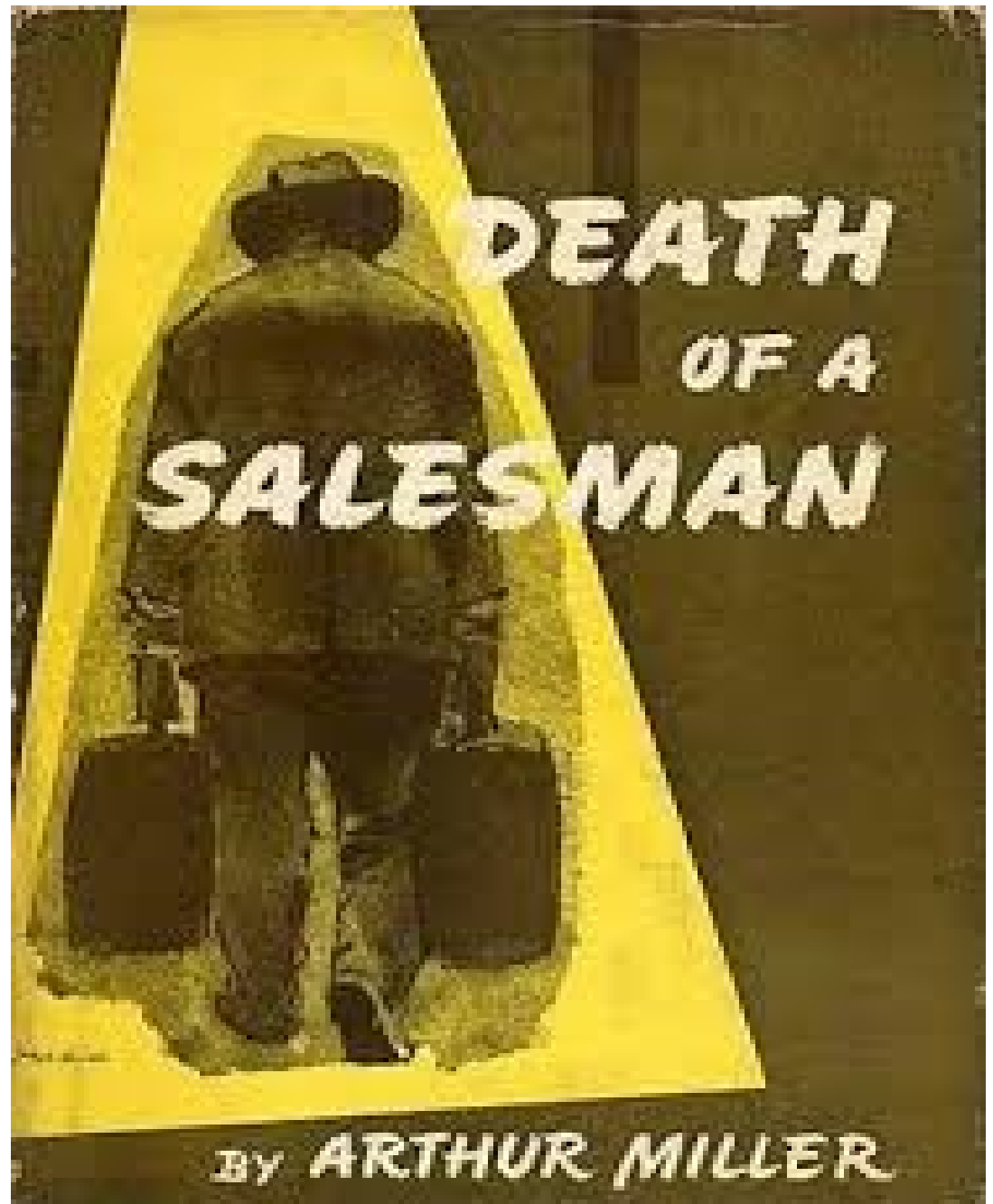
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## Family Relations

*Death of a Salesman* deals with the family crisis of the Lomans, who are preoccupied with the illusion of fulfilling the American Dream.

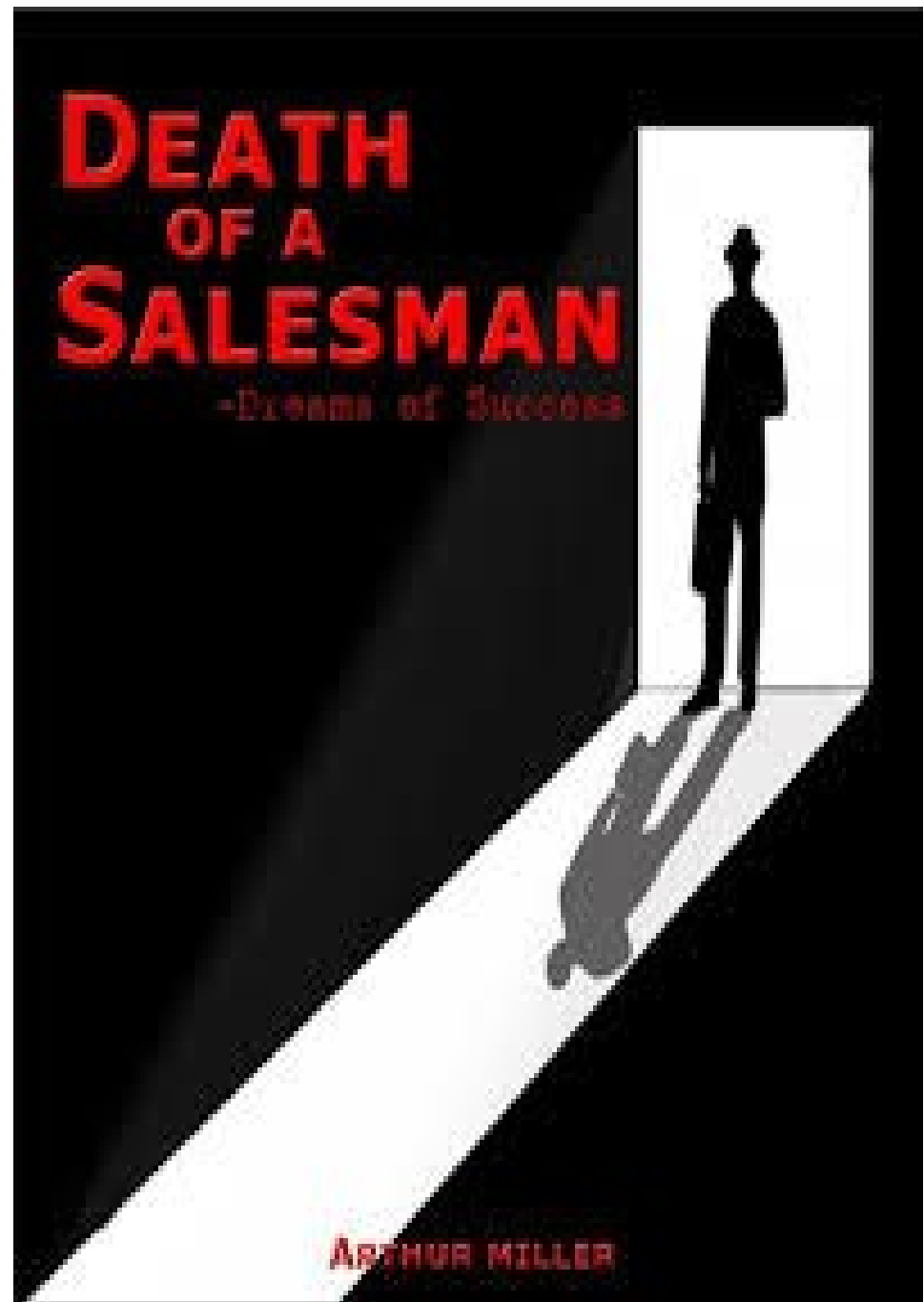




Willy's father leaves him and Ben when Willy is very young, leaving Willy neither money nor legacy. Ben eventually departs for Alaska, leaving Willy to lose himself in a confused vision of the American Dream.

The young Biff, whom Willy considers the embodiment of promise, drops Willy and Willy's zealous ambitions for him when he finds out about Willy's adultery.

Biff's ongoing inability to succeed in business furthers his estrangement from Willy.



Besides, Willy's focus on Biff and negligence of Happy is another source of inconvenience in the family. Though the inferiority complex and jealousy does not develop to an extreme in Happy, it does remind the audience of the religious allusion of Jacob and his son Joseph. However, the event is an autobiographical one for Miller himself suffered from a similar experience.



Willy's obsession with seeing his family happy and safe seems rooted in the childhood emotional trauma of his abandonment by his father. Since his father left him with nothing, Willy feels an acute need to put his sons—especially Biff—on the right path in life.



Still, Willy does not know the right way to bring them up, encouraging them to steal and asking Ben about the best way to nurture them, because of not having a model himself, being jilted by his father.



Willy's extramarital affair with The Woman in Boston becomes the reason behind his troubles with Biff, and develops a wounding sense of guilt whenever he views his devoted wife mending stockings.

