



Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

The American Dream

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The American Dream

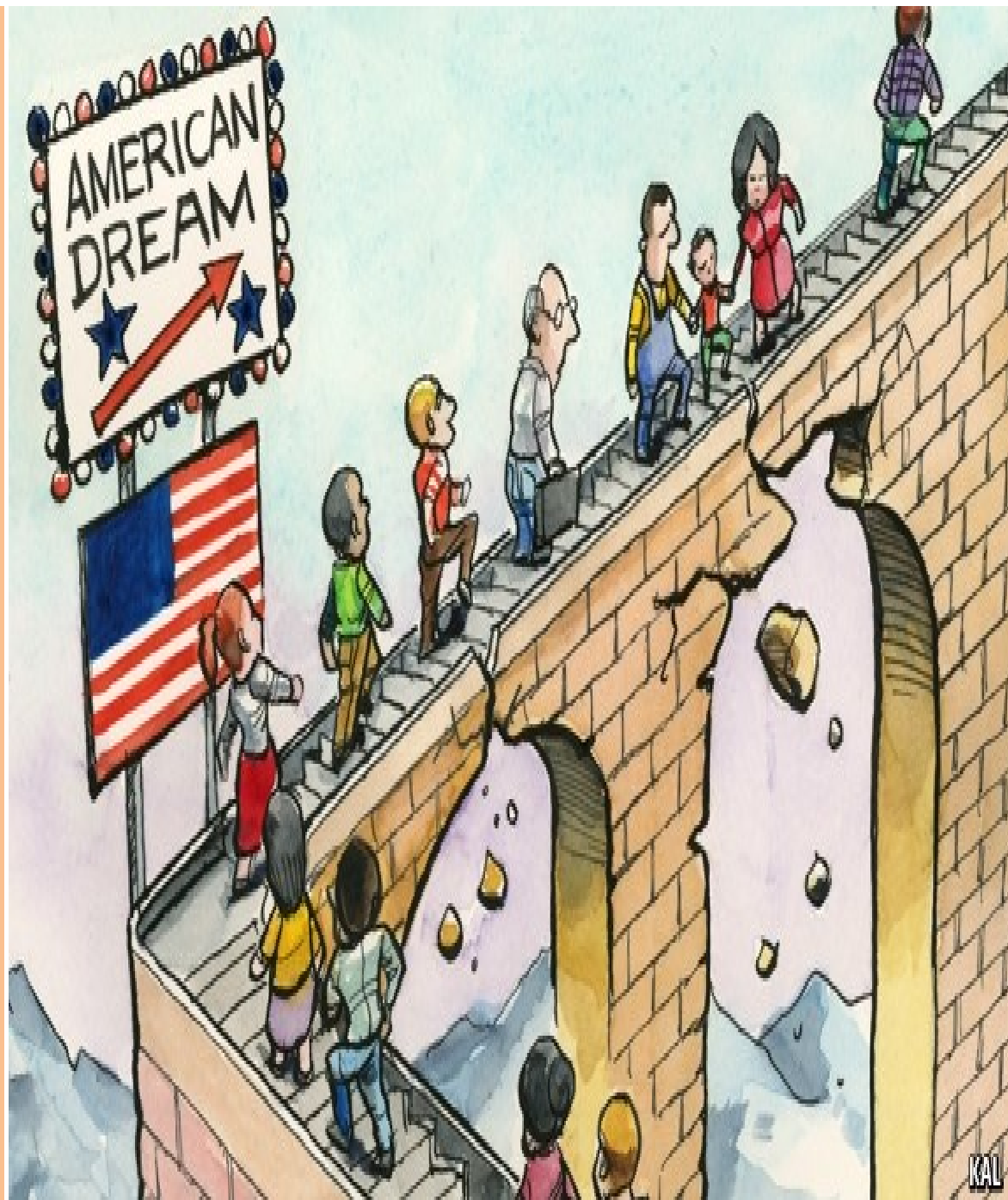
Miller's *Death of a Salesman* criticizes the false promises of the American Dream, the dream of achieving wealth and success.





The play examines the cost of blind faith in the American Dream. Miller charges America with selling a false myth constructed around a capitalist materialism that obscured the personal truth and moral vision of the original American Dream described by the country's founders.

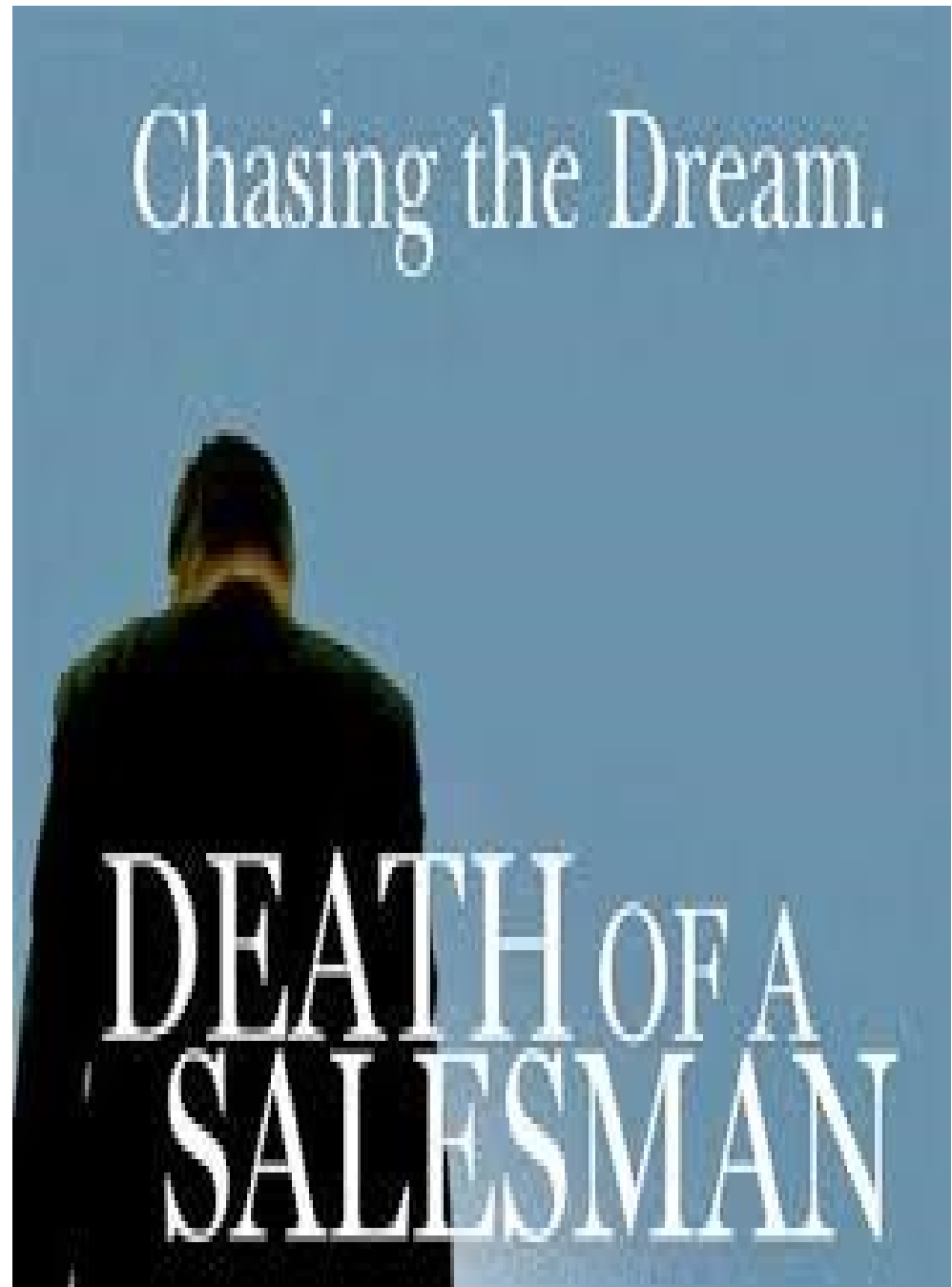
Willy's quest to realize what he views as the American Dream—the "self-made man" who rises out of poverty and becomes rich and famous—is the dominant theme in *Death of a Salesman*.



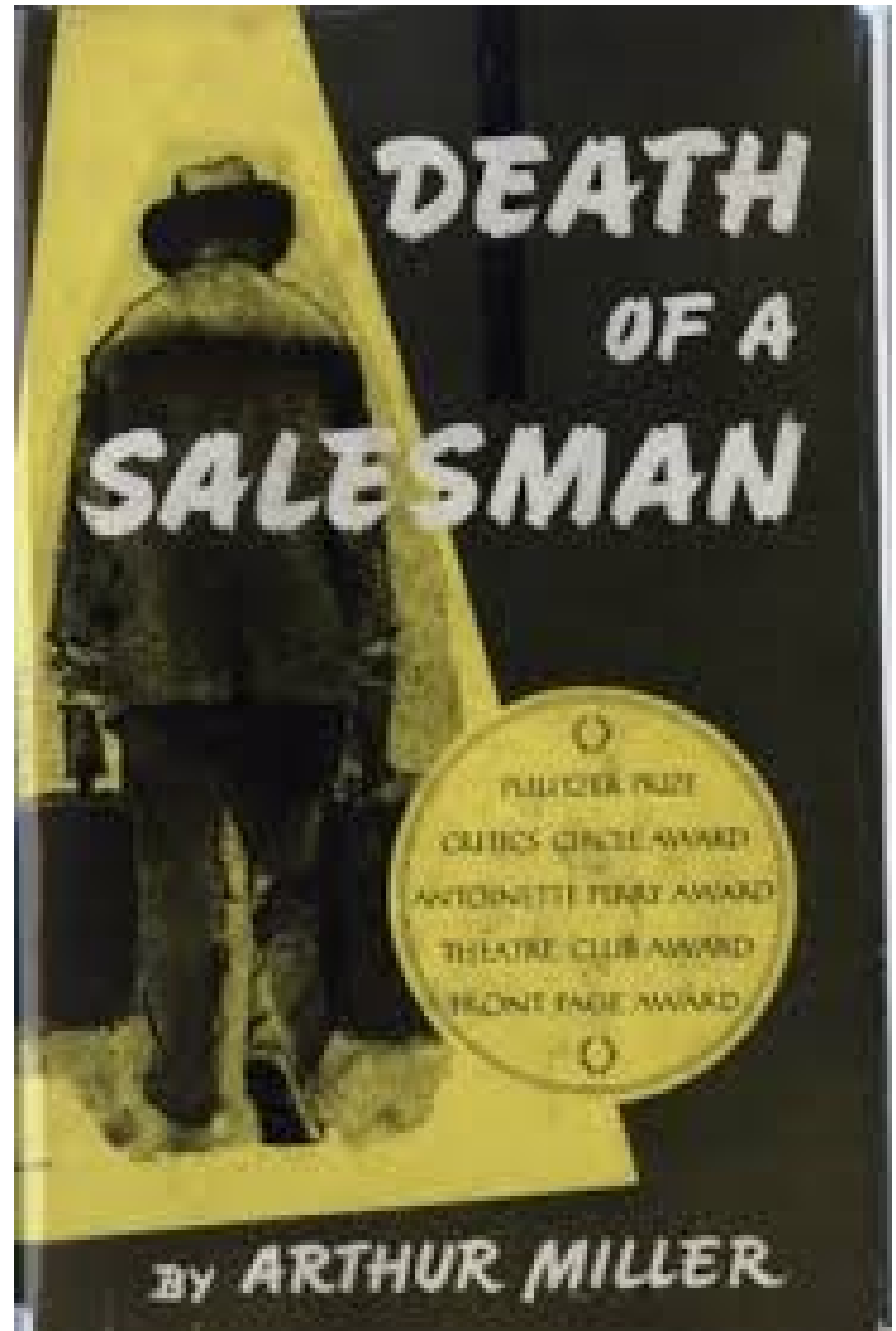
Willy's personal models of the American Dream are his brother Ben and the salesman Dave Singleman. He views the success of these two men as proof that he can indeed attain the success he is so desperate to achieve.



Willy believes that a
“well liked” and
“personally
attractive” man in
business will acquire
the material comforts
offered by modern
American life.



Oddly, Willy's fixation with the superficial qualities of attractiveness and likeability is at odds with a more rewarding understanding of the American Dream that identifies hard work without complaint as the key to success.



Illusion Vs. Reality

The structure of the play emphasises the difference between illusion and reality. Willy Loman lives in illusion and the central problem of the play is Willy's inability to distinguish between illusion and reality.



Thus, the play shows Willy's being caught in his illusions and also shows how he brings these illusion from the past over into his present life, especially as he calls upon his brother Ben to help him.

