



The American Tragedy Close to Home

Clinton LeFort

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When Willie Loman, in Arthur Miller's *Death of A Salesman*, comes back from a long sales trip his family finds him unwell. In this essay, I show that Willie Loman's delusion of becoming a great salesman has a negative impact on his life and his family. Delusion is defined as the 'idiosyncratic belief or thought that is firmly maintained despite it being contradicted by what is generally accepted as fact.' (Apple, 2011) What are the consequences of holding onto thoughts and aspirations that cannot be verified in fact? (Ribkoff, 2000) Willie Loman has hopes and dreams, but they will be broken and shattered or just plain misunderstood. Willie has the hope that his son Biff will amount to something great. Willie tells Linda his wife: "Sure. Certain men just don't get started till later in life. As Thomas Edison; I think. Or B.F. Goodrich. One of them was deaf." (Weston, Act 1) Willy Loman really hopes that Biff will follow in his footsteps and be a great entrepreneur in the business world. Biff doesn't want to be a businessman, but Willy wants to hold onto that thought. Willy believes himself to be a great businessman and that he is on the way to making it big. He likes to brag about his grand delusions to his family, so that they can think highly of him. He tells his sons: "I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home anymore." (Weston, Act 1) Willy believes that he can compare himself to successful people like the boys Uncle Charlie. He tells the boys that he'll be liked more than Uncle Charlie. Willie wants to believe the reason he'll be successful is that he'll be liked more than Uncle Charlie. "He's liked, but he's not- well liked." (Weston, Act 1)

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