Fences & Death Of A Salesman Essay, Research Paper

The role of money in people’s day-to-day lives is quite amazing when it’s put into perspective. The primary reason most Americans get up in the morning is so they can go out and make money. Money buys things; money influences people; money keeps us alive; money makes us happy, or at least people think so. The influence of money in Fences by August Wilson and Death Of A Salesman by Arthur Miller plays a minor but very important role affecting the characters personal lives, the entire families, and the environment in which they live.

In the play, Death of A Salesman, everyone appears to have a problem with money. Willy Loman experiences this problem with money and wonders what he is going to do if business does not “pick up” soon. Willy wonders how he will pay the bills and how he will continue to put food on the table. Willy tells Linda how he feels one day after he gets home and Linda tells him how much money they owe: “You owe 120 dollars by the fifteenth”, “A hundred and twenty dollars! My God, if business don’t pick up soon I don’t know what I’m gonna do! (Miller 1808).” He also felt that at Biff’s age of 34, he should have been settled into a good paying job. In a conversation with Linda he says, “How can he find himself on a farm? Is that a life? A farmhand? But it’s been more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week! (Miller 1798).” Biff said earlier that he was happy where he was but that small, seemingly unimportant fact makes no difference to Willy. All he knows is that Biff is not making very much money and that upsets him. While Willy himself is not making enough to cover the monthly bills, certainly showing that he is not very successful. Although Biff was not making money, it seemed that Happy was doing very well, but Willy never seemed to notice that, or if he did, he never said anything to Happy to let him know what he thought. Willy got down on Biff and did not even recognize Happy’s success while not being a successful man himself. Willy Loman preached and preached to his sons about being successful and making a lot of money, while doing neither himself.

In Fences, Troy Maxson used his brother, Gabriel, for money. He stole the war money that Gabriel received for getting injured. Troy used the money that Gabriel got to build himself a house. Gabriel could not take care of himself, so Troy oversaw Gabriel’s life. After a while Gabriel moved out. He went to live in Mrs. Pearl’s house, down the street and Troy was mad because now Gabriel was not living with them, and this caused a great deal of stress on the family, but especially in Troy. Troy then sent Gabriel to an institution. Since Gabriel was there, Troy got half of the money that Gabriel received from the war. Rose, Troy’s wife, said “…you [Troy] done went down there and signed him to the hospital for half his money (Wilson 1693-94).” Lacy Hall, an avid reader on August Wilson, stated about Fences that “Troy couldn’t care less about Gabriel; all he wanted was the money.”