Death Of A Salesman And Biff Essay, Research Paper

The Importance of Biff?s Role in ?Death of a Salesman? The play ?Death

of a Salesman?, by Arthur Miller, follows the life of Willy Loman, a

self-deluded salesman who lives in utter denial, always seeking the ?American

Dream,? and constantly falling grossly short of his mark. The member?s of

his immediate family, Linda, his wife, and his two sons, Biff and Happy, support

his role. Of these supportive figures, Biff?s character holds the most

importance, as Biff lies at the center of Willy?s internal conflicts and

dreams , and Biff is the only one in the play who seems to achieve any growth.

Biff?s role is essential to the play because he generates the focus of

Willy?s conflict for the larger part, his own conflict is strongly attributed

to Willy, and finally, he is the only character who manages growth or a sense of

closure in the play. Willy is forever plagued by the fact that Biff has not

?gone anywhere in life.? Biff, who is already in his thirties, is still

drifting from place to place, job to job, most recently work as a farmhand. Biff

is a source of endless frustration for Willy, who always dreams of Biff being

incredibly successful in the business world. When Willy has memories of Biff as

a boy, he is completely obsessed with whether or not Biff is well-liked;

however, he is completely oblivious to things like Biff?s having stolen a

football from school, and the fact that Biff is failing his math class. ?Be

liked and you will never want,? says Willy(1363). The amount of aggravation

generated by Biff?s lack of motivation and desire to be ?successful? makes

Biff?s role extremely important The play also spends quite a bit of time

focusing on Biff?s own conflict, which is basically his father. In his youth,

he shared his father?s great aspirations for himself. He was captain of the

football team, and had plans for college and then a career in business

afterwards. Biff was absolutely obsessed with pleasing his father, who was

flawless in his eyes. All of this changed, however, when Biff found his father

in a Boston hotel room with another woman. After that, Biff ?laid down and

died like a hammer hit him ?(1392). Biff had never dreamed for himself, being

concerned only with fulfilling his father?s wishes. When Biff realized that

Willy was not the great man that he thought he was, his dreams became nothing to

him, as had his father. And so, Biff became a drifter, living only on a day to

day basis. Lastly, Biff is the only character who achieves any real growth in

the play. Throughout the play Linda has remained static, always steadfastly

supporting Willy, and believing he is incapable of flaw. At Willy?s funeral,

Happy says, ?I?m gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not

die in vain. He had a good dream. It?s the only dream you can have-to come out

number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I?m gonna win it for

him?(1415). His father died deluding himself, and apparently Happy is going to

do the same. It is only Biff who realizes ?[Willy] had all the wrong dreams.

All, all, wrong?The man never knew who he was?(1415). Biff has accepted the

fact that he was not meant to be a salesman and must seek another path in life.

Having made these observations, it quickly becomes clear that Biff?s character

is as vital to the play as is Willy?s. Without Biff there would be no play.

Therefore, Biff?s role in ?Death of a Salesman? is important because he is

the focus of Willy?s attention and distress, his own conflict is based on his

father, and Biff actually grows at the end of the play, which is important to

any story.