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# Characters and Themes in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot"

*Dissertation submitted in partial requirement for the fulfillment of the  
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## *Dedication*

To my parents without their love, support, and encouragement I never would have finished this work.

To all my wonderful siblings.

To all my friends.

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Praise is to Allah, the Almighty, Who enabled me to finish this thesis successfully.

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## *Abstract*

This dissertation explores “Waiting for Godot” by Samuel Beckett and “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller which are plays from different worlds that contribute to the development and the flourishing of 20<sup>th</sup> century drama.

“Death of a Salesman”, Miller’s most famous work produced in 1949, marked an eye catching vestige in American drama. It casts a cold eye on the ‘American Dream’ and moral that is compromised to achieve it. Its hero, the dreamer salesman Willy Loman, is a man who struggles to get the ‘American Dream’ which is to make sense of his place in the society.

“Waiting for Godot”, Beckett’s great play produced in 1953, had a big effect on British drama. It is known as the best play in list of Absurd drama. This tragic-comedy play centers on two tramps Vladimir and Estragon waiting for a personage called Godot. This play shows the meaningless of life.

The study, however, looks into comparison between the two plays focusing on analysis of the main themes and main characters in each play to highlight the differences and similarities between them.

We first examine the background of 20<sup>th</sup> British and American drama in order to know the grounds that helped in writing the two plays and to explore the characteristics of each play. Then, we analyze each play in terms of main characters and main themes by pointing out their similarities and differences.

In the proposed study, the hypothesis is the following: may major characters and main themes in “Death of a Salesman” and in “Waiting for Godot” similar to each other or different from each other.

## ملخص

يعالج هذا البحث مسرحيتين الأولى للكاتب الأيرلندي صمويل بكيث بعنوان " في انتظار غودو" والثانية بعنوان "وفاة بائع متجول" للكاتب آرثر ميلر وهما مسرحيتين من عالمين مختلفين و اللتان كان لهما الفضل في تطور وازدهار الدراما و بلوغ أوجها في القرن العشرين.

ولقد كان هذا العمل الذي أنتجه ميلر بعنوان "وفاة بائع متجول" عام 1949 الأكثر شهرة و تميزا خاصة في الدراما الأمريكية. و الهدف الأساسي من خلال هذا العمل الدرامي الذي القي نضرة خاطفة على الحلم الأمريكي و التسوية المعنوية اللازمة لتحقيقه. يركز هذا العمل على هدف مرجو مفاده بلوغ البطل الحالم "ويلي لومان" الحلم الأمريكي و المتمثل في تبوء مكانة مرموقة بعد تعرضه للتهميش وهضم و تدمير مساعيه و طموحاته من طرف المجتمع.

و لقد اعتبر عمل بكيث بعنوان "في انتظار غودو" من أكثر الأعمال تميزا والذي صدر عام 1953 إذ كان له تأثير بارز و كبير على الدراما الانكليزية وقد حازت على تقييم أهم عمل مسرحي في القرن العشرين باللغة الإنكليزية. كان هذا واضحا و معروفا أن هذه المسرحية من أفضل المسرحيات في قائمة الدراما العبيثية. وتدور المسرحية التي هي "تراجيديا مضحكة" حول رجلين يدعيان "فلاديمير" و"استراغون" ينتظران شخصا يدعى "غودو". وأثارت هذه الشخصية مع الحكمة القصصية للمسرحية الكثير من التحليل والجدل حول المعنى المبطن لأحداثها.

وما نخلص إليه من خلال المعالجة و الدراسة لهاتين المسرحيتين هو محاولة الولوج في أعماقها بغية عقد مقارنة بينهما عبر التركيز على تحليل الشخصيات الرئيسية و استنباط المغزى من كل مسرحية واستخراج أوجه الشبه و الاختلاف بينهما. وقد اعتمدنا في دراستنا هذه تقسيما عرضنا فيه أولا تفحص الخلفية للدراما الانكليزية و الأمريكية في القرن العشرين, وذلك بغية معرفة العوامل و الأسباب التي أثرت على كتابة المسرحيتين, زيادة على ذلك استخراجنا خصائص كل مسرحية, ثم قمنا أخيرا بعقد المقارنة. .

في هذا البحث اقترحنا هذه الفرضية , قد تكون الشخصيات و المغزى الرئيسية في " وفاة بائع متجول" و الشخصيات و المغزى الرئيسية في " في انتظار غودو" متشابهة أو مختلفة.

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### ***General Introduction***

Any background to 20<sup>th</sup> century drama must obviously begin with a sketch of what the nineteenth century was like. The nineteenth century drama characterized by many characteristics the most important were: Melodramas plays had been popular and it took the most important part of drama during this period. Then, sometimes the plays of this period were adaptations of novels. Moreover, the playwrights turned many famous novels into drama in order to make them easy for understanding the idea or the topic of the novel and because the audiences of nineteenth century were interested with drama more than novels. In addition, at the beginning of the century melodrama plays focused on high class society but gradually at the end of this period new movement named Realism started to appear and to make its first marks. The most significant characteristic of this movement is that characters and themes moved closer to the realities of contemporary life (Gerould).

After nineteenth century, the twentieth century come and it come up with numerous changes in both American and British drama especially after the WWI. Among these changes: Twentieth century dramas become more internationally unified because plays of this period talk about the same topics and took the same characteristics and focused on the same form. Then, drama of this period usually focuses on ordinary people and on their day to day issues or problems because Realism continued its developments and takes the main part. Beside Realism, Expressionism also has an effect on twentieth American and British playwrights. But the great drama could be produced by combining both Realism and Expressionism as in Arthur Miller's "Death of Salesman". Theater of the Absurd is another concept appeared in this period exactly in the WWII. Because of the bad effect of the WWII on human being, this kind of theater was based on representing a sense of meaninglessness of human existence. It

characterized by the use of expressionism in British drama but in America it was a much later development. "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett has been probably considered the most famous play in the list of absurdist plays (Hotaling).

Before the 20th century, both American and British drama centered on religious themes, and plays take the form of Melodramas, also, they were adaptations of novels. Up till the 20th century, realistic topics would be the main task that American and British playwrights dealt with in their works. The most famous example of those playwrights are Arthur Miller with his play "Death of Salesman" from American drama and Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" from British drama. Thus, our task centers on finding an answer to the following question:

- Do main themes and main characters of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" seem to be different or similar ?

Certainly, in this dissertation the hypothesis can be formulated as; characters and the themes in "Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller and in "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett may be different or similar.

The present dissertation aims at clarifying the backgrounds of American and British drama in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by talking about characteristics of two plays that marked eye-catching vestige on drama of that time and contributed in flourishing it, Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot". It mainly focuses on analyzing the main characters and major themes in each work. Comparing Miller's "Death of a Salesman" to Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" is the following point, in order to highlight the differences and similarities between the characters and themes in these plays.

For the reason that the research is a comparative study, the available method to this dissertation will be based on critical analysis of the two plays in order to come with

the differences and similarities of the two plays “Death of a Salesman” and “Waiting for Godot”. We will also examine the studies made by authors and literary scholars on this subject.

This thesis offers the task of comparing two works of two playwrights coming from two different worlds one from American drama who is Arthur Miller’s “Death of a Salesman” and one from British drama who is Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot”.

In the light of what has been discussed, this work can be divided into three chapters that are closely interrelated.

The first chapter discovers the background by giving a literature review about main characteristics of the two plays “Death of a Salesman” and “Waiting for Godot”

The second chapter includes the analysis of Arthur Miller’s “Death of a Salesman”, but focuses on the major themes and characters.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of Samuel Beckett’s play which is “Waiting for Godot.”The analysis focuses on main themes and characters.

The general conclusion, however, is a comparative study in which an attempt is made in order to detect any similarities and differences between “Death of a Salesman” and “Waiting for Godot”, in terms of main themes and main characters.

## ***Chapter One: Literature Review***

### ***1.1 Introduction***

In the 19th Century, Theater in general was extremely successful because it was the main source of entertainment. During this time theatre came up with diverse types of drama and made a fast increase in plays. Playwrights advanced their thinking patterns; moreover, they came up with successful techniques of writing which lead to produce plays of high quality.

Melodrama was the primary form of theatre in the nineteenth century. It aimed at producing superficial excitement, and its development, coupled with the emergence of Realism which focused on serious drama. Initially the Melodramas concentrate mainly on imagination and high class characters, but gradually characters and setting moved close to realities of contemporary life. Related to Realism is Naturalism, which can be defined as a selective realism emphasizing the more sordid and pessimistic aspects of life. Henry Ibsen, the father of the realist and the modern drama, of Norway brought to a climax the realistic movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, he served as a bridge to 20<sup>th</sup> century symbolism. His realistic dramas of ideas surpass other such works because they blend a complex plot, a detailed setting and middle-class or extraordinary characters in an organic whole (History of Theatre).

After, most of twentieth century across the globe saw numerous catastrophic changes because it has witnessed the two great Wars in history and social upheaval without parallel. This period of great change and the development of many new forms of theatre, including Modernism, Expressionism, Political Theatre and other forms of Experimental Theatre, as well as the continuing development of already established literature movements like Naturalism and Realism.

For the most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Realism has been the mainstream. It is originally begun as an experiment to make theatre more useful to society and serve as a reaction against Melodrama. In 1920's, realism had become widespread in England, and the United States. Many plays were written in this mode, those of Ibsen as well as those of American realists like O'Neil, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams are concrete examples (Worthen, 69). So, what are the characteristics of the writing of those playwrights during this period and what are the changes brought to the drama of that time?

This chapter presents the characteristics of the American and British Drama during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on the most famous playwright of the period and his most famous work, which had an effect on many writers and lead to the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre.

### ***1.2. American Drama***

The twentieth century was a time of great change and development for the American Drama, and this development parallels the development and prosperity of the nation itself. Meanwhile, because of the welfare situation of the country, thousand of new theatres were built, and Americans looked to the theater to provide entertainment; for this reason, during this period, playwrights did not produce plays of high qualities. However, twentieth century drama characterized by dramatization of novels and melodrama plays were extremely popular. By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new trend that had begun some twenty years earlier in Europe became evident (VanSpanckern 77). This was Realism, which was a movement difference from the conventional melodramas and sentimental comedies of the 1700s. It is expressed in theatre through the use of Symbolism and character development (Wainscot).

The plays of this period are mostly inspired from European ones. Furthermore, American drama during this period tended to be derivative in form, imitating European drama, but it was native in content talking about current events and social problems (American Literature Themes, Melodramas, Realism).

It was until 20<sup>th</sup> century that pure American drama appeared. In 20<sup>th</sup> century Realism continued to be a primary form of dramatic expression, even as the experimentation and the production of plays became increasingly interesting. Such famous American dramatists as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller reached profound new levels of Realism, using individual characters and their situations on the state of American society in general (Wainscot).

In general, the works of realistic writers demonstrate the main tenet of Realism, and that writers must set down their observation impartially and objectively. They focused on the exact representation of life; it concentrated on middle-class life and reality, avoiding high class life and imagination. The playwright Arthur Miller (1915-2005) is one of that generations. He began writing plays when he was a student at the University of Michigan. In his works, Miller explored the trouble of individuals suffering in an artificial society. Added to that, he combined realistic characters while writing modern tragedy. In his plays, the past was an investable influence on the present and his plays jamb from his social conscience and from his consideration for those who are vulnerable to the deceptive values instilled in them by society. Miller's main achievement was the play "Death of a Salesman" (1949). It won the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for drama, the 1949 Tony Award for best play, and the 1949 New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play of the year. It is considered a landmark in American drama (Wainscot).

“Death of a Salesman” tells, nearly in poetic terms and way, the tragic story of a common man Willy Loman who is much similar to Miller’s father, and he is a travelling salesman who has devoted his life to the search for success and happiness. His wrong philosophy is the reason for the bad situation of his family. In a series of scenes, brightly dramatized by the dramatist, Willy Loman relives his experiences. At the end he commits suicide because of the falseness of American dream, the dream of success (Ronald).

Although Miller generally wrote in a realistic style and much of the play is conveyed expressionistically. Its expressionistic setting ideally suited the dialogue, which, though recognizably colloquial, is expressive and lyrical (Worthen, 76).

### ***1.3. British Drama***

By 1956, British drama was in a terrible situation because of many reasons mainly wars which lead to the separation of Western drama. But during 20<sup>th</sup> century this problem was solved, especially after World War I. Western drama became more internationally unified and less the products of separate national literary traditions. During this century, Realism Naturalism and Symbolism contributed to shape significant plays. Common themes in the 20th century drama were political, reflecting the unease or rebellion of the workers against the state, philosophical, delving into who and why of human existence and existence. After the wars, new playwrights emerged with diverse views (History of theater).

Several works based on the idea of reality, some were radically political, and others kept away from Naturalism and questioned the legitimacy of previously illogical beliefs. Moreover, World War I and World War II caused deep destruction and loss of human ultimate certainties and definitely brought about a world missing any unifying

principle, a world senseless and disconnected from human life. If one realizes the absence of sense, and this is the expression of the spirit of the epoch, in which the Theatre of the Absurd is rooted, the world becomes irrational and the conflict between the world and the human being who begins to be estranged from it arises here as Martin Esslin accepted the idea of Ionesco that says: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. ...Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, and useless" (Theatre of the Absurd).

The Theatre of the Absurd describes a mood, a tone towards life, where man's existence is a dilemma of purposeless, meaningless, and pointless activity. It is complete denial of age-old values. It has no plot, no characterization, no logical sequence, and no culmination. It shows that how man has lost his dignity. It is totally unconventional. T.S.Eliot, the twentieth century poet, and playwright depicted a grim picture of man's absurd life in his famous play 'Sweeney Agonists'

Birth, and copulation, and death.

That's all. That's all, that's all.

Birth, and copulation, and death .(2.193).

Probably the most famous play of the Theater of the Absurd is Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot". It was written in 1949 and published in English in 1954. Beckett was influenced by the French existential philosophy of Sartre and Camus held that human beings simply exist in a world. Beckett interprets various philosophical treatises; he was mostly interested in Descartes. Schopenhauer and Geulincx. These thinkers are the main sources that influenced and shaped Beckett's view of the world as well as his literary writings we are essentially good or bad, we are what we make of ourselves and what we are and what we choose to believe.

One of the most basic philosophical questions he asks is whether there is any meaning in our existence at all. The human necessity of unifying explanation of world has always been satisfied by religion and creators of the philosophical systems who made the human life meaningful. The natural desire to get to know and understand the world in its most hidden spheres was fulfilled by religious dogmas about the existence of God, which guaranteed the meaningful contingency of human life.

“Waiting for Godot” brought Samuel Beckett name and fame in the field of the Theatre of the Absurd. It was first staged on the 5th Jan 1953 with its original French version "En attendant Godot" then it was staged for the first time English in 1955. English audiences were overtaken by Godotmania remembering the line ‘Nothing happens, nobody comes, and nobody goes. It's awful. The action of the play indicates us the absurdity while selecting the setting, plot, characters, and dialogues. We become aware of the settingless setting, plotless plot, characterless characters, actionless action and truthless truth. The whole play is packed with absurdity, because whatever happens, but does not take any motion, is the activity of absurdity to the readers and to the audiences (Lombardi).

The play is about two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who call each other ‘Gogo’ and ‘Didi’. They meet near a bare tree on a country road and they wait for the promised arrival of Godot, whose name could refer to 'God' or also the French name for Charlie Chaplin, 'Charlot'. To fill the boredom they try to recall their past, tell jokes, eat, and speculate about Godot. The very existence of Vladimir and Estragon is in doubt. Without Godot, their world does not have a purpose. At the end of the play the two characters keep on the hope of Waiting (Western drama).

#### ***1.4. Conclusion***

The Twentieth century British and American drama witnessed numerous changes from that of previous centuries. This appeared in the way of using characters and themes that dramatists concentrate on. Twentieth century America and British dramatists put the common man or the ordinary people as the main character and the themes of their works centered on are realistic and reflected their situation, and problems in that period. Arthur Miller and Samuel Beckett explicitly showed these in their plays “Death of a Salesman” and “Waiting for Godot.”

## *Chapter Two: Characterization and Themes in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman"*

### *2.1. Introduction*

Since World War II and the 1950's, people focused on the pursuit of happiness. Life and liberty seemed to be taken care of, especially following the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's. Arthur Miller (1915-2005) undertook to observe the American society and its soul-shriveling materialism in his works, especially in his most famous play "Death of a Salesman" in 1947. It was first performed in 1949 and was an immediate success. It won the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and transformed Miller into a national sensation. "Death of a Salesman" began as a short story that Miller wrote at the age of seventeen while he was working for his father's company. Many critics described "Death of a Salesman" as the greatest American tragedy, and Miller gained eminence as a man who understood the deep essence of the United States because the play examines the cost of blind faith in the 'American Dream' (Bradford).

The play based on six major characters. Willy Loman the aging salesman; prone to embroidering the truth; loves his family but is unable to satisfy his own dream, Linda Loman; Willy's love; long-suffering wife; enables his delusions, Biff Loman; the eldest son of Willy Loman; confused about his place and purpose in life; discovers Willy's affair, Happy Loman; the younger son of Willy Loman; ready to perpetuate Willy's dreams, Charley ;generous neighbor; Willy's only friend; regularly offers support but is knocked back by Willy, Bernard friend to Biff; Charley's son who has become a very successful lawyer, and Ben; Willy's dead brother; idolized by him; made his fortune in

Africa. Howard Wagner; the son of the former owner of the Wagner Company, Miss Frances; secretary of one of Willy's clients; the woman in Boston with whom Willy has an affair, And Litta and Miss Forsyth; the two women that Happy picks up in the restaurant, are the minor characters. In addition, the play has many themes among which the American Dream, Illusion vs. Reality, Abandonment... (Lombardi).

This chapter is intended to analyze, in the first part, the major characters of the play such as Willy Loman, and his family. The second part of this chapter is intended to analyze the main themes of the play such as The American Dream, and Illusion vs. Reality.

## ***2.2. Characterization in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman"***

### ***2.2.1. Willy Loman***

Willy Loman the main character on which the play centers, a 63 year old traveling salesman working on commission. He married Linda, a smiling house wife throughout the day and has two grown boys named Biff and Happy. They were the pride and joy of the neighborhood. Willy is a salesman by profession and when he was an adult, he had two choices to live his life. On one hand he had the choice to live in the where his countryside and to work outdoors and on the other hand the possibility to live in the city and earn money in. The businessman named Dave Singleman was the person who changed his life. Willy was that impressed by the fact that Dave Singleman is famous and people liked him all over the country and that he had drummed merchandise in Singleman. Willy believes that he has found the secret to success and being well-liked by getting a work in a selling firm as Dave Singleman (Breitkof 03). Willy describes Dave in the play:

His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave, he'd go

up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers I'll never forget-and pick up his phone and call the buyers, without ever leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. (2.57).

When "Death of a salesman" is written, that period witnessed a great social shift. That period was time of business prosperity and an era of financial prosperity for Americans. However, even in such enormous transform action , the classic American faith in individualism was still present in the minds of a lot of people and they continued "to affirm on the old faith as if nothing had really changed at all" (Whyte, 05). Willy character faces this predicament exactly. He continues to keep on and hold on that "old faith" rather than to face him with the new business culture.

Willy had experienced several successes in his work as a salesman living a life of luxury because he has worked hard. But as the play goes on, Willy started to consider himself as a failure in different domains of life because he cannot accept the new business climate he faces. Willy describes his problem to his wife Linda in the play: "You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me...I don't know the reason for it, but they just pass me buy" (01.732-3,741-02).

One of the main reasons that makes Willy cannot keep with the change the time is because he keeps on holding the idea that one can succeed in the business world by being well-like and an imposing personality; "the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead" (1.646-4). Willy tells this to his son Biff advising him that being well-liked is the way for success. We understand that Willy wants his family to be successful, especially his two boys, Biff and Happy. His goal also in life is to live the American Dream like his

older brother Ben, who has constantly overshadowed him, and he is in many ways the man that Willy wanted to be. Willy says about Ben: “That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate” (01.865-6). Ben represents the business ideals and the successful traveling salesman in the west. Unfortunately, Willy is failed to be like his brother in order to get the ‘American Dream’ which is to be rich and to live happy life and to keep up with the changing business environment of that time; The Post-World War II era (Sanjjdul 01).

Miller in this play speaks about the common man, Willy Loman as a tragic modern hero who faces social problems and the injustice. In his essay, he defines the common American man whose story, Miller believes, must be told:

I believe that the common man is as apt for tragedies in its highest sense of kings were. On the face of it this ought to be obvious in the high of modern psychiatry, which bases its analysis on classical formulation, such as the Oedipus and Orestes complexes , for instance, which were enacted by royal beings, but which apply to every –one in similar emotional situation.(03).

In this essay ‘Tragedy and the Common man,’ Miller sets out the characteristics of a tragedy and tragic hero. This pattern supports the idea that a tragedy can occur in characters of common men as well as those in high position. He explains that the tragic hero should be possible for everyone not only those of high position such tragedy that portrayed by Shakespeare and Euripides.

The tragedy of the tragic hero, Willy Loman, occurs when Biff and Happy turned their backs and when he lost their respect and love while he puts his whole life and his hope into them. It all started when Biff discovered the affair of his father with another woman, so, Biff’s ambitious for better future and to be a great successful

businessman turned out that he is still searching to find himself. This is what disappoints Willy in the worst way and makes him feel guilty about this and believes that deep inside that he is responsible for Biff's choices in life and his failure to be successful. Biff's discovery of this affair causes Willy to lose his son's love and respect. "The affair that Willy had and Biff discovered," Jeffares observes, "has left a deep impression on the latter, and has altered the relationship between father and son" (146). Biff treats Willy in a way that shows he does not respect him anymore. When Willy asks Biff not to "curse in this house," Biff turns to Willy, as he is "starting...for the stairs," and says: "Since when did you get so clean?" (1.63). Biff's reaction to Willy's order denotes that he does not have any love or respect for his father; otherwise he would not dare say so. In fact, he has lost respect for his father since the moment he found him with that woman in Boston. When he realized that his father was betraying his mother, he called Willy: "You fake! You phony little fake! You fake! Overcome, he turns quickly and weeping fully goes out with his suitcase. Willy left on the floor on his knees" (2.121). We can notice that this was the incident that made Biff lose trust in Willy.

Willy's affair with the woman in Boston, however, does not only deprive him of his son's love and respect, but it also deprives him of peace of mind. Whenever he sees Linda mending stockings, he feels guilty, because he used to give Linda's stockings to his woman in Boston: "Willy, noticing her mending: What's that?" Linda: "Just mending my stockings. They're so expensive— [Willy interrupts], "Willy, angrily, taking them from her: I won't have you mending stockings in this house! Now throw them out!" (1.39).

Moreover, at the beginning of the second act, while Linda saying goodbye to him as he was going out Willy: "Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I'm in

the house. Gets me nervous. I can't tell you. Please" (2.75). We observe that Willy gets nervous when he sees the stockings in Linda's hands. This indicates that he is sorry about what he was doing: giving Linda's stockings to the woman in Boston, and does not want anything that reminds him of his past relationship with the woman, otherwise he would not mind the stockings at all.

Another reason that destroys Willy is his aging. By getting older he can't do the things he used to do. He is not making enough money to support his dream and his wife. Being 60 years old, affects his work because he is getting too old for the traveling and he is not the salesman he once was. He asks his boss for a raise and the boss fires him, so, this situation destroys Willy's pride. The last problem is the conflict between Willy and Biff. This led Willy to think that he failed to be a good father because Biff tries to explain that he was never what Willy wanted him to be. This situation has totally broken him down and he believes that his life is totally finished (Bradford, *Death of a Salesman- a Character Analysis of Willy Loman*).

Willy's dreams and self-image seem to be rightfully his. That is, no one can deny him the right to dream and to estimate his abilities and character the way he likes. What is interesting, however, is how Willy's dreams and self-image are turned against him and how the other related forces, that is, senses of possessing and achieving, guilt, and reality represented by society, participate in adding to his suffering. Instead of facilitating his business deals and consequently leading him to success, Willy's Boston affair made him lose his son's love and respect as well as peace of mind. It also, as a negative consequence, deprives him of achieving success through Biff. His self-image, too, makes him lose sight of his true abilities and set his sights on false prestige and popularity. To claim having these qualities, Willy indulges in lies and pretensions. His dream of having his own business collides with reality as do his hopes of a New York

job and a salary and popularity; and thus his dream of leaving something to be remembered by also turns into a source of confusion, depression, and abnormal behavior (Moss 92).

As a result and because he fails to make himself and his family successful he kills himself in order to maintain the illusion that he has sacrificed himself to give Biff the money to fulfill his dream. Ribkoff writes, "Driven by shame, he kills himself in order to present his dream of being 'well liked' and a successful father and a salesman" (48). Willy thought that since it was his decision to kill himself, he has gained control over his guilt and shame. Centola also writes, "He coms himself that only his death can restore his prominence in his family's eyes and retrieve for him his lost sense of honor"(41). Willy fails to see that his illusion of success was a lie when he commits suicide.

### ***2.2.2 Linda loman***

Linda is Willy's wife, who truly loves her husband the most. Her characteristics can be discovered by paying attention for her husband. When she speaks to her sons, Happy and Biff, she can be very serious, confident, and resolute. However, when Linda converses her husband, it's if she is walking on eggshells. Miller uses the following descriptions to reveal how Linda deals with her husband:"very carefully, delicately," "with some trepidation," "resigned," "sensing the racing of his mind, fearfully..." (Death of a Salesman: Analysis of major characters).

She represents stability in the play because she is always supporting her husband and respected him. For instance, she says: "Attention. attention must be finally paid to such person" (1.39). It seems that Linda address to her two sons Biff an Happy to respect their father because of her interests and desire to keep him live in peace. Also, it

seems that she loves her husband more than her sons. When Biff complains about his father's erratic behavior, Linda proves her devotion to her husband by telling her son: "Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him, then you don't have any feeling for me", "He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have anyone making him feel blue" (1.38). We notice that Linda gives more interest to her husband. This importance she gave to him because of many reasons mainly Willy's job stress and loneliness. In addition to that, Linda is the only person in Willy's life can understand him. As Roudané explains, "even Linda, who knows that 'only the shallowness of the water'(2.59) saved Willy from suicide the year before, and that Willy has 'been trying to kill himself recently, contributes to truth-illusion matrix if Linda casts herself as supportive wife, she is also a complex figure who plays a central role within the family dynamics'(70).

Linda knows Willy's fragile state from the beginning, because of her knowledge and observation that he has been and is trying to kill himself. Unfortunately, she does not know the reason for Willy's behavior as she claims to know? She tells Biff: "He's dying, Biff" Happy turns quickly to her, shocked. After a pause, "why he is dying?" she replies, "He's been trying to kill himself". Biff, with great horror "How?", "what're you talking about?" (1.58).

Linda realizes that Willy has been contemplating suicide. She knows that his mind is on the verge of being lost but she never confronts Willy about his suicidal tendencies. Instead, she plays the role of the quintessential housewife of the 40s and 50s. She exhibits patience, loyalty, and an eternally submissive nature. Her actions lay in fact that she acted out of love and respect for her husband (Christopher 71).

We can observe during the play that Linda realizes that there is a serious problem between Willy and Biff, but she does not know the reason. Moreover, she

thinks that Biff is also responsible for what is going on between him and his father. She realizes that Biff does not respect his father and does not have any feelings for him. When he compliments her saying that she is not even sixty, she knows that he will not say such nice words to his father. She then tells him, “If you don’t have any feelings for him, then you can’t have any feeling for me’ (1.55). As we observed that Linda does not know about the fact of the conflict between her son Biff and her husband Willy. The fact is Willy’s affair with another woman that Biff discovers when he was adult. Linda tries many times to know but without result, both of them avoid answering her: “Willy dear, what has he got against you?” Willy replies “I ‘am so tired. Don’t talk anymore” (1.68). Willy refuses to state what is between him and Biff; this makes Linda unknown about the hidden reason that may destroy the uniqueness of the family.

Because her respect and love for her husband, Linda caught denying that Willy is crazy and instead believes that he is merely “exhausted.” She says to her sons that, “ a lot of people think he’s lost his-balance; but you don’t have to be very smart to know what his trouble is. The man is exhausted” (1.38).

Linda helps her husband to achieve his dreams in order to feel comfortable by supporting him and advising him all the time. Even Willy values her existence beside him when he says that she is his foundation and his support in the second act.

Because her choice for Willy, her life occupied by disappointment, and for all her nice attributes, Linda is left a widow. At Willy’s graveside, she explains that she cannot cry. The long, slow tragic events in her life have drained her of tears. Her husband is dead, her two sons still hold grudges, and the last payment on their house has been made. But there is no one in that house except a lonely old woman named Linda Loman (Linda Loman: The wife in Death of a Salesman).

### ***2.2.3 Biff and Happy Loman***

Biff Loman is the older of Willy's two sons. He is an attractive man, even though he is a failure in his life. In high school, Biff was a star football player; winning scholarship. He has been brought up not only with the will to succeed, but with an almost unbreakable sense of the certainty of his success. However, this high sense of self-esteem is based solely on the praise he gets from his father, whom he loves and puts on a pedestal, his entire value system came crashing down when he caught him cheating on his mother and this made him go kind of crazy. Willy's affair had a bad effect on his son's life and from her Biff spiraled downward. He attempts to follow his passion for working outdoors by herding cattle and working on farms rather than to be part of the business world like Happy and Willy (Bezukhov).

Happy Loman is the younger son of Willy and he is unattractive and overweight. He has been brought up with the same principles as his older brother, but without the sense of manifest destiny: he always considered second because he was over-shadowed by his older brother Biff, who has doted open by Willy because he was handsome and a star football player. though Happy never expressed any overt resentment over the excessive attention paid to Biff. Because his father does not give him attention, has left him an even strong desire to please his father in any way he can. Despite that he is competitive, ambitious and his respectable accomplishment in business, Happy is extremely lonely. Most disturbing for Happy is the fact that he cannot figure out why all this is not working, he follows the rules, done all the right things, but Happy just is not happy (Characters in Death of a Salesman 04).

During the Play, It is observed that Biff and Happy are aimless because they do not know what they want. As Biff "with rising agitation' explains his own problem

to Happy in the first act. He believes that his life is nothing in the farm because he is older to lose his life in such place without thinking about his future which is to work in good position not with horses and to gain a lot of money to be happy in his life.

In other words, Biff enjoys working with horses very much, but working as a farmhand is not his idea of a career and this realization generates a feeling of emptiness in his life, for even though the farm is the place he likes, he thinks he should be working in a more lucrative place than a farm. It is also noticed that Biff feels lost when he is home, for this makes him feel that he has failed to achieve something in life (Carson 50). Happy is not luckier than Biff in this regard though he seems more settled than Biff .he tells Biff that: “I don't know what the hell I'm working for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment -all alone. And I think of the rent I 'm paying. And it's crazy. But then it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty. And still, godd-ammit I'm lonely” (1.23). Happy's speech shows that he is aimless even though he has a job, an apartment, a car and plenty of women, i.e. everything he has always wanted. Happy also asserts that feels lonely.

Thus, both Biff and Happy are not satisfied with the lives they lead and do not know what they exactly want in life. Why they are so unfulfilled is not clear to us .In other words , the significance of this much of information about Biff and Happy to an understanding of the play's story as a whole cannot be of the play 's story a whole cannot be appreciated (Characters in Death of a Salesman 04).

Biff and Happy are not only aimless; they also have some character flaws. Happy is jealous and Biff has the habit of stealing. These statements show these aspects of their personalities. Happy tells Biff that: "... I can outbox , outrun, and out lift anybody in that store , and I have to take orders from those common , petty sons-of - bitches till I can't stand it anymore ," "...see, Biff, everybody around me is so false that

I'm constantly lowering my ideal," "...I got more in my pinkly finger than he's [Happy's merchandize manager] got in his head," and when he says "I gotta show some of those pompous, self-important executives over there that Hap Loman can make the grade. I want to walk into the store the way he walks in" (1.24).

We observe that Happy considers himself better than his bosses both physically and mentally. He considers physical power a sign of social superiority. He also considers his bosses orders insults. His speech indicates that he has great aspirations to achieve, but the problem is that he is being negatively affected by the people he works with .He also thinks he deserves to be the merchandize manager more than the merchandize manager of the store he works for. All this shows that he generally has an undercurrent of competition with his bosses, and he jealous of his boss otherwise he would no insult them. Moreover when he is talking with Biff, Happy says: "when he walks into the store the waves part in front of him. That's fifty-two thousand dollars a year coming through the revolving door..." (1.24).This indicates that he is jealous of his boss. The contradictions in Biff's personality are clear in his speech with his brother in the first act.

We notice that Biff contradicts himself here. First, he says that "I wonder if Oliver still thinks I stole that carton of basketballs" who indicates that a carton of basketballs was stolen and that Oliver thought that Biff had stolen that carton of basket balls. It also means that Biff did not steal that carton, Otherwise Biff use the verbs 'remember' instead of 'think' in his speech. Meanwhile, as he responds to Happy's comment, he says "well, I think he was going to. I think that's why I quit which denotes that Biff stole that carton of basketballs, otherwise he would not have quit especially if Oliver trusted him as he asserts:"I know he thought the world of me." we noticed also in

this two statements “I wonder if Oliver still thinks I stole that carton of basketballs” and “I was never sure whether he knew or not” That contradict each other.

It seems that the habit of stolen will exist in Biff’s personality and he cannot stop it because he does not know why. For instance after he met Oliver, Biff states to happy that he did a very bad thing; and his statement “I’m all numb I swear” (1. 103), makes it clear that he cannot believe he has taken Oliver’s fountain pen. The phrase “with great tension and wonder” implies that Biff is talking about the theft and he cannot explain why he did so. His saying “I don’t know what come over me, Hap. The next thing I know I’m in his office,” explains that his talking the pen was something out of his control .It is the second time that Biff steals something from Oliver. The first time is mentioned in AISI when Biff discusses with Happy the idea of borrowing some money from Oliver. In his last fight with his father in A2S5, Biff tells him that he had stolen a suit in Kinsas City: “You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was in Jail” (2.131). All of this information about Biff makes that stealing is a habit with Biff.

We understand that Biff’s and Happy’s aimlessness and their having such character flaws as contradiction, jealousy, self-deception, and stealing are due to the influence of Willy’s value-system. For example, when Biff thinks that his work should be in “the business world,” not the farm he says: “What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I’m thirty-four years old; I oughta be makin’ my future.” This is because Willy used to tell him that the man who makes an appearance with business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets a head.” So, Therefore Biff feels that he is doing nothing in the farm and it stimulates a feeling of emptiness in his life.

Happy also considers his self better than his bosses both physically and mentally. This self-deception is obviously because of Willy's ideas. When they were young he told them: "I thank Almighty God you're built like Adonises." In addition, the last fight of Biff with Willy in which he accuses Willy of being responsible for spoiling his life makes clear the impact of Willy's value-system on his boys. Biff tells Willy and Happy: "The men don't know who we are! The man is gonna know! To", Willy "We never told the truth for the minutes in this house!" Happy angrily "We always told the truth!" Biff, turning to him and says "You big blow, are you the assistant buyer? You're one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren't you?" Happy replies, "Well, I'm practically-[Biff interrupts]" Biff "you're practically full of it! We all are!" (2.131).

It is clear that Biff tries to make the problem the responsibility of the Loman in general: "we never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!" But he change his mind when tells Happy to his face that he is a big liar. He also blames Willy to have made him believe that he can be a great personality and big boss. It is clear that Willy's value-system has negatively influenced his sons' lives. In this point, Goyal comments, "Willy's house of illusion begins to shake when Biff holds him responsible for this failure" (109).

### ***2.3. Themes in Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman"***

#### ***2.3.1 The American Dream***

America has long been known as a land of opportunity and from this idea comes the 'American Dream,' the idea that any person can achieve success, even if he or she started with nothing. In "Death of a Salesman," Arthur Miller allows his

audiences to make the difference between what is real and what is not real in the American Dream in the lives of millions of Americans. Therefore, 'American Dream' is the main theme of the play. In 'Death of a Salesman,' the idea depends on being well liked, popular person and attractive personality to gain success in business (the American dream in Arthur miller's Death of a Salesman).

Willy Loman, the main character in the play, works all of his life as a salesman, as a cog in the network geared to mass produce not only multiple new produce to be sold, but also to create ever-expanding new desire by making people feel they always need something they do not have. So, Willy's 'American Dream' consists of a well liked and personally attractive man in business, and being able to acquire all of the material comforts offered in the modern American life. In fact, Willy was wrong about this idea and his view is failed because it is just a superficial ideas comparing with the real one of the 'American Dream'. On this point, Brook Atkinson in a review in The New York Times talks about the protagonist of the play, Willy Loman, and his dream:

"Willy has always believed in something that is unsound. He has assumed that success comes to those who are "well liked" as he puts it. He does not seem to be much concerned about the quality of the product he is selling. His customers buy, he thinks, because they like him. Because he is hale and hearty and a good man with jokes" (qtd in Bentley 730).

He explains Willy quest for the 'American Dream' lead to his failure because throughout his life, he pursues the illusion of the 'American Dream' and not the reality of it. The result of his blind faith toward the 'American Dream' leads to his psychological decline and suicide. He is unable to accept the gap between the 'American Dream' and the successes of his life.

Willy's dream is personified strongly by two characters in the play: David Singleman, who could travel anywhere, place many order by phone in his hotel room and he is well-liked by all people who know him. And when this man died at the age of eighty four people come from all over to attend his funeral. This is the kind of personality Willy desire to become and this is the main reason that leads him to choose the job as a salesman (Sajjadul 71). Willy's brother Ben is another symbol of the success that he wants to reach in his life. Willy talks to Happy about Ben: "The men knew what he wanted and went out and got it! Walked into a jungle and comes out, the age of twenty-one, and he's rich!!"(1.28). this is what Willy believes as achieving the American Dream. Ben was a rich man, meaning he had succeeded in the eyes of Willy.

Through the play Willy tells his sons, especially Biff, of what his brother had done. He has also many flashbacks to Ben, asking him for help because he looks at him as being the symbol of his 'American Dream'.

Bernard is that person in the play who Willy looks down upon. Bernard is more of a weird, who doesn't have many friends and spends most of his time doing school work. On the other hand he believes his son, Biff, to be a perfect example of his American Dream. Biff was always well liked in school and was good-looking. However, Bernard is the one who becomes extremely successful, while Biff struggles in his life. Biff begins to work on a ranch out west, making Willy believes his son is not at all successful. In his mind Biff did not succeed in the 'American dream'. This is why Willy continues to push biff to talk to his boss, Bill Oliver. Willy believes that since Biff was once so liked Bill will open his arms to him and do whatever he can for him. But Willy's perception of the 'American dream' was wrong, and Bill does not help Biff at all. Therefore, at the end he commits suicide because he failed and he done this for the American dream. He believes that once he dies all his in assurance money will be

left to Biff and by this way Biff will be successful and in turn Willy would have been successful in raising his son. With the money left to Biff he will be rich, and would have achieved the 'American dream' (Kewl).

Rodham considers "Death of a Salesman" a play about all dreams. He comments that Willy dreams two versions of the American dream, i.e. the business-success dream and the rural – agrarian dream. For him, Willy does not only fail to achieve the business –success dream, but he also fails the substitute of this dream which is affected on Willy. He states that:

The strongest emphasis on the pursuit of dreams is in Death of a Salesman which is a play about dreams ... For the success dream, Willy's models are Dave Singleman (the perfect ex-salesman), Charley (the friendly neighbor), and Uncle Ben... Even Howard (Willy's boss), whom he single-minded pursuit of 'success' he turned into a monster, is Willy's ideal. One cause of Willy's remorse is that he is a failure in the pursuit of this substituted of a dream-a failure in his own, as well as in his family's eyes (119-20).

He means that Willy Loman fails again to achieve his dreams. Because he is fired from his job and this makes him felt failure in his family eyes also and in this the tragic point in Willy's life. Pardhan also comments that the two dreams; the business-success dream and rural-agrarian dream are used to highlight the inner life of Willy "who aspires to be greater than himself" (121). He also states that "Willy's rural-agrarian dream is a sort of safety valve to withdraw from the harsh realities of failure in the pursuit of the success of dream." He means that if the two dreams are consider separately, they will be "equally hopeless as far as Willy is concerned. They provide meaning in his life because he can balance on dream against the other" (120).

Abboston takes Pradhan's idea that Willy's dreams provide meaning in his life because he can balance one dream against the other. She believes that Willy Loman's family has been able to survive for years just through their dreams. She also agrees that Willy and his family can balance their dreams against a harsh reality, but these dreams "are usually more destructive in the long run." She means that, while the dream is give strength to face the hard reality but this reality when intrudes the dreamer will suffer a lot. Abbotson states also that "A central thematic issue in this play "Death of a Salesman" is Miller's consideration of the problematic and elusive 'American dream' of success, and how it tends to be interpreted by society." She adds "Miller sees many people's lives [like the Lomans'] poisoned by their to be successful," and therefore he presents the characters of Charley Bernard as opposed to Ben and Howard to "offer us a potential solution to this social problem" ( 46).

Stephen Lawrence's "The Right Dreams in Death of a Salesman," focuses on the social forces that are the main reason for Willy's downfall. Lawrence blames the social expectations placed upon Willy Loman, which are so extensive that he cannot grasp the contradictions in his world. All those people around him, but they let Willy falls with his dreams and social problems without helping him. Willy cannot solve his troubles and get what he dreams because American society as Lawrence says.

Irving Jacobsen's 'Family Dream in Death of a Salesman' looks at the dreams that puts in his characters. Jacobsen maintains that "Family dreams extend backward in time to interpret the past, reach forward in time to project the future, and pressure reality in the present to conform to memory and imagination"(248). The moment of reality seems to come through a shocking or violent act. For instance, Biff when discover that his father is having an affair, and that truth shatters the dream that Willy has constructed

for his son; Willy is not only connected to his past, he is entrapped by it by the vision what should be, rather than what is (249).

In addition to all of this, the biggest and the most important dream of Willy Loman is having a big, spectacular funeral. At the end when Willy dies, at his funeral, his wife Linda says, "Why didn't anybody come...where are all the people he knew?"(2.112). All his life, he holds on this fantasy, but he never face the reality of how he could have made it come real. It is his vision of the people of the past that lead Willy to follow a particular path, leading to his denials in the end.

### ***2.3.2 Reality vs. Illusion***

Illusion versus reality is another major theme in the play of Arthur Miller because Loman family are all unable to separate reality from illusion to some degree. Willy, the main character, who is mainly suffer from this ailment. Willy's dreams and self-image, however, are not the only forces working against him in achieving success. Reality represented by society is also another force working against him. Willy's hope dream to get a job in New York and a good salary is destroyed by reality that Howard fires him. Howard, in A2S1, tells him that "there just is no spot here for you" (2.80). He expects that he would be rewarded a job in New York and a good salary after his long service with Wagner's company, thirty-five-year service, but when he faces the reality that he is seen to be of no use his hope is shattered.

Willy's dream of establishing his own business also crashes with reality. Willy is unable to achieve his dream of having his own business as he tells his boys: "Tell you a secret, boys. Don't breathe it to a soul. Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more" (1.30). He also tells Linda: "You wait, kid, before it's all over we're gonna get a little place out in the country, and I'll raise some vegetables, a couple of chickens. . ." (2.72).

We notice that Willy dreams of establishing his own business one day and of having a house of his own in the countryside where he would be more comfortable. But he is unable to achieve this dream, because business is slowing down as it is indicated by his speech to Linda: “My God, if business don’t pick up I don’t know what I’m gonna do!” (1.37).

Willy’s hope for Biff to be successful is also destroyed by the reality of nothing. Willy looks at his son as great, successful boy, when in reality he has not achieved all that he hoped. He has gone west to work on a ranch. Willy also believes that Biff is doing big things out west while Biff is nothing. However, at the end of the play Biff is the only family member who is able to realize what is real and what is not. Biff realizes who is, and that is not a successful business man. He likes and wants to work out west, and he has come to accept that. He does not want to live up to all the dreams of his father, he knows who is. He also realizes who Willy is. He says Willy is “a dime a dozen,” showing that Willy followed the illusion of the American dream and now he realizes this and he knew that he would not to be like Willy. He would live his own live.

Willy’s dream of popularity, i.e. being well liked, also crashes with reality. He notices that people do not like him, as mentioned in his talk to his wife Linda: “You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don’t seem to take to me” (1.36).

we noticed that when Willy chose the sales profession because he wanted to be loved as he tells Howard in A2S1: “. . . I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. ’Cause what could be more satisfying than to be . . . remembered and loved and helped by so many different people?” (2. 81).

It means that Willy’s discovers that people do not like him and this is not easy for him because it works against his wish. What is more annoying to Willy is what he

tells Linda about, in A1S2, when he was in one of his business trips: “. . . a salesman I know, as I was going in to see the buyer I heard him say something about—walrus. And I—I cracked him right across the face. I won’t take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that” (1.37). Here, Willy was made fun of by the others. Thus, his dream of popularity collides with reality, too. Finally, Willy expectation of a massive funeral also collides with reality. He expects to have an impressive funeral when he dies. In A2S5, he tells his brother Ben (as he is hallucinating):

the funeral-*straightening up*: Ben, that funeral will be massive! They’ll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the old-timers with the strange license plates-that boy [Biff] will be thunder-stuck, Ben, because he never realized-I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey-I am known, Ben, and he’ll see it with his eyes once and for all. He’ll see what I am, Ben! He’s in for a shock, that boy! (2.126).

We can notice that Willy dreams of a funeral like that of Dave Singleman which he tells Howard about in A2S1: “when he [Singleman] died hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral” (2.81). In Willy’s funeral, however, only five people attend namely, Linda, Biff, Happy, Charley, and Bernard. Linda gets surprised and wonders “Why didn’t anyone come ? . . . But where are all the people he knew? Maybe they blame him.” Charley responds to her wonder saying “Naa. It’s a rough world, Linda. They wouldn’t blame him” (2.139).

#### **2.4. Conclusion**

Many characters in the Twentieth-century tragedy are still struggling with their subjective nature, which in turn structures their cathartic experience. In “Death of a Salesman”, the subjective and the substantive exists in dialectical conflict. We notice the set of characters, not united, but centering on his or her personal struggles; Willy

and his failures, Happy and his narcissism, and Biff with his emotional paralysis. Even Linda exhibits more of a subjective than substantive nature as she frets about tactics for appeasing the family.

In his play Miller talked about many forces that put characters into action. The economic forces include the race for money, keeping up with the neighbors, desperate expectations of fulfill an American dream of happiness, serene and resplendent. The complications hindering characters are an incredibly rigid class structure, and of conspicuous consumption (Willy buys the car and the washer, all the while confronting the continuous need for house repair). All in all, "Death of a Salesman" is one among the plays that makes a turning point in American drama. Because it deals with one of the great problems of twentieth century which is the tragedy of the American common man and his conflicts and struggles with society to gain the American dream. In addition, Miller's play gains an important place in the American drama because it focuses on the middle class American society and Miller combines both realism and expressionism in this play ( M. Metzger 30).

## ***Chapter Three: Characterization and Themes in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot"***

### ***3.1. Introduction***

In 1945, World War the II ended, leaving behind widespread destruction and heavy human casualties. Therefore, for many, the world appeared chaotic and meaningless. Shortly thereafter, new theatre genre called "Theatre of the Absurd" emerged and the definition of 'Absurd' in the dictionary is something that is completely stupid and unreasonable. In the literary context it means 'out of Harmony.' Such theatre started audiences by breaking from traditional stage techniques, raising questions instead of providing answers, and expressing an inability to make sense of human actions, choices, and indeed, life itself. Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" (1952) came to be considered an essential example of theatre of the Absurd. Initially, written in French in 1948 as "En Attendant Godot." Beckett himself translated it into English (British Literature: Drama).

"Waiting for Godot" is a story of two dilapidated bums, Vladimir and Estragon, who fill their days as painlessly as they can, Waiting for someone named Godot, a personage who will explain their interminable insignificance, or put an end to it. This tragicomedy's main action is waiting. Beckett's play is full of unpredictability. The plot structure is perfectly random; there's no certain opening, culmination, and conclusion. In addition, the play is full of unanswered questions of which the most intriguing one is 'who is Godot?'

Play's characters are only five male characters Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, and the Boy. The play mainly centers on the conflicts between the two protagonists Estragon and Vladimir and their waiting for Godot. They are alike in many ways Vladimir is impatient, and always reluctant to keep still or stay where he is because of boredom or

nervousness. He generally walks or stands through the play, While Estragon is mostly motionless, not willing, or not having the strength or power to move. Pozzo and Lucky are the most apparent of slave and master in “Waiting for Godot.” They are strongly tied together both physically and metaphysically. The Boy is another character in the play. He is the messenger who arrives near the end of each act to inform Vladimir and Estragon that Mr. Godot will not arrive. The play also includes the issues of absurdity, death, doubt and ambiguity, time, the meaning of life, language and meaning, and the search for self .

The aim of this chapter is to focus on the analyzing major characters such as Vladimir, and Estragon. In addition, it is focuses on analyzing the most significant themes such as time and the Unknown and Uncertainty in the play.

### ***3.2. Characterization in Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot”***

#### ***3.2. The two tramps***

Vladimir who is one of the two central characters of the play seems to be more dependable and mature. He is addressed as ‘Didi’ by Estragon and as Mr. Albert by the boy. He is most easily distinguished from Estragon by his somewhat more elevated perception and intellect, eager to present a good social image. He believes in the world of mind and accepts a higher reality outside him. Furthermore Vladimir acts as though loyalty to Godot will bring guidance, security, redemption, salvation. He enjoys discourse about mental and emotional dilemmas, occasionally referring to his limited memories of the Bible in order to make sense of his life. He is pragmatic and philosophical in regards to the problems that faced him and his friend Estragon who exercises almost absolute control over him and asserts his supremacy very subtly. Throughout the play, we notice that Vladimir is the most committed the most constant. He reminds Estragon ‘Gogo’ that they must wait for Godot:

Estragon: Charming spot. (He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.) Inspiring prospects. (He turns to Vladimir.) Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon: (despairingly). Ah! (Pause.) You're sure it was here?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: That we were to wait. (1.5).

Perhaps this is simply because his memory is sharper. In addition, Vladimir becomes the conscience of mankind, where his friend Estragon is the body (Waiting for Godot Analysis Study Guide).

Throughout the play and from the behavior of Vladimir, we can obtain the idea that Vladimir is unable to cope with the suffering of others. For example, the way he flips out when Estragon desires to talk about his “private nightmares”: “don’t tell me!” he yells, followed shortly by “don’t tell me!” and finally by the slightly less emotional “you know I can’t bear that” (1.7). And this exchange happens three times in Waiting for Godot. On the top of that, is when Vladimir explodes at Pozzo for mistreating Lucky. “It’s a scandal!” he yells, “flabbergasted.” After he is beating Lucky for mistreating Pozzo, which suggests the problem is not so much aversion to slavery as it is an aversion to suffering, of any kind. Vladimir does not want to witness it, hear it or talkn about it. Other example in the second act: “was I sleeping,” he asks, “while others suffered?” It shows that Vladimir does not like the suffering of others because he may recognize suffering intellectually; he certainly cannot get a handle on it emotionally, which is probably why hearing the pain of others is so difficult for him (Vladimir and Estragon).

Estragon, his name in French means tarragon that pungent herb use to make pickles and vinegar, is the second of the two main characters in the play. He is called Gogo by Vladimir. Estragon seems to be weak and helpless, overly dependent on Vladimir's protection, security, leadership and rational direction. He is forgetful trump, forgets their intention with Vladimir because he has poor memory as he often says in the play: "let's go," Vladimir reminds him "we can't," Estragon asking "why not," Vladimir replies "we're waiting for Godot" (1.10). We observe that they always returned to the same subject because of the weakness of Estragon' memory and his independent on Vladimir (Waiting for Godot Characters).

Estragon is a portrait of physical pain and need. He is first seen complaining of a sore foot. His hunger and thirst is never seen to stop or end. He is physically beaten every night. For instance when 'Gogo' is asked by Vladimir: "And they didn't beat you?" Estragon answers, "Beat me? Certainly they beat me". (1.2).His corporeal suffering seems endless and he is trapped in the moment, with no memory of the past and hopes of the future (Waiting for Godot Study Guide).

In his play, Beckett uses illusions and references to help the reader to understand what each character represents. The two main characters Estragon and Vladimir are represented man as whole and if we separate them they became two different sides of man. Beckett uses Estragon and Vladimir to represent the physical and mental state of man. In one hand, Estragon represents the physical while Vladimir represents the intellectual side of man because Estragon has his shoes and when he takes of his shoes "he peers inside it, feels about inside it, turn it upside down, shakes it..." (1.1). this means that Estragon is looking for something from his boot, but he founds difficult to recognize it and this represents man's side of using physical action to answer question. In the other hand, we observe that Vladimir represents the intellectual side of man

because he has his hat and constantly “takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again” (1.1). We notice that Vladimir’s action of searching for answer in his hat represents his intellectual capability for solving problems. Moreover, both of the tramps are searching for the key to life’s problems.

Throughout the play, it seems that Vladimir is more practical and Estragon is more of a romantic because ‘Gogo’ wants to talk about his dreams but Vladimir does not want to hear him when he wakes up from falling asleep he says: “I had a dream.” Vladimir answers with “Don’t tell me” (1.7) (Vladimir and Estragon).

We observe in the play that Vladimir was more intellect, has the better memory, and is more logical while his friend Estragon depends on him for his life. His insistence that Estragon depends totally on him probably means that he needs Estragon just as much. The purpose of Beckett about this relationship between the two tramps that he wants for his audiences and readers to understand is that Estragon needs Vladimir to tell him what to do and keep him alive, but Vladimir needs Estragon to need him. In this case it seems that the two tramps need each other, therefore they spend half of their time asking if they should be friends or if they should be better to separate each other. And, as we have come to expect in the play, they never really come to any sort of clear decision. The nature of their relationship is as ambiguous as all else in “Waiting for Godot”. For instance when Vladimir wants to hug Estragon, “Together again at last! We’ll have to celebrate this. But how? (He reflects.) Get up till I embrace you,” but he cannot get closer to him because Estragon refuses, “(irritably.) Not now, not now” (1.1). Estragon and Vladimir have a friendship that is bounded by their differences, without one another they would be lost, just like without the intellect side of man, the physical side would be lost, and vice versa (Vladimir in waiting for Godot).

### ***3.3. Themes in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot"***

#### ***3.3.1. Time in "Waiting for Godot"***

"Waiting for Godot" is a story of 'time' written in the form of absurd because time represents the main issue and the best example of that is the title of the play itself which its central action is waiting. The two main characters are forced to whittle away their days awaiting the arrival of a man who never comes "Godot". Nevertheless, absence of Godot wastes time in the lives of Vladimir and Estragon by making them living without purpose or like puppets in the Absurd world, therefore simply "let it go to waste" (Martin 52), instead to find another way to spend it.

Beckett created the two characters in order to make them the victims of time, pointing out that we cannot stop time, proposing that we must enjoy what we have in the present moment and we live it, instead of looking or waiting for better. Anthony Chadwick refers to this in his article "waiting for Godot": "We seem to have a choice between waiting for one 'better' thing after another or simply living with what we have. Both past and future are illusions, and seen in this aspect, we begin to taste the notions of eternity."

Anthony Chadwick means that the play seems to refer just to the present and to the past and future just an illusion or unimportant in the play. The play refers that the tramps do not live with present moment and instead of enjoying the present time, they are waiting. They are excited that Godot will come along after their waiting and "will miraculously save the situation" (50).

Because Vladimir and Estragon have nothing to do in the meantime while they wait for Godot, time is a dreaded barrier, a test of their ability to endure and the time loses when the actions of one day repeated in the next day by characters. As in the first act: Vladimir "He didn't say for sure he'd come." Estragon "And if he doesn't come?"

“We!!! Come back tomorrow.” Vladimir answers, “And then the day after tomorrow” Estragon says. Vladimir replies “Possibly.” Estragon speaks again “And so on.” Vladimir: “The point is”. Estragon says “Until he comes.”

Note that the two trumps have been repeating their actions again and again and waiting providing further evidence of the unimportance of time for them. The fact behind the idea of their waiting is, because the wasting time doesn't affected on them or the time is harmless. Indeed, if we do not like the present moment, the only thing we have to do is wait. For example, if we do not like the winter time then the only thing to do is to wait for spring or summer, and as we are waiting, we can look forward to it by fantasizing what wonderful summer or spring it will be.

In the play if the two trumps didn't have the hope to meet Godot than they may already have taken the action of suicide, so, then fore it seems that Vladimir and Estragon believe strongly that Godot will saved theme by continue their lives with that hope of meeting him. The tramps excitement to meet Godot maybe or refer to the desire of man to fill the time between birth and death with something meaningful as Jade Weighell refers to this in her article “Exploring waiting for Godot”: “Time is irrelevant, it is only something that fills the gap between birth and death, we have no control over it and most of the time it slips by us unseen, with in this by Bekett explores our relationship with this intangible presence that dominates our lives and thoughts” (Jade).

She says that times is has no meaning, and it seems that we cannot control it because it passes, we age, became sick, and one day we eventually die, the truth is that time stops us. Meanwhile, as the tramps are waiting for Godot, they try to find something to do in order to pass the time: Vladimir says “What do we do now?” Estragon answers “wait”, Vladimir “yes, but while waiting”, “what about hanging

ourselves?” Estragon suggests, Vladimir replies “Hmm .it’d give us an erection”, Estragon “( highly excited).an erection!” (1.12).

However, the tramps do not hang themselves and they continue their journey, coming again the next day with the same hope despite nothing significant happening. The escape from suicide is mentioned by Albert Camus “Since life had lost all meaning, man should not seek escape in suicide” (23). He says that suicide could be thought of as ultimate conclusion to a meaningless life, when man cannot find meaning for his existence then his life became absurd. After deciding against the idea of suicide they select the act of waiting.

In the beginning of the play, Estragon states “Nothing to be done” (7), concluding with the idea that the tramps may want to spend their time doing nothing. This became certain when Vladimir insists “I’m beginning to come round to that opinion” (7), and throughout the play they come back to the same conclusion, “Nothing to be done”.

Time has an important role in the play because it includes the idea that the present moment has already become part of history.

This is appeared in Estragon who does not have memory for the past events and Vladimir disappointed by Estragon’s forgetful memory. So, Estragon explains himself “That’s the way I am. Either I forget immediately or never forget” (39). Vladimir insisting: “You ‘d be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it...it’s too much for one man. We should have thought of it or million years ago, in the nineties” (7).

This proves that time has no sense for the tramps, because they talk about the nineties as being a million years ago. Similarly, the tramps are uncertain of the day that they were to wait for Godot: Estragon says “you’re sure it was this evening?” Vladimir

asks “what?” “That we were to wait”, Estragon replies “he said Saturday. (Pause)I think”, Vladimir. Estragon asks Vladimir you think ...But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? It is not rather Saturday? Or Monday? Or Friday... or Thursday?” (2.10-11).

It seems ‘waiting’ is the only choice for the tramp without knowing which day is because they do not use their time and doing something that will make a significant change in their lives. So, waiting for Godot reminds us we have no way of knowing what day it is really is because our time is arbitrary words and Saturday and Thursday are made-up anyway.

An indication of time passing is shown through the characters Pozzo and lucky dumb. In the first act Pozzo is a lord, domineering master of the long suffering Lucky. When they return in the second act Pozzo is blind and Lucky dumb. When they were asked by the two tramps when this happened Pozzo replies: “Have you not done for meeting me with your accursed time !...One day, is that not enough for you?...they give birth aside a grave, they light gleams an instant, then it’s might once more” (2. 89).

During the second act, when the tramps try to remember how they spent yesterday, Estragon’s memories for yesterday and the lost the previous years of their lives awaken: “Oh ... This and that I suppose, nothing in particular.(with assurance) Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent blathering about nothing in particular. That’s been going on now for half a century” (2.42).

It means that they have wasted “half a century” by repeating the action of waiting, and there is nothing changed during this long time in their lives. The subject of the play is not Godot but waiting, because waiting is the only choice the tramps have if they want to carry on their lives. The theme of “waiting as an essential characteristic of the human condition” (Albert 50), Is a statement that became clearer in wrong the confusion of the play, as Vladimir says, “In this immense confusion one thing alone is

clear, we are waiting for Godot to come” (2.51). Their waiting to meet Godot in order to save them and to help them, as we wait our whole lives to be happy for something we do not have instead of being happy with what we have. The tramps tied themselves as Vladimir says, “Saved” (2.60). Their hope reflects irresponsibility for themselves as Vladimir says, “No further need to worry” Then Estragon says “Simply wait”, and Vladimir replies “we’re used to it”( 2.25). They are quite sure of their meeting with Godot, although in fact there is no hope for his arrival, so that their hope seems unreasonable (Hoished).

Angela Hotaling’s explains the tramp’s hope on Godot as: “The characters Vladimir and Estragon anxiously wait for Godot to come. Their lives are spent waiting. They suppose that when Godot will finally come, they will be fulfilled or something. By, what? Godot will bring purpose or meaning to Estragon and Vladimir’s life, and nothing else seems to have the ability to do this”. (11-12). She means that, Godot seems to be the only hope in the lives of Estragon and Vladimir and they believe strongly that Godot can rescue them from that discomfort situation. But, Godot doesn’t appear in the play, and the lives of the two tramps will probably not have any significant events happening except waiting for him: Estragon says “And if he doesn’t come?” “We’ll come back to-morrow” Vladimir replies, “And the day after to-morrow” Estragon, “Possibly” Vladimir, “And so on” Estragon, “The point is” Vladimir, Estragon replies “Until he comes” (1.10). The hope to meet Godot by the two tramps are not waiting to meet him, but waiting to wait for him.

### **3.3.2. *The Unknown and Uncertainty in “Waiting for Godot”***

Samuel Beckett’s ‘Waiting for Godot’ is a typical pattern of what is referred to in literary terms as ‘Absurd Theatre’, a phrase referring to 20th century works that depict the absurdity of modern human creation, often with implicit reference to

humanity's loss or lack of religious, philosophical or cultural roots. The play focused on the idea of "the suffering of being." Most of the play deals with the fact that the two main characters are waiting for something to save them from their boredom. Godot can be understood as one of the many things in life that people wait for. Waiting for Godot directs us to consider "What they mean" (The Theatre of the Absurd 44), and its reflection to the world we live in. because it is part of the 'Theater of the Absurd', this means that it seems to be irrational and meaningless. The tramps lack of knowledge about everything seems to be a metaphor for mankind's lack of basic understanding of the universe and life itself.

Throughout the play we come across hundreds of questions that have no answers, consequently paralleling our lives because we never understand what, where and how life has brought us to the present moment. Beckett makes this question in his play without any answers in purpose, because he chooses to leave the interpretation to the audience. As Esslin writes, "It was an expression, symbolic in order to avoid all personal error, by an author who expected each member of his audience to draw his own conclusions, make his own errors" (20).

In the beginning we are putting into the absurd situation because of the conversation in which Vladimir and Estragon are in. We as readers have no idea how long they have been there or waiting already before we start reading. In the middle of the play the conversations are repeated over and over and nothing really makes sense.

When we read the play we are supposed to assume that the tramps are waiting for Godot to come as Vladimir says "In this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come" (51). However, when it comes to Godot's identity we become misunderstanding because after such a long time waiting they still doubt the name of the person want to see; Estragon asks "His name is Godot? Vladimir "I think

so” (14). He does not reply “yes”, but that he “thinks so”, and that the person they have been waiting for such a long time might be “Godot” or not. Although it seems that the characters of play have not met Godot before: “Oh he’s a ...he’s a kind of acquaintance.” Vladimir says, “Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him.” Estragon replies, “True...we don’t know him very well...but all the same...” Vladimir says, Estragon replies “Personally I wouldn’t even know him if I saw him” (16). The main idea that the play centers on is the hope of this mysterious character’s arrival. There are many suggestions that Godot is happiness, eternal life, love, death, silence, hope, time, God and many other things.

Esslin states, when Beckett was asked by Alan Schneider (who was to direct the first American production of the play) who or what does it mean by Godot, the answer was “If I knew, I would have said so in the play” (44). Indeed, it seems Godot is everything, at the same time he is nothing. The identity of Godot is like listening to a blind man who is asked to describe an object or person. According to what little description of Godot is given in the text and the two protagonists’ excitement to meet him, the best suggestion that Godot might symbolize “God”. They hope that “Godot” will bring meaning into their lives. The impression we have of Godot may well be of God or of some sort of a prophet; he certainly seems a rather patriarchal figure, just as God is commonly conceived. The tramps are scared about Godot’s arrival as Esslin’s says in *The Theatre of the Absurd*: “(Godot’s) coming is not a source of pure joy; it can also mean damnation. When Estragon, in the second act, believes Godot to be approaching, his first thought is, ‘I’m accused’. And as Vladimir triumphantly exclaims, ‘It’s Godot! At last! Let’s go and meet him’, Estragon runs away shouting, ‘I’m in hell!’” (55).

Their fear manifested when Pozzo and Lucky move toward the stage. They think one of the pair is Godot, suggesting religious awe because they are frightened and panic. Beckett's description for the event: "Estragon drops the carrot. They remain motionless, then together make a sudden rush towards the wings. Estragon stop halfway, runs back, picks up the carrot, stuffs in his pocket, runs to rejoin Vladimir. Huddled together, shoulders hunched, cringing away from the menace, they wait" (15).

The characteristics of Godot, based on what we hear from the two tramps and the boy who works for him, is only that Godot does "nothing", and that he has a "white beard" (59), to make an image for God. However this image makes the audience more and more curious and confused when attempting to predict who Godot is. This statement can be seen Anthony Chadwick's opinion for the possibilities that Godot might represent is:

He (Godot) is simultaneously whatever we think he is and not what we think he is: he is an absence, who can be interpreted at moments as God, death, the lord of the manor, a benefactor, even Pozzo. But Godot has a function rather than a meaning. He stands for what keeps us chained – to and in – existence. He is the unknowable that represents hope in an age when there is no hope, he is whatever fiction we want him to be – as long as he justifies our life-as-waiting. Since the tramps have been waiting a long time "Fifty years maybe". (35), it is understandable for the tramps to be frustrated after they have been manipulated for so many years. Throughout the play, the absence of Godot makes Vladimir frustrated, disappointed as well depressed when they do not attain what they are waiting for, he goes on: Or for night to fall. (*Pause.*) We have kept our

appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much? (51).

When Godot did not come the two tramps become hopeless so that they get the idea of hanging themselves. Angela Hotaling brings the same idea that "Vladimir and Estragon, frustrated and discouraged contemplate not showing up and decide that when they arrive tomorrow they will bring a rope to hang themselves" (3). But if they hang themselves they are afraid to disobey Godot by not coming tomorrow and the scare of the punishment. This stated in the end of the second act when Estragon asks, "If we dropped him? (*pause.*) If we dropped him?" Vladimir replies "He'd punish us" (59). Therefore, they come tomorrow to wait for Godot as Estragon asks "You say we have to come back to-morrow? Vladimir "Yes" (60), because Without Godot, the two tramps have lost the meaning to their days.

The plot of the play based on the theme of unknown and uncertainty because it includes many questions without answers. Esslin sees the play as a production which produces the feelings of uncertainty: "In *Waiting for Godot*, the feeling of uncertainty it produces, the ebb and flow of this uncertainty-from the hope of discovering the identity of Godot to its repeated disappointment - are themselves the essence of the play" (45). He means that the hope of meeting Godot by the two tramps makes them disappointment because they did not met him before. In other words, Gdot is unknown and to meet him is not sure.

The issue of unknown is appeared clearly in the main character's names. During the play many names are given to Estragon and Vladimir and this makes the audience in the situation of asking many questions about the correct name. The two tramps are not called by the same names. As Estragon is called by Vladimir Gogo but by the others as Adam, and Vladimir is called by Estragon Didi but by the others as Mr. Albert. All of

this make the audience situation of nothing can be understand about the names. Thus the issue of the unknown becomes the most important problem in the play ( Hansani 20).

The play challenges our conciseness, when uncertainty plays an important role with the memory of the characters. This includes when the tramps meet with the travelers and the messenger, the place, the time and simply everything. In the second act, when Vladimir reminds Pozzo of their meeting yesterday, Pozzo denies it by having no memory of meeting anyone on the previous day: Vladimir asks “And you are Pozzo?” “Certainly I am Pozzo.” Pozzo answers, Vladimir asks again “The same as yesterday?” “Yesterday?” Pozzo, Vladimir tells him “We met yesterday. (Silence) Do you not remember?” Pozzo surly “I don’t remember having met anyone yesterday. But to-morrow I won’t remember having met anyone to-day. So don’t count on me to enlighten you.” (2.56-57). Pozzo’s claim, for he has no absolute memory regarding the meeting with the tramps yesterday, makes Vladimir question himself “would that be possible”. He is disappointed for the world as it is “The air is full of our crisis” (58), when no one is certain of their memory, tomorrow and life itself. In this manner, everything is uncertain and you cannot believe your own eyes and ears. Vladimir questions himself about his own beliefs because he cannot believe Pozzo’s claim for their meeting “That pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be?” (58).

The play also provides the idea that whatever is certain in this moment may turn out to be uncertain in the next moment, and as Estragon insists “No, nothing is certain” (35). In first act Pozzo and Lucky were healthy, but in act two, the following day, Pozzo has become blind and Lucky dumb. Pozzo, the master, was “rich, powerful, and certain of himself” (48), the day before, but the following day he is as deflated as a balloon without air. In only one day both of their lives have changed. Pozzo’s dialogue in the

second act is an excellent illustration of the uncertainty of life, which is, ironically, one of the few certainties in life.

The ending is not clear in the play, it technically does not end however, it leaves the reader to wonder is that because the writer stopped writing. They say they are going to leave but they never actually do.

### ***Conclusion***

Samuel Beckett's play is filled with meaningless of human condition. In other words, it centered on absence of meaning, and within this meaninglessness, Beckett's characters struggled for finding a meaning for themselves and for their lives. They are born into an irrational world. They live out their lives waiting for an explanation that never comes, and this explanation might be only a product of their imagination. Beckett's drama is based on his perception of human condition, that is, being born and mostly living in pain, suffering ordeals, a short rough and unpleasant existence. Man's needs and desires are all reduced.

### ***General Conclusion***

After the analysis of the two plays, this conclusion explores the similarities and differences of main characters and major themes in “Death of a Salesman” by contrasting them with those in “Waiting for Godot”. “Death of a Salesman” is an American play written by Arthur Miller. It was written sometime after WWII. Waiting for Godot is from British drama written by Samuel Beckett sometime after the two World Wars. Although, the two plays were written by two different playwrights in two different places, they contain many similarities, and although, the two plays written during the same period by two of the greatest playwrights of their time suffered from the same problems, they contain many differences in terms of major characters and main themes.

On one hand, the main characters of the two plays are very similar in some aspects and differ in others. The first similarity in the depiction of main characters is that both play center on middle-class American and British society. The main character in “Death of a Salesman”, Willy Loman and his family are from middle-class American family. Likewise, Vladimir and Estragon in “Waiting for Godot” are just two tramps. The second similarity is that both Beckett and Miller design characters that are liable to the pain of existing since they are alone and free. There is no deity or anyone to help them. This results in an endless distress for the characters, which means life-long suffering.

The third similarity, in both plays the main characters fail in achieving their purpose they want to get in their life. In Arthur Miller’s play the main characters don’t success to make their dream real. For instance, the weakness of the tragic hero Willy Loman occurs when he commits suicide because he fails to be well liked and to be a

great successful businessman. Compare, Vladimir and Estragon in “Waiting for Godot” fail to meet Godot in order to solve their problems.

The fourth similarity is that the main characters in both of “Death of a Salesman” and “Waiting for Godot” have bad connection to each other. It means that their conversation based mainly on conflicts as the conflicts between Biff and his father Willy. The reason of their conflict is because of Willy’s affair with another woman. Moreover, Linda and Willy do not connect in good way to each other. For example in the first act when Willy refuses to tell his wife what happen during his day. The same in “Waiting for Godot”, it seems that there is no clear and good connection between Vladimir and Estragon. For example, in the beginning of the play when the two characters meet each other, there Vladimir wants to hug him but Estragon refuses.

On other hand, the main themes in both “Waiting for Godot” and “Death of a Salesman” contain also many similarities. The first similarity is that the main themes that both plays concentrate on uncertainty of life, absurdity, and illusion. In their plays, Arthur Miller and Samuel Beckett focus on the idea of uncertainty. Most of the plays deal with the fact that the main characters are the uncertain life. Furthermore, they strongly believe in the uncertainty of life; therefore, they do not make any changes, because everything they have done will vanish in an instant, resulting in no reward for their time as in “Waiting for Godot” and hard work as in “Death of a Salesman”. In “Waiting for Godot”, the two tamps are not sure of their action which is waiting for unknown person. It means that the two men’s decision is quite different from the reality of the method that they choose for continuing to live when they are bored to death. Similar to that, in “Death of a Salesman” the main characters do not believe strongly in the way they choose to live.

The second similarity is both “Waiting for Godot” and “Death of a Salesman” also deal with the theme of absurdity. The main characters in “Death of a Salesman” work hard to achieve and live successfully but at the end nothing happens; Willy commits suicide, Biff and Happy do not get better work and Linda lost her husband and stays alone. Compare, “Waiting for Godot” also deals with this theme, because Vladimir and Estragon live in an absurd way, waiting and losing their time but at the end nothing happens.

The third similarity is that both plays like each other in idea of illusion. Their main characters are all unable to part what is real from what is not real. When the main characters in both plays dream or want to get something successfully, reality always faces them or works against them, so, their hope and dream crash with reality. In “Death of a Salesman” this appears when Willy’s dream to get a work in New York is destroyed by reality that the boss of his company fires him. In “Waiting for Godot”, this appears when Vladimir’s and Estragon’s hope to meet their savior is destroyed by reality that his messenger tells them that Godot does not come.

However, the main characters of the two plays are very different in some aspects. The first difference is the question of independence. In Beckett’s play, because Vladimir is the more intellectual, active, more logical, strong and has better memory, while Estragon is lazy, hopeless, weak, and has weak memory, this leads Estragon to depend on Vladimir. Unlike, Miller’s main characters do not depend on each other. For example, Willy Loman depends on himself to get his goal in life which is the ‘American Dream’ without asking help from his friends.

The second difference is that the two plays unlike each other in the ability of the main characters that use to get what they want. It seems that in “Death of a Salesman”, the main characters are more serious and active by working hard and not wasting their

time, whereas in *Waiting for Godot*'s main characters are careless because they do not work hard, they just losing their time by waiting for nothing. The second difference is the situation of the main characters in both plays. Arthur Miller's characters seem to be free in their action. There is no power above to control them or to limit their freedom. Contrast with Samuel Beckett's characters, who suffer from the limitation of their freedom. They cannot move, they simply accept the situation that Godot has the power over them.

Besides, themes in Beckett's "*Waiting for Godot*" and "*Miller's Death of a Salesman*" contain many differences. The main difference is that the main theme in the two plays which is the theme of time. We notice in "*Waiting for Godot*", characters are waiting for the future without living their present and there is no flashbacks. Moreover, they wait for a better future and forgetting their present moment. The two tramps Estragon and Vladimir thought that their problems will be solved just by waiting for Godot. They take this action because they suffer from the present condition and they cannot make any change for good situation. Therefore they believe that they will find comfortable life in the future. Differently, in "*Death of a Salesman*" Arthur Miller intermixes past events with those of present. This appears when Willy Loman uses flashbacks in his present life. In other words, he is in and out of the present moment.

The two plays, "*Waiting for Godot*" by Samuel Beckett and "*Death of a Salesman*" by Arthur Miller are wonderful because they engaged me more intellectually than emotionally. In "*Death of a Salesman*" I like the idea that Arthur Miller seems to be criticizing the American Dream. Moreover, I like the characteristics of the main character in his play, because he gave the impression of a man who had been a true mountain within the family, and I believe that the dysfunctional values of American society killed him, not his dreams.

“Waiting for Godot” is a play about nothing and it is a play about everything. It is a play that makes you question your very existence. This, to me, is what makes it a great play and Beckett a genius.

Despite all the differences between Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot” and Miller’s “Death of a Salesman”, they are considered a transformative and highly influential plays, perhaps the most important of the 20th century, particularly for their impact on later playwrights.

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