

Symbolism in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman

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Symbolism in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman

Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman* is wrought with symbolism from the opening scene. Many symbols illustrate the themes of success and failure. They include the apartment buildings, the rubber hose, Willy's brother Ben, the tape recorder, and the seeds for the garden. These symbols represent Willy's attempts to be successful and his impending failure.

When Willy and Linda purchased their home in Brooklyn, it seemed far removed from the city. Willy was young and strong and he believed he had a future full of success. He and his sons cut the tree limbs that threatened his home and put up a hammock that he would enjoy with his children. The green fields filled his home with wonderful aromas. Over the years, while Willy was struggling to pay for his home, the city grew and eventually surrounded the house. Tall apartment [buildings](#) "trapped" Willy's house. Instead of pleasing aromas there were only foul smells filling the home. The development around the home parallels the changes in Willy's career. Willy had a [bright](#) future, but he did not grow and "develop" his skills, believing that a good appearance was all that was necessary to succeed. Over time, Willy's sales skills became stagnant and Willy was "trapped" in his

job. The sweet [smell](#) of success had been replaced by the stench of failure.

The rubber hose represents both success and failure. It is attached to the gas main in Willy's house and provides him with the opportunity to commit suicide. Willy sees this as a way to finally do something for his family to make up for years of disappointment. He will no longer be a burden to them when he is gone, and they will remember him in a posit...

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...r because he did not change with the times. Finally, Willy hoped to show his family that he could do something right and give them a little pleasure by planting seeds in the backyard. He hoped that these seeds would grow into a wonderful garden for all of them to enjoy. Then his family would appreciate him. But the garden fails, as does Willy.

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