

Death of a Salesman Quotations

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Quotes

"A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory." - Charley (Requiem)

Explanation:

Charley says this to Biff after Willy's death. He defends Willy's endless dreaming. He says that a salesman must live on hope. Without dreams, he cannot survive rejection and failure. This line captures the play's compassion for ordinary dreamers like Willy Loman.

"I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!" - Willy (Act II)

Explanation:

Willy shouts this to Biff during their final argument. He cannot accept being ordinary. The line shows his pride and his illusion that he and his sons are destined for greatness. It's one of the most powerful declarations of Willy's delusion.

"Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person." - Linda (Act I)

Explanation:

Linda pleads with her sons to respect their father. She insists that Willy deserves sympathy, not mockery. This line captures Miller's humanist theme: even a failed man deserves dignity.

"He had the wrong dreams. All, all wrong." - Biff (Requiem)

Explanation:

Biff says this after the funeral, realizing his father's tragedy. Willy followed the wrong version of the American Dream, seeking fame instead of truth.

"I'm the New England man. I'm vital in New England." - Willy (Act I)

Explanation:

Willy repeats this line to convince himself that he is still important to his company. It reflects his self-deception and desperate need to feel valuable.

"The woods are burning!" - Willy (Act II)

Explanation:

Willy exclaims this when his world begins collapsing—he has lost his job, and Biff's dream has failed. The burning woods symbolize his panic, loss of control, and the destruction of his dreams.

"Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that?" - Biff (Act II)

Explanation:

Biff cries out in pain, confessing his failure and rejecting his father's illusions. This moment of truth is both tragic and liberating. It breaks the family's long cycle of lies.

"You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit!" - Willy (Act II)

Explanation:

Willy tells his boss Howard, that he deserves respect after years of service. He protests being discarded when he's old and no longer useful. The line exposes the cruelty of modern business.

"The jungle is dark but full of diamonds." - Ben (Act II)

Explanation:

Ben's ghost tempts Willy to end his life, saying that death will bring riches (insurance money). The jungle symbolizes risk and the darkness of the unknown, while diamonds stand for material success.

“He’s liked, but he’s not well-liked.” - Willy (Act I)

Explanation:

Willy compares Biff to Bernard, suggesting that being “well-liked” matters more than working hard. This line shows Willy’s shallow understanding of success and foreshadows Biff’s failure.

“You end up worth more dead than alive.” - Willy (Act II)

Explanation:

Willy says this to Charley when he realizes his life-insurance policy may be his only value. It reveals the depth of his despair and the way society measures a man’s worth by money.

“We’re free... We’re free...” - Linda (Requiem)

Explanation:

Linda says this at Willy’s grave after paying off the house. The irony is bitter that the family is free from debt, but Willy is gone. Freedom comes too late.