DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTER OF ARTS-ENGLISH

SEMESTER -IV

AMERICAN LITERATURE

CORE 401

BLOCK-1

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FOREWORD

The Self-Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavors.

AMERICAN LITERATURE

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BLOCK-1 AMERICAN LITERATURE

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UNIT-1 THOREAU-WALDEN - 1

STRUCTURE

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Life

1.3 Influence

1.4 Criticisms

1.5 Works

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1.7 Keywords

1.8 Questions for Review

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1.10 Answers to Check your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit, you would know about:

- Henry David Thoreau’s life,
- influences on his work,
- criticisms on his work;
- the list of all the works of Henry David Thoreau.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Henry David Thoreau was an American essayist, poet, and philosopher. leading transcendentalist, he is best known for his book Walden, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, and his essay "Civil Disobedience" (originally published as "Resistance to Civil Government"), an argument for disobedience to an unjust state.

Thoreau's books, articles, essays, journals, and poetry amount to more than 20 volumes. Within his enduring achievements are his essays on natural history and philosophy, in which he predicted the biology and environmental history approaches and observations, two origins of modern-day ecology. His literary style interweaves close observation of nature, personal experience, sharp language, symbolic meanings and historical mythology, thus exhibiting romantic flexibility, intellectual simplicity and Yankee's commitment to realistic information. He was also strongly interested in the idea of sustainability in the face of violent forces, social transition and environmental decline; at the same period he promoted rejecting excess and delusion in order to discover the true basic necessities of life.

He was a long lasting abolitionist, conveying addresses that assaulted the Fugitive Slave Law while applauding the compositions of Wendell Phillips and safeguarding the abolitionist John Brown. Thoreau's way of thinking of common rebellion later affected the political contemplations and activities of such eminent figures as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr.

Thoreau is here and there alluded to as a revolutionary. Though "Considerate Disobedience" appears to call for improving instead of canceling government—"I request, not on the double no legislature, yet on the double a superior government" — the bearing of this improvement oppositely highlights political agitation: "'That administration is best which oversees not under any condition;' and when men are set up for it, that will be the sort of government which they will have."

1.2 LIFE

Early life and training, 1817–1837

Thoreau's origination, the Wheeler-Minot Farmhouse in Concord, Massachusetts

Henry David Thoreau was conceived David Henry Thoreau in Concord, Massachusetts, into the "humble New England family" of John Thoreau, a pencil creator, and Cynthia Dunbar. His fatherly granddad had been conceived on the UK crown reliance island of Jersey. His maternal granddad, Asa Dunbar, drove Harvard's 1766 understudy "Spread Rebellion", the primary recorded understudy fight in the American settlements. David Henry was named after his as of late expired fatherly uncle, David Thoreau. He started to call himself Henry David after he completed school; he never requested of to make a legitimate name change. He had two more seasoned kin, Helen and John Jr., and a more youthful sister, Sophia Thoreau. None of the youngsters wedded. Helen (1812–1849) kicked the bucket at age 36 years, from tuberculosis. John Jr. (1815–1842) passed on at age 27, of lockjaw. Henry David (1817–1862) kicked the bucket at age 44, of tuberculosis. Sophia (1819–1876) endures him by 14 years, passing on at age 57 years, of tuberculosis. Reference required

Thoreau's origination despite everything exists on Virginia Road in Concord. The house has been reestablished by the Thoreau Farm Trust, a philanthropic association, and is currently open to the general population. He learned at Harvard College somewhere in the range of 1833 and 1837. He lived in Hollis Hall and took courses in talk, works of art, theory, arithmetic, and science. reference required He was an individual from the Institute of 1770 (presently the Hasty Pudding Club). As per legend, Thoreau wouldn't pay the five-dollar charge (around equal to $128 in 2019) for a Harvard recognition. Actually, the graduate degree he declined to buy had no scholastic legitimacy: Harvard College offered it to graduates "who demonstrated their physical worth by being alive three years subsequent to graduating, and their sparing, gaining, or acquiring quality or condition by having Five Dollars to give the school". He remarked, "Let each sheep keep its own skin", a reference to the custom of utilizing sheepskin vellum for certificates.

Come back to Concord, 1837–1844

The customary callings open to school graduates—law, the congregation, business, prescription—didn't intrigue Thoreau, so in 1835 he disappeared from nonappearance from Harvard, during which he showed school in Canton, Massachusetts. After he graduated in 1837, he joined the personnel of the Concord state funded school, however he surrendered following half a month as opposed to manage beating. He and his sibling John at that point opened the Concord Academy, a language school in Concord, in 1838. They presented a few dynamic ideas, including nature strolls and visits to nearby shops and organizations. The school shut when John turned out to be lethally sick from lockjaw in 1842 subsequent to cutting himself while shaving. He kicked the bucket in Henry's arms.

Upon graduation Thoreau got back to Concord, where he met Ralph Waldo Emerson through a shared companion. 18 Emerson, who was 14 years his senior, took a fatherly and now and again benefactor like enthusiasm for Thoreau, prompting the youngster and acquainting him with a hover of neighborhood journalists and masterminds, including Ellery Channing, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and Nathaniel Hawthorne and his child Julian Hawthorne, who was a kid at that point.

Emerson asked Thoreau to contribute papers and ballads to a quarterly periodical, The Dial, and campaigned the manager, Margaret Fuller, to distribute those compositions. Thoreau's first exposition distributed in The Dial was "Aulus Persius Flaccus", an article on the Roman dramatist, in July 1840. It comprised of reexamined sections from his diary, which he had started keeping at Emerson's recommendation. The principal diary passage, on October 22, 1837, peruses, "'What are you doing now?' he inquired. 'Do you keep a diary?' So I make my first passage to-day."

Thoreau was a thinker of nature and its connection to the human condition. In his initial years he followed Transcendentalism, a free and mixed optimist theory supported by Emerson, Fuller, and Alcott. They held that a perfect otherworldly state rises above, or goes past, the physical and experimental, and that one accomplishes that knowledge by means of individual instinct as opposed to strict regulation. In their view, Nature is the outward indication of internal soul, communicating the "radical correspondence of obvious things and human contemplations", as Emerson wrote in Nature (1836).

On April 18, 1841, Thoreau moved into the Emerson house. There, from 1841 to 1844, he filled in as the kids' mentor; he was likewise a publication aide, repairman and plant specialist. For a couple of months in 1843, he moved to the home of William Emerson on Staten Island, and guided the family's children while looking for contacts among abstract men and columnists in the city who may help distribute his works, including his future artistic delegate Horace Greeley.

Thoreau came back to Concord and worked in his family's pencil industrial facility, which he would keep on doing close by his composition and other work for a large portion of his grown-up life. He rediscovered the way toward making great pencils with substandard graphite by utilizing dirt as the folio. This innovation permitted gainful utilization of a graphite source found in New Hampshire that had been obtained in 1821 by Thoreau's brother by marriage, Charles Dunbar. The way toward blending graphite and mud, known as the Conté procedure, had been first protected by Nicolas-Jacques Conté in 1795. The organization's other wellspring of graphite had been Tantiusques, a mine worked by Native Americans in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Afterward, Thoreau changed over the pencil production line to create plumbago, a name for graphite at that point, which was utilized in the electrotyping procedure.

Once back in Concord, Thoreau experienced a fretful period. In April 1844 he and his companion Edward Hoar coincidentally set a fire that devoured 300 sections of land (1.2 km2) of Walden Woods.

"Common Disobedience" and the Walden years, 1845–1850

I went to the forested areas since I wished to live intentionally, to front just the basic unavoidable issues facing everyone, and check whether I was unable to realize what it needed to instruct, and not, when I came to bite the dust, find that I had not lived. I didn't wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to rehearse acquiescence, except if it was very essential. I needed to live profound and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to defeat every one of that was not life, to cut a wide swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and diminish it to its most reduced terms, and, on the off chance that it end up being mean, why at that point to get its entire and veritable ugliness, and distribute its unpleasantness to the world; or on the off chance that it were heavenly, to realize it by experience, and have the option to give a genuine record of it in my next trip.

— Henry David Thoreau, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For", in Walden

Thoreau wanted to focus and work more on his composition. In March 1845, Ellery Channing told Thoreau, "Go out upon that, construct yourself a hovel, and there start the excellent procedure of eating up yourself alive. I see no other option, no other trust in you." Two months after the fact, Thoreau left on a two-year analyze in straightforward living on July 4, 1845, when he moved to a little house he had based ashore claimed by Emerson in a second-development backwoods around the shores of Walden Pond. The house was in "a pretty field and woodlot" of 14 sections of land (57,000 m2) that Emerson had purchased, 1.5 miles (2.4 km) from his family home.

On July 24 or July 25, 1846, Thoreau ran into the neighborhood charge authority, Sam Staples, who solicited him to pay six years from reprobate survey charges. Thoreau declined on account of his resistance to the Mexican–American War and bondage, and he went through a night in prison due to this refusal. The following day Thoreau was liberated when somebody, liable to have been his auntie, covered the duty, against his desires. The experience strongly affected Thoreau. In January and February 1848, he conveyed addresses on "The Rights and Duties of the Individual corresponding to Government", clarifying his duty obstruction at the Concord Lyceum. Bronson Alcott went to the talk, writing in his diary on January 26:

Heard Thoreau's talk before the Lyceum on the connection of the person to the State—a praiseworthy proclamation of the privileges of the person to self-government, and a mindful crowd. His implications to the Mexican War, to Mr. Hoar's removal from Carolina, his own detainment in Concord Jail for refusal to make good on his expense, Mr. Hoar's installment of mine when brought to jail for a comparative refusal, were all relevant, all around considered, and contemplated. I enjoyed extraordinary this deed of Thoreau's. The American poet Robert Frost wrote of Thoreau, "In one book ... he surpasses everything we have had in America."

The American author John Updike said of the book, "A century and a half after its publication, Walden has become such a totem of the back-to-nature, preservationist, anti-business, civil-disobedience mindset, and Thoreau so vivid a protester, so perfect a crank and hermit saint, that the book risks being as revered and unread as the Bible."

Thoreau moved out of Emerson's house in July 1848 and stayed at a house on nearby Belknap Street. In 1850, he and his family moved into a house at 255 Main Street, where he lived until his death.

In the summer of 1850, Thoreau and Channing journeyed from Boston to Montreal and Quebec City. These would be Thoreau's only travels outside the United States. It is as a result of this trip that he developed lectures that eventually became A Yankee in Canada. He jested that all he got from this adventure "was a cold". In fact, this proved an opportunity to contrast American civic spirit and democratic values with a colony apparently ruled by illegitimate religious and military power. Whereas his own country had had its revolution, in Canada history had failed to turn.

Later years, 1851–1862

Thoreau in 1854

In 1851, Thoreau turned out to be progressively entranced with characteristic history and stories of movement and campaign. He read devotedly on organic science and frequently composed perceptions on this point into his diary. He respected William Bartram and Charles Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle. He kept nitty gritty perceptions on Concord's tendency legend, recording everything from how the organic product aged after some time to the fluctuating profundities of Walden Pond and the days certain flying creatures moved. The purpose of this assignment was to "envision" the periods of nature, in his promise.

He turned into a land surveyor and kept on composing progressively point by point perceptions on the common history of the town, covering a zone of 26 square miles (67 km2), in his diary, a 2,000,000 word report he kept for a long time. He likewise kept a progression of note pads, and these perceptions turned into the wellspring of his late compositions on normal history, for example, "Pre-winter Tints", "The Succession of Trees", and "Wild Apples", an article regretting the annihilation of indigenous wild apple species.

With the ascent of natural history and ecocriticism as scholarly trains, a few new readings of Thoreau started to rise, demonstrating him to have been both a logician and an examiner of biological examples in fields and woodlots. For example, "The Succession of Forest Trees", shows that he utilized experimentation and investigation to clarify how woods recover after fire or human annihilation, through the dispersal of seeds by winds or creatures. Right now, introduced to a steers appear in Concord, and thought about his most noteworthy commitment to biology, Thoreau clarified why one types of tree can develop in a spot where an alternate tree did beforehand. He saw that squirrels frequently convey nuts a long way from the tree from which they tumbled to make stashes. These seeds are probably going to sprout and develop should the squirrel kick the bucket or relinquish the reserve. He credited the squirrel for playing out an "extraordinary help ... in the economy of the universe."

He headed out to Canada East once, Cape Cod multiple times, and Maine multiple times; these scenes motivated his "outing" books, A Yankee in Canada, Cape Cod, and The Maine Woods, where travel agendas outline his considerations about topography, history and reasoning. Different ventures took him southwest to Philadelphia and New York City in 1854 and west over the Great Lakes locale in 1861, when he visited Niagara Falls, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Mackinac Island. 60 He was commonplace in his own movements, however he read generally about movement in different grounds. He ate up all the first-hand travel accounts accessible in quite a while day, when the last unmapped districts of the earth were being investigated. He read Magellan and James Cook; the cold wayfarers John Franklin, Alexander Mackenzie and William Parry; David Livingstone and Richard Francis Burton on

Africa; Lewis and Clark; and many lesser-known works by voyagers and proficient explorers. Astonishing measures of perusing nourished his perpetual interest about the people groups, societies, religions and common history of the world and left its follows as discourses in his voluminous diaries. He handled all that he read, in the nearby lab of his Concord understanding. Among his well known adages is his recommendation to "live at home like a voyager".

After John Brown's assault on Harpers Ferry, numerous unmistakable voices in the abolitionist development removed themselves from Brown or cursed him with swoon acclaim. Thoreau was nauseated by this, and he formed a key discourse, A Plea for Captain John Brown, which was firm with all due respect of Brown and his activities. Thoreau's discourse demonstrated powerful: the abolitionist development started to acknowledge Brown as a saint, and when of the American Civil War whole multitudes of the North were actually praising Brown enthusiastically. As a biographer of Brown put it, "If, as Alfred Kazin recommends, without John Brown there would have been no Civil War, we would include that without the Concord Transcendentalists, John Brown would have had minimal social effect."

Demise

Thoreau contracted tuberculosis in 1835 and experienced it sporadically a while later. In 1860, after a late-night outing to check the rings of tree stumps during a rainstorm, he turned out to be sick with bronchitis. His wellbeing declined, with brief times of abatement, and he in the end got confined to bed. Perceiving the terminal idea of his infection, Thoreau spent his last years overhauling and altering his unpublished works, especially The Maine Woods and Excursions, and requesting of distributers to print updated versions of A Week and Walden. He composed letters and diary passages until he turned out to be too frail to even think about continuing. His companions were frightened at his reduced appearance and were captivated by his quiet acknowledgment of death. At the point when his auntie Louisa asked him in his last weeks in the event that he had come to terms with God, Thoreau reacted, "I didn't realize we had ever fought."

Careful he was failing horrendously, Thoreau's last words were "Now comes adequate cruising", trailed by two singular words, "moose" and "Indian". He kicked the can on May 6, 1862, at age 44. Amos Bronson Alcott orchestrated the organization and read decisions from Thoreau's works, and Channing displayed a song. Emerson created the honor verbally communicated at the internment administration. Thoreau was shrouded in the Dunbar family plot; his outstanding parts and those of people from his nearby family were over the long haul moved to Sleepy Hollow Cemetery (42°27′53″N 71°20′32″W) in Concord, Massachusetts.

Thoreau's companion William Ellery Channing distributed his first life story, Thoreau the Poet-Naturalist, in 1873. reference required Channing and another companion, Harrison Blake, altered a few sonnets, expositions, and diary passages for after death distribution during the 1890s. Thoreau's diaries, which he regularly dug for his distributed works yet which remained to a great extent unpublished at his demise, were first distributed in 1906 and assisted with building his cutting edge notoriety. reference required another, extended version of the diaries is in progress, distributed by Princeton University Press. Today, Thoreau is viewed as one of the preeminent American essayists, both for the advanced clearness of his exposition style and the premonition of his perspectives on nature and governmental issues. His memory is regarded by the worldwide Thoreau Society and his inheritance respected by the Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, built up in 1998 in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

Nature and human presence

The majority of the extravagances and a significant number of the purported solaces of life are not basic, however positive blocks to the height of humanity.

— Thoreau

Thoreau was an early promoter of recreational climbing and kayaking, of monitoring normal assets on private land, and of saving wild as open land. He was himself an exceptionally talented canoeist; Nathaniel Hawthorne, after a ride with him, noticed that "Mr. Thoreau dealt with the vessel so flawlessly, either with two oars or with one, that it appeared to be sense with his own will, and to require no physical exertion to direct it."

He was not a severe vegan, however he said he favored that diet and upheld it as a methods for personal growth. He wrote in Walden, "The useful issue with creature nourishment for my situation was its uncleanness; what's more, when I had gotten and cleaned and cooked and eaten my fish, they appeared not to have encouraged me basically. It was inconsequential and superfluous, and cost more than it came to. A little bread or a couple of potatoes would have done too, with less difficulty and foulness."

Thoreau neither dismissed development nor completely grasped wild. Rather he looked for a center ground, the peaceful domain that coordinates nature and culture. His way of thinking necessitated that he be an instructive mediator between the wild he put together such a great amount with respect to and the spreading mass of humankind in North America. He denounced the last unendingly however felt that an instructor should be near the individuals who expected to hear what he needed to let them know. The ferocity he appreciated was the close by bog or woodland, and he favored "mostly developed nation". His concept of being "far in the openings of the wild" of Maine was to "venture to every part of the lumberjack's way and the Indian path", yet he additionally climbed on unblemished land. In the article "Henry David Thoreau, Philosopher" Roderick Nash stated, "Thoreau left Concord in 1846 for the first of three excursions to northern Maine. His desires were high since he planned to discover certified, antiquated America. However, contact with genuine wild in Maine influenced him far uniquely in contrast to had the possibility of wild in Concord. Rather than leaving the forested areas with a developed energy about the wilds, Thoreau felt a more prominent regard for human progress and understood the need of equalization."

Of liquor, Thoreau stated, "I would fain keep calm consistently. ... I accept that water is the main beverage for an insightful man; wine isn't so honorable an alcohol. ... Of all ebriosity, who doesn't like to be inebriated by the air he relaxes?"

Sexuality

Thoreau never wedded and was childless. He endeavored to depict himself as a plain puritan. In any case, his sexuality has for some time been the subject of hypothesis, including by his counterparts. Pundits have called him hetero, gay, or abiogenetic. There is no proof to recommend he had physical relations with anybody, man or lady. A few researchers have recommended that homoerotic conclusions go through his works and inferred that he was gay. The requiem "Compassion" was roused by the eleven-year-old Edmund Sewell, with whom he climbed for five days in 1839. One researcher has proposed that he composed the lyric to Edmund in light of the fact that he was unable to force himself to compose it to Edmund's sister, and another that Thoreau's "enthusiastic encounters with ladies are memorialized under a cover of manly pronouns", yet different researchers reject this. It has been contended that the long paean in Walden to the French-Canadian woodchopper Alek Therien, which incorporates inferences to Achilles and Patroclus, is an outflow of clashed want. In a portion of Thoreau's composition there is simply the feeling of a mystery. In 1840 he writes in his diary: "My companion is the statement of regret for my life. In him are the spaces which my circle navigates". Thoreau was unequivocally affected by the ethical reformers of his time, and this may have ingrained uneasiness and blame over sexual want.

Governmental issues

Some portion of an arrangement on

- Green disorder
- Green and Black flag.
- Ways of thinking appear
- Hypothesis and practice appear
- Individuals appear
- Books and distributions appear
- Related themes appear

- Black Flag Symbol Anarchism gateway
- Aegopodium podagraria1 Environment gateway
- A hued casting a ballot box Politics entrance

Thoreau was intensely against subjection and effectively bolstered the abolitionist development. 1 He partook as a conductor in the Underground Railroad, conveyed addresses that assaulted the Fugitive Slave Law, and contrary to the prevalent attitude of the time, upheld radical abolitionist volunteer army pioneer John Brown and his gathering. 1 Two weeks after the doomed assault on Harpers Ferry and in the weeks paving the way to Brown's execution, Thoreau conveyed a discourse to the residents of Concord, Massachusetts, in which he contrasted the American government with Pontius Pilate and compared Brown's execution to the torturous killing of Jesus Christ:

Nearly eighteen hundred years prior Christ was killed; at the beginning of today, perchance, Captain Brown was hung. These are the two parts of the bargains which isn't without its connections. He isn't Old Brown anymore; he is a heavenly attendant of light.

In The Last Days of John Brown, Thoreau depicted the words and deeds of John Brown as respectable and a case of gallantry. what's more, he deplored the paper editors who expelled Brown and his plan as "insane".

Thoreau was an advocate of restricted government and independence. In spite of the fact that he was confident that humanity might have, through self-advancement, the sort of government which "oversees not in any manner", he separated himself from contemporary "no-administration men" (revolutionaries), stating: "I request, not on the double no legislature, however immediately a superior government."

Thoreau considered the advancement from outright government to restricted government to majority rule government as "an advancement toward genuine regard for the individual" and guessed about further upgrades "towards perceiving and sorting out the privileges of man". Echoing this conviction, he proceeded to express: "There will never be a truly free and edified State until the State comes to perceive the person as a higher and autonomous force, from which all its capacity and authority are determined, and treats him as needs be."

It is on this premise Thoreau could so unequivocally denounce against British and Catholic force in A Yankee in Canada. Authoritarian authority had squashed the individuals' feeling of creativity and endeavor; the Canadian habitants had been diminished, in his view, to an interminable innocent state. Overlooking the ongoing Rebellions, he contended that there would be no upheaval in the St. Lawrence River valley.

In spite of the fact that Thoreau accepted protection from shamefully practiced authority could be both brutal (exemplified in his help for John Brown) and peaceful (his own case of duty obstruction showed in Resistance to Civil Government), he viewed radical harmlessness as compulsion to lack of involvement, stating: "Let not our Peace be broadcasted by the rust on our swords, or our powerlessness to draw them from their sheaths; however let her at any rate have such a great amount of work on her hands as to keep those swords brilliant and sharp." Furthermore, in a conventional lyceum banter in 1841, he discussed the subject "Is it ever appropriate to offer persuasive opposition?", contending the certifiable.

In like manner, his judgment of the Mexican–American War didn't come from pacifism, but instead on the grounds that he considered Mexico "treacherously overwhelm and vanquished by a remote armed force" as a way to extend the slave an area.

Thoreau was irresolute towards industrialization and free enterprise. On one hand he viewed trade as "suddenly sure and tranquil, brave, and unwearied" and communicated adoration for its related cosmopolitanism, composing:

I am revived and extended when the cargo train shakes past me, and I smell the stores which go administering their scents all the path from Long Wharf to Lake Champlain, helping me to remember remote parts, of coral reefs, and Indian seas, and tropical climes, and the degree of the globe. I feel progressively like a resident of the world at seeing the palmleaf which will cover such a significant number of yellowish New England heads the following summer.

Then again, he composed disparagingly of the manufacturing plant framework:

I can hardly imagine how our processing plant framework is the best mode by which men may get attire. The state of the agents is turning into consistently increasingly like that of the English; and it can't be stood amazed at, since, to the extent I have heard or watched, the chief item is, not excessively humankind might be well and actually clad, in any case, irrefutably, that organizations might be enhanced.

Thoreau additionally preferred bioregionalism, the assurance of creatures and wild territories, unhindered commerce, and tax assessment for schools and thruways. He objected to the oppression of Native Americans, bondage, innovative utopianism, industrialism, philistinism, mass amusement, and pointless utilizations of innovation.

Scholarly interests, impacts, and affinities

Indian sacrosanct writings and theory

Thoreau was impacted by Indian profound idea. In Walden, there are numerous clear references to the sacrosanct writings of India. For instance, in the main part ("Economy"), he states: "The amount more outstanding the Bhagvat-Geeta than every one of the vestiges of the East!" American Philosophy: An Encyclopedia classes him as one of a few figures who "took an increasingly polytheist or pandeist approach by dismissing perspectives on God as discrete from the world", additionally a trait of Hinduism.

Moreover, in "The Pond in Winter", he likens Walden Pond with the consecrated Ganges stream, composing:

Krishna showing Arjuna from Bhagavata Gita, a book Thoreau read at Walden Pond In the first part of the day I wash my keenness in the awesome and cosmogonal theory of the Bhagvat Geeta since whose organization long stretches of the divine beings have slipped by, and in examination with which our cutting edge world and its writing appear to be weak and minor; and I question if that way of thinking isn't to be alluded to a past reality, so remote is its sublimity from our originations. I set out the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the hireling of the Brahmin, minister of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who despite everything sits in his sanctuary on the Ganges perusing the Vedas, or abides at the base of a tree with his covering and water container. I meet his hireling come to draw water for his lord, and our cans so to speak grind together in a similar well. The unadulterated Walden water is blended with the consecrated water of the Ganges.

Thoreau knew his Ganges symbolism could have been verifiable. He expounded on ice collecting at Walden Pond. Also, he realized that New England's ice vendors were shipping ice to remote ports, including Calcutta. reference required.

Moreover, Thoreau followed different Hindu traditions, including following an eating routine of rice ("It was fit that I should live on rice, chiefly, who cherished so well the way of thinking of India."), woodwind playing (suggestive of the most loved melodic interest of Krishna), and yoga. reference required

In a 1849 letter to his companion H.G.O. Blake, he expounded on yoga and its significance to him:

Free right now the winged animals noticeable all around, withdrew from each sort of chains, the individuals who practice yoga assemble in Brahma the specific products of their works. Rely on it that, impolite and thoughtless as I am, I would fain rehearse the yoga reliably. The yogi, retained in examination, contributes in his degree to creation; he inhales a heavenly aroma, he hears brilliant things. Divine structures cross him without tearing him, and joined to the nature which is appropriate to him, he goes, he goes about as energizing unique issue. Somewhat, and at uncommon interims, even I am a yogi.

Biology

Bird eggs found by Thoreau and given to the Boston Society of Natural History. Those in the nest are of yellow warbler, the other two of red-tailed hawk.

Thoreau read contemporary works in the new science of biology, including the works of Alexander von Humboldt, Charles Darwin, and Asa Gray (Charles Darwin's staunchest American ally). Thoreau was deeply influenced by Humboldt, especially his work Kosmos.

In 1859, Thoreau purchased and read Darwin's On the Origin of Species. Unlike many natural historians at the time, including Louis Agassiz who publicly opposed Darwinism in favor of a static view of nature, Thoreau was immediately enthusiastic about the theory of evolution by natural selection and endorsed it, stating:

The development theory implies a greater vital force in Nature, because it is more flexible and accommodating, and equivalent to a sort of constant new creation. (A quote from On the Origin of Species follows this sentence.)

Check your Progress-1

1. What was Henry Thoreau’s Father’s name???

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2. Where was Henry Thoreau conceived???

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1.3 INFLUENCE

Thoreau's cautious perceptions and wrecking ends have undulated into time, getting more grounded as the shortcomings Thoreau noted have become increasingly articulated ... Occasions that appear to be totally irrelevant to his stay at Walden Pond have been affected by it, including the national park framework, the British work development, the production of India, the social liberties development, the radical transformation, the natural development, and the wild development.

Today, Thoreau's words are cited with feeling by dissidents, communists, agitators, libertarians, and traditionalists the same.

— Ken Kifer, Analysis and Notes on Walden: Henry Thoreau's Text with Adjacent Thoreauvian Commentary

Thoreau's political works had little effect during his lifetime, as "his peers didn't consider him to be a scholar or as a radical", seeing him rather as a naturalist. They either rejected or overlooked his political articles, including Civil Disobedience. The main two complete books (instead of expositions) distributed in his lifetime, Walden and A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849), both managed nature, in which he "wanted to meander". His eulogy was generalized with the likes of others as opposed to as a different article in a 1862 yearbook. Nevertheless, Thoreau's works proceeded to impact numerous open figures. Political pioneers and reformers like Mohandas Gandhi, U.S. President John F. Kennedy, American social equality dissident Martin Luther King Jr., U.S. Preeminent Court Justice William O. Douglas, and Russian creator Leo Tolstoy all discussed being emphatically influenced by Thoreau's work, especially Civil Disobedience, as did "conservative scholar Frank Chodorov who dedicated a whole issue of his month to month, Analysis, to a valuation for Thoreau".

Thoreau additionally affected numerous specialists and creators including Edward Abbey, Willa Cather, Marcel Proust, William Butler Yeats, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Upton Sinclair, E. B. White, Lewis Mumford, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alexander Posey, and Gustav Stickley. Thoreau additionally impacted naturalists like John Burroughs, John Muir, E. O. Wilson, Edwin Way Teale, Joseph Wood Krutch, B. F. Skinner, David Brower, and Loren Eiseley, whom Publishers Weekly called "the advanced Thoreau". English author Henry Stephens Salt composed a memoir of Thoreau in 1890, which promoted Thoreau's thoughts in Britain: George Bernard Shaw, Edward Carpenter, and Robert Blatchford were among the individuals who became Thoreau lovers because of Salt's backing. Mohandas Gandhi previously read Walden in 1906 while functioning as a social liberties dissident in Johannesburg, South Africa. He previously read Civil Disobedience "while he sat in a South African jail for the wrongdoing of peacefully challenging the Indian populace in the Transvaal. The article excited Gandhi, who composed and distributed a summary of Thoreau's contention, calling its 'sharp rationale ... unanswerable' and alluding to Thoreau as 'one of the best and most good men America has created'." He revealed to American columnist Webb Miller, " Thoreau's thoughts affected me enormously. I received some of them and prescribed the investigation of Thoreau to the entirety of my companions who were helping me in the reason for Indian Independence. Why I really took the name of my development from Thoreau's exposition 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience', expounded on 80 years prior."

Martin Luther King, Jr. noted in his collection of memoirs that his first experience with the possibility of peaceful opposition was perusing "On Civil Disobedience" in 1944 while going to Morehouse College. He wrote in his collection of memoirs that it was, here, right now Englander's refusal to make good on his charges and his decision of prison as opposed to help a war that would spread subjugation's region into Mexico, I reached the hypothesis of peaceful opposition. Captivated by declining to help out a malevolent framework, I was so profoundly moved that I rehash the work a few times. I became persuaded that noncooperation with underhanded is as a lot of an ethical commitment as is participation with acceptable. No other individual has been progressively expressive and enthusiastic in getting this thought across than Henry David Thoreau. Because of his works and individual observer, we are the beneficiaries of a heritage of imaginative dissent. The lessons of Thoreau woke up in our social liberties development; to be sure, they are more alive than any time in recent memory. Regardless of whether communicated in a demonstration at lunch counters, an opportunity ride into Mississippi, a quiet dissent in Albany, Georgia, a transport blacklist in Montgomery, Alabama, these are outgrowths of Thoreau's request that underhanded must be opposed and that no ethical man can persistently acclimate to foul play.

American clinician B. F. Skinner composed that he conveyed a duplicate of Thoreau's Walden with him in his childhood. In 1945 he composed Walden Two, an anecdotal ideal world around 1,000 individuals from a network living respectively roused by the life of Thoreau. Thoreau and his kindred Transcendentalists from Concord were a significant motivation of the author Charles Ives. The fourth development of the Concord Sonata for piano (with a section for woodwind, Thoreau's instrument) is a character picture, and he likewise set Thoreau's words.

On-screen character Ron Thompson did a sensational depiction of Henry David Thoreau on the 1976 NBC TV arrangement The Rebels.

Thoreau's thoughts have affected and reverberated with different strains in the rebel development, with Emma Goldman alluding to him as "the best American revolutionary". Green turmoil and anarcho-primitivism specifically have both determined motivation and natural perspectives from the works of Thoreau. John Zerzan incorporated Thoreau's content "Trips" (1863) in his altered aggregation of works in the anarcho-primitivist convention titled Against human progress: Readings and reflections. Additionally, Murray Rothbard, the organizer of anarcho-private enterprise, has opined that Thoreau was one of the "extraordinary scholarly saints" of his development. Thoreau was additionally a significant effect on late-nineteenth century revolutionary naturism. Globally, Thoreau's ideas additionally held significance inside independent revolutionary circles in Spain, France, and Portugal.

For the 200th commemoration of his introduction to the world, distributers discharged a few new releases of his work: an entertainment of Walden's 1902 version with representations, an image book with extracts from Walden, and an explained assortment of Thoreau's articles on servitude. The United States Postal Service gave a memorial stamp regarding Thoreau on May 23, 2017 in Concord, MA.

Adjustments

In 2017, Walden, a Game was discharged on itch.io. Made by Tracy Fullerton, it is an open world, first individual videogame adjustment of Thoreau's Walden. Players can fabricate the hero's lodge, investigate nature, record greenery, ranch the land, visit Emerson's home and the town of Concord. Toward the finish of every day players are welcome to ponder their diary which steadily tops off with reflections dependent on the player's excursion and everyday encounters. The game additionally incorporates letters among Thoreau and his counterparts, including Amos Bronson Alcott and Ralph Waldo Emerson. It likewise incorporates letters between his counterparts to fabricate an image of Thoreau's gathering as an essayist and his associations in the scholarly and Transcendentalist scene in America at that point. The game was discharged for PlayStation 4 out of 2018.

Check your Progress-2

1. In which year did the United States Postal Service give a memorial stamp regarding Thoreau?

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1.4 CRITICISM

In spite of the fact that his works would get across the board recognition, Thoreau's thoughts were not all around commended. Scottish creator Robert Louis Stevenson made a decision about Thoreau's underwriting of living alone and separated from current society in regular straightforwardness to be a sign of "unmanly" effeminacy and "womanish isolation", while regarding him a liberal "skulker".

Nathaniel Hawthorne had blended sentiments about Thoreau. He noticed that "He is a sharp and fragile spectator of nature—a real eyewitness—which, I think, is nearly as uncommon a character as even a unique writer; and Nature, as an end-result of his affection, appears to receive him as her particular kid, and gives him insider facts which hardly any others are permitted to observe." On the other hand, he additionally composed that Thoreau "disavowed every single normal method of getting a living, and appears to be slanted to lead a kind of Indian life among enlightened men".

In a comparable vein, artist John Greenleaf Whittier despised what he esteemed to be the "insidious" and "heathenish" message of Walden, guaranteeing that Thoreau needed man to "lower himself to the degree of a woodchuck and stroll on four legs".

Because of such reactions, English author George Eliot, composing for the Westminster Review, described such pundits as deadened and biased:

Individuals—exceptionally astute in their own eyes—who might have each man's life requested by a specific example, and who are narrow minded of each presence the utility of which isn't obvious to them, may pooh-pooh Mr. Thoreau and this scene in his history, as eccentric and marvelous.

Thoreau himself likewise reacted to the analysis in a passage of his work Walden by showing the immateriality of their requests:

I ought not obtrude my undertakings such a great amount on the notification of my perusers if extremely specific requests had not been made by my townsmen concerning my method of life, which some would call insolent, however they don't appear to me at all impudent, be that as it may, thinking about the conditions, common and relevant. Some have asked what I found a good pace; I didn't feel bereft; in the event that I was not apprehensive; and such. Others have been interested to realize what segment of my salary I committed to magnanimous purposes; and a few, who have enormous families, what number of poor kids I kept up. ... Tragically, I am kept to this topic by the limitation of my experience. Additionally, I, on my side, expect of each author, first or last, a straightforward and genuine record of his own life, and not just what he has known about other men's lives; ... I believe that none will extend the creases in putting on the coat, for it might do great support of him whom it fits.

Ongoing analysis has blamed Thoreau for false reverence, cynicism, and being hypocritical, in light of his works in Walden, in spite of the fact that this analysis has been seen as profoundly specific.

Check your Progress-3

1. Who blended sentiments about Thoreau ?

1.5 WORKS

- Aulus Persius Flaccus (1840)
- The Service (1840)
- A Walk to Wachusett (1842)
- Paradise (to be) Regained (1843)
- The Landlord (1843)
- Sir Walter Raleigh (1844)
- Herald of Freedom (1844)
- Wendell Phillips Before the Concord Lyceum (1845)
- Reform and the Reformers (1846–48)
- Thomas Carlyle and His Works (1847)
- A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849)
- Resistance to Civil Government, or Civil Disobedience, or On the Duty of Civil Disobedience (1849)
- An Excursion to Canada (1853)
- Slavery in Massachusetts (1854)
- Walden (1854)
- A Plea for Captain John Brown (1859)
- Remarks After the Hanging of John Brown (1859)
- The Last Days of John Brown (1860)
- Walking (1862)
- Autumnal Tints (1862)
- Wild Apples: The History of the Apple Tree (1862)
- The Fall of the Leaf (1863)
- Excursions (1863)
- Life Without Principle (1863)
- Night and Moonlight (1863)
- The Highland Light (1864)
- The Maine Woods (1864) 159 160 Fully Annotated Edition. Jeffrey S. Cramer, ed., Yale University Press, 2009

- Cape Cod (1865)
- Letters to Various Persons (1865)
- A Yankee in Canada, with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers (1866)
- Early Spring in Massachusetts (1881)
- Summer (1884)
- Winter (1888)
- Autumn (1892)
- Miscellanies (1894)
- Familiar Letters of Henry David Thoreau (1894)
- Poems of Nature (1895)
- Some Unpublished Letters of Henry D. and Sophia E. Thoreau (1898)
- The First and Last Journeys of Thoreau (1905)
- Journal of Henry David Thoreau (1906)
- The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau edited by Walter Harding and Carl Bode (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1958)
- Poets of the English Language (Viking Press, 1950) citation needed
- I Was Made Erect and Lone
- The Bluebird Carries the Sky on His Back (Stanyan, 1970) citation needed
- The Dispersion of Seeds published as Faith in a Seed (Island Press, 1993)
- The Indian Notebooks (1847-1861) selections by Richard F. Fleck

1.6 LET US SUM UP

American essayist, poet, and practical philosopher, Henry David Thoreau was a New England Transcendentalist and author of the book Walden.

Synopsis

Henry David Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817, in Concord, Massachusetts. He began writing nature poetry in the 1840s, with poet Ralph Waldo Emerson as a mentor and friend. In 1845 he began his famous two-year stay on Walden Pond, which he wrote about in his master work, Walden. He also became known for his beliefs in Transcendentalism and civil disobedience, and was a dedicated abolitionist.

Early Life

One of America's most popular scholars, Henry David Thoreau is associated with his philosophical and naturalist works. He was brought up in Concord, Massachusetts, alongside his more seasoned kin John and Helen and more youthful sister Sophia. His dad worked a nearby pencil processing plant, and his mom leased pieces of the family's home to guests.

A splendid understudy, Thoreau in the end went to Harvard College (presently Harvard University). There he contemplated Greek and Latin just as German. As per a few reports, Thoreau needed to take a break from his tutoring for a period on account of sickness. He moved on from school in 1837 and battled with what do to next. At that point, an informed man like Thoreau may seek after a profession in law or prescription or in the congregation. Other school graduates went into instruction, a way he quickly followed. With his sibling John, he set up a school in 1838. The endeavor crumbled a couple of years after the fact after John turned out to be sick. Thoreau at that point got down to business for his dad for a period.

After school, Thoreau become a close acquaintance with author and individual Concord inhabitant Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through Emerson, he got presented to Transcendentalism, a way of thinking that accentuated the significance of exact considering and otherworldly issues over the physical world. It energized logical request and perception. Thoreau came to know a considerable lot of the development's driving figures, including Bronson Alcott and Margaret Fuller.

Emerson went about as a coach to Thoreau and bolstered him from numerous points of view. For a period, Thoreau lived with Emerson as a guardian for his home. Emerson likewise utilized his impact to advance Thoreau's scholarly endeavors. A portion of Thoreau's first works were distributed in The Dial, a Transcendentalist magazine. What's more, Emerson gave Thoreau access to the grounds that would motivate probably the best work.

Walden Pond

In 1845, Thoreau manufactured a little home for himself on Walden Pond, on property claimed by Emerson. He went through over two years there. Looking for a less difficult kind of life, Thoreau flipped the standard everyday practice of the occasions. He tried different things with functioning as meager as conceivable as opposed to take part in the example of six days on with one three day weekend. Now and then Thoreau filled in as a land surveyor or in the pencil manufacturing plant. He felt this new methodology helped him maintain a strategic distance from the wretchedness he saw around him. "The mass of men lead lives of calm urgency," Thoreau once composed.

His timetable gave him a lot of time to dedicate to his philosophical and abstract interests. Thoreau took a shot at A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849). The book drew from a sailing trip he took with his sibling John in 1839. Thoreau in the end began expounding on his Walden Pond analyze too. Many were interested about his progressive way of life, and this intrigue gave the inventive flash to an assortment of expositions. Distributed in 1854, Walden; or, Life in the Woods upheld carrying on with a real existence near nature. The book was an unobtrusive achievement, yet it wasn't until a lot later that the book contacted a bigger crowd. Throughout the years, Walden has enlivened and educated the work regarding naturalists, tree huggers and essayists.

While living at Walden Pond, Thoreau additionally had an experience with the law. He went through a night in prison subsequent to declining to make good on a survey charge. This experience drove him to think of one of his most popular and most powerful expositions, "Common Disobedience" (otherwise called "Protection from Civil Government"). Thoreau held profoundly felt political perspectives, contradicting bondage and the Mexican-American War. He put forth a solid defense for following up on one's individual inner voice and not indiscriminately adhering to laws and government arrangement. "The main commitment which I reserve an option to accept that is to do whenever what I think right," he composed.

Since its production in 1849, "Common Disobedience" has propelled numerous pioneers of dissent developments around the globe. This peaceful way to deal with political and social opposition has affected American social equality development extremist Martin Luther King Jr. also, Mohandas Gandhi, who helped India win freedom from Great Britain, among numerous others.

Later Years

In the wake of leaving Walden Pond, Thoreau invested some energy taking care of Emerson's home while he was on visit in England. Still captivated with nature, Thoreau recorded his perceptions on plant and untamed life in his local Concord and on his excursions. He visited the forested areas of Maine and the shoreline of Cape Cod a few times.

Thoreau likewise stayed a dedicated abolitionist until an amazing finish. To help his motivation, he composed a few works, including the 1854 article "Servitude in Massachusetts." Thoreau additionally took a daring represent Captain John Brown, an extreme abolitionist who drove an uprising against subjugation in Virginia. He and his supporters struck a government arms stockpile in Harpers Ferry to arm themselves in October 1859, however their arrangement was impeded. A harmed Brown was later sentenced for conspiracy and put to death for his wrongdoing. Thoreau rose to shield him with the discourse "A Plea for Capt. John Brown," calling him "a holy messenger of light" and "the most courageous and humanist man in all the nation."

In his later years, Thoreau combat a sickness that had tormented him for quite a long time. He had tuberculosis, which he had contracted decades sooner. To reestablish his wellbeing, Thoreau went to Minnesota in 1861, yet the excursion didn't improve his condition. He at long last capitulated to the infection on May 6, 1862. Thoreau was proclaimed as "a unique mastermind" and "a man of basic tastes, strong propensities, and of mysterious forces of perception" in a portion of his tribute.

While different authors from his time have blurred into indefinite quality, Thoreau has suffered on the grounds that such an extensive amount what he expounded on is as yet important today. His works on government were progressive, with some considering him an early rebel. Thoreau's investigations of nature were similarly radical in their own specific manner, gaining him the moniker of "father of environmentalism." And his major work, Walden, has offered up an interesting antidote to living in the modern rat race.

1.7 KEYWORDS

- **Un merchantable**: not fit for sale
- **Architectural Ornament**: something added to a building to improve its appearance
- **Bottleful**: the quantity contained in a bottle
- **Bathing Tub:** a relatively large open container that you fill with water and use to wash the body
- **Indweller**: a person who inhabits a particular place

1.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a brief note on Henry Thoreau’s Works.
- Write a note on Henry Thoreau’s Life.
- Describe the criticism related to Henry Thoreau’s work.

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Henry David Thoreau’s father’s name was John Thoreau. (**answer to check your progress -1 - Q1**)

Henry David Thoreau was conceived in Concord, Massachusetts. (**answer to check your progress -1 – Q2**)

The United States Postal Service gave a memorial stamp regarding Thoreau on May 23, 2017 in Concord, MA. (**answer to check your progress -2 - Q1**)

Nathaniel Hawthorne had blended sentiments about Thoreau. (**answer to check your progress -3 - Q1**)

UNIT-2 THOREAU-WALDEN - 2

STRUCTURE

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Plot

2.3 Themes

2.4 Characters

2.5 Origins and Publishing History

2.6 Reception

2.7 Adaptations

2.8 Let us sum up

2.9 Keywords

2.10 Questions for Review

2.11 Suggested Reading and References

2.12 Answers to Check your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit, you would know about:

- Henry David Thoreau's Walden
- The plot of Walden,
- The themes used by Henry Thoreau in Walden
- The adaptations of Walden,
- The origins and publishing history and reception of Walden by Henry Thoreau.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Walden is a book by transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. The text is a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings. The work is part personal declaration of independence, social experiment, voyage of spiritual discovery, satire, and—to some degree—a manual for self-reliance.

First published in 1854, Walden details Thoreau's experiences over the course of two years, two months, and two days in a cabin he built near Walden Pond amidst woodland owned by his friend and mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson, near Concord, Massachusetts. Thoreau used this time to write his first book, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. The experience later inspired Walden, in which Thoreau compresses the time into a single calendar year and uses passages of four seasons to symbolize human development.

The book can be seen as performance art, a demonstration of how easy it can be to acquire the four necessities of life. Once acquired, he believed people should then focus their efforts on personal growth.

By immersing himself in nature, Thoreau hoped to gain a more objective understanding of society through personal introspection. Simple living and self-sufficiency were Thoreau's other goals, and the whole project was inspired by transcendentalist philosophy, a central theme of the American Romantic Period.

Thoreau makes precise scientific observations of nature as well as metaphorical and poetic uses of natural phenomena. He identifies many plants and animals by both their popular and scientific names, records in detail the color and clarity of different bodies of water, precisely dates and describes the freezing and thawing of the pond, and recounts his experiments to measure the depth and shape of the bottom of the supposedly "bottomless" Walden Pond.

2.2 PLOT

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

— Henry David Thoreau

Part memoir and part spiritual quest, Walden opens with the announcement that Thoreau spent two years at Walden Pond living a simple life without support of any kind. Readers are reminded that at the time of publication, Thoreau is back to living among the civilized again. The book is separated into specific chapters, each of which focuses on specific themes:

Economy: In this first and longest chapter, Thoreau outlines his project: a two-year, two-month, and two-day stay at a cozy, "tightly shingled and plastered", English-style 10' × 15' cottage in the woods near Walden Pond. He does this, he says, to illustrate the spiritual benefits of a simplified lifestyle. He easily supplies the four necessities of life (food, shelter, clothing, and fuel) with the help of family and friends, particularly his mother, his best friend, and Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson. The latter provided Thoreau with a work exchange -— he could build a small house and plant a garden if he cleared some land on the woodlot and did other chores while there. Thoreau meticulously records his expenditures and earnings, demonstrating his understanding of "economy", as he builds his house and buys and grows food. For a home and freedom, he spent a mere $28.12½, in 1845 (about $934 in 2018 dollars). At the end of this chapter, Thoreau inserts a poem, "The Pretensions of Poverty", by seventeenth-century English poet Thomas Carew. The poem criticizes those who think that their poverty gives them unearned moral and intellectual superiority. Much attention is devoted to the skepticism and wonderment with which townspeople greeted both him and his project as he tries to protect his views from those of the townspeople who seem to view society as the only place to live. He recounts the reasons for his move to Walden Pond along with detailed steps back to the construction of his new home (methods, support, etc.).

Where I Lived, and What I Lived For: Thoreau recollects thoughts of places he stayed at before selecting Walden Pond, and quotes Roman Philosopher Cato's advice "consider buying a farm very carefully before signing the papers." His possibilities included a nearby Hallowell farm (where the "wife" unexpectedly decided she wanted to keep the farm). Thoreau takes to the woods dreaming of an existence free of obligations and full of leisure. He announces that he resides far from social relationships that mail represents (post office) and the majority of the chapter focuses on his thoughts while constructing and living in his new home at Walden.

Reading: Thoreau discusses the benefits of classical literature, preferably in the original Greek or Latin, and bemoans the lack of sophistication in Concord evident in the popularity of unsophisticated literature. He also loved to read books by world travelers. He yearns for a time when each New England village supports "wise men" to educate and thereby ennoble the population.

Sounds: Thoreau encourages the reader to be "forever on the alert" and "looking always at what is to be seen." Although truth can be found in literature, it can equally be found in nature. In addition to self-development, an advantage of developing one's perceptiveness is its tendency to alleviate boredom. Rather than "look abroad for amusement, to society and the theatre", Thoreau's own life, including supposedly dull pastimes like housework, becomes a source of amusement that "never ceases to be novel." Likewise, he obtains pleasure in the sounds that ring around his cabin: church bells ringing, carriages rattling and rumbling, cows lowing, whip-poor-wills singing, owls hooting, frogs croaking, and cockerels crowing. "All sound heard at the greatest possible distance," he contends "produces one and the same effect." Likening the train's cloud of steam to a comet tail and its commotion to "the scream of a hawk", the train becomes homologous with nature and Thoreau praises its associated commerce for its enterprise, bravery, and cosmopolitanism, proclaiming: "I watch the passage of the morning cars with the same feeling that I do the rising of the sun."

Solitude: Thoreau reflects on the feeling of solitude. He explains how loneliness can occur even amid companions if one's heart is not open to them. Thoreau meditates on the pleasures of escaping society and the petty things that society entails (gossip, fights, etc.). He also reflects on his new companion, an old settler who arrives nearby and an old woman with great memory ("memory runs back farther than mythology"). Thoreau repeatedly reflects on the benefits of nature and of his deep communion with it and states that the only "medicine he needs is a draught of morning air".

Visitors: Thoreau talks about how he enjoys companionship (despite his love for solitude) and always leaves three chairs ready for visitors. The entire chapter focuses on the coming and going of visitors, and how he has more comers in Walden than he did in the city. He receives visits from those living or working nearby and gives special attention to a French Canadian born woodsman named Alec Thérien. Unlike Thoreau, Thérien cannot read or write and is described as leading an "animal life". citation needed He compares Thérien to Walden Pond itself. Thoreau then reflects on the women and children who seem to enjoy the pond more than men, and how men are limited because their lives are taken up.

The Bean-Field: Reflection on Thoreau's planting and his enjoyment of this new job/hobby. He touches upon the joys of his environment, the sights and sounds of nature, but also on the military sounds nearby. The rest of the chapter focuses on his earnings and his cultivation of crops (including how he spends just under fifteen dollars on this).

The Village: The chapter focuses on Thoreau's reflections on the journeys he takes several times a week to Concord, where he gathers the latest gossip and meets with townsmen. On one of his journeys into Concord, Thoreau is detained and jailed for his refusal to pay a poll tax to the "state that buys and sells men, women, and children, like cattle at the door of its senate-house".

The Ponds: In autumn, Thoreau discusses the countryside and writes down his observations about the geography of Walden Pond and its neighbors: Flint's Pond (or Sandy Pond), White Pond, and Goose Pond. Although Flint's is the largest, Thoreau's favorites are Walden and White ponds, which he describes as lovelier than diamonds.

Baker Farm: While on an afternoon ramble in the woods, Thoreau gets caught in a rainstorm and takes shelter in the dirty, dismal hut of John Field, a penniless but hard-working Irish farmhand, and his wife and children. Thoreau urges Field to live a simple but independent and fulfilling life in the woods, thereby freeing himself of employers and creditors. But the Irishman won't give up his aspirations of luxury and the quest for the American dream.

Higher Laws: Thoreau discusses whether hunting wild animals and eating meat is necessary. He concludes that the primitive, carnal sensuality of humans drives them to kill and eat animals, and that a person who transcends this propensity is superior to those who cannot. (Thoreau eats fish and occasionally salt pork and woodchuck.) In addition to vegetarianism, he lauds chastity, work, and teetotalism. He also recognizes that Native Americans need to hunt and kill moose for survival in "The Maine Woods", and eats moose on a trip to Maine while he was living at Walden. Here is a list of the laws that he mentions:

One must love that of the wild just as much as one loves that of the good.

What men already know instinctively is true humanity.

The hunter is the greatest friend of the animal which is hunted.

No human older than an adolescent would wantonly murder any creature which reveres its own life as much as the killer.

If the day and the night make one joyful, one is successful.

The highest form of self-restraint is when one can subsist not on other animals, but of plants and crops cultivated from the earth.

Brute Neighbors: is a simplified version of one of Thoreau's conversations with William Ellery Channing, who sometimes accompanied Thoreau on fishing trips when Channing had come up from Concord. The conversation is about a hermit (himself) and a poet (Channing) and how the poet is absorbed in the clouds while the hermit is occupied with the more practical task of getting fish for dinner and how in the end, the poet regrets his failure to catch fish. The chapter also mentions Thoreau's interaction with a mouse that he lives with, the scene in which an ant battles a smaller ant, and his frequent encounters with cats.

House-Warming: After picking November berries in the woods, Thoreau adds a chimney, and finally plasters the walls of his sturdy house to stave off the cold of the oncoming winter. He also lays in a good supply of firewood, and expresses affection for wood and fire.

Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors: Thoreau relates the stories of people who formerly lived in the vicinity of Walden Pond. Then he talks about a few of the visitors he receives during the winter: a farmer, a woodchopper, and his best friend, the poet Ellery Channing.

Winter Animals: Thoreau amuses himself by watching wildlife during the winter. He relates his observations of owls, hares, red squirrels, mice, and various birds as they hunt, sing, and eat the scraps and corn he put out for them. He also describes a fox hunt that passes by.

The Pond in Winter: Thoreau describes Walden Pond as it appears during the winter. He says he has sounded its depths and located an underground outlet. Then he recounts how 100 laborers came to cut great blocks of ice from the pond, the ice to be shipped to the Carolinas.

Spring: As spring arrives, Walden and the other ponds melt with powerful thundering and rumbling. Thoreau enjoys watching the thaw, and grows ecstatic as he witnesses the green rebirth of nature. He watches the geese winging their way north, and a hawk playing by itself in the sky. As nature is reborn, the narrator implies, so is he. He departs Walden on September 6, 1847.

Conclusion: This final chapter is more passionate and urgent than its predecessors. In it, he criticizes conformity: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away", citation needed By doing so, men may find happiness and self-fulfillment.

I do not say that John or Jonathan will realize all this; but such is the character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

Check your Progress-1

1. Who wrote Walden???

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2. When was Walden first published???

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2.3 THEMES

Man and the Natural World

Thanks to Walden, Thoreau is known as one of the first environmentalists. How did he get this title? Well, he interpreted nature in a way that hadn't been done before. For Thoreau, nature isn't just a mirror to man's soul, as it was for the Romantics, nor is it celebrated within the confines of a well-ordered landscape or farm, as it is in the pastoral tradition. Thoreau wants wild nature, nature untouched by human hands. As is demonstrated simply through his presence as an observer, this untouched-by-human-hands thing may not be possible, but, hey, a guy wants what he wants.

Thoreau represents this wild vision of nature through various lenses – first, with a naturalist's eye for the differences between species, and for the changes in distinctive habitats as they evolve over the seasons. Second, he represents it as a historian, capturing the way that humans have altered the landscape. This includes his own attempts at farming, which is in tension with his respect for native plants. In the end, the nature Thoreau describes is only about a mile away from the center of town, and not in some far-off wilderness. But so, what? Thoreau wants to remind us that nature is all around us, and there to inspire us to be better than we are.

Life, Consciousness, and Existence

Does simply breathing qualify as living? Or does living require far, far more? In Walden, Thoreau examines his fellow man, and finds him wanting, lacking, and unfulfilled: laboring day in and day out, trapped by the desire for wealth and material comforts, unable to distinguish between luxury (like butter and a house with more than one room!) and necessity. Most men, according to Thoreau, are trapped in a kind of living death that suppresses everything that is natural and wonderful about being human. Talk about dark.

But Thoreau is trying to rescue us through Walden. This book is an attempt to break past all our misconceptions about the true meaning of life and get to some understanding of what real life is. Life isn't just about going through the motions in your daily grind, but enjoying all the faculties for thinking, imagining, and feeling that are unique to each and every one of us.

Society and Class

Thoreau frequently compares American society is to what were then considered "primitive" or "savage" societies, such as that of the Native Americans. Thoreau also juxtaposes our society with ancient societies such as the Greek or Chinese. In both of these comparisons, American society often loses. Instead of becoming a more just society, Thoreau sees everywhere around him a barbaric attachment to wealth and political power. We are still savages, according to Thoreau, and worse, we haven't even maintained the best customs of so-called savage societies – lose-lose. Our author argues that the project of civilization remains incomplete as long as materialism, injustice, and intolerance prevail.

Wisdom

For Thoreau, wisdom can't be found in college, or by calling Dr. Phil. Wisdom isn't the same as common sense. In fact, wisdom will often appear nonsensical to the unwise. And wisdom isn't the same as conventional wisdom, since true wisdom will often seem idiosyncratic (too particular) or just plain odd to most of the world.

Now that we've discussed what wisdom is not, let's talk about what it is. Thoreau proposes that true wisdom is unique to each individual, and that it is out there for each individual to discover in practice, through the experiment of living. This search for wisdom should not be confused with selfishness. It's more the development of an inner sense of what is just and right. Since wisdom is unique to each individual, we cannot expect each person's expression of wisdom to be the same as any other's. Every individual expresses wisdom in an equally unique style. For Thoreau, this multiplicity of perspectives is something to be celebrated.

Isolation

There's a big difference being lonely and being alone in Walden. Thoreau believes that the vast majority of people out there feel terribly lonely, even in the midst of crowded cities. Paradoxically, we are most alone in a crowd because we lose the company of, well, ourselves, which is what otherwise makes us unique. Without a sense of ourselves, we can't form authentic attachments with others. We can't be good friends. We just become part of the miserable herd. This is probably something we can all relate to: you have to love yourself in order to love others, right? Thoreau's life alone by Walden Pond is an attempt to recover a more authentic sense of who he is. He's alone, an independent spirit, but he's no hermit. Walden isn't a lonely book. It's filled with characters, and more than a few conversations end in robust laughter with good company. What's important, though, is that with a strong sense of self, Thoreau is able to be a part of that company.

Happiness

Walden is a joyful book. It's easy to get distracted by Thoreau's sometimes bully-like, preachy moments, but, if he's preaching, he's preaching the joy of life. He wants to jolt his readers out of their despair, dejection, and anxieties. Happiness can't be found in luxury or power, he tells us. These things can only distract from the true source of happiness, the inexhaustible beauty of nature and of the human spirit. The pages of this book are filled with Thoreau's sensual delight in nature: every sound is music, every sight is a work of art, and there isn't a berry or a chipmunk in the area that he isn't willing to taste. If Walden is an experiment, it's an experiment to discover whether a man who has little more than a one-room cabin and some not-so-profitable beans can find joy. And, of course, the book answers with a resounding yes.

Visions of America: Antebellum Period

Even though Thoreau may seem isolated way out on Walden Pond, he's still only about a mile away from the center of Concord, MA, the town famous for the "shot heard around the world" that started the American Revolution. So, Walden gives us a sense of what pre-Civil War (a.k.a. antebellum) New England was like in the 19th century. We get a sense of the day-to-day lives of the mainly rural inhabitants, as well as a sense of how American industrialization was transforming life through such innovations as the telegraph and the railroad.

In fact, history permeates the area, even in isolated Walden Pond – from archaeological evidence of Native American tribes who used to live in the area to Thoreau's personal experience assisting runaway slaves and his objection to the Mexican-American War. Walden is a kind of an attempt to preserve, through words, the diversity of species and landscapes of the area before it disappears. And what a success story it is.

Technology and Modernization

Walden is, among other things, a book about time. According to Thoreau, time has been hijacked by modernity, where technological advances such as the railroad and the telegraph have sped up life at an inhuman rate. But, from our author's perspective, we've gotten to a point where these technologies are no longer tools. Instead of us running the machines, the machines are running us. No matter how hard we work, we can never keep pace, let alone pause to think about what we're doing. (Yikes – we wonder what Thoreau would think about, um, the Internet?)

Thoreau wants us all to slow down and reconnect with real time, Nature's time. By slowing down, we give ourselves some space to think about our values and the direction this fast-paced life is taking us. Like John Connor, Thoreau wants to take the future back from the machines and return it to human hands.

2.4 CHARACTERS

THOREAU

"Simplify, simplify." It's one of the most famous sentences from Thoreau's Walden, but really jarring for people (like you) who have actually read the book. Sure, Thoreau declares that his sole purpose is to relate the discoveries and success of his personal experiment living for two years alone by Walden Pond – a pretty simple life. But what we actually get in Walden is a portrait of a man who is caught up in his own contradictions. There's nothing simplified about Thoreau's character.

Actually, that's what makes Walden fun to read. It's written in the voice of someone who is fully aware that he's got a pretentious, elitist streak. Because of this, contradictions abound, but they're incredibly rich, and worth taking a look at.

Comedy vs. Sobriety

The process of "simplification," in one sense, is essentially a struggle between the seriousness of life and the comedy that comes along with it.

Just as Thoreau seems to be getting seriously, intellectually pretentious, life (figuratively, but amusingly) bops him on the head.

A classic instance of such comic simplification occurs at the beginning of the "Brute Neighbors" chapter. The chapter title suggests that Thoreau is, once again, going to poo-poo his fellow man for being so anti-intellectual. When the chapter begins with a funny dialogue between a Hermit and a Poet, though, it is the serious Hermit who is portrayed as ridiculous, as he gets easily distracted from philosophical questions by... fishing.

In case you don't get the joke, remember that Thoreau describes time as "the stream he goes fishing in." Sure, you can put on a serious face and say, in an AP-exam-ish way, "the stream presents an important allegory for Thoreau's conceptualization of time as an a-temporal entity fundamentally divorced from worldly concerns," but that would be seriously missing the point of Thoreau's self-mockery. Correct gobbledy-gook, but pretentious still.

Mind vs. Body

A slightly less amusing tension is found between Thoreau's spiritual/intellectual side and his bodily, animal nature. This tension is written on the page, with chapters waffling between lengthy reflection on moral and social questions, and even more lengthy reflection on natural beauty. Nature metaphors pop up in the more intellectual sections, and comparisons to moral or intellectual ideas are often made in the nature sections. It's almost as if the poetic, metaphor-making side of Thoreau were trying to weave together and reconcile these two sides of himself.

Perhaps the two most outstanding instances of this mind/body tension are portrayed in Thoreau's description, first of Walden Pond, and second of the melting mud. In both cases, a simple appreciation for natural beauty shifts toward an allegory about some very human, spiritual truth. Whether Thoreau successfully reconciles the two is still up for debate by scholars – what do you think?

Man vs. Nature

Another contradiction: for a conservationist, Thoreau seems ambivalent (indifferent) about the way humans impact nature. Let's take a closer look. He is against abusing natural resources for material gain (think railroad, logging, and ice-harvesting). But at the same time, he acknowledges that his own farm takes its toll on the native species of the land. What's more, he celebrates the entrepreneurial spirit that led to developments such as the railroad in the first place. Listen, friend, you can't have your cake and eat it, too. Well, you can, but we will notice.

This tension between man and nature comes through in Thoreau's representation of Walden Pond. It is unclear whether the pond is an unchanging symbol of human goodness, or a symbol of the way humans abuse nature (he bemoans the changes that have taken place at Walden Pond since he was a boy). It seems like Thoreau sees it both ways, and you know what, that's perfectly okay.

Un-Simplifiable

All of these contradictions make Thoreau incredibly human, and that's a good thing. If the book were written as deliberately as he sought to live at Walden Pond (his words, not ours), it would be way too preachy. Instead, we have a man who's so completely honest about what's going on in his mind that he's even willing to lay out his weaknesses and contradictions. We get a clamorous and essentially joyful book, through the voice of a man who is intensely curious about everything from Hindu mythology to the name of an as-of-yet-unidentified species of pickerel. Perhaps the simplest truth that we get from the book – and more specifically, from Thoreau's character – is that man is essentially un-simplifiable.

The Poet

The poet is an unnamed character, but scholars generally agree that it refers to Ellery Channing, one of Thoreau's closest buddies. But boo on the scholars. It's almost better for him to be anonymous. Like the philosopher and the hermit, the poet's lack of a name draws attention to the fact that he's a poet and forces us to think about the qualities that make him so great at what he does. For Thoreau, it isn't just verbal virtuosity that makes a good poet. You have to be morally sound as well. "Nothing can deter a poet," writes Thoreau, "for he is actuated by pure love" (Former Inhabitants.20).

The poet is a cheerful and optimistic presence in Thoreau's life, a great friend that he enjoys laughing and fishing with. In this respect, he's much like characters such as the philosopher and the woodchopper. In the mock dialogue with the hermit at the beginning of the "Brute Neighbors" chapter, the poet reminds the hermit that he must avoid getting caught up in philosophical reflection and instead immerse himself in the world, even if that just means goin' fishin' with a friend. This guy is what we call down-to-earth – not something we necessarily expect from a poet.

The Philosopher

The philosopher is unnamed in Walden, although scholars generally agree that Thoreau was referring to Amos Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa May Alcott, the author of Little Women. Alcott was a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson and a Transcendentalist himself. He is perhaps best known for his innovative experiments in education and his experiments with communal living.

By not using his name, Thoreau draws attention to the features that made Alcott an exemplary philosopher. A "true friend of man; almost the only friend of human progress," the philosopher isn't some snooty guy stuck in an ivory tower, but a man who has tremendous faith in human nature. He has a "hospitable intellect" that "embraces children, beggars, insane, and scholars, and entertains the thought of all, adding to it commonly some breadth and elegance" (Former Inhabitants.21). This philosopher has a faith in human goodness and progress that outshines Thoreau's. While Thoreau sometimes rags on humanity, the philosopher never does.

The Hermit

The philosopher is unnamed in Walden, although scholars generally agree that Thoreau was referring to Amos Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa May Alcott, the author of Little Women. Alcott was a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson and a Transcendentalist himself. He is perhaps best known for his innovative experiments in education and his experiments with communal living.

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John Field, Irishman

The Irish characters are the only ones with names in Walden. This is not because of their significance, unfortunately, but because they are the least likely characters to actually read the book. Thoreau's characterization of Irish people often follows the racial stereotyping of his time. Remember, this was an era when Irish immigrants were flooding into the United States to escape famine conditions in Ireland. Anti-immigration sentiment portrayed the Irish as impoverished and backwards, with a tendency to create large families that they could not support. According to their critics, this all suggested moral weakness.

The Irish characters that appear in the novel – John Field, James Collins, Seeley – all fit this stereotype, and Thoreau will even go so far as to say that "the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe" (Baker Farm.3). Like the woodchopper, the Irish characters in Walden serve as examples of incomplete human beings, too involved in their animal existence to attain intellectual enlightenment. Ouch.

The Woodchopper

The woodchopper is one of Thoreau's rare companions in the woods. Of French Canadian background, he is a purely natural man, not very bright in the bookish sense, but woods-smart (as opposed to street-smart), and learned in practical things. He is a "simple and natural" man, Thoreau tells us, and, due to his simplicity, he's perfectly happy, "a well of good humor and contentment." This is in stark contrast to the men who live "lives of quiet desperation" in the cities (Visitors.9-10).

The one fault of the woodchopper is that he might just be too simple. Despite his "positive originality," Thoreau finds him lacking in the intellectual department since he is so "primitive and immersed in his animal life" (Visitors.14). In a way, the woodchopper is Thoreau's temptation: why not be totally natural and simple? But for Thoreau, to be a complete man, you still need to be intellectual, philosophical, and concerned with the rest of humanity. How do you measure up?

Check your Progress - 2

1. What was the name of Louisa May Alcott's father???

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2. Name the Irish Characters of Walden???

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2.5 ORIGINS AND PUBLISHING HISTORY

There has been much guessing as to why Thoreau went to the pond. E. B. White stated on this note, "Henry went forth to battle when he took to the woods, and Walden is the report of a man torn by two powerful and opposing drives—the desire to enjoy the world and the urge to set the world straight", while Leo Marx noted that Thoreau's stay at Walden Pond was an experiment based on his teacher Emerson's "method of nature" and that it was a "report of an experiment in transcendental pastoralism".

Likewise others have assumed Thoreau's intentions during his time at Walden Pond was "to conduct an experiment: Could he survive, possibly even thrive, by stripping away all superfluous luxuries, living a plain, simple life in radically reduced conditions?" He thought of it as an experiment in "home economics". Although Thoreau went to Walden to escape what he considered, "over-civilization", and in search of the "raw" and "savage delight" of the wilderness, he also spent considerable amounts of his time reading and writing. citation needed

Thoreau spent nearly four times as long on the Walden manuscript as he actually spent at the cabin. Upon leaving Walden Pond and at Emerson's request, Thoreau returned to Emerson's house and spent the majority of his time paying debts. During those years Thoreau slowly edited and drafted what were originally 18 essays describing his "experiment" in basic living. After eight drafts over the course of ten years, Walden was published in 1854.

After Walden's publication, Thoreau saw his time at Walden as nothing more than an experiment. He never took seriously "the idea that he could truly isolate himself from others". Without resolution, Thoreau used "his retreat to the woods as a way of framing a reflection on both what ails men and women in their contemporary condition and what might provide relief".

2.6 RECEPTION

Walden enjoyed some success upon its release, but still took five years to sell 2,000 copies, and then went out of print until Thoreau's death in 1862. Despite its slow beginnings, later critics have praised it as an American classic that explores natural simplicity, harmony, and beauty. The American poet Robert Frost wrote of Thoreau, "In one book ... he surpasses everything we have had in America".

It is often assumed that critics initially ignored Walden, and that those who reviewed the book were evenly split or slightly more negative than positive in their assessment of it. But researchers have shown that Walden actually was "more favorably and widely received by Thoreau's contemporaries than hitherto suspected." Of the 66 initial reviews that have been found so far, "were strongly favorable." Some reviews were rather superficial, merely recommending the book or predicting its success with the public; others were more lengthy, detailed, and nuanced with both positive and negative comments. Positive comments included praise for Thoreau's independence, practicality, wisdom, "manly simplicity", and fearlessness. Not surprisingly, less than three weeks after the book's publication, Thoreau's mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaimed, "All American kind are delighted with Walden as far as they have dared to say."

On the other hand, the terms "quaint" or "eccentric" appeared in over half of the book's initial reviews. Other terms critical of Thoreau included selfish, strange, impractical, privileged (or "manor born"), and misanthropic. One review compared and contrasted Thoreau's form of living to communism, probably not in the sense of Marxism, but instead of communal living or religious communism. While valuing freedom from possessions, Thoreau was not communal in the sense of practicing sharing or of embracing community. So, communism "is better than our hermit's method of getting rid of encumbrance."

In contrast to Thoreau's "manly simplicity", nearly twenty years after Thoreau's death Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson judged Thoreau's endorsement of living alone in natural simplicity, apart from modern society, to be a mark of effeminacy, calling it "womanish solicitude; for there is something unmanly, something almost dastardly" about the lifestyle. Poet John Greenleaf Whittier criticized what he perceived as the message in Walden that man should lower himself to the level of a woodchuck and walk on four legs. He said: "Thoreau's Walden is a capital reading, but very wicked and heathenish ... After all, for me, I prefer walking on two legs". Author Edward Abbey criticized Thoreau's ideas and experiences at Walden in detail throughout his response to Walden called "Down the River with Thoreau", written in 1980.

Today, despite these criticisms, Walden stands as one of America's most celebrated works of literature. John Updike wrote of Walden, "A century and a half after its publication, Walden has become such a totem of the back-to-nature, preservationist, anti-business, civil-disobedience mindset, and Thoreau so vivid a protester, so perfect a crank and hermit saint, that the book risks being as revered and unread as the Bible." The American psychologist B. F. Skinner wrote that he carried a copy of Walden with him in his youth, and eventually wrote Walden Two in 1945, a fictional utopia about 1,000 members who live together in a Thoreau-inspired community.

Kathryn Schulz has accused Thoreau of hypocrisy, misanthropy and being sanctimonious based on his writings in Walden, although this criticism has been perceived as highly selective.

Check your Progress - 3

1. Who accused Thoreau of hypocrisy, misanthropy and being sanctimonious based on his writings in Walden???

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2.7 ADAPTATIONS

Video games

The National Endowment for the Arts in 2012 bestowed Tracy Fullerton, game designer and professor at the University of Southern California's Game Innovation Lab with a $40,000 grant to create, based on the book, a first person, open world video game called Walden, a game, in which players "inhabit an open, three-dimensional game world which will simulate the geography and environment of Walden Woods". The game production was also supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and was part of the Sundance New Frontier Story Lab in 2014. The game was released to critical acclaim on July 4, 2017, celebrating both the day that Thoreau went down to the pond to begin his experiment and the 200th anniversary of Thoreau's birth. It was nominated for the Off-Broadway Award for Best Indie Game at the New York Game Awards 2018.

Furthermore, Walden was adapted into an iOS app published by a third party developer. Walden: Life in the Woods is a quick play-through 2D game in which the player can, "explore the woods surrounding Walden Pond and play Thoreau inspired mini games."

Digitization and scholarship efforts

Digital Thoreau, a collaboration among the State University of New York at Geneseo, the Thoreau Society, and the Walden Woods Project, has developed a fluid text edition of Walden across the different versions of the work to help readers trace the evolution of Thoreau's classic work across seven stages of revision from 1846 to 1854. Within any chapter of Walden, readers can compare up to seven manuscript versions with each other, with the Princeton University Press edition, and consult critical notes drawn from Thoreau scholars, including Ronald Clapper's dissertation The Development of Walden: A Genetic Text (1967) and Walter Harding's Walden: An Annotated Edition (1995). Ultimately, the project will provide a space for readers to discuss Thoreau in the margins of his texts.

Influence

Jean Craighead George's My Side of the Mountain trilogy draws heavily from themes expressed in Walden. Protagonist Sam Gribley is nicknamed "Thoreau" by an English teacher he befriends.

Shane Carruth's second film Upstream Color features Walden as a central item of its story, and draws heavily on the themes expressed by Thoreau.

The 1989 film Dead Poets Society heavily features an excerpt from Walden as a motif in the plot.

The Finnish symphonic metal band Nightwish makes several references to Walden on their eighth studio album Endless Forms Most Beautiful of 2015, including in the song titled "My Walden".

The investment research firm Morningstar, Inc. was named for the last sentence in Walden by founder and CEO Joe Mansueto, and the "O" in the company's logo is shaped like a rising sun.

In the 2015 video game Fallout 4, which takes place in Massachusetts, there exists a location called Walden Pond, where the player can listen to an automated tourist guide detail Thoreau's experience living in the wilderness. At the location there stands a small house which is said to be the same house Thoreau built and stayed in.

Phoebe Bridgers references the book in her song Smoke Signals.

In 2018, MC Lars and Mega Ran released a song called Walden where they discuss the book and its influence.

In South Park episode S01E02, Eric Cartman wins a prize writing an essay copied by Walden, replacing the author's name with his own.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

In this we studied about Henry David Thoreau’s Walden, its plot, themes, characters, adaptations, origins and publishing history and reception.

2.9 KEYWORDS

- **Sand Cherry**: small straggling American cherry growing on sandy soil and having minute scarcely edible purplish-black fruit
- **Woodchuck**: reddish brown North American marmot
- **Townsman:** a resident of a town or city
- **Linen Paper:** a high-quality paper made of linen fibers or with a linen finish
- **Wild Apple**: any of numerous wild apple trees usually with small acidic fruit

2.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a brief note on the plot of Walden by Henry Thoreau.
- Describe the themes of Walden by Henry Thoreau.
- Mention the characters of Walden by Henry Thoreau.
- Write the adaptations of Walden by Henry Thoreau.

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2.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Henry David Thoreau wrote Walden**. (answer to check your progress – 1 Q - 1)**

Walden was first published in 1854. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q - 2)**

Amos Bronson Alcott was the father of Louisa May Alcott. **(answer to check your progress – 2 Q - 1)**

The Irish characters that appear in Walden are John Field, James Collins, Seeley. **(answer to check your progress – 2 Q - 2)**

Kathryn Schulz accused Thoreau of hypocrisy, misanthropy and being sanctimonious based on his writings in Walden. **(answer to check your progress – 3 Q - 1)**

UNIT-3 THOREAU-WALDEN - 3

STRUCTURE

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Analysis

3.3 Symbols

3.4 Motifs

3.5 Let us sum up

3.6 Keywords

3.7 Questions for Review

3.8 Suggested Reading and References

3.9 Answers to Check your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit, you would know about

- analysis of the Walden by Henry David Thoreau,
- symbols used in Walden by Henry David Thoreau and
- motifs used in Walden by Henry David Thoreau.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Walden, in full Walden; or, Life in the Woods, series of 18 essays by Henry David Thoreau, published in 1854. An important contribution to New England Transcendentalism, the book was a record of Thoreau’s experiment in simple living on the northern shore of Walden Pond in eastern Massachusetts (1845–47). Walden is viewed not only as a philosophical treatise on labor, leisure, self-reliance, and individualism but also as an influential piece of nature writing. It is considered Thoreau’s masterwork.

Walden is the product of the two years and two months Thoreau lived in semi-isolation by Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts. He built a small cabin on land owned by his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson and was almost totally self-sufficient, growing his own vegetables and doing odd jobs. It was his intention at Walden Pond to live simply and have time to contemplate, walk in the woods, write, and commune with nature. As he explained, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life.” The resulting book is a series of essays, or meditations, beginning with “Economy,” in which he discussed his experiment and included a detailed account of the construction (and cost) of his cabin. Thoreau extolled the benefits of literature in “Reading,” though in the following essay, “Sounds,” he noted the limits of books and implored the reader to live mindfully, “being forever on the alert” to the sounds and sights in his or her own life. “Solitude” praised the friendliness of nature, which made the “fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant.” Later essays included “Visitors,” “Higher Laws,” “Winter Animals,” and “Spring.”

Relatively neglected during Thoreau’s lifetime, Walden achieved tremendous popularity in the 20th century. Thoreau’s description of the physical act of living day by day at Walden Pond gave the book authority, while his command of a clear, straightforward, but elegant style helped raise it to the level of a literary classic. Oft-repeated quotes from Walden include: “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation”; “Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes”; and “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.”

3.2 ANALYSIS

TONE

Exuberant, Bombastic

Starting with his epigraph, Thoreau announces that he wants to wake us up. That's why it's not really surprising that the tone in the book is generally exuberant, as if Thoreau was shouting in your ear through a megaphone. He knows what he's doing and he's not going to apologize for it. As he writes:

If I boast more than is becoming, my excuse is that I brag for humanity rather than for myself; and my shortcomings and inconsistencies do not affect the truth of my statement. Notwithstanding much cant and hypocrisy – chaff which I find it difficult to separate from my wheat, but for which I am as sorry as any man – I will breathe freely and stretch myself in this respect, it is such a relief to both the moral and physical system; and I am resolved that I will not through humility become the devil's attorney. (Economy.71)

So yes, Thoreau sometimes goes off into excess and hyperbole, and he suggests some occasionally silly ideas like measuring a man as if he were a pond, but it's all in the name of just being who he is in all his originality. He's sure of himself (bombastic), yes, but enjoying every moment (and helping us enjoy it, too).

GENRE

Autobiography

Let's see. With *Walden,* Thoreau tells a story about his life in the first person. We're going to go ahead and call that an autobiography. Maybe it's not as thrilling as Rob Lowe's or Portia De Rossi's, but it's an autobiography nonetheless.

Thoreau being Thoreau, *Walden* is no ordinary autobiography. Yes, he talks about his day-to-day life, but he also includes a load of abstract and esoteric thoughts. He reflects on philosophical issues, he cites ancient Greek, Roman, and Chinese philosophies, he discusses poetry, expresses social satire, and, of course, he can never stop observing the natural world around him. A person's own words can tell us wonders about them and the world around them. What does *Walden* tell us about Thoreau? And if you wrote your autobiography today, what would you tell the world about yourself?

WHAT'S UP WITH THE TITLE?

If you've read this book, it's pretty obvious what the title is all about. Walden is the name of the pond, just outside Concord, Massachusetts, where Thoreau lived alone for two years. Given that he's essentially writing an autobiography, he could have named his book *Thoreau* or *Life* and nobody would have batted an eye. So, why Walden?

Well, the pond is more than just a locale. It is, Thoreau frankly admits, a symbol, and a versatile one at that. (See "Pond in Winter," paragraph 6.) It represents both the inspiring beauty of untouched nature as well as man's capacity for a rich and spiritually fulfilling life, free from materialism. If he'd named the book *Thoreau* (or something of the sort), the focus would have been placed too much on man. As we know, Thoreau was all about nature. Originally published as *Walden; or Life in the Woods*, the revised 1862 title puts the novel's emphasis squarely on the pond, and thus, on nature itself.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE ENDING?

While Thoreau spends quite a few pages explaining the rationale behind his "private experiment" by Walden Pond, he gives us very little explanation as to why he ultimately leaves: "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there," he writes in his "Conclusion." "Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one" (Conclusion.4). Life at Walden Pond had become routine, a "beaten track," and he was no longer interested – which is another way of saying he just got bored.

Boredom can be a good thing, though. It's a kick in the pants, telling you that you've become too settled and complacent, luring you out into the world to try new things. After his experiment at Walden Pond, Thoreau would go on to continue his work with the abolition movement and write other naturalistic studies. And perhaps he was able to do so with a greater confidence and conviction than he had before he came to Walden Pond.

It's also a fitting ending for a conclusion that is mostly directed at the reader. "Don't obsess about me," Thoreau seems to be saying, "Who cares about my reasons for leaving? The important question is what *you* are going to do now that you've read my book."

SETTING

Field Trip

Walden chronicles the two years Thoreau spent at Walden Pond, a rural area located just outside of Concord, Massachusetts. If you're lucky enough to live in the area, you should probably just head on over to check it out. It's actually been largely preserved thanks to conservation efforts inspired by the book. Because Thoreau is so detailed in his description of the physical setting around him (understatement of the century, we know), we won't try to top him. Instead, we'll focus on the historical setting of the book, something that Thoreau doesn't talk about as explicitly.

Thoreau was only at Walden Pond for two years (from 1845-1847), but the book went through extensive revisions before it was (finally) published in 1854. In that decade-ish, a lot of pretty important stuff went down in the United States. There are hints here and there in *Walden* indicating that Thoreau hadn't stopped thinking about the world when he left Walden Pond.

The Rebel

Remember how Thoreau got arrested in "The Village" chapter? Of course you do, it's the most action-packed part of the book. Remember what he got arrested for? Hmmm. Maybe not. Well, the brief arrest was for his refusal to pay a poll tax in protest of the US government. He elaborates on this experience in his famous essay "Civil Disobedience" (1849), where he justifies not paying the taxes by asserting that he doesn't know where his money would be going.

The Fugitive

Thoreau was strongly anti-slavery. Most notably, he objected to the government's Fugitive Slave Law, which stated that any fugitive slave discovered in the North had to be returned to the South. As it turns out, Thoreau's beloved state of Massachusetts was on his side. By 1843, Massachusetts had instituted a Personal Liberty Law. They tried to get around the federal government's initial law by prohibiting any Massachusetts official from assisting in the capture of a fugitive slave. So what does any of this have to do with *Walden?*

Well, slavery, as we know (if we were paying attention in history class), was quite a problem in the mid-19th century. Thoreau actually viewed the Mexican-American War of 1845-1848 as an attempt by the United States to acquire more territories which – being in the South – would become slave-holding states. So – and we promise we're getting to the point – Thoreau's decision to retreat into Walden Pond may be viewed in part as a response to the expansionist policies of the government.

Everyone's A Critic, Especially Thoreau

Thoreau was also concerned about the pace of industrialization in 19th-century America. Aren't we all? But really, a lot of stuff was going on at this time that would totally change the face of America: the spread of the railroad, the development of the Transatlantic Telegraph, urbanization, and an increase in industrial capacity (in industries such as the textile industry). Some people saw these developments as signs of progress and modernity, but Thoreau, always the contrarian, worried about the excessive commercialization and materialism of society. Simply put, everyone was too worried about making money and too dazzled by technological innovation to stop and think about their moral well-being.

In *Walden,* Thoreau describes a rural world where all of these signs of modernity are present, but not the center of attention. The star of the show is the individual and his personal quest to answer some of the big questions about the meaning of life.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE EPIGRAPH?

I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

Thoreau's epigraph may be referring to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous 1802 poem inspiringly titled "Dejection: An Ode." In this poem, Coleridge, a Romantic poet, relates how a stormy night inspires dark thoughts and "dull pain," keeping the poet from a restful sleep.

Thoreau's epigraph suggests that he feels pretty much the opposite way. He doesn't find nature to be a source of dark thoughts, nor is he depressed or down on himself. He's prepared to crow like a rooster, and he doesn't care if he ruffles a few feathers in the process. To top it off, he certainly isn't interested in sleeping (and we shouldn't be either). Thoreau returns throughout the book to this idea of waking up his readers (Where I Lived.7, 15; Conclusion.20). It's clearly an important motif, so we're not surprised that he brings it up right from the epigraph.

TOUGH-O-METER

(6) Tree Line

Thoreau *wants* his book to be difficult – but not incomprehensible. He wants to challenge his readers to think, to question, to examine every element of their lives (and perhaps every element of his novel). Sometimes it's just the continuously academic, esoteric content that makes it difficult. Luckily, there's a good dose of humor mixed in, mainly directed at Thoreau himself, as well as lush descriptions of natural beauty to break up the more philosophical prose.

WRITING STYLE

Poetic, with a dose of National Geographic

Thoreau's writing style is dense with metaphor, and filled with sentences that pile on observation after observation, and reflection upon reflection, until, before you know it, you've gotten to the end of the paragraph without crossing nary a period. Not surprisingly, his main source for metaphor is the natural world around him. When he's describing nature, he often personifies or anthropomorphizes what he sees, as if all the animals, birds, plants, and even the pond have distinct personalities.

In addition to poetry, Thoreau's writing style will veer into precise, naturalistic detail, going so far as to give us the genus and species of the animals, birds, and plants he encounters at Walden Pond. The mix of the extended, poetic style and the particular, scientific style helps keep us on our toes.

ALLEGORIES AND WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS

Let's start by saying that Thoreau was a pretty well-informed dude. And that's putting it lightly. Many of the allegories that he uses in Walden are actually citations of parables from various non-Christian religious or philosophical traditions, including Hindu, Arabic, and Confucian sources. Not only is Thoreau knowledgeable enough to include these citations, but in doing so, he gives us a sense of how universal his personal quest is. He situates himself rather self-consciously in a global philosophical tradition meant to emphasize the universality of his unique experiment.

One of the most striking allegories in Walden is actually one that Thoreau essentially made up on his own. It is the tale of the artist of Kouroo that appears in his "Conclusion." In the story, this artist becomes so absorbed in making a staff that he remains impervious to Time (insusceptible to it, immune to it, not affected by it... you get the point – he doesn't notice Time passing). This is a fitting allegory for Thoreau's own project in writing Walden. The fact that the allegory is an invention of Thoreau's – there's no such story in the Bhagavad-Gita, the Hindu sacred text – makes things even more interesting. Thoreau seems to have internalized his readings of ancient philosophy to the point where he can write his own allegorical stories, but in the voice of these ancient storytellers. Cool.

SAVAGES

In the 19th century, the term "savage" didn't only bring to mind Fred Savage, the adorable kid from *The Princess Bride.* In fact, it didn't to that at all. Instead, it was used to refer to non-European tribal peoples. In *Walden*, Thoreau uses this term "savage" in two different ways: sometimes very specifically, to refer to Native Americans, and other times generally, as the opposite of civilized man.

Savages are often set up as a kind of foil for civilized man, the "other" that isn't quite as other as may appear on first sight. In fact, savages often provide instances of customs or beliefs that Thoreau values. So, while Thoreau doesn't necessarily want to live in a "wigwam," as he tells us in the first chapter, he does like the idea in theory. He prefers the general principle of a home as a basic structure serving basic necessities, in contrast to the larger, furnished homes. Through such examples as this, and the custom of the "busk," Thoreau portrays savages as people who understand the true worthlessness of material things, as well as the true requirements of hospitality.

ANIMAL ALLEGORIES

For Thoreau, animals aren't just woodland buddies, they're also a poetic inspiration, helping him communicate key truths about human nature. Here are some of the most striking animal allegories:

The hound, the bay horse, and a turtle-dove (Economy.23): The story about searching for a lost hound, bay horse, and turtle-dove is in a very crucial spot in the book. Thoreau tells the story while explaining the rationale for his personal quest. This placement may suggest one of two things: either that these animals are metaphors for the elusive (hard to get to) spiritual truth that Thoreau seeks, or that they represent the impossibility of living a fulfilling life when you are caught in the rat race of trying to get ahead in the world.

The striped snake (Economy.59): The spectacle of benumbed snakes makes Thoreau think of how the mass of men live, largely unconscious and oblivious (unaware of the world around them).

The fighting ants (Brute Neighbors.12-13): Thoreau gives us an epic battle of ant versus ant. It's an ugly fight, with each ant becoming dismembered in the process. This gruesome, but really memorable, image leads Thoreau to consider the futility of human war.

The crafty loon (Brute Neighbors.17): Thoreau describes a game of chase he plays with a loon on Walden Pond. The loon is constantly ducking away, then popping up a good distance from him. Like the hound, bay horse, and turtle-dove, the crafty loon seems to be an allegory for Thoreau's spiritual quest – or spiritual chase, perhaps.

The bug in the table (Conclusion.19): This allegory appears in the second-to-last paragraph of Thoreau's book, in a chapter that is geared toward explaining to his readers how his private experiment is relevant to their lives. The bug allegory suggests that we, too, might one day be surprised to discover the same individualized, personal truth that Thoreau discovered on Walden Pond. Wouldn't that be something?

VISION AND AWAKENING

Walden opens and closes on the theme of waking up (think *Lost*), and Thoreau continuously emphasizes the idea of opening our eyes to see the natural and spiritual beauty of the world. Actually, we also need to open our eyes in order to read. Thoreau's book isn't for the half-asleep, that's for sure. In one memorable scene, Thoreau brings together the motif of opening our eyes to see the world and opening our eyes to read. He criticizes the average newspaper reader, who reads about sensational incidents like a man losing his eyes, never thinking for a moment that he has already lost his own eyes – that is, the living, understanding, critical eye (Economy.18).

THE POND

"I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol," writes Thoreau (Pond in Winter.6). Walden Pond is not just the setting, but also an important symbol in the book. Everything about Walden Pond – its clarity, its reflective surface, its depth, the specific qualities of its water and its ice – provides Thoreau with yet another occasion to contemplate some aspect of human life. Then, of course, there's the spectacle of the ice-collectors harvesting the ice, Walden Pond's only real commodity. Because of his previous comments, Thoreau has helped us appreciate both the greed that drives the collectors, as well as the pond's seeming immunity to this violation. Walden Pond is the "earth's eye," he writes, "looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature" (Ponds.18). The pond is deep, and so is Thoreau – majorly.

THAWING MUD

Thoreau is inspired by… mud. Yes, mud. The sight of this humble substance thawing initiates Thoreau's reflections on the interconnectedness of everything in life, from the muckiest mud to the most sublime ideas. As it thaws, the mud makes a distinctive web pattern that reminds Thoreau of leaves, which, in turn, makes him think about how certain distinctive patterns recur in nature. For Thoreau, this recurring pattern is nothing less than "living poetry":

The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree. (Spring.9)

The sight of this pattern confirms Thoreau's belief that natural beauty corresponds to human spiritual truths.

NARRATOR POINT OF VIEW

First Person (Central)

In *Walden*, Thoreau uses a first person, central narrator point of view to describe his personal experiences during his two-year adventure. The advantage of this narrative technique is that we get right into Thoreau's head. It's as if he were thinking aloud to us. There is no feeling or impression that he doesn't attempt to communicate. Did he eat a disgusting root? Check. Did he eat a woodchuck? Check. Does he like the way worn-in clothes feel? Check. Thoreau is so self-conscious that he even seems aware of his own limitations. Often, something that might sound pompous and preachy gets undercut by a humorous context. It's hard to feel judged when the person who's doing the judging has just eaten a woodchuck. If anyone else were telling this story, it just wouldn't feel quite as authentic.

BOOKER'S SEVEN BASIC PLOTS ANALYSIS

The Call

Is it Possible to Live Differently?

Thoreau is inspired to embark on his quest for spiritual enlightenment by his own desire to find out what life really is all about. He's dissatisfied with contemporary society and questions whether modernization has really improved the quality of life. He's basically called to question the world around him.

The Journey

We're About To Find Out

Thoreau decides to live alone at Walden Pond and he lays out his rationale: it is a private experiment to see whether it is possible to live a rich and fulfilling life without all the luxuries of modern life.

Arrival and Frustration

Let's Get It Started In Here

When Thoreau arrives at Walden Pond and begins to set up his home, he doesn't experience much frustration. Everything generally goes according to plan, with a few minor hiccups like a neighbor stealing his nails. So, arrival? Yes. Frustration? Not so much.

The Final Ordeals

The Long Haul

Over two years, Thoreau enjoys life at the pond as it changes over the four seasons. He experiences what many might consider to be hardships: he lives on a diet mostly of tasteless bread, he gets snowed in during the winter, he is often alone, and he spends much of his day laboring in his garden. For Thoreau, though, these hardships are welcome opportunities for learning. If only we could all see the world that way.

The Goal

…And He's Outta Here

Satisfied that he has learned all he can from his two years at Walden Pond, Thoreau sets out to join civilized society once again, enriched by his experiences.

PLOT ANALYSIS

Wild Thing

Thoreau moves to Walden Pond and decides to embark on a personal experiment. His objective? To see what will happen if he lives alone, with just the bare essentials, for two years. Pretty exciting start, actually.

Conflict

Well, Almost Wild Thing

Our author finds that he can't totally escape from civilization on Walden Pond, since he's so close to the town of Concord, MA. Still, this turns out to be a good thing. By embarking on his spiritual quest so close to home, he can show how enlightenment is possible for anyone. As we can see, conflict doesn't always have to be a totally bad thing. A lot of good can come of it.

Complication

A Different Kind Of Solitary Confinement

On one visit to the village, Thoreau gets arrested for tax evasion. He spends just a few sentences on his arrest, which ends with him spending a night in jail. It's not a huge setback for his Walden Pond project (so it's more of a nuisance than a complication, actually), but he does go into a lot more depth about the incident in another essay, "Civil Disobedience."

Climax

Completely And Utterly Alone – And Loving It

In the winter, Thoreau is almost completely isolated, hemmed in by snow. So he is compelled to simplify to a degree he hasn't simplified yet. He's stuck in his cabin for a week at a time without company. Characteristically, Thoreau finds joy and beauty in all that snow. This isn't the kind of *Die Hard* moment we think of when we hear climax, but in a book about isolation, it certainly serves as the climactic moment.

Suspense

Nature Makes His Heart – and Pond – Melt

The thawing of Walden Pond at the end of winter is one of the most dramatic scenes in the book. It marks a kind of spiritual turning point for Thoreau, a way of letting go of winter and past regrets and looking ahead to the spring and the future. Again, it's no horror story suspense, but it allows us to wonder what will happen when spring arrives.

Denouement

The Departed

When spring arrives, Thoreau leaves Walden Pond, but he admits he's not really sure why. Having lived this particular life to the fullest, he suggests that he's going out into the world to discover other ways of living.

Conclusion

The Dealy-O

At the end of his book, Thoreau draws some conclusions about life, the universe, and pretty much everything else. *Walden* actually ends with a whole chapter where Thoreau reflects on his past experience, and what he hopes his readers can learn from his experience. Generally, he announces that his private experiment is a success, a confirmation of the beliefs he laid out in early chapters such as "Economy."

THREE-ACT PLOT ANALYSIS

Act I

Thoreau sets up his cabin and fields next to Walden Pond.

Act II

Thoreau lives beside Walden Pond for two years.

Act III

Thoreau leaves Walden Pond and rejoins civilized society.

ALLUSIONS

Literary and Philosophical References

- *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Economy.77)
- The Bible (Economy.47-48)
- Thomas Carew, *Coelum Britannicum* (Economy.111)
- Ellery Channing, "Baker Farm" (Baker Farm.3)
- Confucius, *Analects* (Economy.15, Where I Lived.20; Solitude.10; Conclusion.14)
- ---. *The Great Learning* (Where I Lived.14; Higher Laws.9)
- William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery* (House-Warming.13)

- William Habbingdon, "To My Honoured Friend Sir Ed. P. Knight" (Conclusion.2)
- Homer, The Odyssey (Where I Lived.22)
- Homer, The Iliad (Where I Lived.16; Visitors.8)
- Ovid, Metamorphoses (Economy.5, 103; Spring.18, 21)
- Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen* (Visitors.5)
- Henry David Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience" and "Resistance to Civil Government" (Village.3)
- *The Vedas* (Where I Lived.14; Solitude.11; Higher Laws.8)

Check your Progress-1

1. How many series of essays is Walden made up of???

____

____

____

2. Where did Thoreau live???

____

____

____

3. Who was the owner of the land on which Thoreau built a small cabin?

____

____

____

4. How long did Thoreau live in Concord, Massachusetts?

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____

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3.3 SYMBOLS

Walden Pond

The meanings of Walden Pond are various, and by the end of the work this small body of water comes to symbolize almost everything Thoreau holds dear spiritually, philosophically, and personally. Certainly it symbolizes the alternative to, and withdrawal from, social conventions and obligations. But it also symbolizes the vitality and tranquility of nature. A clue to the symbolic meaning of the pond lies in two of its aspects that fascinate Thoreau: its depth, rumored to be infinite, and its pure and reflective quality. Thoreau is so intrigued by the question of how deep Walden Pond is that he devises a new method of plumbing depths to measure it himself, finding it no more than a hundred feet deep. Wondering why people rumor that the pond is bottomless, Thoreau offers a spiritual explanation: humans need to believe in infinity. He suggests that the pond is not just a natural phenomenon, but also a metaphor for spiritual belief. When he later describes the pond reflecting heaven and making the swimmer's body pure white, we feel that Thoreau too is turning the water (as in the Christian sacrament of baptism by holy water) into a symbol of heavenly purity available to humankind on earth. When Thoreau concludes his chapter on "The Ponds" with the memorable line, "Talk of heaven! ye disgrace earth," we see him unwilling to subordinate earth to heaven. Thoreau finds heaven within himself, and it is symbolized by the pond, "looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." By the end of the "Ponds" chapter, the water hardly seems like a physical part of the external landscape at all anymore; it has become one with the heavenly soul of humankind.

Animals

As Thoreau's chief companions after he moves to Walden Pond, animals inevitably symbolize his retreat from human society and closer intimacy with the natural world. Thoreau devotes much attention in his narrative to the behavior patterns of woodchucks, partridges, loons, and mice, among others. Yet his animal writing does not sound like the notes of a naturalist; there is nothing truly scientific or zoological in Walden, for Thoreau personalizes nature too much. He does not record animals neutrally, but instead emphasizes their human characteristics, turning them into short vignettes of human behavior somewhat in the fashion of Aesop’s fables. For example, Thoreau’s observation of the partridge and its young walking along his windowsill elicits a meditation on motherhood and the maternal urge to protect one’s offspring. Similarly, when Thoreau watches two armies of ants wage war with all the “ferocity and carnage of a human battle,” Thoreau’s attention is not that of an entomologist describing their behavior objectively, but rather that of a philosopher thinking about the universal urge to destroy.

The resemblance between animals and humans also works in the other direction, as when Thoreau describes the townsmen he sees on a trip to Concord as resembling prairie dogs. Ironically, the humans Thoreau describes often seem more “brutish” (like the authorities who imprison him in Concord) than the actual brutes in the woods do. Furthermore, Thoreau’s intimacy with animals in Walden shows that solitude for him is not really, and not meant to be, total isolation. His very personal relationship with animals demonstrates that in his solitary stay at the pond, he is making more connections, not fewer, with other beings around him.

Ice

Since ice is the only product of Walden Pond that is useful, it becomes a symbol of the social use and social importance of nature, and of the exploitation of natural resources. Thoreau’s fascination with the ice industry is acute. He describes in great detail the Irish icemen who arrive from Cambridge in the winter of 1846 to cut, block, and haul away 10,000 tons of ice for use in city homes and fancy hotels. The ice-cutters are the only group of people ever said to arrive at Walden Pond en masse, and so they inevitably represent society in miniature, with all the calculating exploitations and injustices that Thoreau sees in the world at large. Consequently, the labor of the icemen on Walden becomes a symbolic microcosm of the confrontation of society and nature. At first glance it would appear that society gets the upper hand, as the frozen pond is chopped up, disfigured, and robbed of ten thousand tons of its contents. But nature triumphs in the end, since less than twenty-five percent of the ice ever reaches its destination, the rest melting and evaporating en route—and making its way back to Walden Pond. With this analysis, Thoreau suggests that humankind's efforts to exploit nature are in vain, since nature regenerates itself on a far grander scale than humans could ever hope to affect, much less threaten. The icemen's exploitation of Walden contrasts sharply with Thoreau's less economic, more poetical use of it. In describing the rare mystical blue of Walden's water when frozen, he makes ice into a lyrical subject rather than a commodity, and makes us reflect on the question of the value, both market and spiritual, of nature in general.

3.4 MOTIFS

The Seasonal Cycle

The narrative of Walden, which at first seems haphazard and unplanned, is actually quite consciously put together to mirror the cycle of the seasons. The compression of Thoreau's two actual years (1845 to 1847) into one narrative year shows how relatively unimportant the documentary or logbook aspect of his writing is. He cares less for the real calendar time taken up by his project than for the symbolic time he projects onto it. One full year, from springtime to springtime, echoes the Christian idea of rebirth, moving from one beginning to a new one. (We can imagine how very different Walden might be if it went from December to December, for example.) Thus each season inevitably carries with it not just its usual calendar attributes, but a spiritual resonance as well. The story begins in the spring of 1845, as Thoreau begins construction on his cabin. He moves in, fittingly and probably quite intentionally, on Independence Day, July 4—making his symbolic declaration of independence from society, and drawing closer to the true sources of his being. The summer is a time of physical activity, as he narrates in great detail his various construction projects and domestic management solutions. He also begins his cultivation of the bean-fields, following the natural cycle of the seasons like any farmer, but also echoing the biblical phrase from Ecclesiastes, "a time to reap, a time to sow." It may be more than the actual beans he harvests, and his produce may be for the soul as well as for the marketplace. Winter is a time of reflection and inwardness, as he mostly communes with himself indoors and has only a few choice visitors. It is in winter that he undertakes the measuring of the pond, which becomes a symbol of plumbing his own spiritual depths in solitude. Then in spring come echoes of Judgment Day, with the crash of melting ice and the trumpeting of the geese; Thoreau feels all sins forgiven. The cycle of seasons is thus a cycle of moral and spiritual regeneration made possible by a communion with nature and with oneself.

Poetry

The moral directness and hardheaded practical bookkeeping matters with which Thoreau inaugurates Walden do not prepare us for the lyrical outbursts that occur quite frequently and regularly in the work. Factual and detail-minded, Thoreau is capable of some extraordinary imaginary visions, which he intersperses within economic matters in a highly unexpected way. In his chapter "The Bean-Field," for example, Thoreau tells us that he spent fifty-four cents on a hoe, and then soon after quotes a verse about wings spreading and closing in preparation for flight. The down-to-earth hoe and the winged flight of fancy are closely juxtaposed in a way typical of the whole work.

Occasionally the lyricism is a quotation of other people's poems, as when Thoreau quotes a Homeric epic in introducing the noble figure of Alex Therien. At other times, as in the beautiful "Ponds" chapter, Thoreau allows his prose to become lyrical, as when he describes the mystical blue ice of Walden Pond. The intermittent lyricism of Walden is more than just a pleasant decorative addition or stylistic curiosity. It delivers the powerful philosophical message that there is higher meaning and transcendent value in even the most humble stay in a simple hut by a pond. Hoeing beans, which some might consider the antithesis of poetry, is actually a deeply lyrical and meaningful experience when seen in the right way.

Imaginary People

Thoreau mentions several actual people in Walden, but curiously, he also devotes considerable attention to describing nonexistent or imaginary people. At the beginning of the chapter "Former Inhabitants," Thoreau frankly acknowledges that in his winter isolation he was forced to invent imaginary company for himself. This conjuring is the work of his imagination, but it is also historically accurate, since the people he conjures are based on memories of old-timers who remember earlier neighbors now long gone. Thoreau’s imaginary companions are thus somewhere between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy. When Thoreau describes these former inhabitants in vivid detail, we can easily forget that they are now dead: they seem too real.

Thoreau also manages to make actual people seem imaginary. He never uses proper names when referring to friends and associates in Walden, rendering them mythical. After Thoreau describes Alex Therien as a Homeric hero, we cannot help seeing him in a somewhat poetic and unreal way, despite all the realism of Thoreau’s introduction. He doesn’t name even his great spiritual teacher, Emerson, but obliquely calls him the “Old Immortal.” The culmination of this continual transformation of people into myths or ideas is Thoreau’s expectation of “the Visitor who never comes,” which he borrows from the Vedas, a Hindu sacred text. This remark lets us see how spiritual all of Thoreau’s imaginary people are. The real person, for him, is not the villager with a name, but rather the transcendent soul behind that external social persona.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

While Thoreau lived at Walden (July 4, 1845–September 6, 1847), he wrote journal entries and prepared lyceum lectures on his experiment in living at the pond. By 1847, he had begun to set his first draft of Walden down on paper. After leaving Walden, he expanded and reworked his material repeatedly until the spring of 1854, producing a total of eight versions of the book. James Munroe, publisher of A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849), originally intended to publish Walden as well. However, with the failure of A Week, Munroe backed out of the agreement. In 1852, two parts of what would be Walden were published in Sartain's Union Magazine ("The Iron Horse" in July, "A Poet Buys A Farm" in August). Six selections from the book (under the title "A Massachusetts Hermit") appeared in advance of publication in the March 29, 1854 issue of the New York Daily Tribune. Ticknor and Fields published Walden; or, Life in the Woods in Boston in an edition of 2,000 copies on August 9, 1854. A second printing was issued in 1862, with multiple printings from the same stereotyped plates issued between that time and 1890. A second American edition (from a new setting of type) was published in 1889 by Houghton, Mifflin, in two volumes, the first English edition in 1886. In 1894, Walden was included as the second volume of the Riverside Edition of Thoreau's collected writings, in 1906 as the second volume of the Walden and Manuscript Editions. In 1971, it was issued as the first volume of the Princeton Edition.

Since the nineteenth century, Walden has been reprinted many times, in a variety of formats. It has been issued in its entirety and in abridged or selected form, by itself and in combination with other writings by Thoreau, in English and in many European and some Asian languages, in popular and scholarly versions, in inexpensive printings, and in limited fine press editions. A number of editions have been illustrated with artwork or photographs. Some individual chapters have been published separately.

Some of the well-known twentieth century editions of or including Walden are: the 1937 Modern Library Edition, edited by Brooks Atkinson; the 1939 Penguin Books edition; the 1946 edition with photographs, introduction, and commentary by Edwin Way Teale; the 1946 edition of selections, with photographs, by Henry Bugbee Kane; the 1947 Portable Thoreau, edited by Carl Bode; the 1962 Variorum Walden, edited by Walter Harding; and the 1970 Annotated Walden (a facsimile reprint of the first edition, with illustrations and notes), edited by Philip Van Doren Stern.

Although Thoreau actually lived at Walden for two years, Walden is a narrative of his life at the pond compressed into the cycle of a single year, from spring to spring. The book is presented in eighteen chapters.

Thoreau opens with the chapter "Economy." He sets forth the basic principles that guided his experiment in living, and urges his reader to aim higher than the values of society, to spiritualize. He explains that he writes in response to the curiosity of his townsmen, and draws attention to the fact that Walden is a first-person account. He writes of himself, the subject he knows best. Through his story, he hopes to tell his readers something of their own condition and how to improve it. Perceiving widespread anxiety and dissatisfaction with modern civilized life, he writes for the discontented, the mass of men who "lead lives of quiet desperation." Distinguishing between the outer and the inner man, he emphasizes the corrosiveness of materialism and constant labor to the individual's humanity and spiritual development. Thoreau encourages his readers to seek the divinity within, to throw off resignation to the status quo, to be satisfied with less materially, to embrace independence, self-reliance, and simplicity of life. In identifying necessities — food, shelter, clothing, and fuel — and detailing specifically the costs of his experiment, he points out that many so-called necessities are, in fact, luxuries that contribute to spiritual stagnation. Technological progress, moreover, has not truly enhanced quality of life or the condition of mankind. Comparing civilized and primitive man, Thoreau observes that civilization has institutionalized life and absorbed the individual. He writes of living fully in the present. He stresses that going to Walden was not a statement of economic protest, but an attempt to overcome society's obstacles to transacting his "private business." He does not suggest that anyone else should follow his particular course of action. Each man must find and follow his own path in understanding reality and seeking higher truth. Discussing philanthropy and reform, Thoreau highlights the importance of individual self-realization. Society will be reformed through reform of the individual, not through the development and refinement of institutions.

In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau recounts his near-purchase of the Hollowell farm in Concord, which he ultimately did not buy. He remains unencumbered, able to enjoy all the benefits of the landscape without the burdens of property ownership. He becomes a homeowner instead at Walden, moving in, significantly, on July 4, 1845 — his personal Independence Day, as well as the nation's. He casts himself as a chanticleer — a rooster — and Walden — his account of his experience — as the lusty crowing that wakes men up in the morning. More than the details of his situation at the pond, he relates the spiritual exhilaration of his going there, an experience surpassing the limitations of place and time. He writes of the morning hours as a daily opportunity to reaffirm his life in nature, a time of heightened awareness. To be awake — to be intellectually and spiritually alert — is to be alive. He states his purpose in going to Walden: to live deliberately, to confront the essentials, and to extract the meaning of life as it is, good or bad. He exhorts his readers to simplify, and points out our reluctance to alter the course of our lives. He again disputes the value of modern improvements, the railroad in particular. Our proper business is to seek the reality — the absolute — beyond what we think we know. This higher truth may be sought in the here and now — in the world we inhabit. Our existence forms a part of time, which flows into eternity, and affords access to the universal.

In the chapter "Reading," Thoreau discusses literature and books — a valuable inheritance from the past, useful to the individual in his quest for higher understanding. True works of literature convey significant, universal meaning to all generations. Such classics must be read as deliberately as they were written. He complains of current taste, and of the prevailing inability to read in a "high sense." Instead of reading the best, we choose the mediocre, which dulls our perception. Good books help us to throw off narrowness and ignorance, and serve as powerful catalysts to provoke change within.

In "Sounds," Thoreau turns from books to reality. He advises alertness to all that can be observed, coupled with an Oriental contemplation that allows assimilation of experience. As he describes what he hears and sees of nature through his window, his reverie is interrupted by the noise of the passing train. At first, he responds to the train — symbol of nineteenth century commerce and progress — with admiration for its almost mythical power. He then focuses on its inexorability and on the fact that as some things thrive, so others decline — the trees around the pond, for instance, which are cut and transported by train, or animals carried in the railroad cars. His comments on the railroad end on a note of disgust and dismissal, and he returns to his solitude and the sounds of the woods and the nearby community — church bells on Sundays, echoes, the call of the whippoorwill, the scream of the screech owl (indicative of the dark side of nature) and the cry of the hoot owl. The noise of the owls suggests a "vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized . . . the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have." Sounds, in other words, express the reality of nature in its full complexity, and our longing to connect with it. He builds on his earlier image of himself as a crowing rooster through playful discussion of an imagined wild rooster in the woods, and closes the chapter with reference to the lack of domestic sounds at his Walden home. Nature, not the incidental noise of living, fills his senses.

Thoreau opens "Solitude" with a lyrical expression of his pleasure in and sympathy with nature. When he returns to his house after walking in the evening, he finds that visitors have stopped by, which prompts him to comment both on his literal distance from others while at the pond and on the figurative space between men. There is intimacy in his connection with nature, which provides sufficient companionship and precludes the possibility of loneliness. The vastness of the universe puts the space between men in perspective. Thoreau points out that if we attain a greater closeness to nature and the divine, we will not require physical proximity to others in the "depot, the post-office, the bar-room, the meeting-house, the school-house" — places that offer the kind of company that distracts and dissipates. He comments on man's dual nature as a physical entity and as an intellectual spectator within his own body, which separates a person from himself and adds further perspective to his distance from others. Moreover, a man is always alone when thinking and working. He concludes the chapter by referring to metaphorical visitors who represent God and nature, to his own oneness with nature, and to the health and vitality that nature imparts.

Thoreau asserts in "Visitors" that he is no hermit and that he enjoys the society of worthwhile people as much as any man does. He comments on the difficulty of maintaining sufficient space between himself and others to discuss significant subjects, and suggests that meaningful intimacy — intellectual communion — allows and requires silence (the opportunity to ponder and absorb what has been said) and distance (a suspension of interest in temporal and trivial personal matters). True companionship has nothing to do with the trappings of conventional hospitality. He writes at length of one of his favorite visitors, a French Canadian woodchopper, a simple, natural, direct man, skillful, quiet, solitary, humble, and contented, possessed of a well-developed animal nature but a spiritual nature only rudimentary, at best. As much as Thoreau appreciates the woodchopper's character and perceives that he has some ability to think for himself, he recognizes that the man accepts the human situation as it is and has no desire to improve himself. Thoreau mentions other visitors — half-wits, runaway slaves, and those who do not recognize when they have worn out their welcome. Visiting girls, boys, and young women seem able to respond to nature, whereas men of business, farmers, and others cannot leave their preoccupations behind. Reformers — "the greatest bores of all" — are most unwelcome guests, but Thoreau enjoys the company of children, railroad men taking a holiday, fishermen, poets, philosophers — all of whom can leave the village temporarily behind and immerse themselves in the woods.

In "The Bean-Field," Thoreau describes his experience of farming while living at Walden. His bean-field offers reality in the forms of physical labor and closeness to nature. He writes of turning up Indian arrowheads as he hoes and plants, suggesting that his use of the land is only one phase in the history of man's relation to the natural world. His bean-field is real enough, but it also metaphorically represents the field of inner self that must be carefully tended to produce a crop. Thoreau comments on the position of his bean-field between the wild and the cultivated — a position not unlike that which he himself occupies at the pond. He recalls the sights and sounds encountered while hoeing, focusing on the noise of town celebrations and military training, and cannot resist satirically underscoring the vainglory of the participants. He notes that he tends his beans while his contemporaries study art in Boston and Rome, or engage in contemplation and trade in faraway places, but in no way suggests that his efforts are inferior. Thoreau has no interest in beans per se, but rather in their symbolic meaning, which he as a writer will later be able to draw upon. He vows that in the future he will not soy beans but rather the seeds of "sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like." He expands upon seed imagery in referring to planting the seeds of new men. Lamenting a decline in farming from ancient times, he points out that agriculture is now a commercial enterprise, that the farmer has lost his integral relationship with nature. The true husbandman will cease to worry about the size of the crop and the gain to be had from it and will pay attention only to the work that is particularly his in making the land fruitful.

Thoreau begins "The Village" by remarking that he visits town every day or two to catch up on the news and to observe the villagers in their habitat as he does birds and squirrels in nature. But the town, full of idle curiosity and materialism, threatens independence and simplicity of life. He resists the shops on Concord's Mill Dam and makes his escape from the beckoning houses, and returns to the woods. He writes of going back to Walden at night and discusses the value of occasionally becoming lost in the dark or in a snowstorm. Sometimes a person lost is so disoriented that he begins to appreciate nature anew. Fresh perception of the familiar offers a different perspective, allowing us "to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations." He refers to his overnight jailing in 1846 for refusal to pay his poll tax in protest against slavery and the Mexican War, and comments on the insistent intrusion of institutions upon men's lives.

Turning from his experience in town, Thoreau refers in the opening of "The Ponds" to his occasional ramblings "farther westward . . . into yet more unfrequented parts of the town." Throughout his writings, the west represents the unexplored in the wild and in the inner regions of man. In Walden, these regions are explored by the author through the pond. He writes of fishing on the pond by moonlight, his mind wandering into philosophical and universal realms, and of feeling the jerk of a fish on his line, which links him again to the reality of nature. He thus presents concrete reality and the spiritual element as opposing forces. He goes on to suggest that through his life at the pond, he has found a means of reconciling these forces.

Walden is presented in a variety of metaphorical ways in this chapter. Believed by many to be bottomless, it is emblematic of the mystery of the universe. As the "earth's eye," through which the "beholder measures the depth of his own nature," it reflects aspects of the narrator himself. As "a perfect forest mirror" on a September or October day, Walden is a "field of water" that "betrays the spirit that is in the air . . . continually receiving new life and motion from above" — a direct conduit between the divine and the beholder, embodying the workings of God and stimulating the narrator's receptivity and faculties. Walden is ancient, having existed perhaps from before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. At the same time, it is perennially young. It possesses and imparts innocence. Its waters, remarkably transparent and pure, serve as a catalyst to revelation, understanding, and vision. Thoreau refers to talk of piping water from Walden into town and to the fact that the railroad and woodcutters have affected the surrounding area. And yet, the pond is eternal. It endures despite all of man's activities on and around it. In this chapter, Thoreau also writes of the other bodies of water that form his "lake country" (an indirect reference to English Romantic poets Coleridge and Wordsworth) — Goose Pond, Flint's Pond, Fair Haven Bay on the Sudbury River, and White Pond (Walden's "lesser twin"). He concludes "The Ponds" reproachfully, commenting that man does not sufficiently appreciate nature. Like Walden, she flourishes alone, away from the towns of men.

In "Baker Farm," Thoreau presents a study in contrasts between himself and John Field, a man unable to rise above his animal nature and material values. The chapter begins with lush natural detail. A worshipper of nature absorbed in reverie and aglow with perception, Thoreau visits pine groves reminiscent of ancient temples. He calls upon particular familiar trees. He describes once standing "in the very abutment of a rainbow's arch," bathed briefly and joyfully in a lake of light, "like a dolphin." The scene changes when, to escape a rain shower, he visits the squalid home of Irishman John Field. Field came to America to advance his material condition. The meanness of his life is compounded by his belief in the necessity of coffee, tea, butter, milk, and beef — all luxuries to Thoreau. Thoreau talks to Field as if he were a philosopher, urging him to simplify, but his words fall on uncomprehending ears. Exultant in his own joy in nature and aspiration toward meaning and understanding, Thoreau runs "down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder," the "Good Genius" within urging him to "fish and hunt far and wide day by day," to remember God, to grow wild, to shun trade, to enjoy the land but not own it. The last paragraph is about John Field, by comparison with Thoreau "a poor man, born to be poor . . . not to rise in this world" — a man impoverished spiritually as well as materially.

In "Higher Laws," Thoreau deals with the conflict between two instincts that coexist side by side within himself — the hunger for wildness (expressed in his desire to seize and devour a woodchuck raw) and the drive toward a higher spiritual life. In discussing hunting and fishing (occupations that foster involvement with nature and that constitute the closest connection that many have with the woods), he suggests that all men are hunters and fishermen at a certain stage of development. Although most don't advance beyond this stage, if a man has the "seeds of better life in him," he may evolve to understanding nature as a poet or naturalist and may ultimately comprehend higher truth. Thoreau says that he himself has lost the desire to fish, but admits that if he lived in the wilderness, he would be tempted to take up hunting and fishing again. A man can't deny either his animal or his spiritual side. In discussing vegetarian diet and moderation in eating, sobriety, and chastity, he advocates both accepting and subordinating the physical appetites, but not disregarding them. The chapter concludes with reference to a generic John Farmer who, sitting at his door one September evening, despite himself is gradually induced to put aside his mundane thoughts and to consider practicing "some new austerity, to let his mind descend into his body and redeem it, and treat himself with ever increasing respect."

Continuing the theme developed in "Higher Laws," "Brute Neighbors" opens with a dialogue between Hermit and Poet, who epitomize polarized aspects of the author himself (animal nature and the yearning to transcend it). Through the rest of the chapter, he focuses his thoughts on the varieties of animal life — mice, phoebes, raccoons, woodchucks, turtle doves, red squirrels, ants, loons, and others — that parade before him at Walden. He provides context for his observations by posing the question of why man has "just these species of animals for his neighbors." He answers that they are "all beasts of burden, in a sense, made to carry some portion of our thoughts," thus imparting these animals with symbolic meaning as representations of something broader and higher. Several animals (the partridge and the "winged cat") are developed in such a way as to suggest a synthesis of animal and spiritual qualities. Thoreau devotes pages to describing a mock-heroic battle of ants, compared to the Concord Fight of 1775 and presented in straightforward annalistic style as having taken place "in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive-Slave Bill." He thus ironically undercuts the significance of human history and politics. The battle of the ants is every bit as dramatic as any human saga, and there is no reason that we should perceive it as less meaningful than events on the human stage. The image of the loon is also developed at length. Diving into the depths of the pond, the loon suggests the seeker of spiritual truth. It also represents the dark, mysterious aspect of nature. Thoreau thus uses the animal world to present the unity of animal and human life and to emphasize nature's complexity.

The narrative moves decisively into fall in the chapter "House-Warming." Thoreau praises the ground-nut, an indigenous and almost exterminated plant, which yet may demonstrate the vigor of the wild by outlasting cultivated crops. He describes the turning of the leaves, the movement of wasps into his house, and the building of his chimney. Described as an "independent structure, standing on the ground and rising through the house to the heavens," the chimney clearly represents the author himself, grounded in this world but striving for universal truth. The pond cools and begins to freeze, and Thoreau withdraws both into his house, which he has plastered, and into his soul as well. He continues his spiritual quest indoors, and dreams of a more metaphorical house, cavernous, open to the heavens, requiring no housekeeping. He regrets the superficiality of hospitality as we know it, which does not permit real communion between host and guest. He writes of gathering wood for fuel, of his woodpile, and of the moles in his cellar, enjoying the perpetual summer maintained inside even in the middle of winter. Winter makes Thoreau lethargic, but the atmosphere of the house revives him and prolongs his spiritual life through the season. He is now prepared for physical and spiritual winter.

Thoreau begins "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors" by recalling cheerful winter evenings spent by the fireside. But winter is quiet —

even the owl is hushed — and his thoughts turn to past inhabitants of the Walden Woods. He writes of Cato Ingraham (a former slave), the black woman Zilpha (who led a "hard and inhumane" life), Brister Freeman (another slave) and his wife Fenda (a fortune-teller), the Stratton and Breed families, Wyman (a potter), and Hugh Quoil — all people on the margin of society, whose social isolation matches the isolation of their life near the pond. Thoreau ponders why Walden's "small village, germ of something more" failed, while Concord thrives, and comments on how little the former inhabitants have affected the landscape. The past failed to realize the promise of Walden, but perhaps Thoreau himself will do so. He observes that nobody has previously built on the spot he now occupies — that is, he does not labor under the burden of the past. He has few visitors in winter, but no lack of society nevertheless. He still goes into town (where he visits Emerson, who is referred to but not mentioned by name), and receives a few welcome visitors (none of them named specifically) — a "long-headed farmer" (Edmund Hosmer), a poet (Ellery Channing), and a philosopher (Bronson Alcott). He waits for the mysterious "Visitor who never comes."

Thoreau again takes up the subject of fresh perspective on the familiar in "Winter Animals." He examines the landscape from frozen Flint's Pond, and comments on how wide and strange it appears. He writes of winter sounds — of the hoot owl, of ice on the pond, of the ground cracking, of wild animals, of a hunter and his hounds. He describes a pathetic, trembling hare that shows surprising energy as it leaps away, demonstrating the "vigor and dignity of Nature."

At the beginning of "The Pond in Winter," Thoreau awakens with a vague impression that he has been asked a question that he has been trying unsuccessfully to answer. But he looks out upon nature, itself "an answered question," and into the daylight, and his anxiety is quelled. The darkness and dormancy of winter may slow down spiritual processes, but the dawn of each day provides a new beginning. In search of water, Thoreau takes an axe to the pond's frozen surface and, looking into the window he cuts in the ice, sees life below despite its apparent absence from above. The workings of God in nature are present even where we don't expect them. He writes of the fishermen who come to the pond, simple men, but wiser than they know, wild, who pay little attention to society's dictates and whims. He describes surveying the bottom of Walden in 1846, and is able to assure his reader that Walden is, in fact, not bottomless. There is a need for mystery, however, and as long as there are believers in the infinite, some ponds will be bottomless. In probing the depths of bodies of water, imagination dives down deeper than nature's reality. Thoreau expresses the Transcendental notion that if we knew all the laws of nature, one natural fact or phenomenon would allow us to infer the whole. But our knowledge of nature's laws is imperfect. He extrapolates from the pond to humankind, suggesting the scientific calculation of a man's height or depth of character from his exterior and his circumstances. The pond and the individual are both microcosms. Thoreau describes commercial ice-cutting at Walden Pond. Despite what might at first seem a violation of the pond's integrity, Walden is unchanged and unharmed. Moreover, ice from the pond is shipped far and wide, even to India, where others thus drink from Thoreau's spiritual well. Walden water mixes with Ganges water, while Thoreau bathes his intellect "in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta" — no doubt an even exchange, in Thoreau's mind.

"Spring" brings the breaking up of the ice on Walden Pond and a celebration of the rebirth of both nature and the spirit. Thoreau again presents the pond as a microcosm, remarking, "The phenomena of the year take place every day in a pond on a small scale." He revels in listening and watching for evidence of spring, and describes in great detail the "sand foliage" (patterns made by thawing sand and clay flowing down a bank of earth in the railroad cut near Walden), an early sign of spring that presages the verdant foliage to come. In its similarity to real foliage, the sand foliage demonstrates that nothing is inorganic, and that the earth is not an artifact of dead history. It is, rather, living poetry, compared with which human art and institutions are insignificant. The chapter is rich with expressions of vitality, expansion, exhilaration, and joy. Thoreau focuses on the details of nature that mark the awakening of spring. He asks what meaning chronologies, traditions, and written revelations have at such a time. Rebirth after death suggests immortality. Walden has seemingly died, and yet now, in the spring, reasserts its vigor and endurance. The narrator, too, is reinvigorated, becomes "elastic" again. A man's thoughts improve in spring, and his ability to forgive and forget the shortcomings of his fellows — to start afresh — increases. Thoreau states the need for the "tonic of wildness," noting that life would stagnate without it. He comments also on the duality of our need to explore and explain things and our simultaneous longing for the mysterious. Taking either approach, we can never have enough of nature — it is a source of strength and proof of a more lasting life beyond our limited human span. Thoreau refers to the passage of time, to the seasons "rolling on into summer," and abruptly ends the narrative. He compresses his entire second year at the pond into the half-sentence, "and the second year was similar to it." The last sentence records his departure from the pond on September 6, 1847.

In his "Conclusion," Thoreau again exhorts his reader to begin a new, higher life. He points out that we restrict ourselves and our view of the universe by accepting externally imposed limits, and urges us to make life's journey deliberately, to look inward and to make the interior voyage of discovery. Evoking the great explorers Mungo Park, Lewis and Clark, Frobisher, and Columbus, he presents inner exploration as comparable to the exploration of the North American continent. Thoreau explains that he left the woods for the same reason that he went there, and that he must move on to new endeavors. There is danger even in a new enterprise of falling into a pattern of tradition and conformity. One must move forward optimistically toward his dream, leaving some things behind and gaining awareness of others. A man will replace his former thoughts and conventional common sense with a new, broader understanding, thereby putting a solid foundation under his aspirations. Thoreau expresses unqualified confidence that man's dreams are achievable, and that his experiment at Walden successfully demonstrates this. The experience and truth to which a man attains cannot be adequately conveyed in ordinary language, must be "translated" through a more expressive, suggestive, figurative language. Thoreau entreats his readers to accept and make the most of what we are, to "mind our business," not somebody else's idea of what our business should be. He presents the parable of the artist of Kouroo, who strove for perfection and whose singleness of purpose endowed him with perennial youth. Transcending time and the decay of civilization, the artist endures, creates true art, and achieves perfection. This parable demonstrates the endurance of truth. Thoreau again urges us to face life as it is, to reject materialism, to embrace simplicity, serenely to cultivate self, and to understand the difference between the temporal and the permanent. He ends Walden with an affirmation of resurrection and immortality through the quest for higher truth. One last time, he uses the morning imagery that throughout the book signifies new beginnings and heightened perception: "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star."

3.6 KEYWORDS

- **Exogenous**: derived or originating externally
- **Alluvion**: gradual formation of new land, by recession of the sea or deposit of sediment
- **Deliquium:** a spontaneous loss of consciousness caused by insufficient blood to the brain
- **Squalidness**: sordid dirtiness
- **Wigwam:** a Native American lodge frequently having an oval shape

3.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a brief note on analysis of “Walden” by Henry Thoreau.
- Describe in brief the symbols of “Walden” by Henry Thoreau.
- Write a short note on motifs of “Walden” by Henry Thoreau.

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Walden is made up of series of 18 essays. (**answer to check your progress – 1 Q-1**)

Thoreau lived in semi-isolation by Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts.(**answer to check your progress – 1 Q-2)**

Thoreau built a small cabin on land owned by his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson.(**answer to check your progress – 1 Q-3)**

Thoreau lived in Concord, Massachusetts for two years. (**answer to check your progress – 1 Q-4)**

UNIT-4 ARTHUR MILLER- DEATH OF A SALESMAN

STRUCTURE

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Life

4.3 Legacy

4.4 Works

4.5 Miller's styles, themes, and characters

4.6 Let us sum up

4.7 Keywords

4.8 Questions for Review

4.9 Suggested Reading and References

4.10 Answers to Check your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you would learn about Arthur Miller’s life,
- you would also learn about the legacy and works of Arthur Miller,
- and you would also learn about the styles and themes used by Arthur Miller in his work and’
- Characters used by Arthur Miller in all his works.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Arthur Asher Miller (October 17, 1915 – February 10, 2005) was an American playwright, essayist, and a controversial figure in the twentieth-century American theater. Among his most popular plays are All My Sons (1947), Death of a Salesman (1949), The Crucible (1953) and A View from the Bridge (1955, revised 1956). He wrote several screenplays and was most noted for his work on The Misfits (1961). The drama Death of a Salesman has been numbered on the short list of finest American plays in the 20th century.

Miller was often in the public eye, particularly during the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s. During this time, he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee and was married to Marilyn Monroe. In 1980, Miller received the St. Louis Literary Award from the Saint Louis University Library Associates. He received the Prince of Asturias Award, the Praemium Imperiale prize in 2002 and the Jerusalem Prize in 2003, as well as the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize in 1999.

4.2 LIFE

Early life

Miller was born on October 17, 1915, in Harlem, in the New York City borough of Manhattan, the second of three children of Augusta (Barnett) and Isidore Miller. Miller was Jewish, and of Polish Jewish descent. His father was born in Radomyśl Wielki, Galicia (then part of Austria-Hungary, now Poland), and his mother was a native of New York whose parents also arrived from that town. Isidore owned a women's clothing manufacturing business employing 400 people. He became a wealthy and respected man in the community. The family, including his younger sister Joan Copeland, lived on West 110th Street in Manhattan, owned a summer house in Far Rockaway, Queens, and employed a chauffeur. In the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the family lost almost everything and moved to Gravesend, Brooklyn. (One source says they moved to Midwood) As a teenager, Miller delivered bread every morning before school to help the family. After graduating in 1932 from Abraham

Lincoln High School, he worked at several menial jobs to pay for his college tuition at the University of Michigan. After graduation (circa 1936), he began to work as a psychiatric aide and also a copywriter before accepting faculty posts at New York University and University of New Hampshire. On May 1, 1935, Miller joined the League of American Writers (1935–1943), whose members included Alexander Trachtenberg of International Publishers, Frank Folsom, Louis Untermeyer, I. F. Stone, Myra Page, Millen Brand, Lillian Hellman, and Dashiell Hammett. (Members were largely either Communist Party members or fellow travelers.)

At the University of Michigan, Miller first majored in journalism and worked for the student paper, The Michigan Daily. It was during this time that he wrote his first play, No Villain. Miller switched his major to English, and subsequently won the Avery Hopwood Award for No Villain. The award brought him his first recognition and led him to begin to consider that he could have a career as a playwright. Miller enrolled in a playwriting seminar taught by the influential Professor Kenneth Rowe, who instructed him in his early forays into playwriting; Rowe emphasized how a play is built in order to achieve its intended effect, or what Miller called "the dynamics of play construction". Rowe provided realistic feedback along with much-needed encouragement, and became a lifelong friend. Miller retained strong ties to his alma mater throughout the rest of his life, establishing the university's Arthur Miller Award in 1985 and Arthur Miller Award for Dramatic Writing in 1999, and lending his name to the Arthur Miller Theatre in 2000. In 1937, Miller wrote Honors at Dawn, which also received the Avery Hopwood Award. After his graduation in 1938, he joined the Federal Theatre Project, a New Deal agency established to provide jobs in the theater. He chose the theater project despite the more lucrative offer to work as a scriptwriter for 20th Century Fox. However, Congress, worried about possible Communist infiltration, closed the project in 1939. Miller began working in the Brooklyn Navy Yard while continuing to write radio plays, some of which were broadcast on CBS.

Early career

In 1940, Miller married Mary Grace Slattery. The couple had two children, Jane and Robert (born May 31, 1947). Miller was exempted from military service during World War II because of a high school football injury to his left kneecap. That same year his first play was produced; The Man Who Had All the Luck won the Theatre Guild's National Award. The play closed after four performances with disastrous reviews.

In 1947, Miller's play All My Sons, the writing of which had commenced in 1941, was a success on Broadway (earning him his first Tony Award, for Best Author) and his reputation as a playwright was established. Years later, in a 1994 interview with Ron Rifkin, Miller said that most contemporary critics regarded All My Sons as "a very depressing play in a time of great optimism" and that positive reviews from Brooks Atkinson of The New York Times had saved it from failure.

In 1948, Miller built a small studio in Roxbury, Connecticut. There, in less than a day, he wrote Act I of Death of a Salesman. Within six weeks, he completed the rest of the play, one of the classics of world theater. Death of a Salesman premiered on Broadway on February 10, 1949, at the Morosco Theatre, directed by Elia Kazan, and starring Lee J. Cobb as Willy Loman, Mildred Dunnock as Linda, Arthur Kennedy as Biff, and Cameron Mitchell as Happy. The play was commercially successful and critically acclaimed, winning a Tony Award for Best Author, the New York Drama Circle Critics' Award, and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It was the first play to win all three of these major awards. The play was performed 742 times.

In 1949, Miller exchanged letters with Eugene O'Neill regarding Miller's production of All My Sons. O'Neill had sent Miller a congratulatory telegram; in response, he wrote a letter that consisted of a few paragraphs detailing his gratitude for the telegram, apologizing for not responding earlier, and inviting Eugene to the opening of Death of a Salesman. O'Neill replied, accepting the apology, but declining the invitation, explaining that his Parkinson's disease made it difficult to travel. He ended the letter with an invitation to Boston, a trip that never occurred.

Critical years

In 1955, a one-act version of Miller's verse drama A View from the Bridge opened on Broadway in a joint bill with one of Miller's lesser-known plays, A Memory of Two Mondays. The following year, Miller revised A View from the Bridge as a two-act prose drama, which Peter Brook directed in London. A French-Italian co-production Vu du Pont, based on the play, was released in 1962.

Marriages and family

Miller and Marilyn Monroe tie the knot in Westchester County, New York, 1956

In June 1956, Miller left his first wife, Mary Slattery, whom he married in 1940, and married film star Marilyn Monroe. They had met in 1951, had a brief affair, and remained in contact since. Monroe had just turned 30 when they married; she never had a real family of her own and was eager to join the family of her new husband.

Monroe began to reconsider her career and the fact that trying to manage it made her feel helpless. She admitted to Miller, "I hate Hollywood. I don't want it anymore. I want to live quietly in the country and just be there when you need me. I can't fight for myself anymore."

She converted to Judaism to "express her loyalty and get close to both Miller and his parents", writes biographer Jeffrey Meyers. Monroe told her close friend, Susan Strasberg: "I can identify with the Jews. Everybody's always out to get them, no matter what they do, like me." Soon after she converted, Egypt banned all of her movies.

Away from Hollywood and the culture of celebrity, Monroe's life became more normal; she began cooking, keeping house and giving Miller more attention and affection than he had been used to. His children, aged twelve and nine, adored her and were reluctant to return to their mother when the weekend was over. As she was also fond of older people, she got along well with his parents, and the feeling was mutual.

Later that year, Miller was subpoenaed by the HUAC, and Monroe accompanied him. In her personal notes, she wrote about her worries during this period:

I am so concerned about protecting Arthur. I love him—and he is the only person—human being I have ever known that I could love not only as a man to which I am attracted to practically out of my senses—but he is the only person—as another human being that I trust as much as myself...

Miller began work on writing the screenplay for The Misfits in 1960, directed by John Huston and starring Monroe. But it was during the filming that Miller and Monroe's relationship hit difficulties, and he later said that the filming was one of the lowest points in his life. Monroe was taking drugs to help her sleep and more drugs to help her wake up, which caused her to arrive on the set late and then have trouble remembering her lines. Huston was unaware that Miller and Monroe were having problems in their private life. He recalled later, "I was impertinent enough to say to Arthur that to allow her to take drugs of any kind was criminal and utterly irresponsible. Shortly after that I realized that she wouldn't listen to Arthur at all; he had no say over her actions."

Shortly before the film's premiere in 1961, Miller and Monroe divorced after their five years of marriage. Nineteen months later, August 4, 1962, Monroe died of a likely drug overdose. Huston, who had also directed her in her first major role in The Asphalt Jungle in 1950, and who had seen her rise to stardom, put the blame for her death on her doctors as opposed to the stresses of being a star: "The girl was an addict of sleeping pills and she was made so by the God-damn doctors. It had nothing to do with the Hollywood set-up."

Miller married photographer Inge Morath in February 1962. She had worked as a photographer documenting the production of The Misfits. The first of their two children, Rebecca, was born September 15, 1962. Their son, Daniel, was born with Down syndrome in November 1966. Against his wife's wishes, Miller had him institutionalized, first at a home for infants in New York City, and then at the Southbury Training School in Connecticut. Though Morath visited Daniel often, Miller never visited him at the school and rarely spoke of him. Miller and Inge remained together until her death in 2002. Arthur Miller's son-in-law, actor Daniel Day-Lewis, is said to have visited Daniel frequently, and to have persuaded Arthur Miller to meet with him.

HUAC controversy and The Crucible

In 1952, Elia Kazan appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Kazan named eight members of the Group Theatre, including Clifford Odets, Paula Strasberg, Lillian Hellman, J. Edward Bromberg, and John Garfield, who in recent years had been fellow members of the Communist Party. Miller and Kazan were close friends throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, but after Kazan's testimony to the HUAC, the pair's friendship ended. After speaking with Kazan about his testimony, Miller traveled to Salem, Massachusetts, to research the witch trials of 1692. He and Kazan did not speak to each other for the next ten years. Kazan later defended his own actions through his film On the Waterfront, in which a dockworker heroically testifies against a corrupt union boss.

In The Crucible, Miller likened the situation with the House Un-American Activities Committee to the witch hunt in Salem in 1692. The play opened at the Beck Theatre on Broadway on January 22, 1953. Though widely considered only somewhat successful at the time of its release, today The Crucible is Miller's most frequently produced work throughout the world. It was adapted into an opera by Robert Ward in 1961.

While newsmen take notes, Chairman Dies of House Un-American Activities Committee reads and proofs his letter replying to Pres. Roosevelt's attack on the Committee, October 26, 1938

The HUAC took an interest in Miller himself not long after The Crucible opened, denying him a passport to attend the play's London opening in 1954. When Miller applied in 1956 for a routine renewal of his passport, the House Un-American Activities Committee used this opportunity to subpoena him to appear before the committee. Before appearing, Miller asked the committee not to ask him to name names, to which the chairman, Francis E. Walter (D-PA) agreed. When Miller attended the hearing, to which Monroe accompanied him, risking her own career, he gave the committee a detailed account of his political activities. Reneging on the chairman's promise, the committee demanded the names of friends and colleagues who had participated in similar activities. Miller refused to comply, saying "I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him." As a result, a judge found Miller guilty of contempt of Congress in May 1957. Miller was sentenced to a fine and a prison sentence, blacklisted, and disallowed a US passport. In 1958, his conviction was overturned by the court of appeals, which ruled that Miller had been misled by the chairman of the HUAC.

Miller's experience with the HUAC affected him throughout his life. In the late 1970s, he joined the other celebrities (including William Styron and Mike Nichols) who were brought together by the journalist Joan Barthel whose coverage of the highly publicized Barbara Gibbons murder case helped raise bail for Gibbons' son Peter Reilly who'd been convicted of his mother's murder based on what many felt was a coerced confession and little other evidence. Barthel documented the case in her book A Death in Canaan which was made as a television film of the same name and broadcast in 1978. City Confidential, an A&E Network series, produced an episode about the murder, postulating that part of the reason Miller took such an active interest (including supporting Reilly's defense and using his own celebrity to bring attention to Reilly's plight) was because he had felt similarly persecuted in his run-ins with the HUAC. He sympathized with Reilly, whom he firmly believed to be innocent and to have been railroaded by the Connecticut State Police and the Attorney General who had initially prosecuted the case.

Later career

Miller in 1966

In 1964, After the Fall was produced, and is said to be a deeply personal view of Miller's experiences during his marriage to Monroe. The play reunited Miller with his former friend Kazan: they collaborated on both the script and the direction. After the Fall opened on January 23, 1964, at the ANTA Theatre in Washington Square Park amid a flurry of publicity and outrage at putting a Monroe-like character, called Maggie, on stage. Robert Brustein, in a review in the New Republic, called After the Fall "a three and one half hour breach of taste, a confessional autobiography of embarrassing explicitness ... there is a misogynistic strain in the play which the author does not seem to recognize. ... He has created a shameless piece of tabloid gossip, an act of exhibitionism which makes us all voyeurs, ... a wretched piece of dramatic writing." That same year, Miller produced Incident at Vichy. In 1965, Miller was elected the first American president of PEN International, a position which he held for four years. A year later, Miller organized the 1966 PEN congress in New York City. Miller also wrote the penetrating family drama, The Price, produced in 1968. It was Miller's most successful play since Death of a Salesman.

In 1969, Miller's works were banned in the Soviet Union after he campaigned for the freedom of dissident writers. Throughout the 1970s, Miller spent much of his time experimenting with the theatre, producing one-act plays such as Fame and The Reason Why, and traveling with his wife, producing In The Country and Chinese Encounters with her. Both his 1972 comedy The Creation of the World and Other Business and its musical adaptation, Up from Paradise, were critical and commercial failures.

Miller was an unusually articulate commentator on his own work. In 1978 he published a collection of his Theater Essays, edited by Robert A. Martin and with a foreword by Miller. Highlights of the collection included Miller's introduction to his Collected Plays, his reflections on the theory of tragedy, comments on the McCarthy Era, and pieces arguing for a publicly supported theater. Reviewing this collection in the Chicago Tribune, Studs Terkel remarked, "in reading the Theater Essays ...you are exhilaratingly aware of a social critic, as well as a playwright, who knows what he's talking about."

In 1983, Miller traveled to China to produce and direct Death of a Salesman at the People's Art Theatre in Beijing. The play was a success in China and in 1984, Salesman in Beijing, a book about Miller's experiences in Beijing, was published. Around the same time, Death of a Salesman was made into a TV movie starring Dustin Hoffman as Willy Loman. Shown on CBS, it attracted 25 million viewers. In late 1987, Miller's autobiographical work, Timebends, was published. Before it was published, it was well known that Miller would not talk about Monroe in interviews; in Timebends Miller talks about his experiences with Monroe in detail.

During the early-mid 1990s, Miller wrote three new plays: The Ride Down Mt. Morgan (1991), The Last Yankee (1992), and Broken Glass (1994). In 1996, a film of The Crucible starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Paul Scofield, Bruce Davison, and Winona Ryder opened. Miller spent much of 1996 working on the screenplay for the film.

Mr. Peters' Connections was staged Off-Broadway in 1998, and Death of a Salesman was revived on Broadway in 1999 to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. The play, once again, was a large critical success, winning a Tony Award for best revival of a play.

In 1993, he was awarded the National Medal of Arts. Miller was honored with the PEN/Laura Pels Theater Award for a Master American Dramatist in 1998. In 2001 the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) selected Miller for the Jefferson Lecture, the U.S. federal government's highest honor for achievement in the humanities. Miller's lecture was entitled "On Politics and the Art of Acting." Miller's lecture analyzed political events (including the U.S. presidential election of 2000) in terms of the "arts of performance," and it drew attacks from some conservatives such as Jay Nordlinger, who called it "a disgrace," and George Will, who argued that Miller was not legitimately a "scholar."

In 1999, Miller was awarded The Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, one of the richest prizes in the arts, given annually to "a man or woman who has made an outstanding contribution to the beauty of the world and to mankind's enjoyment and understanding of life." In 2001, Miller received the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. On May 1, 2002, Miller was awarded Spain's Principe de Asturias Prize for Literature as "the undisputed master of modern drama." Later that year, Ingeborg Morath died of lymphatic cancer at the age of 78. The following year Miller won the Jerusalem Prize.

In December 2004, 89-year-old Miller announced that he had been in love with 34-year-old minimalist painter Agnes Barley and had been living with her at his Connecticut farm since 2002, and that they intended to marry. Within hours of her father's death, Rebecca Miller ordered Barley to vacate the premises because she had consistently been opposed to the relationship. Miller's final play, Finishing the Picture, opened at the Goodman Theatre, Chicago, in the fall of 2004, with one character said to be based on Barley. It was reported to be based on his experience during the filming The Misfits, though Miller insisted the play is a work of fiction with independent characters that were no more than composite shadows of history.

Death

Miller died on the evening of February 10, 2005 (the 56th anniversary of the Broadway debut of Death of a Salesman) at age 89 of bladder cancer and heart failure, at his home in Roxbury, Connecticut. He had been in hospice care at his sister's apartment in New York since his release from hospital the previous month. He was surrounded by Barley, family and friends. His body was interred at Roxbury Center Cemetery in Roxbury.

Check your Progress-1

1. When was Arthur Miller born ???

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2. Where was Arthur Miller born ???

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4.3 LEGACY

Arthur Miller's career as a writer spanned over seven decades, and at the time of his death, Miller was considered to be one of the greatest dramatists of the twentieth century. After his death, many respected actors, directors, and producers paid tribute to Miller, some calling him the last great practitioner of the American stage, and Broadway theatres darkened their lights in a show of respect. Miller's alma mater, the University of Michigan, opened the Arthur Miller Theatre in March 2007. As per his express wish, it is the only theatre in the world that bears Miller's name.

Other notable arrangements for Miller's legacy are that his letters, notes, drafts and other papers are housed at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin.

Arthur Miller is also a member of the American Theater Hall of Fame. He was inducted in 1979.

In 1993 he received the Four Freedoms Award for Freedom of Speech.

In 2017 his daughter, Rebecca Miller, a writer and filmmaker, completed a documentary about her father's life, under the title Arthur Miller: Writer.

Foundation

The Arthur Miller Foundation was founded to honor the legacy of Miller and his New York City Public School Education. The mission of the foundation is: "Promoting increased access and equity to theater arts education in our schools and increasing the number of students receiving theater arts education as an integral part of their academic curriculum." Other initiatives include certification of new theater teachers and their placement in public schools; increasing the number of theater teachers in the system from the current estimate of 180 teachers in 1800 schools; supporting professional development of all certified theater teachers; providing teaching artists, cultural partners, physical spaces, and theater ticket allocations for students. The foundation's primary purpose is to provide arts education in the New York City school system. The current chancellor of the foundation is Carmen Farina, a large proponent of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The Master Arts Council includes, among others, Alec Baldwin, Ellen Barkin, Bradley Cooper, Dustin Hoffman, Scarlett Johansson, Tony Kushner, Julianne Moore, Michael Moore, Liam Neeson, David O. Russell, and Liev Schreiber. Son-in-law Daniel Day-Lewis serves on the current board of directors.

The foundation celebrated Miller's 100th birthday with a one-night-only performance of Miller's seminal works in November 2015.

The Arthur Miller Foundation currently supports a pilot program in theater and film at the public school Quest to Learn in partnership with the Institute of Play. The model is being used as an in-school elective theater class and lab. The objective is to create a sustainable theater education model to disseminate to teachers at professional development workshops.

Archive

Miller donated thirteen boxes of his earliest manuscripts to the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin in 1961 and 1962. This collection included the original handwritten notebooks and early typed drafts for Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, All My Sons, and other works. In January, 2018, the Ransom Center announced the acquisition of the remainder of the Miller archive totaling over 200 boxes. The full archive opened in November, 2019.

Check your Progress-1

1. In which year did Arthur Miller win the Four Freedoms Award for Freedom of Speech.???

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2. What does the Arthur Miller Foundation currently support???

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4.4 WORKS

Stage Plays

- No Villain (1936)
- They Too Arise (1937, based on No Villain)
- Honors at Dawn (1938, based on They Too Arise)
- The Grass Still Grows (1938, based on They Too Arise)
- The Great Disobedience (1938)
- Listen My Children (1939, with Norman Rosten)
- The Golden Years (1940)
- The Man Who Had All the Luck (1940) 96
- The Half-Bridge (1943)
- All My Sons (1947)
- Death of a Salesman (1949)
- An Enemy of the People (1950, based on Henrik Ibsen's play An Enemy of the People)
- The Crucible (1953)
- A View from the Bridge (1955)
- A Memory of Two Mondays (1955)
- After the Fall (1964)
- Incident at Vichy (1964)
- The Price (1968)
- The Reason Why (1970)
- Fame (one-act, 1970; revised for television 1978)
- The Creation of the World and Other Business (1972)
- Up from Paradise (1974)
- The Archbishop's Ceiling (1977)
- The American Clock (1980)
- Playing for Time (television play, 1980)
- Elegy for a Lady (short play, 1982, first part of Two Way Mirror)
- Some Kind of Love Story (short play, 1982, second part of Two Way Mirror)
- I Think About You a Great Deal (1986)
- Playing for Time (stage version, 1985)
- I Can't Remember Anything (1987, collected in Danger: Memory!)

- Clara (1987, collected in Danger: Memory!)
- The Ride Down Mt. Morgan (1991)
- The Last Yankee (1993)
- Broken Glass (1994)
- Mr. Peters' Connections (1998)
- Resurrection Blues (2002)
- Finishing the Picture (2004)

Radio Plays

- The Pussycat and the Expert Plumber Who Was a Man (1941)
- Joel Chandler Harris (1941)
- The Battle of the Ovens (1942)
- Thunder from the Mountains (1942)
- I Was Married in Bataan (1942)
- That They May Win (1943)
- Listen for the Sound of Wings (1943)
- Bernardine (1944)
- I Love You (1944)
- Grandpa and the Statue (1944)
- The Philippines Never Surrendered (1944)
- The Guardsman (1944, based on Ferenc Molnár's play)
- The Story of Gus (1947)

Screenplays

- The Hook (1947)
- All My Sons (1948)
- Let's Make Love (1960)
- The Misfits (1961)
- Everybody Wins (1984)
- Death of a Salesman (1985)
- The Crucible (1996)

Assorted Fiction

- Focus (novel, 1945)

- "The Misfits" (short story, published in Esquire, October 1957)
- I Don't Need You Anymore (short stories, 1967)
- Homely Girl: A Life (short story, 1992, published in UK as "Plain Girl: A Life" 1995)
- "The Performance" (short story)
- Presence: Stories (2007) (short stories include The Bare Manuscript, Beavers, The Performance, and Bulldog)

Non-fiction

- Situation Normal (1944) is based on his experiences researching the war correspondence of Ernie Pyle.
- In Russia (1969), the first of three books created with his photographer wife Inge Morath, offers Miller's impressions of Russia and Russian society.
- In the Country (1977), with photographs by Morath and text by Miller, provides insight into how Miller spent his time in Roxbury, Connecticut and profiles of his various neighbors.
- Chinese Encounters (1979) is a travel journal with photographs by Morath. It depicts the Chinese society in the state of flux which followed the end of the Cultural Revolution. Miller discusses the hardships of many writers, professors, and artists as they try to regain the sense of freedom and place they lost during Mao Zedong's regime.
- Salesman in Beijing (1984) details Miller's experiences with the 1983 Beijing People's Theatre production of Death of a Salesman. He describes the idiosyncrasies, understandings, and insights encountered in directing a Chinese cast in a decidedly American play.
- Timebends: A Life, Methuen London (1987) ISBN 0-413-41480-9. Like Death of a Salesman, the book follows the structure of memory itself, each passage linked to and triggered by the one before.

Collections

- Abbotson, Susan C. W. (ed.), Arthur Miller: Collected Essays, Penguin 2016 ISBN 978-0-14-310849-8

- Centola, Steven R. ed. Echoes Down the Corridor: Arthur Miller, Collected Essays 1944–2000, Viking Penguin (US)/Methuen (UK), 2000 ISBN 0-413-75690-4
- Kushner, Tony, ed. Arthur Miller, Collected Plays 1944–1961 (Library of America, 2006) ISBN 978-1-931082-91-4.
- Martin, Robert A. (ed.), "The theater essays of Arthur Miller", foreword by Arthur Miller. NY: Viking Press, 1978 ISBN 0-14-004903-7

4.5 MILLER'S STYLES, THEMES, AND CHARACTERS

Miller successfully synthesized diverse dramatic styles and movements in the belief that a play should embody a delicate balance between the individual and society, between the singular personality and the polity, and between the separate and collective elements of life. He thought himself a writer of social plays with a strong emphasis on moral problems in American society and often questioned psychological causes of behavior. He also built on the realist tradition of Henrik Ibsen in his exploration of the individual's conflict with society but also borrowed Symbolist and expressionist techniques from Bertolt Brecht and others. Some critics attempt to interpret his work from either an exclusively political or an exclusively psychological standpoint but fail to pierce the social veil that Miller creates in his work. Miller often stressed that society made his characters what they are and how it dictated all of their fears and choices.

Themes

All American family

While Miller comes under criticism for his reputation, most critics note him as a dramatist of the family. One of his greatest strengths is his penetrating insight into familial relationships. Often, Miller's characters are living in service of their family. The conventions of the family play, such as patterns, setting, and style of representation were set canonically by Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Miller. In these plays, white men are privileged with their family and social responsibility; typically, these men are lower class. Miller maintained that family relationships and families must be immersed in social context.

Social responsibility

Miller is known for the consciousness of the characters in his play. In his plays, he confronts a level of banality with the roller coaster of guilt and responsibility. Some strong examples of characters who portray this struggle between their conscious and their social responsibility are Joe Keller in All My Sons and John Proctor in The Crucible. Miller often creates consequences for characters who ignore or violate their social responsibilities.

Life, death and human purpose

Miller's determination to deal with the eternal themes of life, death and human purpose is one of his most prominent themes across his works. This theme spans from Willy Loman's dedication to providing for his family and his inherent belief that his death would leave a legacy, to John Proctor's willingness to die to preserve his name. Nearly all of Miller's protagonists struggle with the mark they leave on life and what it means to die.

Famous characters of his works

Willy Loman

In Death of a Salesman – originally entitled The Inside of His Head – Miller brilliantly solves the problem of revealing his main character's inner discord, rendering Willy Loman as solid as the society in which he tries to sell himself. Indeed, many critics believe that Miller has never surpassed his achievement in this play, which stands as his breakthrough work, distinguished by an extremely long Broadway run, by many revivals, and by many theater awards, including the Pulitzer Prize in 1949. Death of a Salesman seems destined to remain an American classic and a standard text in American classrooms.

Willy Loman desperately wants to believe that he has succeeded, that he is “well liked” as a great salesman, a fine father, and a devoted husband.

That he has not really attracted the admiration and popularity at which he has aimed is evident, however, in the weariness that belabors him from the beginning of the play. Nearing retirement he suffers a drastic decrease in sales work, a dissatisfying marriage, and a turbulent relationship with his sons which inexorably leads to his suicide with the justification that the insurance will finally provide for his family.

Eddie Carbone

Eddie Carbone is the central character in A View from the Bridge and is not positioned as the protagonist or the antagonist. He is a longshoreman who lives with his wife, Beatrice, and his 17-year-old niece, Catherine. When his family from Italy, Rodolpho and Marco, migrate illegally and begin to live with him, the small world that he operates in is disrupted. Eddie becomes conflicted and ultimately self-destructive over his sexual attraction to his niece and her involvement with one of his Italian tenants. His character arc culminates as he becomes an informer to the immigration authorities which leads to a confrontation with one of his tenants. Marco labels him as an informer and Eddie perceives this as a permanent blemish on his good name. This confrontation ultimately leads to his death, leaving Eddie as one of Miller's examples of tragic figures.

John Proctor

John Proctor is the protagonist of one of Miller's most controversial works, The Crucible. He is a faithful farmer who lives by a strict moral code that he violates by succumbing to an affair with a young girl, Abigail, who serves in his home. After Proctor rejects her, Abigail spitefully accuses John's wife of witchcraft, involving him in a string of affairs that challenge his beliefs and convictions. In his attempts to save his wife, he is convicted of witchcraft as well, and will only be acquitted if he confesses to his crime and signs his name to a piece of paper. Proctor is a strong, vital man in the prime of his life both in his confession of witchcraft and the subsequent passion with which he defends his name at the cost of his life.

Joe Keller

Critics have long admired the playwright's suspenseful handling of the Keller family's burden in the play All My Sons. The critical character in this work is Joe Keller, who permitted defective parts to remain in warplanes that subsequently crash. Not only does Joe Keller fail to recognize his social responsibility, but also he allows his business partner to take the blame and serve the prison term for the crime. Gradually, events combine to strip Keller of his rationalizations. He argues that he never believed that the cracked engine heads would be installed and that he never admitted his mistake because it would have driven him out of business at the age of sixty-one, when he would not have another chance to “make something” for his family, his highest priority. Joe's irresponsibility is exposed through his son's questioning of his very humanity.Joe's suicide results from the tremendous guilt and self-awareness that arises during the play.

Literary and public criticism

Christopher Bigsby wrote Arthur Miller: The Definitive Biography based on boxes of papers Miller made available to him before his death in 2005. The book was published in November 2008, and is reported to reveal unpublished works in which Miller "bitterly attack ed the injustices of American racism long before it was taken up by the civil rights movement".

In his book Trinity of Passion, author Alan M. Wald conjectures that Miller was "a member of a writer's unit of the Communist Party around 1946," using the pseudonym Matt Wayne, and editing a drama column in the magazine The New Masses.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

Early years

Arthur Miller was born on October 17, 1915, in New York City, the second of Isidore and Augusta Barnett Miller's three children. His father had come to the United States from Austria-Hungary and ran a small coat-manufacturing business. His mother, a native of New York, had been a public school teacher.

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Miller was only an average student. He was much more fond of playing sports than doing his schoolwork. Only after graduating from high school in 1932 did Miller think about becoming a writer, when he read Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky's (1821–1881) The Brothers Karamazov. Miller attended City College in New York for two weeks, then worked briefly with his father and in an autoparts warehouse to earn money to attend the University of Michigan. He enrolled there two years later, continuing to work as a dishwasher and as a night editor at a newspaper to help pay his expenses while he studied drama. He graduated in 1938, having won several awards for playwriting.

Miller returned to New York City to a variety of jobs, including writing for the Federal Theater Project, a government-sponsored program that ended before any of his work could be produced. Because of an old football injury, he was rejected for military service, but he was hired to tour army camps to collect material for a movie, The Story of G. I. Joe. His notes from these tours were published as Situation Normal (1944). That same year the Broadway production of his play The Man Who Had All the Luck opened, closing after four performances. In 1945 his novel Focus, an attack on anti-Semitism (the hatred of Jewish people), appeared.

Three Successful Plays

Miller's career blossomed with the opening of All My Sons on Broadway in 1947. The play, a tragedy (a drama having a sad conclusion), won three prizes and fascinated audiences across the country. Then Death of a Salesman (1949) brought Miller the Pulitzer Prize for drama, international fame, and an estimated income of two million dollars. The words of its hero, Willy Loman, have been heard in at least seventeen languages as well as on movie screens everywhere.

By the time of Miller's third Broadway play, The Crucible (1953), audiences were ready to accept his belief that "a poetic drama rooted in American speech and manners" was the only way to produce a tragedy out of the common man's life. The play was set in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, a time when many people were accused of being witches and were burned alive. Miller's play pointed out how similar those events were to Senator Joseph McCarthy's (1909–1957) investigations of anti-American activities during the early 1950s, which led to wild accusations against many public figures. Miller himself was called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in June 1956 and was asked to give the names of guilty parties. He stated, "My conscience will not permit me to use the name of another person and bring trouble to him." He was convicted of contempt of (lack of respect for) Congress, but the conviction was reversed in 1958.

Hit-or-miss efforts

Two of Miller's one-act plays, A View from the Bridge and A Memory of Two Mondays (1955), were social dramas focused on the inner life of working men; neither had the power of Death of a Salesman. Nor did his film script, The Misfits (1961). His next play, After the Fall (1964), was based on his own life. His second wife, actress Marilyn Monroe (1926–1962), was the model for one of the characters. Incident at Vichy (1965), a long, one-act play based on a true story set in France during World War II (1939–45; when Germany, Italy, and Japan battled France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States), examined the nature of guilt and the depth of human hatred. In The Price (1968) Miller returned to domestic drama in his portrayal of a tight, intense struggle between two brothers, almost strangers to each other, brought together by their father's death. It is Miller at the height of his powers, cementing his position as a major American dramatist.

But The Price proved to be Miller's last major Broadway success. His next work, The Creation of the World and Other Business, was a series of comic sketches first produced on Broadway in 1972. It closed after only twenty performances. All of Miller's works after that premiered outside of New York. Miller staged the musical Up From Paradise (1974) at the University of Michigan. Another play, The Archbishop's Ceiling, was presented in 1977 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

In the 1980s Miller produced a number of short pieces. The American Clock was based on Studs Terkel's (1912–) history of the Great Depression (a slump in the country's system of producing, distributing, and using goods and services that led to almost half of the industrial workers in the country losing their jobs during the 1930s). Elegy for a Lady and Some Kind of Story were two one-act plays that were staged together in 1982. Miller's Danger, Memory! was composed of the short pieces I Can't Remember Anything and Clara. All of these later plays have been regarded by critics as minor works. In the mid-1990s Miller adapted The Crucible for a film version starring Daniel Day-Lewis and Joan Allen.

Later years

Despite the absence of any major successes since the mid-1960s, Miller seems secure in his reputation as a major figure in American drama. In addition to his Pulitzer Prize in 1949, his awards include the Theatre Guild National Prize, 1944; Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award (given for achievement in the theater), 1947 and 1953; Emmy Award (given for achievement in television broadcasting), 1967; George Foster Peabody Award, 1981; John F. Kennedy Award for Lifetime Achievement, 1984; Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, 1999; National Book Foundation lifetime achievement award, 2001; New York City College Alumni Association medal for artistic devotion to New York, 2001; and the Japan Art Association lifetime achievement award, 2001.

4.7 KEYWORDS

- **Adonis**: any very handsome young man.
- **Anemia**: a condition in which there is a reduction of the number, or volume, of red blood corpuscles or of the total amount of hemoglobin in the bloodstream, resulting in paleness, generalized weakness.
- **Babble**: to make incoherent sounds, as a baby does; to prattle or talk too much or foolishly.
- **Bastard**: a slang term for a person regarded with contempt, hatred, pity, resentment, and so on.
- **Blow:** [Informal] to brag; boast.

4.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a note on Arthur Miller's works.
- Write a brief note on Arthur Miller's themes, styles and characters.
- Describe in brief about Arthur Miller's life.
- Write a short note on Arthur Miller's legacy.

4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- Miller, Gerri (March 14, 2018). "Daughter Documents the Inner Arthur Miller". Jewish Journal. Retrieved May 8, 2018.
- Kampel, Stewart (September 19, 2013). "Q&A with Rebecca Miller". Hadassah Magazine. Retrieved May 8, 2018.
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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Miller was born on October 17, 1915. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q 1)**

Miller was born in Harlem, in the New York City borough of Manhattan. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q 2)**

In 1993 Miller received the Four Freedoms Award for Freedom of Speech. **(answer to check your progress – 2 Q 1)**

The Arthur Miller Foundation currently supports a pilot program in theater and film at the public school Quest to Learn in partnership with the Institute of Play. (**answer to check your progress – 2 Q2)**

UNIT-5 ARTHUR MILLER- DEATH OF A SALESMAN -2

STRUCTURE

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Summary

5.3 Productions

5.4 Let us sum up

5.5 Keywords

5.6 Questions for Review

5.7 Suggested Reading and References

5.8 Answers to Check your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- You will be able to understand the summary of “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller and;
- the productions of “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman stems from both Arthur Miller's personal experiences and the theatrical traditions in which the playwright was schooled. The play recalls the traditions of Yiddish theater that focus on family as the crucial element, reducing most plot to the confines of the nuclear family. Death of a Salesman focuses on two sons who are estranged from their father, paralleling one of Miller's other major works, All My Sons, which premiered two years before Death of a Salesman.

Although the play premiered in 1949, Miller began writing Death of a Salesman at the age of seventeen when he was working for his father's company. In short story form, it treated an aging salesman unable to sell anything. He is berated by company bosses and must borrow subway change from the young narrator. The end of the manuscript contains a postscript, noting that the salesman on which the story is based had thrown himself under a subway train.

Arthur Miller reworked the play in 1947 upon a meeting with his uncle, Manny Newman. Miller's uncle, a salesman, was a competitor at all times and even competed with his sons, Buddy and Abby. Miller described the Newman household as one in which one could not lose hope, and based the Loman household and structure on his uncle and cousins. There are numerous parallels between Abby and Buddy Newman and their fictional counterparts, Happy and Biff Loman: Buddy, like Biff, was a renowned high school athlete who ended up flunking out. Miller's relationship to his cousin’s parallels that of the Lomans to their neighbor, Bernard.

5.2 SUMMARY

Act I.1 (Loman Home, Present Day):

The salesman, Willy Loman, enters his home. He appears very tired and confused. Linda Loman, his wife, puts on a robe and slippers and goes downstairs. She has been asleep. Linda is mostly jovial, but represses objections to her husband. Her struggle is to support him while still trying to guide him. She worries that he smashed the car, but he says that nothing happened. He claims that he's tired to death and couldn't make it through the rest of his trip. He got only as far as Yonkers, and doesn't remember the details of the trip. He tells Linda that he kept swerving onto the shoulder of the road, but Linda thinks that it must be faulty steering in the car.

Linda says that there's no reason why he can't work in New York, but Willy says he's not needed there. Willy claims that if Frank Wagner were alive he would be in charge of New York by now, but that his son, Howard, doesn't appreciate him. Linda tells him that Happy took Biff on a double date, and that it was nice to see them shaving together. Linda reminds him not to lose his temper with Biff, but Willy claims that he simply had asked him if he was making any money. Willy says that there is an undercurrent of resentment in Biff, but Linda says that Biff admires his father. Willy calls Biff a lazy bum and says that he is lost. Willy longs for the days when their neighborhood was less developed and less crowded. He wakes up his sons Biff and Happy, both of whom are in the double bunk in the boys' bedroom.

Act I.2 (Loman Home, Present Day):

At thirty-four, Biff is well-built but somewhat worn and not very self-assured. Happy, two years younger than his brother, is tall and powerfully made. He is a visibly sexual person. Both boys are somewhat lost, Happy because he has never risked defeat. The two brothers discuss their father. Happy thinks that Willy's license will be taken away, and Biff suggests that his father's eyes are going.

Happy thinks that it's funny that they are sleeping at home again, and they discuss Happy's "first time" with a girl named Betsy. Happy says that he was once very bashful with women, but as he became more confident Biff became less so. Biff wonders why his father mocks him so much, but Happy says that he wants Biff to make good. Biff tells Happy that he has had twenty or thirty different types of jobs since he left home before the war, and everything turns out the same. He reminisces about herding cattle in Nebraska and the Dakotas. But he criticizes himself for playing around with horses for twenty-eight dollars a week at his advanced age. Happy says that Biff is a poet and an idealist, but Biff says that he's mixed up and should get married.

When Biff asks Happy if he is content, Happy defiantly says that he is not. He says that he has his own apartment, a car, and plenty of woman, but is still lonely. Biff suggests that Happy come out west with him to buy a ranch. Happy claims that he dreams about ripping off his clothes in the store and boxing with his manager, for he can "outbox, outrun, and outlift anybody in that store," yet he has to take orders from them.

Happy says that the women they went on a date with that night were gorgeous, but he gets disgusted with women: he keeps "knockin' them over" but it doesn't mean anything. Happy says that he wants someone with character, like his mother. Biff says that he thinks he may work for Bill Oliver, whom he worked for earlier in life. Biff worries that Bill will remember that he stole a carton of basketballs, and remembers that he quit because Bill was going to fire him.

Act I.3 (Loman Home, Past):

This segment of the act takes place in the kitchen years before. Willy reminds Biff not to make promises to a girl, because girls will always believe what you tell them and Biff is too young to be talking seriously to girls. Willy surprises the boys with a new punching bag, and as Happy exercises he brags about how he is losing weight. Biff shows Willy a football he took from the locker room, but Willy tells him to return it. Biff tells Willy that he missed him when he was away on business. Willy says that someday he'll have his own business like Uncle Charley. Willy says that he'll be bigger than Charley, because Charley is liked, but not well-liked. Willy promises to take his boys on business and show them all of the towns in New England and introduce them to the finest people.

As Happy and Biff toss the football around, Bernard enters. Bernard is worried because Biff has a state exam (Regents) the following week and has yet to study for them. Bernard heard that Mr. Birnbaum will fail Biff in his math class if he does not study, and reminds Biff that just because he has been accepted to UVA the high school does not have to graduate him. Willy tells Bernard not to be a pest, and Bernard leaves. Biff says that Bernard is "liked, but not well liked." Willy says that Bernard may get the best grades in school, but when he gets out in the business world people like Biff and Happy will be five times ahead of him.

Linda enters, and after the boys leave she and Willy discuss the troubles that Willy has been having in his business. Willy worries that others laugh at him, but Linda reassures him, saying that he is successful because he is making seventy to a hundred dollars per week. Willy also worries that people respect Uncle Charley, who is a man of few words. Linda tells him that few men are as idolized by their children as Willy is.

Act I.4 (Hotel Room, Past):

Willy crosses from one part of the stage to another, where a woman is standing, putting on her scarf. Willy says that he gets so lonely, and gets the feeling that he'll never make a living for her or a business for the boys. The woman claims that she picked Willy for his sense of humor. Willy tells her that he will be back in about two weeks and that he will see her the next time he is in Boston.

Act I.5 (Loman Home, Past):

Willy is back in the kitchen with Linda, who reassures him that he is a handsome man. Linda mends her stocking, but Willy tells her that he does not want her to do such menial tasks. Willy returns to the porch, where he tells Bernard to give Biff the answers to the Regents exam. Bernard says that he normally gives Biff the answers, but Regents is a State exam and he could be arrested. Bernard says that Biff is driving the car without a license and will flunk math. Willy also hears the woman's voice (from the hotel room), and screams for it to shut up. Willy explodes at Linda, saying that there's nothing the matter with Biff. He asks her if she wants Biff to be a worm like Bernard. Linda, almost in tears, exits into the living room.

Act I.6 (Loman Home, Present Day):

Willy tells Happy that he nearly hit a kid in Yonkers. Willy wonders why he didn't go to Alaska with his brother Ben, because the man was a genius: success incarnate. Ben ended up with diamond mines: he walked into a jungle and came out rich at the age of twenty-one. Happy tells Willy that he should retire. Charley enters. As Willy and Charley play cards, Charley offers Willy a job, which insults him. Willy asks Charley why Biff is going back to Texas, but Charley tells him to let Biff go. Willy talks about the ceiling he put up in the living room, but refuses to give any details. When Charley wonders how he could put up a ceiling, Willy shouts at him that a man who can't handle tools is not a man, and calls Charley disgusting.

Uncle Ben enters, a stolid man in his sixties with a mustache and an authoritative air. Willy tells Ben that he is getting awfully tired, but since

Charley cannot see Ben, Willy tells him that for a second Charley reminded him of his brother Ben, who died several weeks ago in Africa. Ben asks Willy if their mother is living with him, but Willy said that she died a long time ago. Charley, who cannot see Ben, wonders what Willy is talking about. Finally Charley becomes unnerved and leaves.

Act I.7 (Loman Home, Past):

While Willy talks with Ben, Linda (as a younger woman) enters. Willy asks Ben where his father is, but Ben says that he didn't find his father in Alaska, for he never made it there. Ben claims he had a very faulty view of geography and ended up in Africa instead of Alaska. Willy was only three years, eleven months old when Ben left. Young Biff and Happy enter, and Willy introduces them to Uncle Ben, a "great man." Ben boasts that their father was a very great man, an inventor who could make more money in a week than another man could make in a lifetime. Willy shows Biff to Ben, and says that he's bringing up Biff to be like their father. Biff and Ben start to spar; Ben trips Biff, then tells him never to fight fair with a stranger, because he will never get out of the jungle that way. Ben leaves, wishing Willy good luck on whatever he does.

Charley returns, and reprimands Willy for letting his kids steal lumber from the nearby building that is being refurbished. Willy says that he reprimanded them, but that he has a "couple of fearless characters" as his children. Charley tells him that the jails are full of fearless characters, but Ben says that so is the stock exchange. Bernard enters and says that the watchman is chasing Biff, but Willy says that he is not stealing anything. Willy says that he will stop by on his way back to Africa, but Willy begs him to stay and talk. Willy worries that he's not teaching his sons the right kind of knowledge. Ben repeats that when he walked into the jungle he was seventeen, and when he walked out he was twenty-one and fantastically rich.

Act I.8 (Loman Home, Present Day):

Ben leaves, but Willy still speaks to him as Linda enters. Willy wonders what happened to the diamond watch fob that Ben gave to him when he came from Africa. Linda reminds him that he pawned it to pay for Biff's radio correspondence course. Biff and Happy come downstairs in their pajamas, and ask Linda how long Willy has been talking to himself. Linda says that this has been going on for years. Linda says that she would have told Biff, if he had an address where he could be reached. She also says that Willy is at his worst when Biff comes home, and asks Biff why they are so hateful to one another. Biff claims that he is trying to change.

Linda asks if he thinks about Willy. She says that if Biff has no feelings for his father, then he has no feeling for her either. Linda says that Willy is the dearest man in the world to her, and she won't have anyone making him feel unwanted. Biff tells her to stop making excuses for Willy because he never had an ounce of respect for her. Happy tells Biff not to call their father crazy. Biff says that Willy has no character. She tells him that Willy never made a lot of money, and that he is not the finest character, but he is a human being and "attention must be paid" to him.

Linda recounts the indignities that Willy has suffered, such as having to borrow money from Charley, and she calls Happy a philanderer. Biff wants to stay with his parents and promises not to fight with Willy. Biff says that Willy threw him out before because his father is a fake who does not like anybody who knows the truth about him. Linda says that Willy is dying and that he's been trying to kill himself. When Willy had his car accident in February, a woman saw that he deliberately smashed into the bridge railing to drive his car into the river. Willy has also tried to use the gas line to kill himself. Biff apologizes to Linda and promises to stay and try to become a success. Happy tells Biff that he never tries to please people in business, and that he whistles in the elevator.

Willy enters and tells Biff that he never grew up, and that Bernard does not whistle in the elevator. Biff says that Willy does whistle, however. Biff tells Willy that he's going to see Bill Oliver tomorrow to talk about the sporting good business. Happy says that the beauty of the plan is that it would be like they were playing ball again. Willy says that it is personality that wins the day. After the boys leave, Linda worries that Oliver won't remember Biff. Willy says that if Biff had stayed with Oliver he'd be on top now. Willy reminisces about Biff's ball game at

Ebbets Field. He promises that the next day, he'll ask Harold if he can work in New York.

Biff finds Willy's rubber tubing behind the heater, and is horrified.

Act II.1 (Loman Home, Present Day):

Willy sits at the kitchen table the next morning. He claims that he slept well for the first time in months. Linda says that it was thrilling to see the boys leaving together, and says that Biff had a new, hopeful attitude. Willy dreams about buying a little place in the country. Linda asks Willy if he will talk to Howard today, and he says that he will tell Howard to take him off the road. Linda tells him that he is supposed to meet the boys for dinner at Frank's Chop House. As soon as Willy leaves, Linda gets a phone call from Biff. She tells him that the pipe that Willy connected to the gas heater is gone; Willy must have taken it away himself. She is disappointed to learn that Biff is the one who took it away.

Act II.2 (Wagner's Office, Present Day):

Willy enters the office of his boss, Howard Wagner, a thirty-six year old man sitting at a typewriter table with a wire-recording machine. Howard plays Willy recordings of Howard's daughter and son. Willy tries to tell Howard what he wants, but Howard insists on playing a recording of his wife. Willy tells Howard that he would prefer not to travel anymore, but Howard says Willy is a road man. Willy says that he was in the firm when Howard's father used to carry him as a boy. Howard does not have a spot.

Willy talks about how being a salesman used to be a position that had personality in it and demanded comradeship and respect, but today there is no room for friendship or personality. Willy keeps asking for lower and lower salaries. Howard's father made promises to Willy, he cries, but Howard tells him to pull himself together, and then leaves. Willy leans on the desk and turns on the wire recorder. Willy leaps away with fright and shouts for Howard. Howard returns and fires Willy, telling him that he needs a good, long rest. Howard tells him that this is no time for false pride and he should rely on his sons.

Act II.3 (Loman Home, Past):

Howard exits and Ben enters, carrying his valise and umbrella. Willy asks him if he has secured the Alaska deal. The younger version of Linda enters, and she tells Ben that Willy has a great job in New York. She tells him not to go to Alaska. She wonders why everybody must conquer the world, and tells Willy that he's well-liked, and that Old Man Wagner promised that Willy would be a member of the firm someday. Young Biff enters with Young Happy. Willy insists that it is "who you know" that counts, but Ben leaves. Young Bernard arrives, and begs Biff to let him carry his helmet, but Happy wants to carry it. Willy prepares to escort them to the championship game. Willy tells Charley that he cannot go to Biff's baseball game because there is no room in the car. Willy is insulted when he thinks that Charley forgot about the game. Willy prepares to fight Charley.

Act II.4 (Charley's Office, Present Day):

Bernard, now mature, sits in Charley's office. Willy talks to Bernard, who tells him that he's going to leave for Washington soon. Willy tells Bernard about the deal with Bill Oliver, and asks Bernard his secret. Willy wonders why Biff's life ended after the Ebbets Field game. Bernard asks why Willy did not tell Biff to go to summer school so that he could pass math. Around that time, Biff disappeared for a month to see his father in New England, and when he came back he burned his UVA sneakers. Bernard wonders what happened in New England.

Charley enters and tells Willy that Bernard is going to argue a case in front of the Supreme Court. Charley gives Willy some money. Willy complains about Howard firing him, but Charley says that things like naming a child do not matter: the only thing that matters is what you can sell. Charley offers him a job again, even though he admits that he does not like Willy and Willy does not like him. Willy refuses once more, and Charley realizes that the sticking point is jealousy. Charley gives him money for insurance, and Willy remarks that a person is worth more dead than alive. Willy tells Charley to apologize to Bernard for him, and, on the verge of tears, tells Charley that he is his only friend.

Act II.5 (Restaurant, Present Day):

At the restaurant, Stanley the waiter seats Happy. A lavishly dressed girl enters and sits at the next table, and Happy tells Stanley to bring her champagne. Biff enters as Happy flirts with the girl, who is named Miss Forsythe. Happy tells Miss Forsythe that Biff is a quarterback with the New York Giants. Happy asks the girl out, and asks her if she can find a friend for Biff. The girl exits, and Happy remarks that girls like that are why he can't get married.

Biff tells Happy that he did a terrible thing. Bill Oliver did not remember Biff, and walked away when Biff approached him. Biff stole his fountain pen, though. Biff insists that they tell their father tonight to prove that Biff is not lying about his failures just to spite Willy. Happy tells him to say that he has a lunch date with Oliver tomorrow and to prolong the charade, because Willy is never so happy as when he is looking forward to something. Willy arrives, and tells his sons that he was fired. Although Biff tries to lie to Willy about his meeting with Oliver, Biff and Willy fight when Willy thinks that Biff insulted Bill Oliver. Biff finally gives up, and tells Happy that he cannot talk to Willy. As Biff tries to explain, Willy imagines himself arguing with Young Biff and Young Bernard about Biff failing math, and imagines Bernard telling Linda that Biff went to Boston to see Willy. Biff continues to explain what happened while Willy imagines the woman in the hotel room. Miss Forsythe returns with another woman and Willy leaves. Biff and Happy argue over who should do something about their dad. Happy denies to the women that Willy is their father.

Act II.6 (Hotel Room, Past):

Willy follows the Woman as he buttons his shirt. Someone knocks on the door, but Willy says he is not expecting anybody. The Woman claims that Willy ruined her, and that whenever he comes to the office she will make sure that he goes right through to the buyers. The knocking persists, and Willy tells the Woman to stay in the bathroom while he opens the door. It is Biff, who tells Willy that he flunked math. Biff begs Willy to talk to Mr. Birnbaum, his teacher, to convince him to pass Biff.

Biff hears the woman laugh, and she enters from the bathroom. Willy tells Biff that the woman is staying in the next room, which is being painted, so he let her take a shower in his room. Willy throws the woman out, as she claims Willy promised to buy her a pair of stockings. Willy tries to explain that the woman is a buyer, but Biff starts to cry. Willy admits that he had a relationship with the woman, but claims that it means nothing to him, and that he was lonely.

Act II.7 (Restaurant, Present Day):

At the restaurant, Stanley stands in front of Willy as Willy shouts at the waiter, thinking that he is Biff. Stanley tells Willy that his boys left with the two women and said that they will see him at home. Stanley tries to help him. Willy asks if there is a seed store in the neighborhood, because he has to buy some seeds to plant. Willy leaves for the seed store.

Act II.8 (Loman Home, Present Day):

Happy and Biff return home to find their mother there. Happy gives her flowers, and tells Linda that he and Biff met two girls. Linda knocks the flowers to the floor at Biff's feet. She asks whether they care if their father lives or dies. She says that they wouldn't even abandon a stranger at the restaurant as they did their father. Linda asks Happy if he had to go to his "lousy rotten whores" tonight, but Happy insists that all they did was follow Biff around trying to cheer him up. Linda throws them out, calling them a pair of animals. Linda says that Willy didn't have to say anything to her because he was so humiliated that he nearly limped when he entered the house. Biff insists that he talk to Willy, but Linda refuses to let him.

They hear a noise outside; it is Willy planting his seeds in the garden. They find Willy outside, carrying a flashlight, a hoe and a handful of seed packets. Willy imagines that he talks to Ben about his own funeral. He says that people will come from miles around, because he is well-known and well-liked, but Ben says he is a coward. Biff tells Willy that he is not coming back anymore and that he has no appointment with Oliver. Willy does not believe Biff, and tells him that he cut down his life for spite. Willy refuses to take the blame for Biff's failure. Biff takes the rubber tube out of his pocket and puts it on the table. Biff asks if it is supposed to make him feel sorry for his father. Biff tells his father that the reason they couldn't find him for months was because he was in jail for stealing a suit, and that he has stolen something at every good job since high school. Biff says that he is a dime a dozen, and so is Willy, but Willy insists that neither of them are unimportant.

Crying, Biff asks Willy to give up his phony dream. Willy is amazed to realize that Biff likes him. Linda says that he loves him. Willy can't believe Biff cries for him. Happy tells Linda that he will get married and change everything. Everybody goes to sleep but Willy, who remains in the kitchen talking to Ben. He imagines what wonderful things Biff could accomplish with $20,000 insurance money. Linda calls from her bedroom for Willy to come to bed, but Willy runs out of the house and speeds away in his car. Biff and Happy don jackets, while Linda walks out in mourning clothes and places flowers down on Willy's grave.

Requiem:

Charley tells Linda that it is getting dark as she stares at Willy's grave. Deeply angered, Happy tells Linda that Willy had no right to commit suicide. Linda wonders where all of the people that Willy knew are. Linda says it is the first time in thirty-five years that she and Willy were nearly free and clear financially, because Willy only needed a little salary. Biff says that Willy had the wrong dreams and that he never knew who he was. Charley says that "nobody dast blame this man," for Willy was a salesman, and for a salesman there is no rock bottom to the life. A salesman has to dream.

Biff asks Happy to leave the city with him, but Happy says that he's going to stay in the city and beat the racket, and show that Willy did not die in vain. Charley, Happy and Biff leave, while Linda remains at the grave. She asks why Willy did what he did, and says that she has just made the last payment on the house today, and that they are free and clear.

Check your Progress-1

1. What does “Death of a Salesman” play recall?

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2. When did Arthur Miller began writing Death of a Salesman?

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3. In which year did Arthur Miller reworked the play?

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4. What was the name of Willy Loman's wife?

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5.3 PRODUCTIONS

The original Broadway production was produced by Kermit Bloomgarden and Walter Fried. The play opened at the Morosco Theatre on February 10, 1949, closing on November 18, 1950, after 742 performances. The play starred Lee J. Cobb as Willy Loman, Mildred Dunnock as Linda, Arthur Kennedy as Biff, Howard Smith as Charley and Cameron Mitchell as Happy. Albert Dekker and Gene Lockhart later played Willy Loman during the original Broadway run. It won the Tony Award for Best Play, Best Supporting or Featured Actor (Arthur Kennedy), Best Scenic Design (Jo Mielziner), Producer (Dramatic), Author (Arthur Miller), and Director (Elia Kazan), as well as the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the New York Drama Critics' Circle

Award for Best Play. Jayne Mansfield performed in a production of the play in Dallas, Texas, in October 1953. Her performance in the play attracted Paramount Pictures to hire her for the studio's film productions.

The play has been revived on Broadway four times:

- June 26, 1975, at the Circle in the Square Theatre, running for 71 performances. George C. Scott starred as Willy.
- March 29, 1984, at the Broadhurst Theatre, running for 97 performances. Dustin Hoffman played Willy. In a return engagement, this production re-opened on September 14, 1984, and ran for 88 performances. The production won the Tony Award for Best Revival and the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Revival.
- February 10, 1999, at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre, running for 274 performances, with Brian Dennehy as Willy. The production won the Tony Award for: Best Revival of a Play; Best Actor in Play; Best Featured Actress in a Play (Elizabeth Franz); Best Direction of a Play (Robert Falls). This production was filmed.
- February 13, 2012, at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, in a limited run of 16 weeks. Directed by Mike Nichols, Philip Seymour Hoffman played Willy, Andrew Garfield played Biff, Linda Emond played Linda, and Finn Wittrock played Happy.

It was also part of the inaugural season of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1963.

Christopher Lloyd portrayed Willy Loman in a 2010 production by the Weston Playhouse in Weston, Vermont, which toured several New England venues.

Antony Sher played Willy Loman in the first Royal Shakespeare Company production of the play directed by Gregory Doran in Stratford-upon-Avon in the spring of 2015, with Harriet Walter as Linda Loman. This production transferred to London's West End, at the Noël Coward Theatre for ten weeks in the summer of 2015. This production was part of the centenary celebrations for playwright Arthur Miller.

The play ran until Saturday, 4 January 2020 at the Piccadilly Theatre in London, starring Sharon D. Clarke and Wendell Pierce.

5.4 LET US SUM UP

Summary

As a flute melody plays, Willy Loman returns to his home in Brooklyn one night, exhausted from a failed sales trip. His wife, Linda, tries to persuade him to ask his boss, Howard Wagner, to let him work in New York so that he won't have to travel. Willy says that he will talk to Howard the next day. Willy complains that Biff, his older son who has come back home to visit, has yet to make something of himself. Linda scolds Willy for being so critical, and Willy goes to the kitchen for a snack.

As Willy talks to himself in the kitchen, Biff and his younger brother, Happy, who is also visiting, reminisce about their adolescence and discuss their father's babbling, which often includes criticism of Biff's failure to live up to Willy's expectations. As Biff and Happy, dissatisfied with their lives, fantasize about buying a ranch out West, Willy becomes immersed in a daydream. He praises his sons, now younger, who are washing his car. The young Biff, a high school football star, and the young Happy appear. They interact affectionately with their father, who has just returned from a business trip. Willy confides in Biff and Happy that he is going to open his own business one day, bigger than that owned by his neighbor, Charley. Charley's son, Bernard, enters looking for Biff, who must study for math class in order to avoid failing. Willy points out to his sons that although Bernard is smart, he is not "well liked," which will hurt him in the long run.

A younger Linda enters, and the boys leave to do some chores. Willy boasts of a phenomenally successful sales trip, but Linda coaxes him into revealing that his trip was actually only meagerly successful. Willy complains that he soon won't be able to make all of the payments on their appliances and car. He complains that people don't like him and that he's not good at his job. As Linda consoles him, he hears the laughter of his mistress. He approaches The Woman, who is still laughing, and engages in another reminiscent daydream. Willy and The Woman flirt, and she thanks him for giving her stockings.

The Woman disappears, and Willy fades back into his prior daydream, in the kitchen. Linda, now mending stockings, reassures him. He scolds her mending and orders her to throw the stockings out. Bernard bursts in, again looking for Biff. Linda reminds Willy that Biff has to return a football that he stole, and she adds that Biff is too rough with the neighborhood girls. Willy hears The Woman laugh and explodes at Bernard and Linda. Both leave, and though the daydream ends, Willy continues to mutter to himself. The older Happy comes downstairs and tries to quiet Willy. Agitated, Willy shouts his regret about not going to Alaska with his brother, Ben, who eventually found a diamond mine in Africa and became rich. Charley, having heard the commotion, enters. Happy goes off to bed, and Willy and Charley begin to play cards. Charley offers Willy a job, but Willy, insulted, refuses it. As they argue, Willy imagines that Ben enters. Willy accidentally calls Charley Ben. Ben inspects Willy's house and tells him that he has to catch a train soon to look at properties in Alaska. As Willy talks to Ben about the prospect of going to Alaska, Charley, seeing no one there, gets confused and questions Willy. Willy yells at Charley, who leaves. The younger Linda enters and Ben meets her. Willy asks Ben impatiently about his life. Ben recounts his travels and talks about their father. As Ben is about to leave, Willy daydreams further, and Charley and Bernard rush in to tell him that Biff and Happy are stealing lumber. Although Ben eventually leaves, Willy continues to talk to him.

Back in the present, the older Linda enters to find Willy outside. Biff and Happy come downstairs and discuss Willy's condition with their mother. Linda scolds Biff for judging Willy harshly. Biff tells her that he knows Willy is a fake, but he refuses to elaborate. Linda mentions that Willy has tried to commit suicide. Happy grows angry and rebukes Biff for his failure in the business world. Willy enters and yells at Biff. Happy intervenes and eventually proposes that he and Biff go into the sporting goods business together. Willy immediately brightens and gives Biff a host of tips about asking for a loan from one of Biff's old employers, Bill Oliver. After more arguing and reconciliation, everyone finally goes to bed.

Act II opens with Willy enjoying the breakfast that Linda has made for him. Willy ponders the bright-seeming future before getting angry again about his expensive appliances. Linda informs Willy that Biff and Happy are taking him out to dinner that night. Excited, Willy announces that he is going to make Howard Wagner give him a New York job. The phone rings, and Linda chats with Biff, reminding him to be nice to his father at the restaurant that night.

As the lights fade on Linda, they come up on Howard playing with a wire recorder in his office. Willy tries to broach the subject of working in New York, but Howard interrupts him and makes him listen to his kids and wife on the wire recorder. When Willy finally gets a word in, Howard rejects his plea. Willy launches into a lengthy recalling of how a legendary salesman named Dave Singleman inspired him to go into sales. Howard leaves and Willy gets angry. Howard soon re-enters and tells Willy to take some time off. Howard leaves and Ben enters, inviting Willy to join him in Alaska. The younger Linda enters and reminds Willy of his sons and job. The young Biff enters, and Willy praises Biff's prospects and the fact that he is well liked.

Ben leaves and Bernard rushes in, eagerly awaiting Biff's big football game. Willy speaks optimistically to Biff about the game. Charley enters and teases Willy about the game. As Willy chases Charley off, the lights rise on a different part of the stage. Willy continues yelling from offstage, and Jenny, Charley's secretary, asks a grown-up Bernard to quiet him down. Willy enters and prattles on about a "very big deal" that Biff is working on. Daunted by Bernard's success (he mentions to Willy that he is going to Washington to fight a case), Willy asks Bernard why Biff turned out to be such a failure. Bernard asks Willy what happened in Boston that made Biff decide not to go to summer school. Willy defensively tells Bernard not to blame him.

Charley enters and sees Bernard off. When Willy asks for more money than Charley usually loans him, Charley again offers Willy a job. Willy again refuses and eventually tells Charley that he was fired. Charley scolds Willy for always needing to be liked and angrily gives him the money. Calling Charley his only friend, Willy exits on the verge of tears.

At Frank's Chop House, Happy helps Stanley, a waiter, prepare a table. They ogle and chat up a girl, Miss Forsythe, who enters the restaurant. Biff enters, and Happy introduces him to Miss Forsythe, continuing to flirt with her. Miss Forsythe, a call girl, leaves to telephone another call girl (at Happy's request), and Biff spills out that he waited six hours for Bill Oliver and Oliver didn't even recognize him. Upset at his father's unrelenting misconception that he, Biff, was a salesman for Oliver, Biff plans to relieve Willy of his illusions. Willy enters, and Biff tries gently, at first, to tell him what happened at Oliver's office. Willy blurts out that he was fired. Stunned, Biff again tries to let Willy down easily. Happy cuts in with remarks suggesting Biff's success, and Willy eagerly awaits the good news.

Biff finally explodes at Willy for being unwilling to listen. The young Bernard runs in shouting for Linda, and Biff, Happy, and Willy start to argue. As Biff explains what happened, their conversation recedes into the background. The young Bernard tells Linda that Biff failed math. The restaurant conversation comes back into focus and Willy criticizes Biff for failing math. Willy then hears the voice of the hotel operator in Boston and shouts that he is not in his room. Biff scrambles to quiet Willy and claims that Oliver is talking to his partner about giving Biff the money. Willy's renewed interest and probing questions irk Biff more, and he screams at Willy. Willy hears The Woman laugh and he shouts back at Biff, hitting him and staggering. Miss Forsythe enters with another call girl, Letta. Biff helps Willy to the washroom and, finding Happy flirting with the girls, argues with him about Willy. Biff storms out, and Happy follows with the girls.

Willy and The Woman enter, dressing themselves and flirting. The door knocks and Willy hurries The Woman into the bathroom. Willy answers the door; the young Biff enters and tells Willy that he failed math. Willy tries to usher him out of the room, but Biff imitates his math teacher's lisp, which elicits laughter from Willy and The Woman. Willy tries to cover up his indiscretion, but Biff refuses to believe his stories and storms out, dejected, calling Willy a "phony little fake." Back in the restaurant, Stanley helps Willy up. Willy asks him where he can find a seed store. Stanley gives him directions to one, and Willy hurries off.

The light comes up on the Loman kitchen, where Happy enters looking for Willy. He moves into the living room and sees Linda. Biff comes inside and Linda scolds the boys and slaps away the flowers in Happy's hand. She yells at them for abandoning Willy. Happy attempts to appease her, but Biff goes in search of Willy. He finds Willy planting seeds in the garden with a flashlight. Willy is consulting Ben about a $20,000 proposition. Biff approaches him to say goodbye and tries to bring him inside. Willy moves into the house, followed by Biff, and becomes angry again about Biff's failure. Happy tries to calm Biff, but Biff and Willy erupt in fury at each other. Biff starts to sob, which touches Willy. Everyone goes to bed except Willy, who renews his conversation with Ben, elated at how great Biff will be with $20,000 of insurance money. Linda soon calls out for Willy but gets no response. Biff and Happy listen as well. They hear Willy's car speed away.

In the requiem, Linda and Happy stand in shock after Willy's poorly attended funeral. Biff states that Willy had the wrong dreams. Charley defends Willy as a victim of his profession. Ready to leave, Biff invites Happy to go back out West with him. Happy declares that he will stick it out in New York to validate Willy's death. Linda asks Willy for forgiveness for being unable to cry. She begins to sob, repeating "We're free. . . ." All exit, and the flute melody is heard as the curtain falls.

5.5 KEYWORDS

- **Surly:** bad-tempered; sullenly rude; hostile and uncivil.
- **Temporary:** for a time only; not permanent.
- **Thunderstruck:** struck with amazement.
- **Tired To The Death**: an expression meaning exhausted. Here, the phrase can also be interpreted literally because Willy has attempted suicide several times and is planning to try again.
- **Undercurrent**: an underlying tendency, opinion, etc., usually one that is kept hidden and not expressed openly.
- **Worm:** an abject, wretched, or contemptible person.

5.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Write a short note on productions based on Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller.
- Write a summary of Act II.7 (Restaurant, Present Day) of Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller.
- Summarize Act II.8 (Loman Home, Present Day) of Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller.

5.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- "Death of a Salesman". Retrieved March 6, 2011.
- "Death of a Salesman". www.therep.org. Archived from the original on February 5, 2017.
- Gottfried, Martin (2004). Arthur Miller: His Life and Work. Perseus Books Group. p. 118. ISBN 978-0-306-81377-1.
- Koon, Helene. Twentieth Century Interpretations of Death of Salesman. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Bradford, Wade. "The American Dream in "Death of a Salesman"". About.com.

5. 8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

The play recalls the traditions of Yiddish theater that focus on family as the crucial element, reducing most plot to the confines of the nuclear family. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q 1)**

Miller began writing Death of a Salesman at the age of seventeen. . **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q 2)**

Arthur Miller reworked the play in 1947. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q 3)**

The name of Willy Loman’s wife is Linda Loman. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q 4)**

UNIT-6 ARTHUR MILLER- DEATH OF A SALESMAN -3

STRUCTURE

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Analysis

6.3 Reception

6.4 Adaptations in Other Media

6.5 Let us sum up

6.6 Keywords

6.7 Questions for Review

6.8 Suggested Reading and References

6.9 Answers to Check your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you will be able to know about the analysis of “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller.
- You would also be able to go through the reception as well as adaptations in various other Media of “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Death of a Salesman is a 1949 stage play written by American playwright Arthur Miller. It won the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play. The play premiered on Broadway in February 1949, running for 742 performances, and has been revived on Broadway four times, winning three Tony Awards for

Best Revival. It is widely considered to be one of the greatest plays of the 20th century.

Death of a Salesman is a tragedy about the differences between the Loman family's dreams and the reality of their lives. The play is a scathing critique of the American Dream and of the competitive, materialistic American society of the late 1940s. The storyline features Willy Loman, an average guy who attempts to hide his averageness and failures behind increasingly delusional hallucinations as he strives to be a "success."

The idea for the play first manifested itself as a short story, which author Arthur Miller initially abandoned. His interest was renewed later on however, by an uncle who was a salesman. When the play version appeared on Broadway, it was a total hit. It won Arthur Miller the Pulitzer Prize in 1949. By this point in his career, Miller had already proven his chops with his hit play, All My Sons. However, with Death of a Salesman, Miller's career was launched into a whole new level.

Death of a Salesman is widely considered even to this day to be one of the greatest American plays ever written. It's often ranked right up there with classics like Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night, Thornton Wilder's Our Town, and Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

Like all classics, Death of a Salesman's themes still ring true today. Its harsh criticism of American capitalism may not be quite as shocking as it was when the play first premiered, but we have a feeling that every modern-day audience member knows exactly what Miller is getting at—whether you agree with him or not.

6.2 ANALYSIS

Act I.1 (Loman Home, Present Day):

At the beginning of the play, Arthur Miller establishes Willy Loman as a troubled and misguided man, at heart a salesman and a dreamer. He emphasizes his preoccupation with success. However, Miller makes it equally apparent that Willy Loman is not a successful man. Although in his sixties, he is still a traveling salesman bereft of any stable location or occupation, and clings only to his dreams and ideals. There is a strong core of resentment in Willy Loman's character and his actions assume a more glorious past than was actually the case. Willy sentimentalizes the neighborhood as it was years ago, and is nostalgic for his time working for Frank Wagner, especially because his former boss's son, Howard Wagner, fails to appreciate Willy. Miller presents Willy as a strong and boisterous man with great bravado but little energy to support his impression of vitality. He is perpetually weary and exhibits signs of dementia, contradicting himself and displaying some memory loss.

Linda, in contrast, shows little of Willy's boisterous intensity. Rather, she is dependable and kind, perpetually attempting to smooth out conflicts that Willy might encounter. Linda has a similar longing for an idealized past, but has learned to suppress her dreams and her dissatisfaction with her husband and sons. Miller indicates that she is a woman with deep regrets about her life; she must continually reconcile her husband with her sons, and support a man who has failed in his life's endeavor. Linda exists only in the context of her family relationships. As a mother to Biff and Happy and a husband to Willy, and must depend on them for whatever success she can grasp.

The major conflict in Death of a Salesman is between Biff Loman and his father. Even before Biff appears on stage, Linda indicates that Biff and Willy are perpetually at odds with one another because of Biff's inability to live up to his father's expectations. As Linda says, Biff is a man who has not yet "found himself." At thirty-four years old, Biff remains to some degree an adolescent. This is best demonstrated by his inability to keep a job. He and Happy still live in their old bunk beds; despite the fact that this reminds Linda of better times, it is a clear sign that neither of the sons has matured.

A major theme of the play is the lost opportunities that each of the characters face. Linda Loman, reminiscing about the days when her sons were not yet grown and had a less contentious relationship with their father, regrets the state of disarray into which her family has fallen. Willy Loman believes that if Frank Wagner had survived, he would have been given greater respect and power within the company. Willy also regrets the opportunities that have passed by Biff, whom he believes to have the capability to be a great man.

Miller uses the first segment of the play to foreshadow later plot developments. Willy worries about having trouble driving and expresses dissatisfaction with his situation at work, and Linda speaks of conflict between Willy and his sons. Each of these will become important in driving the plot and the resolution of the play.

Act I.2 (Loman Home, Present Day):

Biff and Happy are both trapped in a perpetual adolescence. Both men are tall and well-built, but their emotional development does not mirror their physical appearance. Happy reminisces about his first sexual experience, while Biff handles a football, a sign of his childhood. The setting of the segment, the boys' childhood bedroom, also suggests that they are trapped in their past. Even the names of the two men, Happy and Biff, are childlike nicknames inappropriate for mature adults.

Biff, in particular, is a drifter who demonstrates little sense of maturity or responsibility. He moves from job to job without any particular plan, and is most content working jobs that use his physicality but do not offer any hope for a stable future. Biff is self-destructive, ruining every job opportunity that he might have, and realizes his own failure. He is aware that he is a disappointment and an embarrassment to his father, who holds great aspirations for his son. Biff feels that he is just a boy and must take steps to demonstrate a shift into the maturity of adulthood.

Happy, in contrast, is less self-aware than his brother, yet is equally confused and is similarly immature. Happy has the ostensible characteristics of adulthood including a steady profession, yet his attitude is that of a teenager. He is a manipulative womanizer who manifests little respect for the women he seduces; his euphemism for seduction, "knockin' them over," suggests at best an impersonal connection and at worst a violent subtext. Happy clearly demonstrates aspects of a Madonna-whore complex; he cannot respect women with whom he has sex, believing them to be inauthentic, and instead wishes to have as a partner a person who has "character" such as his mother. This suggests that Happy cannot respect a woman whom he successfully seduces.

Happy's immaturity is perhaps even more apparent in this segment of the play, for his adolescent qualities starkly contrast with his adult lifestyle. Although he has a respectable job, Happy compares himself to his co-workers in terms of physical accomplishment; he believes he should not have to take orders from men over whom he is athletically superior. He thus approaches the workplace with a school-yard mentality, believing that physical strength is more important than intellectual development.

Miller contrasts the ideas that the two men have with regards to success, the major thematic concern of the play. Biff believes himself to be a failure because he does not display the trappings of adulthood, such as a steady occupation and a stable home life, and because he has made mistakes in his life. Happy, in contrast, believes himself to be a failure because although he is ostensibly more successful than his brother, he still feels empty and unfulfilled.

Act I.3 (Loman Home, Present Day):

Arthur Miller employs a disjointed time structure in Death of a Salesman, in which the play shifts settings and time within the act. The "present" time of the aged Willy Loman and his grown sons gives way to the time when Biff and Happy were teenagers. These scenes are explanatory: the actions and conversations of teenage Biff and Happy clarify the behavior of the characters in their early thirties. The tone of these scenes is idyllic; the tension that is later apparent between Biff and Willy is nonexistent, while both characters demonstrate a confidence and contentment that has disappeared decades later.

The segment demonstrates the inherent causes of the Loman sons' immaturity. Willy has instilled in his sons a belief that appearances are more important than actual achievement or talent, contrasting his athletic and handsome sons with the hardworking yet uncharismatic Bernard. Willy values intangible characteristics such as personality over any actual barometer of achievement, which he dismisses as unimportant in the business world. The contrast that Willy makes is between men who are "liked" and men who are "well-liked," believing that to be "well-liked," as defined by charisma and physical appearance, is the major criterion for success.

This causes his sons, particularly Biff, to eschew their studies in favor of athletic achievement. Happy continually brags that he is losing weight, while Biff, ready to go to college on an athletic scholarship, shows enough disregard for his studies to fail math. This segment also foreshadows Biff's later troubles; he steals from the locker room as a teenager just as he later steals from Bill Oliver. Although Willy does not speak directly to Happy about how he should treat girls, Miller indicates that it is from his father that Happy gained his unhealthy attitude toward women.

Miller defines several major themes of Death of a Salesman in this flashback. Most importantly, he develops the theme of success and the various characters' definitions of it. Miller presents Charley and his son Bernard as unqualified exemplars of success; Bernard is an exemplary student, while Charley owns his own business. However, Willy cannot accept the success of these two characters, believing that it is his personality that will make Willy a greater success than Charley and his sons more successful than Bernard. Yet there is an unmistakable degree of delusion in Willy's boasting; he fails to realize the limits of charm and charisma when it masks superficiality. Even Willy's claims of his own success at this point seem invalid; he brags about meeting important and powerful men, yet can only specifically describe briefly meeting the mayor of Providence. Furthermore, he worries that others do not respect him as they do Charley and that he is not making enough money. Even in the prime of his life, Willy Loman is an inauthentic man whose dreams exceed his limited grasp.

Act I.4 (Hotel Room, Past):

Miller readily switches from location to location during Death of a Salesman, as the flashback to Willy at home switches to a flashback of Willy in a hotel room in Boston. This serves as an ironic counterpoint to Linda's comment that Willy is idolized by his children; the fact that he is having an affair shows that Willy is not a man worthy of such fervent admiration. He displays the same callous disregard for women that Happy demonstrates as an adult, yet where Happy disregards women with whom he has insubstantial relationships, Willy is unfaithful to the devoted Linda. The flashback also demonstrates that Willy is not a man respected by others; the woman with whom he has an affair selected. Willy for his sense of humor rather than for any substantial qualities.

Act I.5 (Hotel Room, Past):

This segment of the chapter, also a flashback, returns to the Loman household, which is the setting for most of the play. Miller contrasts Willy's life on the road in which he behaves like a callous womanizer with his behavior as a husband at home. A great deal of Willy's dedication to Linda stems from his own sense of pride; he does not want her to mend stockings because it shows that he cannot provide her with the financial resources to buy new stockings. Miller further establishes the contrast between Biff and Bernard; Bernard is more concerned with Biff's studies than either Biff or Willy, while Biff is reckless and abusive.

Willy Loman deals with each of these problems through denial. He tells Linda that there is absolutely nothing wrong with Biff, particularly in comparison to Bernard. However, Willy feels the strain of his indiscretions, as is shown when he hears the voice of the woman with whom he has had an affair. The problems that Willy has during his later years are to a great extent self-inflicted, the product of long-standing guilt for his actions.

Act I.6 (Hotel Room, Past):

If Charley and Bernard are the symbols of tangible material success in Death of a Salesman, Willy's older brother Ben symbolizes the broadest reaches of success, which are intangible and practically imaginary. Whether Ben is a Horatio Alger figure, a character whose history is to be taken literally, is disputable; some aspects of his biography are so romanticized and absurdly grandiose that it is likely that the information that Miller gives concerning Ben is filtered through Willy Loman's imagination. When Ben appears in the play, it is only as a representation of Willy's imagination. For Willy, Ben represents fantastic success gained through intangible luck rather than through the boredom of steady dedication and hard work; Ben has gained what Willy always wanted but never could achieve.

The encounter between Charley and Willy illustrates that Willy feels some jealousy toward his friend for his success. Willy offers advice to Charley at every opportunity in an attempt to assert some dominance over him. He interprets a man as a person who can handle tools well, returning to a physical definition of manhood in comparison to monetary or status-based definitions that would assert Charley's superiority.

Likewise, Charley seems to realize Willy's envy, and behaves tentatively toward his friend. Although he does injure Willy's pride by offering him a job, Charley does so tentatively, for he has great pity for Willy that he knows he must mask. Charley does, however, give the most sound advice to Willy, advising him to let Biff do what he pleases and leave for Texas.

Act I.7 (Hotel Room, Past):

Once again, Miller shifts the setting of the play to previous years in a seemingly imaginary scene that contrasts Willy's failed aspirations with the supposedly great accomplishments of his brother Ben. Willy deals almost entirely in superlatives. Ben is a legendary man who, out of pure luck, ended up the owner of a diamond mine. Ben, who exists as an extension of Willy's imagination, speaks of their father in similar terms, as a "great man" and an inventor. These boasts are exaggerations meant to emphasize Willy's feelings of inadequacy in comparison to his brother and father. Willy even pathetically attempts to justify life in Brooklyn as a life comparable to that in the outdoors. This familial history provides a neat complement to Willy's relationship with Biff; just as Biff feels himself a failure in his father's eyes, Willy perceives himself to be inadequate in comparison to his father and brother.

The second appearance of Young Biff and Young Happy reinforces the values that Willy has instilled in his sons. Happy once again brags about losing weight, showing his focus on physical appearance and athleticism, while Biff steals from the nearby construction site. For Willy, stealing is merely an extension of a capitalist mindset; he makes no distinction between the fearless character in jail and the fearless character in the stock exchange. This demonstrates the insufficiencies of Willy's views on success: he attributes success to luck or immorality and cannot see the virtues of hard work and discipline as shown by Charley and Bernard. Willy can conceive of success as a mantra by Ben or the result of fearless daring, but he cannot imagine that hard work and dedication are critical to the formula. Willy's business values inform his instructions to his sons, while their instructions from Willy inform their behavior in the business world.

Act I.8 (Hotel Room, Past):

Miller, who returns to the present reality of the play in this segment, definitively establishes that the "flashbacks" occur in the context of Willy Loman's imagination and are a symptom of a larger dementia. Linda attributes her husband's hallucinations to Biff's presence, likely a sign that Biff reminds Willy of his failures as a father and as a businessman. However, the aspect of Willy's dementia that Miller focuses on during this segment of the play is the effect which it has on Linda. She has been the one to deal with Willy's erratic behavior alone, and doing so has made her age considerably. She is her husband's only defender, even when this role threatens to further exacerbate the conflicts that her family faces.

Miller deals with the indignities that Willy has suffered largely in terms of their effect on Linda. Since her existence and identity depend entirely on her husband, she staunchly defends him even when she realizes that he does not deserve to be defended. When she tells Biff that he cannot love her if he does not love Willy, Linda essentially chooses her husband over her children. She does this largely out of a strong feeling of duty toward Willy, for she knows that she is the only person who shows any concern for whether he lives or dies. Significantly, she centers her defense of Willy on his status as a human being and not his role as a father or husband. In these respects, Linda thus admits Willy's failures but nevertheless still maintains that "attention must be paid" to him. This declaration is significant in its construction; Linda declares that someone must regard Willy, but does not specify anybody in particular, thus avoiding a particular accusation of her sons. She condemns society in general for the ill treatment of her husband. As shown by Linda's condemnation of Happy's philandering and Biff's immaturity, Linda has few qualms about confronting her sons, yet when she demands attention for her husband she does not lay the blame only on them.

However, as Miller ennobles Linda as the long-suffering and devoted wife, he nevertheless shows Willy Loman to be undeserving of the respect and admiration Linda accords him. Biff emphasizes the fact that Willy has no sense of character and no respect for Linda, while hints about her physical appearance emphasize that Linda has aged considerably because of her demanding husband.

The final segment of the first act serves as a turning point for Biff, who realizes that he must "apply himself" as his parents have demanded of him. This revelation comes when Linda reveals that Willy has attempted suicide, finally focusing on the severity of his plight. Willy's suicide attempts are the mark of a failed man, but, more importantly, show the disparity between his aspirations and his actual achievements.

Biff's idea of a sporting goods business with his brother demonstrates the various character flaws of Biff and his father. It continues the family emphasis on appearance and personality over substance and achievement. Biff places his aspirations for success on Bill Oliver just as his father depended on Frank Wagner; Linda rightly worries about this, thinking that Bill Oliver may not remember Biff. Finally, the idea of the sporting goods business emphasizes the immaturity of Biff and Happy; both men want to work in sporting goods as an attempt to relive their youth and high school athletic glory. Even Willy himself sees this as an opportunity for himself and his sons to regain what they had lost decades before.

Act II.1 (Loman Home, Present Day):

The second act begins with a dramatic shift in tone from the previous act, as Willy now appears cheerful and optimistic. Most importantly, the pipe connected to the gas heater with which Willy tried to commit suicide is now gone; Linda automatically assumes that Willy took it away himself, although this will come into question later in the play.

But the sense of optimism that dominates the start of the act is somewhat unfounded. His change in mood is entirely based on Biff's meeting with Bill Oliver, trumped up in Willy's mind to a sure-bet business plan. Willy has gone from suicidal to confident and cheerful in the matter of one night, despite the fact that nothing concrete has been resolved, because the dream of the Oliver plan gave him hope.

Act II.2 (Wagner's Office, Present Day):

In this segment of the second act, Arthur Miller uses Howard Wagner as a symbol of progress and innovation in contrast with Willy Loman's outdated notions of business tactics. Most of the details in Howard's office emphasize technological innovation and novelty, from his well-appointed, modern office to the recording machine that fascinates Howard. This shows that Howard is more interested in the future than the past, as he ignores Willy to consider his new machine. In contrast, Willy speaks not of his future with the company but with his history and past promises. That Willy is frightened by the recorder is a symbol of Willy's obsolescence within a modern business world; he cannot deal with innovation. Even his values, as he notes, belong to a different time. Willy speaks of a past time when being a salesman demanded respect and friendship, a time that has clearly passed, if it ever existed at all.

Willy once again falls prey to his idea that personality and personal relationships are critical factors in the business world. He cites the memory of Howard's father bringing Howard as a newborn to the office and his own role in helping to name the boy. While personally relevant, in terms of the business world this fact bears little weight.

Act II.3 (Loman Home, Past):

Miller once again shifts the setting of the play to an earlier date in order to contrast Willy's present experiences with those of his idealized past. The reappearance of Ben is symbolic of the dreams Willy Loman has sacrificed for a more secure - and more mundane - existence. This segment gives some indication that Linda has, in some respects, limited her husband by forcing him to take a more stable path. She claims that not every man has to conquer the world, perhaps assuming that Willy Loman is not a man capable of doing so.

However, Miller reemphasizes Willy's belief in personal connections as the critical factor in business. By this point in the play, Willy's claim that it is "who you know" that counts has been thoroughly disproved, for Willy was fired by a man whom he has known since his birth.

Bernard and Charley's reappearance in this segment foreshadow their later roles in the play. This segment reestablishes the contentious relationship between Charley and Willy, who is shocked to think that Charley may not be in total awe of Biff's athletic achievements. It also reiterates the way in which Bernard remained in Charley's shadow. The dynamic among the characters has obviously shifted, and Miller's insertion of a flashback at this point foreshadows a later development of the dynamic between the Lomans, Bernard, and Charley.

Act II.4 (Charley's Office, Present Day):

Miller juxtaposes the unsuccessful Willy Loman with the great successes of Bernard and Charley in this segment. Miller continues to develop Willy Loman as a pathetic and deranged character who hallucinates and shouts to himself as he walks through the hallway of an office building. Bernard, in contrast, is a successful man, esteemed in his profession and content with his private life.

The portrayal of Bernard that Miller offers in this segment is ironic, considering Willy's previous comparisons of Bernard to his sons. While Willy believed that Bernard's more serious behavior and lack of "personality" would hobble him once he entered the business world, the opposite seems to be the case. While Happy is at best moderately successful and unhappy, and Biff is an outright failure, Bernard, whom Willy believed to have skills not applicable to the business world, is an obvious success. Bernard himself even seems to realize that Willy's expectations for his sons have been thwarted, and holds back from telling Willy the reason why he is going to Washington in order to avoid embarrassing him.

Bernard also serves to elucidate the development of the relationship between Willy and Biff Loman. Bernard can pinpoint a turning point in their relationship, citing a specific time after which Biff's attitude toward his father changed. Bernard seems to attribute this occurrence to Biff's current failure, claiming that Biff never wanted to go to summer school or graduate high school after visiting his father in New England. Miller makes it clear that Willy is directly responsible for Biff's failures. According to Bernard's interpretation of the event, Biff is nearly self-destructive, ruining his chances for a stable future in order to spite his father.

Charley also represents a degree of success and serenity that Willy is unable to achieve. It is Charley who best identifies the problem with Willy's philosophy of business: Willy wrongly believes that it is personality and intangible factors that are critical to success, while Charley knows that it is in fact more concrete factors such as sales that determine whether a man is successful. Charley also realizes the degree to which Willy is jealous of him and his son; he believes that this is the reason that Willy will not accept a job from him.

The relationship between Charley and Willy is not based on affection, but rather on custom and a developed sense of obligation. Charley admits that he does not like Willy and Willy dislikes him in return, but Charley is in fact Willy's only friend. This declaration is one of the few moments in the play in which Willy seems to realize and acknowledge his own pathetic state. This is accompanied by Willy's claim that a person is worth more dead than alive, which emphasizes Willy's suicidal state and foreshadows events to come.

Act II.5 (Restaurant, Present Day):

While Biff's failures and flaws have been a major preoccupation throughout the play, this segment demonstrates how detrimental Happy's character flaws can be. A compulsive womanizer, Happy tells blatant lies to the women that he meets, claiming that Biff is a professional athlete, then gets rid of his father in favor of seducing Miss Forsythe. In the final, most cruel move that Happy makes, he denies that Willy is his father, thus repudiating his father even more callously than Biff has done.

Biff, in contrast, merely continues his pattern of foolish mistakes in this segment. While Biff may have started to fail in order to spite his father, by this point his self-destructive behavior is ingrained. His plan to ask Bill Oliver for money was dubious at best, but Biff made it even more unlikely by pseudo-accidentally pocketing his fountain pen. In contrast to Happy, Biff does show some concern for his father's feelings; he worries that Willy will think that Biff intentionally botched the meeting with Bill Oliver.

The Loman sons' insistence on framing Biff's meeting with Bill Oliver in the best possible terms shows that their true interest in the sporting goods business is not for personal gain, but rather to please their father. Biff believes that he cannot tell Willy the truth about his meeting with Bill Oliver, because Willy will think that Biff purposely sabotaged the meeting as an affront to him. Biff's concern is primarily what his father thinks of him and what affect this will have on him; his failure during the meeting, with the exception of his embarrassment over taking the fountain pen, is barely a consideration unless it involves how his father will react to the event. Miller demonstrates that in spite of his weakness, Willy still dominates his sons, whose actions are based on how their father will react to them.

Willy's hallucination about Young Biff failing math and visiting him in Boston gives a greater indication of the reason why Biff garnered such animosity toward his father. Willy ties Biff's visit to Boston with his affair in the same city; the likely confrontation between Willy's life at home as a father and his life on the road as a salesman seems to provide the motivation for Biff's spiteful, self-destructive behavior.

Act II.6 (Hotel Room, Past):

Once again returning to the Loman family's past, Miller finally gives a full explanation for Biff's refusal to take a summer school course, the critical event that determined his chain of failures. It is Willy's infidelity that prompted the change in Biff, as he learned that his father was having an affair with the woman in Boston. Yet the revelation of this reason for Biff's bitterness is not the only example in this segment of how Willy has carelessly ruined the lives of those around him. Willy has ruined the reputation of the Woman, but can offer nothing to her in return. Despite the promises that he has made to her, he denies and discards her. This parallels Willy's earlier insistence that Linda should not mend stockings. Stockings serve as a symbol of what Willy can provide and as a measure of his success.

Act II.7 (Restaurant, Present Day):

Yet another humiliation for Willy Loman occurs in this segment: his sons have abandoned him at the restaurant, leaving him alone with the waiter while they go out with the two superficial women. Willy's preoccupation with seeds is symbolic of his realization that he has created nothing permanent or worthwhile in his life. As a salesman, he is merely a liaison for what others create, while the family that he made himself has abandoned him at the restaurant. Seeds symbolize something more permanent and tangible even than his family. This new theme also relates back to Willy's seeming embarrassment at Ben's notion that he cannot hunt or fish in Brooklyn; Willy worries that, as a salesman, he is not close enough to nature. His wish to plant seeds is a way to compensate for this deficiency.

Act II.8 (Loman Home, Present Day):

The final sequence of the second act parallels the end of the first act in structure and emotional resolution. Linda once again acts as the conscience and voice of reason in the household, berating Biff and Happy for their lack of concern for their father. Biff and Happy, in turn, resolve to do improve themselves: Happy decides to settle down, while Biff breaks down emotionally and cries for his father. Biff admits that he was unavailable for months not because he did not care to contact his parents, but rather because he was in jail. This contradicts earlier indications that he did not care for his parents.

The final confrontation between Biff and Willy seems aligned along different concerns for each man. While Biff focuses on Willy's false dreams for himself and for his sons, Willy seems concerned only with what his sons think of him. Willy still retains a belief that Biff and

Happy are important people capable of great success, while Biff takes the more realistic view that they are common people incapable of achieving their unrealistic dreams. This returns to the theme of Willy's boundless aspirations, which guarantee that he will never be satisfied with any degree of success in his real life. It is this inability to fully achieve success that drives Willy Loman to suicide.

Willy Loman's suicide can be interpreted as a noble sacrifice, driven by the belief that Biff may go into business with the insurance money he gained from his death. Paradoxically, Willy's suicide may be related to his reconciliation with his elder son; having realized how much Biff cares for him and convinced that Biff does not behave out of spite, Willy can now sacrifice himself for his son.

REQUIEM

Willy Loman's funeral is a cruel and pathetic end to the salesman's life. Only his family and Charley attend, while none of his other customers, friends, or colleagues bother to pay their respects. However, the funeral rests primarily on Willy's status as a salesman: it is the character of a salesman that determined Willy's course of action, according to Miller. For a salesman, there are only dreams and hope for future sales. Happy and Biff interpret Willy's suicide in terms of these business dreams: Happy wishes to stay in the city and succeed where his father failed, while Biff rejects the business ethos that destroyed his father and plans to leave New York. Both Happy and Charley frame Willy Loman as a martyr figure, blameless for his suicide and noble in his aspirations, repudiating the humiliations that Willy suffered during the course of the play. The play ends on an ironic note, as Linda claims that she has made the final payment on their house, creating a sense of financial security for the Lomans for the first time. Willy Loman worked for thirty-five years in order to build this sense of security and stability, yet committed suicide before he could enjoy the results of his labor.

6.3 RECEPTION

In the United States

Death of a Salesman first opened on February 10, 1949, to great success. Drama critic John Gassner wrote that "the ecstatic reception accorded Death of Salesman has been reverberating for some time wherever there is an ear for theatre, and it is undoubtedly the best American play since A Streetcar Named Desire."

In the United Kingdom

The play reached London on July 28, 1949. London responses were mixed, but mostly favorable. The Times criticized it, saying that "the strongest play of New York theatrical season should be transferred to London in the deadest week of the year." However, the public understanding of the ideology of the play was different from that in America. Some people, such as Eric Keown, think of Death of a Salesman as "a potential tragedy deflected from its true course by Marxist sympathies."

In Germany

The play was hailed as "the most important and successful night" in Hebbel-Theater in Berlin. It was said that "it was impossible to get the audience to leave the theatre" by whom?   at the end of the performance. The Berlin production was more successful than New York, possibly due to better interpretation.

In India

Compared to Tennessee Williams and Beckett, Arthur Miller and his Death of a Salesman were less influential. Rajinder Paul said that "Death of a Salesman has only an indirect influence on Indian theatre practitions." However, it was translated and produced in Bengali as 'Pheriwalar Mrityu' by the theater group Nandikar. Director Feroz Khan adapted the play in Hindi and English by the name "Salesman Ramlal" played by Satish Kaushik and with the role of his son portrayed by Kishore Kadam.

In China

Death of a Salesman was welcomed in China. There, Arthur Miller directed the play himself. As Miller stated, "It depends on the father and the mother and the children. That's what it's about. The salesman part is what he does to stay alive. But he could be a peasant, he could be, whatever." Here, the play focuses on the family relationship. It is easier for the Chinese public to understand the relationship between father and son because "One thing about the play that is very Chinese is the way Willy tries to make his sons successful." The Chinese father always wants his sons to be 'dragons.'

Check your Progress-1

1. When was “Death of a Salesman” first opened?

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2. When did “Death of a Salesman” play first reached in London?

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3. For how many years did Willy Loman work ?

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4. Who adapted the play “Death of a Salesman” in Hindi?

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6.4 ADAPTATIONS IN OTHER MEDIA

- 1951: Adapted by Stanley Roberts and directed by László Benedek, who won the Golden Globe Award for Best Director. The film was nominated for Academy Awards for Best Actor in a Leading Role (Fredric March), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Kevin McCarthy), Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Mildred

Dunnock), Best Cinematography, Black-and-White, and Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture.

- 1960: In USSR, directed by Theodore Wolfovitch as You Can't Cross the Bridge.
- 1961: En Handelsresandes död starring Kolbjörn Knudsen and directed by Hans Abramson (in Swedish).
- 1968: Der Tod eines Handlungsreisenden starring Heinz Rühmann and directed by Gerhard Klingenberg.
- 1966 (CBS): Starring Lee J. Cobb, Gene Wilder, Mildred Dunnock, James Farentino, Karen Steele, and George Segal and directed by Alex Segal.
- 1966 (BBC): Starring Rod Steiger, Betsy Blair, Tony Bill, Brian Davies, and Joss Ackland and directed by Alan Cooke.
- 1979: En Handelsresandes död starring Carl-Gustav Lindstedt and directed by Bo Widerberg (in Swedish).
- 1985: Starring Dustin Hoffman, Kate Reid, John Malkovich, Stephen Lang, and Charles Durning and directed by Volker Schlöndorff.
- 1996: Starring Warren Mitchell, Rosemary Harris, Iain Glen, and Owen Teale and directed by David Thacker.
- 2000: Starring Brian Dennehy, Elizabeth Franz, Ron Eldard, Ted Koch, Howard Witt, and Richard Thompson and directed by Kirk Browning.
- 2008: Play within the film in Synecdoche, New York, starring Philip Seymour Hoffman.
- 2015: Radio drama, starring David Suchet and Zoë Wanamaker, directed by Howard Davies, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3. [15]
- 2016: Play within the film in The Salesman (Forushande), acting as counterpoint to the main plot. Starring Shahab Hosseini, Taraneh Alidoosti, Babak Karimi, and directed by Asghar Farhadi.

6.5 LET US SUM UP

Analysis

Arthur Miller (Oct 1950-Feb 2005) was, in all probability, one of the greatest playwrights of contemporary history He is also one of the greatest critics of contemporary American society, as his works often tend to portray American middlemen as heroes, bitterly and futilely fighting against the entire system of what "Americanism" is, with all its hues and negative aspects. Arthur Miller is a distinctive dramatist in his own right, with extensive uses of dramatic elements in his plays, such as sound, particular attention to stage settings, and his dialogues. Critics have noted the impact of his relatively simple use of language for his dialogues, with no grandiose wordplay whatsoever- in its simplicity lies its beauty. This is a task many authors have failed at, as verbosity often tends to make the message in its language go astray- readers tend to get lost in these piles of "liquid gold", flowing from one tenuous page to the other. Another aspect of his plays is the profound use of surreal elements, which form a beautiful symbiotic relationship with the realistic parts of the play, as if holding some semblance of delicate balance, on the verge of dangerously tipping. Irving Jacobson, in his article "Dreams in death of a salesman" quotes-

"Robert Hogan has noted that much of Miller's work developed from the image of man "struggling to be at one with society." Miller elucidates the nature of this struggle in "The Family in Modern Drama," where he finds all great drama to be concerned with some aspect of a single problem: "How may a man make of the outside world a home?" What does he need to do, to change within himself or in the external world, if he is to find "the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honor which, evidently, all men have connected in their memories with the idea of family?

This quote effectively grips at the essence of Arthur Miller's work. This paper will discuss one of the fundamental aspects of the play "Death of a Salesman"-The debate on the central character, or "Who is the central character in the play?"

"Death of a Salesman" is one of his most acclaimed works, with various adaptations to its credit. The theme of the quintessential "American Hero" has found its appeal in the general reading masses, and hence the popularity of this play. There are quite a few analytical aspects to this piece of work, and the one this paper will explore, is the grand debate on its central character. Various critics have remarked on the fragile nature of Willy Loman (primarily believed to be the protagonist of the play by many) and given evidence and personal opinions as to why he may not be the central character after all. Willy Loman is a salesman, a middle class salesman in the drama, and the play revolves around him as he tries to justify and make sense of his existence to the cruel and unappreciative society. He does that through various devices- mainly through his sons, and through the surreal appearance of Ben, his dead, successful (the American dream definition of it) brother. The strong character of Biff, his younger son, does not help matters as far as debate on the central character is concerned, as there are times in the play where Biff is the anchor that pulls and controls Willy Loman’s actions. Linda is another character which makes an impact in her own right- the quiet force, the glue that holds the family together, the wife of Willy Loman. Happy, the elder son is generally excluded from this debate as his character does not really influence any action- it is him, rather, who gets influenced by the judgments and whims of other characters. This paper will attempt to deconstruct some of the aspects of these characters, and try and provide evidence for justifying who the central character is, and hopefully arrive at a concrete conclusion.

Firstly, the character of Willy Loman will be under scrutiny. Aristotle has made several remarks about the definitions of drama, and set down concrete parameters about the ‘ideal’ protagonist. Naturally, many have deviated from that character profile. Aristotle often remarks about the ‘elevated’ position of his protagonists, and how the protagonist needs to have a tragic flaw (Hamartia) in order to set the stage for his grand downfall, as Aristotle believed that the only true form of drama was tragedy. Willy Loman is quite the sore thumb in this line of thought. His character thoroughly lacks all the hallmarks of any sort of elevated position. His ideals aren’t lofty, nor are his actions grand. But in this anomaly of his lies his greatness- his ambitions, his dreams. His inability to fulfill those dreams is sadly, his tragic flaw, and ultimately, his desire to manifest those dreams around him results in his downfall. As Jacobson rightly remarks-

“This differentiates Willy Loman from a dramatic tradition of introspective figures who, like Shakespeare's Hamlet or Milton's Samson, confront their situations in a profound social and metaphysical solitude. By contrast, a protagonist who cannot be alone, who cannot summon the intelligence and strength to scrutinize his condition and come to some understanding of it-whatever agony it may cost him-seems disqualified for the tragic stature literature can bestow.”

Loman does not have profound soliloquies to his credit, but perhaps, he has something which causes a similar, if not greater impact- the surreal manifestation of Ben, one of the trailblazers of success for him. Biff and Dave Singleman (his employer) are two other trailblazers for him, and the reader may take note of the fact that Willy Loman stresses a lot on the quality of “personal” attractiveness. Biff’s image of a star athlete, and the successful entrepreneur image of Dave appeals to him, and he wants to desperately attain that level of success. Loman’s futile efforts to attain whatever he envisages, his great aspirations despite the realization of mediocrity- all flaws- are ultimately the contributors of versatility in character. This is perhaps what makes Loman such a feasible protagonist, and such an appealing one as far as literary appreciation is concerned. Loman is the force that moves the events in the play, the one that is responsible for its volatility. The entire play may be an account of Loman’s struggle to attain success, to be one with the American society. He drags the entire family into the quagmire of his decisions, and attempts to influence their lives to attain satisfaction, as he seems resigned to his fate. Loman also assumes a commanding role as head of the household- not afraid to reproach and reprimand people when confronted with such a situation, often shown when he reprimands Biff, or talks about him and his sheer “laziness” in life. His anger bursts, however, are shown to be quite hollow when he interacts with people outside the sphere of his house, displaying further disconnection to society. Loman’s death, his erasure, is probably one of the masterstrokes of such a protagonist- with his death comes insurance, his support to his family, and to achieve a plethora of other goals. To quote Jacobson-

“Leonard Moss has noted that he chooses death "not simply as an escape from shame but as a last attempt to re-establish his own self- confidence and his family's integrity.'" The insurance money makes it seem possible to synthesize the values of Ben and Singleman. For by entering the dark, unknown "jungle" of death Loman might bring out tangible wealth, "like diamonds," thus becoming as much an adventurer as Ben but within the skyscraper world of New York. He imagines himself then having a funeral as massive as Singleman's, one that would leave Biff "thunderstruck." Thus in a single act Loman hopes to achieve transformation, prominence, synthesis, and his lost unity with Biff."

Biff, on the other hand, is quite the polar opposite in comparison to his father. Biff's character is an antithesis of what an ideal candidate for the American dream is- he has realized that it is just an illusion, and a futile dream-and accepted that reality. Biff's personality is stronger than that of his father, just because of that realization. The acceptance of that reality comes through in this line- "BIFF: Hap, the trouble is we weren't brought up to grub for money. I don't know how to do it."

Biff knows that making money isn't everything, but is conflicted and somewhat indecisive in the beginning of the play, as Willy never really gives them all a chance, trying to influence them with his concepts of success. Biff has tasted his father's version of success, is attractive, both physically and personality wise (personal attractiveness) - but, is too 'lazy' for his own good. Biff knows that all these momentary achievements are extremely fickle in nature, and wants his father to realize that. The relationship between father and son is volatile, but strong at the same time; Biff knows the ins and outs of his father, while Willy and however knowledgeable he may be about his son's traits does not want to accept him as he is. He is always looking for an opportunity to change Biff in order to satisfy some deep personal ambition, but Biff is unaffected by his father's attempts, even disgusted. This brief extract says a lot about that underlying resentment and bitterness-

"HAPPY (getting into bed): I wish you'd have a good talk with him.
(The light of their room begins to fade.)
BIFF (to himself in bed): That selfish, stupid...
HAPPY: Sh... Sleep, Biff. "

Biff, no matter how indifferent he seems to his father's ambition, still deeply cares about him. Willy Loman does the same for his favorite son, often seen fondly speaking about him and praising him for the smallest things. Biff's ambitions sometimes take a grandiose turn, but he quickly comes back to earth. He does not wish to emulate the "ideal" man as his father envisions, but wants to go his own way, no matter how indecisive or reckless it may otherwise seem. This very nature of his tends to bring out the agitated nature of his father, often leading to sudden conflicts. This analysis leads to one realization- Biff is more than suitable for the candidate of the protagonist. One may even go so far to say that Willy's paternal favoritism for Biff soon turns into obsession to a point that his actions are influenced by the way Biff behaves. The need, the urge Willy feels- the urge to set Biff right and harness the potential of Biff's "personal attractiveness" tend to influence a lot of decisions he makes in the play, leading to the crests and troughs of the play. Willy often recalls certain memories related to Biff, in the light of what he considers true success to be, and what he considers to be Biff's true strength-

"WILLY: Like a young god. Hercules — something like that. And the sun, the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? Right up from the field, with the representatives of three colleges standing by? And the buyers I brought, and the cheers when he came out — Loman, Loman, Loman! God Almighty, he'll be great yet. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away!"

This heroic representation of Biff leads one to question as to who really is influencing the play, Willy or Biff. Willy, in his own narrow perspective, very much aspires to reach and taste that sweet scent of success Biff had on the event of that football match. This does shake his pedestal as the protagonist a bit, leading to further debate. Quote number 3 talks about one of the goals Loman hopes to achieve after death- to regain his unity with Biff. If Biff is given such prominence, the informed reader may as well come to a conclusion- that Biff is indeed the central character.

Weighing the evidence on both sides, and coming to a conclusion is relatively tough, as there is enough evidence to prove the arguments on both sides. This then boils to down to a matter of pure personal opinion- and, this paper will conclude that the title of protagonist will indeed be retained by Willy Loman. Willy Loman is still, undoubtedly the force, the vital, the central component of the play, not just because of its title, but because of the way he steers things. His idolizing of Biff is just one of his many imperfections, but he is the protagonist nevertheless- imperfections are just a part of his character. We can see that Loman is just not influenced by everybody who has money, or is well off- his relationship with Charlie, his neighbor tells us that much. He wants to be at home in the world, a world where society finally accepts him, a world where he really achieves success. These goals, no matter how mediocre they may seem to the "intellectual" are still lofty in his perception, and he struggles until the very end to achieve them. This play is an account of his struggle against the world, the society, the systems, and ultimately, himself. Perhaps, this line confirms that the play indeed revolves around him.

6.6 KEYWORDS

- **Adonis**: any very handsome young man.
- **Anemia:** a condition in which there is a reduction of the number, or volume, of red blood corpuscles or of the total amount of hemoglobin in the bloodstream, resulting in paleness, generalized weakness.
- **Babble**: to make incoherent sounds, as a baby does; to prattle or talk too much or foolishly.
- **Bastard:** a slang term for a person regarded with contempt, hatred, pity, resentment, and so on.
- **Blow:** Informal to brag; boast.

6.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Mention the adaptations of the play "Death of a Salesman" in other media.
- Write the analysis of Act II.2 (Wagner's Office, Present Day) of the play "Death of a Salesman".

- Analyze Act II.3 (Loman Home, Past) of the play “Death of a Salesman”.

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6. 9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Death of a Salesman first opened on February 10, 1949. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q1)**

The play Death of a Salesman “”reached London on July 28, 1949. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q2)**

Willy Loman worked for thirty-five years. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q3)**

Director Feroz Khan who adapted the play “Death of a Salesman” in Hindi. **(answer to check your progress – 1 Q4)**

UNIT-7 ARTHUR MILLER- DEATH OF A SALESMAN -4

STRUCTURE

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

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7.0 OBJECTIVES

Once you go through this unit,

- you would get to know about the characters used in “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller.
- You would also learn about the motifs, symbols and themes used in “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Death of a Salesman is a tragedy about the differences between the Loman family's dreams and the reality of their lives. The play is a scathing critique of the American Dream and of the competitive, materialistic American society of the late 1940s. The storyline features

Willy Loman, an average guy who attempts to hide his averageness and failures behind increasingly delusional hallucinations as he strives to be a "success."

The idea for the play first manifested itself as a short story, which author Arthur Miller initially abandoned. His interest was renewed later on however, by an uncle who was a salesman. When the play version appeared on Broadway, it was a total hit. It won Arthur Miller the Pulitzer Prize in 1949. By this point in his career, Miller had already proven his chops with his hit play, All My Sons. However, with Death of a Salesman, Miller's career was launched into a whole new level.

Death of a Salesman is widely considered even to this day to be one of the greatest American plays ever written. It's often ranked right up there with classics like Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night, Thornton Wilder's Our Town, and Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

Like all classics, Death of a Salesman's themes still ring true today. Its harsh criticism of American capitalism may not be quite as shocking as it was when the play first premiered, but we have a feeling that every modern-day audience member knows exactly what Miller is getting at—whether you agree with him or not.

7.2 CHARACTERS

WILLY LOMAN

You were probably aching throughout this play to shove a mirror in front of Willy Loman's face and make him take a good, honest look at himself. But even if you tried, it probably wouldn't have worked. He has a lot of potential, but he also has a whopping case of self-deception paired with misguided life goals. A salesman for all of his career, Willy thinks the goal of life is to be well-liked and gain material success.

So what happens when he doesn't reach these goals? Total disaster.

Willy is a rather insecure guy. He tries to make himself feel better by lying to himself and his family. In his world of delusion, Willy is a hugely successful salesman. He disguises his profound anxiety and self-doubt with extreme arrogance. Periodically unable to maintain this image of strength, Willy despairs and pleads with successful people around him for guidance and support. Despite his efforts, it becomes clear that Willy Loman is not popular, well-liked, or even good at his job. In fact, he never was. In all likelihood, he never will be. Now an older man, Willy can no longer drive competently, pay his bills, or sell anything.

Despite Willy's evident failure to meet his (poorly chosen) life goals, he clings to a fierce belief in the American Dream and the promise that anyone attractive and well-liked can make it big. He has deceived himself his entire life and tries to live vicariously through his unwilling son, Biff. But Biff uncovers Willy's lies when he finds out that Willy has been cheating on Linda. Choosing to alienate his son rather than face reality, and tormented by his failures, Willy spirals downward.

Willy's Desire to Escape

So let's talk about all these flashbacks. Part of this "downward spiral" we keep talking about has to do with Willy losing a grip on reality and on time. Because his life, by his standards, sucks, Willy escapes into the past and also conveniently gives us, the reader or audience, the background information we need. "Escape" becomes Willy's middle name—not unlike his own father, who abandoned him and his brother when they were young.

All this escape business brings us to Willy's mistress. "The woman" gives Willy everything he needs: an alternate world and an ego-boost. Miller makes sure we are able to understand these reasons for why Willy has the affair. If we, the reader/audience, hated Willy for being a cheating jerk, we wouldn't be so upset at his death. But we don't hate Willy. We don't even call him a cheater. Why? Because we understand the psychology behind his affair. He is simply trying to escape.

Willy's Death

Which brings us, right on schedule, to the end of the play. As we all know, Willy kills himself. But why? Well, he was clearly still harboring misguided hopes about success for Biff. It seems Willy would rather kill himself than accept the fact that really, honestly, all his son wants is some shirtless sweaty time in Midwestern haystacks.

The point is, Willy is still deluded when he kills himself. We all know the money isn't going to be used to start a business. What's sad is that Willy doesn't. That final delusion is almost worse than his death itself.

Speaking of this death, let's talk about the title of the play. Willy was always in pursuit of being the perfect salesman, and before he kills himself he expresses a wish to die "the death of a salesman." So here's the big money question: does he?

To answer that, we have to ask ourselves just what does it mean to be a salesman in this play? We know what it means in Willy's mind (if we say "well-liked" one more time…), but Charley brings up an interesting point at the funeral: part of being a salesman is having a dream. Part of being a salesman is about *selling yourself*. We'll let you take it from there.

Willy as Tragic Hero

Hamartia

If you saw Willy Loman sitting across from you on a bus, you probably wouldn't peg him for a hero. If you got to know him, it would probably seem even less likely. Still, Willy Loman is often thought of as a hero. Of course, he's a particular kind of hero: a tragic hero. The ancient Greeks were the first to write about these doomed souls. Sophocles' Oedipus is the most perfect example—at least according to Aristotle.

But how is slouchy old Willy Loman in any way similar to the heroes of Greek tragedy? This word is often translated as "tragic flaw," but it's more accurately translated as "a missing of the mark" or a "mistake made in ignorance."

Just like Oedipus, Willy Loman goes through his life blindly, never realizing the full truth of himself. Willy refuses to admit that he's a failure. You could say that the idea of *hamartia* is seen in Willy through his delusional personality. Also, like Oedipus and almost all tragic heroes, Willy's *hamartia* causes his own downfall. In the end, Willy's delusions lead him to take his own life.

Anagnorisis

According to Aristotle, tragic heroes also have a moment of recognition, or *anagnorisis*. This is supposed to be a moment where the hero realizes the terrible mistake he's made and usually moans about it a lot. This happens to Oedipus when he realizes that he's inadvertently killed his father and slept with his mother. (Whoops!)

You could argue that Willy has a small realization near the end of the play. He never says it directly, but at some point—probably after Howard fires him—he must realize that he's just never going to succeed in business. If he didn't come to this realization, then he wouldn't decide to kill himself so Biff could use his life insurance money.

However, though Willy must make some small realization toward the end of the play, we hesitate to label it as full blown *anagnorisis*. Willy definitely goes to his death amid a cloud of delusion. Even after Biff totally lays it out for his dad that all he wants to do is be a cowboy or whatever, Willy refuses to understand.

The pitiful salesman kills himself, thinking that Biff will use the life insurance money to start a business. It becomes painfully obvious at the funeral that this is totally not going to happen, showing that Willy went to his death without coming to grips with reality. Yes, it seems that, unlike many classical Greek tragic heroes, Willy doesn't have a major *anagnorisis*.

The Common Man

Willy is also different from his tragic predecessors because he isn't royalty of any kind. Yep, Willy is just a salesman. He has no real power in the world, and not too many people really care when he dies. Unlike the legendary and powerful Oedipus, Willy is a nobody. But why would Arthur Miller try to write a tragedy about a total schmuck? Did he not read Aristotle's book or something? Hardly—we're guessing that Miller knew Aristotle's ideas better than we do. It turns out that the fact that

Willy is an everyday guy is part of the whole point Miller is trying to make.

In Arthur Miller's famous essay, "Tragedy of the Common Man," he states, "I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were." Miller goes on to say that it's not the fact that past tragic heroes have been royal that makes them resonate with modern audiences. It's that fact that they share the same problems as we do today, the same flaws, fears, and hopes.

Some critics have said that true tragedy is impossible when your hero is a common man. They say that when an everyday guy goes down, not as many people suffer as they would if it were a king. OK, sure, but we have a question: is the size of a tragedy really limited to the world of the play? Can't we look into the life of a common man and recognize our own flaws? Can't we see those flaws in society around us? Why can't a common man's life have size and meaning?

Miller ends his essay by saying, "It is time, I think, that we who are without kings took up this bright thread of our history and followed it to the only place it can possibly lead in our time—the heart and spirit of the average man." Preach it, Arthur, preach it.

BIFF LOMAN

Don't let Biff's tough-guy name deceive you. He's not just the big, dumb lump that his name might make you imagine. In fact, he's the only character in the book who shows any real personal growth. Sure, Biff is also flawed, just like everyone else. He can't hold down a job, he steals from all of his employers, and he even went to jail. Despite these shortcomings, however, we can't help but like Biff. Why? Because he shows real initiative on the personal development front.

The deal with Biff is that he's Willy's oldest son and the one whom Willy seems to be really crazy about. Biff was a hotshot in high school as the star football player. However, he never put much energy into his schoolwork and failed math as a senior. A lot of this was due to the fact that Willy let him get away with anything and never encouraged him to do well in school. Without the math credit, Biff couldn't graduate and therefore couldn't take his football scholarship to college. Wow, great parenting, Willy.

Things might have worked out for Biff even though he flunked math. He could've taken a summer course and made everything all right. However, right about that time Biff caught his dad cheating on his mom, and it made him go kind of crazy. Once again, Willy had a bad effect on his son's life. Biff bailed on summer school and the math credit. From here, he spiraled downward. He started working on ranches in the West, but couldn't hold a job because he kept stealing from his bosses. When we meet him in the play, he's 34 years old and has finally realized just how bad Willy messed him up.

While Biff is in some ways desperate to impress and please his dad, he also realizes that Willy has flawed, materialistic dreams that Biff is neither able nor desires to achieve. Unlike his father and brother, Biff is self-aware and values the truth. In one shouting match with Willy, he says that he can't hold a job because his dad made him so arrogant as a boy that he can't handle taking orders from a boss. Finally, a moment of truth. Yet, despite his insight and honesty, Biff is unable to communicate openly with his father. Willy is simply unable to accept the truth.

Biff reminds us that the American Dream is not every man's dream. Rather than seeking money and success, Biff wants a more basic life. He wants to be seen and loved for who he is. He wants his dad to stop being such a deluded twerp. Sadly, Miller seems to say, Americans (Biff, in this case) are made the victims of the country's success. Just as Willy is unable to understand or even love his son, America as a whole is unable to understand those who value simple pleasures over the rat race. At least, that's what *Death of a Salesman* seems to argue.

HAPPY LOMAN

Happy might as well be Willy Jr., because this apple hasn't fallen far from the tree. Though he is relatively successful in his job, he has his dad's totally unrealistic self-confidence and his grand dreams about getting rich quick. Like Biff, but to a lesser extent, Happy has suffered from his father's expectations. Mostly, though, his father doesn't pay that much attention to him. Willy was always a bigger fan of Biff. Happy, maybe because he always felt second-best, has more of a desire to please his father. Despite his respectable accomplishments in business and the many, many notches on his bedpost, Happy is extremely lonely.

Happy is competitive and ambitious, but these feelings are misdirected. Unable to compete on his own terms in the business world, Happy blindly pursues women—like his friends' girlfriends—purely for the sake of doing so. Looks like he's taken his sense of competition to the realm of sex. Of course, this, much like the world of business, fails to satisfy him.

Most disturbing for Happy is the fact that he can't figure out why all this isn't working. He's followed the rules, done all the right things, yet Happy just isn't happy. His name highlights the irony of his predicament. If you consider the fact that parents name their children, you could say that Willy foolishly bestowed the nickname on his son in yet another display of misguidance and delusion. Nice.

Just as the saddest part of Willy's suicide is his continued delusion, the saddest part of Happy's ending is his own persistent misbelief. Still driven by what he feels he *should* want (money, a wife), he sticks to Willy’s foolish dreams to the bitter end.

LINDA LOMAN AND CHARLEY

Linda is Willy's doting wife. She refuses to see through her husband's lies. This is a woman on a mission: protect Willy's emotions and dreams. Part of her nature is the result of naïveté; Linda doesn't know the full picture here, from Willy's finances to his job to his mistress. This cluelessness is partly why Linda defends her husband's behavior even when he has lashed out at her. No one can argue—she's one loyal chick.

Like her husband, Linda equates happiness and freedom with material wealth. She accepts the American ideal that success is possible for anyone. Nevertheless, Linda shows substantially more preoccupation than her husband with talent, dedication, and basic ethics that reach beyond simply being well-liked. Unlike Willy, she expresses concern over Biff's poor math performance, his growing aggression, and his tendency to steal everything that will fit in his pocket and even some things that don't.

Linda's utter and blind devotion to her husband makes it hard for her to understand why he killed himself—and why no one showed up to his funeral. Her ironic statement "we're free" just reminds us that Linda is still very, very clueless.

Charley is Willy's longtime neighbor who is just plain nice. He functions as a voice of reason and practicality in a world of delusion and confusion. Charley is humble, reserved, down to earth, and honest. Since he actually has some self-confidence, unlike Willy, Charley doesn't need to brag to everyone to make himself feel better. At one point in the play, Willy is shocked to find that Charley hasn't shouted from the rooftops the fact that his son, Bernard, is arguing a case before the Supreme Court.

Charley is the character against whom Willy is always measuring himself. Willy constantly criticizes Charley for not being well-liked, for not being interested in football, for having a nerdy son, and for not being a real man. It seems like Willy is always putting his neighbor down because he's jealous of him, plain and simple.

Willy can't understand why Charley is successful in business and in parenting. Even more frustrating to Willy, Charley is generous and helpful, offering him advice, money, and even a job. This, of course, tells us more about our main character; by refusing his neighbor's help, Willy shows his pride and tendency for self-destruction.

BERNARD

Charley's son, Bernard, is as different from Biff as Charley is from Willy. While Biff was a popular high school football star, Bernard was the über-nerd. Nerdy though he was, Bernard was always looking out for Biff, helping him with his homework and showing concern when Biff failed math.

Bernard, who once idolized Biff, ends up with a happy and successful life. Of course, success for Bernard has nothing to do with being handsome or popular. He actually ends up being a lawyer in his adulthood and goes off to argue a case before the Supreme Court. Humble like his father, Bernard doesn't rub his success in Willy's face—he only inquires after Biff with concern.

UNCLE BEN

Ben is Willy's adventurous and lucky older brother. Of course, he's dead, so he only appears in the play as a character in Willy's troubled imagination. Willy totally idolizes Ben because he was an adventurer who escaped the world of business and got rich quick by finding diamonds in the African jungle.

One of Willy's lifelong regrets is that he didn't go with his brother to Alaska. Unlike Willy, Ben was able to take a risk and stray from the world of fierce ambition and competition. Willy interprets Ben's good fortune as undeniable proof that his dreams of making it big are realistic.

Willy also associates Ben with knowledge and self-awareness, qualities that he himself is severely lacking. Willy always wants advice, and Ben gives it. Of course, it's frequently not very good advice and is usually the product of Willy's own imagination.

In his imagined conversations with his brother, Willy pries him for information about their father, about how he succeeded financially, and for advice about parenting Biff and Happy. It's hard to talk about Ben and his responses to these pleas, since he is either a memory of the past or a figment of Willy's imagination. And given Willy's complete lack of credibility, it's hard to tell even these apart.

But one thing we can take as true with reasonable confidence is the scene where Ben fights Biff. Ben wins, but only by cheating, informing the boy that that's the only way to win. There's some sketchiness surrounding his success in Africa (we're thinking he wasn't just handed the diamonds and sent along his way). He even says, in Willy's imaginings, "The jungle is dark but full of diamonds." That's big stuff right there.

Considering Ben's self-serving nature and amoral proclivities, the word "dark" connotes more than just shadows under the trees. We're not going so far as to say words like "evil" or "Darth Vader," but Ben's success is certainly blemished by his apparent use of cheating to get what he wants.

THE WOMAN

This anonymous character has an affair with Willy Loman that Biff finds. She lives in Boston and works in a company as an assistant. She says that Willy has promised her but does not disclose that. Biff becomes frustrated after finding clues to this affair of his father.

HOWARD WAGNER

A young man of thirty-six years, Howard Wagner is an epitome of the capitalistic owner who stays cold despite his employees going to dogs. His father has been Willy’s boss, and after his death, he has become his boss. When young Wagner sees Willy losing his mind, he sacks him. He displays his prowess of technology by playing with wire recorder when Willy meets him.

JENNY

Charley's secretary.

STANLEY

A waiter at the restaurant who seems to be friends or acquainted with Happy.

MISS FORSYTHE

A girl whom Happy picks up at the restaurant. She is very pretty and claims she was on several magazine covers. Happy lies to her, making himself and Biff look like they are important and successful. (Happy claims that he attended West Point and that Biff is a star football player.)

LETTA

Miss Forsythe's friend.

7.3 MOTIFS

Mythic Figures

Willy’s tendency to mythologize people contributes to his deluded understanding of the world. He speaks of Dave Singleman as a legend and imagines that his death must have been beautifully noble. Willy compares Biff and Happy to the mythic Greek figures Adonis and Hercules because he believes that his sons are pinnacles of “personal attractiveness” and power through “well liked”-ness; to him, they seem the very incarnation of the American Dream.

Willy’s mythologizing proves quite nearsighted, however. Willy fails to realize the hopelessness of Singleman’s lonely, on-the-job, on-the-road death. Trying to achieve what he considers to be Singleman’s heroic status, Willy commits himself to a pathetic death and meaningless legacy (even if Willy’s life insurance policy ends up paying off, Biff wants nothing to do with Willy’s ambition for him). Similarly, neither Biff nor Happy ends up leading an ideal, godlike life; while Happy does believe in the American Dream, it seems likely that he will end up no better off than the decidedly ungodlike Willy.

The American West, Alaska, and the African Jungle

These regions represent the potential of instinct to Biff and Willy. Willy’s father found success in Alaska and his brother, Ben, became rich in Africa; these exotic locales, especially when compared to Willy’s banal Brooklyn neighborhood, crystallize how Willy’s obsession with the commercial world of the city has trapped him in an unpleasant reality. Whereas Alaska and the African jungle symbolize Willy’s failure, the American West, on the other hand, symbolizes Biff’s potential. Biff realizes that he has been content only when working on farms, out in the open. His westward escape from both Willy's delusions and the commercial world of the eastern United States suggests a nineteenth-century pioneer mentality—Biff, unlike Willy, recognizes the importance of the individual.

7.4 SYMBOLS

Seeds

Seeds represent for Willy the opportunity to prove the worth of his labor, both as a salesman and a father. His desperate, nocturnal attempt to grow vegetables signifies his shame about barely being able to put food on the table and having nothing to leave his children when he passes. Willy feels that he has worked hard but fears that he will not be able to help his offspring any more than his own abandoning father helped him. The seeds also symbolize Willy's sense of failure with Biff. Despite the American Dream's formula for success, which Willy considers infallible, Willy's efforts to cultivate and nurture Biff went awry. Realizing that his all-American football star has turned into a lazy bum, Willy takes Biff's failure and lack of ambition as a reflection of his abilities as a father.

Diamonds

To Willy, diamonds represent tangible wealth and, hence, both validation of one's labor (and life) and the ability to pass material goods on to one's offspring, two things that Willy desperately craves. Correlatively, diamonds, the discovery of which made Ben a fortune, symbolize Willy's failure as a salesman. Despite Willy's belief in the American Dream, a belief unwavering to the extent that he passed up the opportunity to go with Ben to Alaska, the Dream's promise of financial security has eluded Willy. At the end of the play, Ben encourages Willy to enter the "jungle" finally and retrieve this elusive diamond—that is, to kill himself for insurance money in order to make his life meaningful.

Linda's and The Woman's Stockings

Willy’s strange obsession with the condition of Linda’s stockings foreshadows his later flashback to Biff’s discovery of him and The Woman in their Boston hotel room. The teenage Biff accuses Willy of giving away Linda’s stockings to The Woman. Stockings assume a metaphorical weight as the symbol of betrayal and sexual infidelity. New stockings are important for both Willy’s pride in being financially successful and thus able to provide for his family and for Willy’s ability to ease his guilt about, and suppress the memory of, his betrayal of Linda and Biff.

The Rubber Hose

The rubber hose is a stage prop that reminds the audience of Willy’s desperate attempts at suicide. He has apparently attempted to kill himself by inhaling gas, which is, ironically, the very substance essential to one of the most basic elements with which he must equip his home for his family’s health and comfort—heat. Literal death by inhaling gas parallels the metaphorical death that Willy feels in his struggle to afford such a basic necessity.

7.5 THEMES

American Dream

The American Dream has been one of the themes of most literary works written during that time. Characters in this play try to reach this dream in one or the other way and feel frustrated when facing failure. Howard Wagner is one of the examples who has inherited this dream from his father, while Bernard, the son of Charley, achieved his dream in the legal profession. However, one person who continually faces failure is Willy Loman. He could not become a world-class salesman and could not make his sons achieve his failed dreams. Biff is a classic case of failure at this age, while Happy is not ambitious. Seeing failure of his own desires and that of the half-hearted efforts of his sons, Willy Loman tries to follow his brother, Ben, who achieved this dream at such a young age but fails. Therefore, he commits suicide out of frustration.

Dangers of Modernity

Modernity that has kicked off during the decades of the 50s was taking firm roots in the United States, making various professionals entirely obsolete. In this background, it was posing serious threats to different professions. Willy Loman's profession was one of them. Hence, Howard Wagner starts fidgeting with the radio when talking to Willy to make it clear to him that now technological development is replacing human beings. Willy Loman's frustration of his failure in his field costs him his life. The modern objects and their presence in the play, too, points to his increased frustration.

Gender Relations

Gender issues and relationships with the opposite gender is another major theme of the play. With the modernity and materialism taking firm roots in the society, the female seems to replace the patriarchy and become the head of the family. Willy Loman's affair with the attractive anonymous woman of Boston and his son's womanizing attitude both point to gender relationships in the capitalistic society. Interestingly, Linda does not fall victim to this modern thinking, or she does not become a tool to be exploited. Instead, she stays loyal to her husband.

Opportunity

Although every person tries, material luck comes to those who exploit the opportunities. Howard Wagner knows that Willy Loman is no match to modern marketing and business innovations. That is why he sacks him without feeling any empathy. Willy Loman does not see this as an opportunity to improve himself professionally, while for Wagner it is an opportunity to find new hands. In the same way, Happy has found an opportunity, but Biff lacks this acumen to see things. In fact, Bernard and Biff both have similar opportunities, but one decides to exploit it, while the other does not. This makes the difference.

Family

The play, Death of a Salesman, is the tragedy of a family which could not accept the changing times. Willy Loman, while trying to materialize his American dream, loses his senses. He knows that he has lost touch with the modern market. Therefore, he depends on his sons to realize his dreams, but both fail. Biff does not know what to do in life, while Happy does not have any dream. Charley and Bernard, their neighbors, have been placed by Miller in contrast to them to show a successful family. Conversely, Willy Loman and his sons have been implicitly presented as a failed family. Therefore, family and relationships is another theme of the play.

Personality Cult

Developing a fetish for a figure, or personality cult is another major theme of the play. Willy Loman constantly repeats lines and advises his sons that they must be well-liked. This is his pet word that he uses time and again to reflect a culture where a person well-liked becomes an icon in business and industry. Therefore, business and market are based on the idea of the culture of personality. Miller has highlighted this belief of Willy Loman that image creates an economy and that people well-liked become financially successful.

Betrayal and Abandonment

Another minor theme of the play is the betrayal of relationships and dreams. Willy Loman constantly hankers after Biff that he would realize his dream. However, Biff constantly dodges his dreams and comes out of the dream circle, declaring that he does not like the office job. As a salesman, Willy Loman takes this rejection on the part of Biff as an insult. In this sense, this betrayal of Biff and his abandonment of the dream that his father has harbored for years leads Willy to frustration. At the same time, Willy Loman’s affair with the Woman is betrayal toward his wife. Therefore, this becomes a recurrent theme throughout the play.

Natural and Artificial World

Arthur Miller has placed the natural and the artificial world side by side. On the one hand, Willy Loman tries to find a good career amid his failure as a salesman. He is fired from the company by its new owner, Howard Wagner. This reflects the harsh artificial world of urban capitalism where a man has no place if he is not beneficial for the business. However, on the other hand, his son Biff talks about working on ranches to find refuge in the natural world.

Reality and Illusion

The play has presented another minor theme that is reality and illusions. Willy Loman dreams that he would succeed, or else his sons would do it in case of his failure. His dream of amassing wealth and living in luxury is an illusion that he cannot see becoming a reality in his lifetime despite his claims. In fact, he is unable to face the reality of his failure, his sons' possible failure and going against his dream. Therefore, instead of accepting reality, he commits suicide.

Cruelty of Capitalism

Cruelty and inhumanity of the capitalist world is another minor theme of the play. Howard Wagner knows that Willy Loman has worked for Wagner's father very diligently. He also knows that he is an experienced salesman, but the desire for more profit forces him to show him cold shoulder due to Willy Loman's inability to make more sales in the modern period. He fails to come up to Wagner's expectations and has to face sacking. Wagner does not see any utility of the old salesman, ignoring his services for the company. He shows the cruelty of capitalism through Willy's expulsion.

Check your Progress-1

1. In which year did Arthur Miller win the Pulitzer Prize?

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2. Who is Charley?

3. Who is Bernard ?

4. Who in Uncle Ben?

7.6 LET US SUM UP

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Willy Loman

Willy Loman is a 60-plus-year-old traveling salesman who lives in New York City and struggles to keep a grip on the present because of his deep disillusionment with the trajectory of his life. In his youth, Willy was abandoned by his father. During a trip to find his father, Willy met a successful traveling salesman and determined to become one himself, with the hope of gaining financial success, affirmation, and reputation. Frequently away from home, Willy turned to the company of another woman, and when his son Biff, then a high school senior, discovered his father's infidelity, their relationship changed forever. Willy's delusion builds as the play progresses, and at the end he commits suicide in exchange for life insurance money to provide for his family.

Linda Loman

Linda's primary roles as Willy's wife are supporter, advocate, and defender. Secondarily, Linda is the mother of Biff and Happy. The tension of trying to keep her family functional motivates her character. In many ways, she is a typical housewife of her era, focused on her domestic responsibilities and her family.

Biff Loman

Biff is Willy and Linda Loman's older son, 34 years old at the time of the play. As a child, Biff idolized his father and worked hard to please him, especially through his high school football career. Like his father, Biff values being liked more than adhering to ethical rules and begins a practice of stealing, an act Willy does not condemn. His conflict with his father is driven by Biff's desire to finally come clean and live truthfully**.**

Happy Loman

Happy, the Lomans' younger son, is a 32-year-old womanizing deceiver who shares many of his father's characteristics. He seldom presents the truth about himself and is driven only by his desires to find sexual and financial satisfaction. Even after his father's death, Happy is unchanged. He commits himself to fulfilling his father's shallow dream of becoming a successful salesman, always aiming to "come out number-one man."

SYMBOLS

Miller uses symbolism throughout the play to support central themes. Symbols support the visual nature of the work, which is intended to be viewed and experienced rather than read.

Distant Lands

Distant geographical locations represent freedom and possibility in contrast to the confinement and death of New York City. In several of Willy's memories, his brother Ben appears and asks him to accompany him to Alaska, a wide-open land of opportunity. In the end, Ben ends up in Africa, another wild and mysterious location, and becomes rich in the diamond mines there by the age of 21. At the beginning of the play, Biff returns from enjoyable work on a farm in the West to try to make a more substantial and traditional living in New York, all the while longing to return to the West to start a ranch. All three distant locations symbolize the possibility of escape and independence.

Stockings

Silk stockings become a symbol of Willy Loman's betrayal and deception. Both Willy's wife and his lover discuss stockings. To be economical, Linda Loman spends time repairing her damaged stockings, a fact that annoys her husband because it emphasizes his failure to provide his family with luxuries. Willy Loman gives new stockings to the woman with whom he is having an affair in Boston. When Biff Loman discovers his father's affair, he shouts, "You—you gave her Mama's stockings!"—a further sign of Willy's betrayal of his family.

Miller's choice of stockings is significant in that during World War II, the materials used to make stockings—silk, nylon, and rayon—were rationed for the war effort. This essential component of a woman's wardrobe was hard to get. This historical context emphasizes Willy's efforts to give The Woman, but not his wife, something rare and valuable and hard to come by. In this way, Willy's gift and The Woman's praise of Willy are more helpful to Willy in maintaining his delusions of success than the vision of his wife mending her torn stockings.

Seeds

The seeds symbolize Willy Loman's longing for nature, something he cannot get in his city dwelling. His desire to plant seeds reveals a healthy need to nurture growth, but it is not well planned or executed. He fails at raising his sons, and he is trapped in a world in which he is unfruitful. When he exclaims that he needs to get seeds, his wife reminds him that there is not enough light to plant a garden. Yet near the end of the play, Willy, in a delusional state, is out in the backyard planting seeds, a last effort to create something fruitful with his life.

Flute

The play begins and ends with the melody of a flute, and music reappears many times throughout the story. Willy's father, who deserted Willy as a child, was a flute maker and salesman. The instrument, which is "small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon" symbolizes the past for Willy—a connection to nature as well as his sense of abandonment and longing for a deep connection with family. The flute also serves as a signal to the audience that Willy's memories are near and that the past is about to overtake the present.

THEMES

Death of a Salesman is probably best known for its theme of the futility and unattainability of the American Dream. Willy Loman builds his life on the premise that with hard work, charisma, and some good luck, he can achieve success and self-fulfillment. Over the course of the play, the dream unravels in a variety of ways.

American Dream and Disillusionment

A key component to the American Dream is the idea that financial prosperity is available to anyone who works for it. Willy learns the lie behind this proposition even as he watches other characters succeed financially: his brother Ben, his neighbor Charley, and Charley's son Bernard.

Throughout the play, Willy Loman's desire to be well liked and well respected drive him as much as his desire for financial success. He believes that the American Dream is a two-part idea: financial success and the recognition of that success by society. Willy mistakenly measures his value through the social respect or recognition of others, and he bestows this belief on his sons.

Illusion versus Reality

For Willy Loman, issues of illusion and reality are complicated, and the structure of the play makes these issues complicated for the audience as well, as Miller weaves flashbacks into the present reality of the play. Much of Willy's life of illusion is fueled by his need to manipulate the truth to his own advantage. For example, he spins the facts about his sales earnings, withholding information about his impoverished financial state from his family for the purpose of appearing successful.

One of the most significant illusions, which haunts Willy and ultimately his whole family, is Willy's fidelity to Linda. Instead of acknowledging the truth and accepting responsibility for his betrayal, Willy makes up a story to tell his son, which does not fool Biff. Willy's conflict with Biff comes to a climax when Biff finally names Willy for what he is—a phony.

In fact, the entire Loman family lives under a cloud of illusion and self-deception. They keep information from each other and never speak openly about the family's dysfunction, continuing to behave as if they are a happy family on the cusp of success. While Linda Loman knows the truth about her husband, his deteriorating mental state and suicide attempts, she continues to live a life devoted to Willy. Her self-deception requires that she turn a blind eye to the full effects of Willy's choices.

In contrast, Charley and his son Bernard, who are both financially successful and appear to be happy people, do not seem to suffer from the same kind of self-deception as the Lomans.

Betrayal

As young men, Willy and his brother, Ben, were abandoned by their father when he left the family, presumably for Alaska. This first betrayal in Willy's life is a betrayal of family values as it is a father's responsibility to stay with his family and help raise his sons. Subsequently, Ben, a surrogate father figure, betrayed Willy when Ben left Willy behind to travel to Africa, where Ben made his fortune and then died. Willy also feels betrayed by Ben in that Willy believes that Ben held some secret to success and wealth that he did not share with Willy. In both cases, Willy's father and his brother choose lives of adventure and wealth in place of building family connections.

These early betrayals lead to Willy's betrayal of his own family in various forms. As a traveling salesman, Willy frequently abandons his sons for road trips, leaving them fatherless for long periods of time. He betrays Linda in his affair with The Woman. In the end, Willy acts out the ultimate betrayal of his family when he abandons them through suicide.

Nature versus Man-Made Environment

Although Willy Loman feels driven to be a success as a salesman, he has another conflicting longing that appears throughout the play. He loves nature and the country life. In fact, traveling allows Willy to feel a sense of freedom and participation in the natural world, although he is just driving through it. When Willy is feeling at his worst, he wishes for fresh air, a garden, and the outdoor life. Yet his sense that real success comes from working in a man-made environment keeps him chained to his life in New York City and a job in which he cannot achieve personal or financial success.

Biff also loves nature and faces the same inner conflict as his father. He loves working on a farm in the West, but he has been so indoctrinated by his father's ideas about the American Dream and business success that he cannot embrace what he clearly enjoys. Unable to settle into a satisfying career, Biff moves back and forth between the freedom of the country and the confinement of the city, for a time subscribing to a dream of owning a sporting goods store with Happy.

7.7 KEYWORDS

- **Contemptuous**: full of contempt; scornful or disdainful.
- **Crack**: to hit or strike with a sudden, sharp blow or impact.
- **Cut And Dried**: an expression meaning "strictly business" without time for or need of pleasantries.
- **Dime a Dozen**: an expression used to imply that something is available in large quantities. The fact that the item is not rare suggests that it is not of great value.
- **Exhibitions**: public shows or displays, as of art, industrial products, athletic feats, and so on.
- **Hercules**: in Greek and Roman myth, the son of Zeus and Alcmene, renowned for his strength and courage, especially, as shown in his performance of twelve labors imposed on him.

7.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Describe the characters of Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller.
- Write a short note on themes of Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller.

- Write a short note on symbols used in Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller.
- Write a short note on motifs of Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller.

7.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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7. 10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Arthur Miller won the Pulitzer Prize in 1949. **(answer to check your progress- 1 Q1)**

Charley is Willy's longtime neighbor. **(answer to check your progress- 1 Q2)**

Bernard is Charley’s son. **(answer to check your progress- 1 Q3)**

Ben is Willy's adventurous and lucky older brother. **(answer to check your progress- 1 Q4)**