Character List:

Willy Loman: A sixty year old salesman living in Brooklyn, Willy Loman is a gregarious, mercurial man with powerful strivings and aspirations for success. However, after thirty-five years as a traveling salesman throughout New England, Willy Loman is tired and defeated by his lack of success and difficult family life. Although he has a dutiful wife, his relationship with his oldest son, Biff, is strained because of Biff's continual failures. As a salesman, Willy Loman focuses on personal details over actual measures of success, believing that it is personality and not results that garner success in the business world.

Biff Loman: The thirty-four year old son of Willy Loman, Biff was a star high school athlete with a scholarship to UVA, but he did not attend college after failing his high school math course and not attending summer school. He did this primarily out of spite after finding his father having an affair with a woman in Boston. Since then, Biff has been a continual failure, stealing from every job he has had and even spending time in jail. Despite his failures and anger towards his father, Biff still has great concern for what his father thinks of him, and the conflict between the two characters drives the narrative of the play.

Linda Loman: The dutiful and obedient wife to Willy and mother of Biff and Happy, Linda Loman is the one person who supports Willy Loman, despite his often reprehensible treatment of her. She is a woman who has aged greatly because of her difficult life supporting her husband, whose hallucinations and erratic behavior she contends with alone. She is the moral center of the play, occasionally stern and not afraid to confront her sons on their poor treatment of their father.

Happy Loman: The younger of the two Loman sons, Happy Loman is seemingly content and successful, with a steady career and none of the obvious marks of failure that his older brother displays. Happy, however, is not content with his more stable life, because he has never risked failure or striven for any real measure of success. Happy is a compulsive womanizer who treats women purely as sex objects and has little respect for the many women he seduces.

Charley: The Lomans' next door neighbor and father of Bernard, Charley is a successful businessman and exemplifies the success that Willy never could achieve. Although Willy claims that Charley is a man who is "liked, but not well-liked," he owns his own business and is respected and admired. He and Willy have a contentious relationship, but Charley is nevertheless Willy's only friend.

Bernard: Bernard is Charley's only son, intelligent and industrious but without the gregarious personality of either of the Loman sons. It is this quality that makes Willy believe that Bernard will never be a true success in the business world, but Bernard nevertheless proves himself to be far more successful than Willy imagined: he is a lawyer ready to argue a case in front of the Supreme Court.

Ben: Willy's older brother, Ben left home at seventeen to find their father in Alaska, but ended up in Africa, where he found diamond mines and came out of the jungle at twenty-
one an incredibly rich man. Although Ben died several weeks before the present time of the play, he often appears carrying a valise and umbrella in Willy's hallucinations. Ben represents the fantastic success for which Willy has always hoped but can never achieve, as well as the lost opportunities in Willy Loman's life.

**Howard Wagner:** The thirty-six year old son of Frank Wagner, Willy Loman's former boss, Howard now occupies the same position as his late father. Although Willy was the one who named Howard, he nevertheless is forced to fire Willy for his erratic behavior. Howard is preoccupied with technology; when Willy meets with him, he spends most of the meeting demonstrating his new wire recorder.

**Stanley:** He is the waiter at the restaurant where Willy meets his sons, and helps Willy home after Biff and Happy leave their father there.

**The Woman:** An assistant in a company in Boston with which Willy deals, this nameless character has a continuing affair with Willy when he visits New England. The Woman claims that Willy ruined her and failed in his promises to her. When Bill finds the Woman in Willy's hotel room, he begins his course of self-destructive behavior.

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**Act I (Loman Home, Present Day):**

The salesman, Willy Loman, enters his home dressed in a dark gray business suit and carrying two large sample cases. He appears very tired and confused, a sixty year old man with calluses on his hands, yet he has powerful strivings and a mercurial nature. Linda Loman, his wife, puts on a robe and slippers and goes downstairs. She has been asleep. Linda is mostly jovial, but has developed an iron repression of her objections to her husband. Her struggle is to spiritually support him while 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 on his trip. He only got as far as Yonkers, and doesn't remember the entire details of his trip. He tells Linda that he kept swerving onto the shoulder of the road, but Linda thinks that it must be the steering. He had to drive ten miles an hour to get back home. She tells him that he needs to rest his mind. Willy tells
her how he was driving along looking at the scenery, and suddenly he's going off the road. Linda says that there's no reason why he can't work in New York, but Willy says he's not needed there. Linda worries that Willy is too accommodating and that he should tell Howard that he must work in New York. Willy claims that if Frank Wagner were alive he would be in charge of New York by now, but Howard doesn't appreciate him. Linda tells him how Happy took Biff on a date, and that it was nice to see them shaving together. Linda reminds him not to lose his temper around 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 is crestfallen and admires his father. When Biff finds himself, both of them will be happier. Willy questions how Biff can find himself as a farmhand. Willy remarks that it is a disgrace that a thirty-four year old man has not found himself. Willy calls Biff a lazy bum and says that he is lost, but then contradicts himself and says that he is not lazy. Willy complains about how Linda got a new type of cheese, American instead of Swiss. Willy longs for the days when their neighborhood was less developed and less crowded. He shouts about how the population is out of control. He wakes up his sons Biff and Happy, both of whom are in the double bunk in the boys' bedroom. Willy vows that he won't fight with Biff anymore, for some men don't get started until late in life, such as Edison or B.F. Goodrich.

Analysis:

At the beginning of the play, Arthur Miller establishes Willy Loman as a troubled and misguided man, at heart a salesman and a dreamer with a preoccupation with success. However, Miller makes equally apparent that Willy Loman is no 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 within Willy Loman, whose actions assume a more glorious and idealized past. Willy sentimentalizes the neighborhood as it was years ago, and mourns the days working for Frank Wagner, while his son Howard Wagner fails to appreciate him. Miller presents Willy as a strong and boisterous man with great bravado but little energy to support that impression of vitality. He is perpetually weary and exhibits signs of dementia, contradicting himself within his conversations and showing some memory loss.

Linda, in contrast, displays little of the boisterous intensity of Willy. 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 without any hope for pursuing whatever dreams she may have had. 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 resides 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, thus using a euphemism to describe his string of perpetual failures. At thirty-four years old, Biff remains to some