

MULTIPLE CHOICE STUDY GUIDE/QUIZ QUESTIONS - *Death of a Salesman*

Act One

1. The main character is a salesman who, after thirty four years with the company, has been taken off salary and is experiencing some personal and financial difficulties. What is his name?
  - a. His name is Willy Loman
  - b. His name is Charley Wills.
  - c. His name is Ben Happs.
  - d. His name is William Benson.
2. Who is Willy's wife?
  - a. Her name is Jenny.
  - b. Her name is Letty.
  - c. Her name is Linda.
  - d. Her name is Happy.
3. What happened to Willy after he got a little above Yonkers?
  - a. He ran out of gas.
  - b. He forgot he was driving and ran off the road.
  - c. He ran into a truck.
  - d. He had a heart attack while driving.
4. What is Linda's reaction to Willy's complaints about himself?
  - a. She agrees and says she never should have married him.
  - b. She urges him to see a therapist.
  - c. She cries and says not to talk like that.
  - d. She makes excuses for him.
5. Who are Biff and Happy?
  - a. They are two new young salesmen who are trying to get Willy's territory.
  - b. They are Willy's sons. Neither are very settled or responsible.
  - c. They are Willy's older brothers. They are both highly successful, and ridicule Willy for his failure.
  - d. They are two neighbors. Willy owes them both money.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Two

6. In the first scene with Linda, Willy contradicted himself twice. About what did he contradict himself?
  - a. He called Biff lazy, but later describes him as hardworking. Later he contradicts himself about the windshield of the car.
  - b. He says Ben made in his money in oil, but later says real estate. He says he remembers his boys' birthdays, but later admits that he doesn't.
  - c. First he says he doesn't love Linda, then he says he never said that. Then he says he had one accident, although he know he has had three.
  - d. He says he wants to retire, then says he wants to work for ten more years. Then he says Happy is his favorite son, although he later tells Biff he is the favorite.
7. What seems to be the problem between Biff and Willy?
  - a. Biff is a draft dodger, and Willy wanted him to have a military career.
  - b. Biff was disrespectful to his mother, and Willy was angry about it.
  - c. Biff wants to move to Alaska, but Willy wants him to go into sales and take over his (Willy's) route.
  - d. Biff is unsettled and hasn't made anything of himself yet, and this distress Willy.
8. Why doesn't Happy go west with Biff?
  - a. He is about to be married, and his wife-to-be won't let him go.
  - b. He has just applied to graduate school.
  - c. He wants to show the executives in his company that he can make the grade.
  - d. He is too insecure to try something that risky.
9. What does Biff want from Bill Oliver?
  - a. He wants money to buy a ranch.
  - b. He wants a recommendation to a film director Bill knows in Hollywood.
  - c. He wants his old job back.
  - d. Biff wants Bill Oliver to become partners with him and open a consulting service.
10. Why did Biff stop working for Bill Oliver?
  - a. Bill never gave him a raise in four years.
  - b. Biff suspected Bill knew he had stolen some basketball.
  - c. Biff had been dating Bill's daughter; Bill fired him when Biff dropped her.
  - d. Bill wanted Biff to lie to an insurance adjuster, and Biff refused.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Three

11. Happy says, "I don't know what to do about him [Willy], it's getting embarrassing." What is he referring to?
- a. He is referring to Willy's growing obesity.
  - b. He is referring to Willy's crude gestures and language.
  - c. He is referring to Willy's excessive spending.
  - d. He is referring to Willy's mental lapses into a dream world.
12. What does Happy's thinking tell you about his character?
- a. It shows that Happy really loves Willy.
  - b. It shows that Happy is more concerned about his own welfare than Willy's health.
  - c. Happy is admitting his ignorance, and acknowledging that he should have studied more in school.
  - d. Happy prefers his mother to his father.
13. Why does Willy talk so much about the car?
- a. Buying a new car for his wife is his motivation for keeping his sales job.
  - b. He thinks the car makes him seem powerful.
  - c. He had a bad experience in his car today, and the old car is a happy experience from the past.
  - d. He has developed a nervous phobia, and thinks that talking about the car will bring him good luck. Not talking about it may bring bad luck.
14. Where did Biff get the football?
- a. Biff had stolen it from school.
  - b. Biff had received it as a gift from his mother.
  - c. He borrowed it from Happy
  - d. He had stolen it from a kid down the street
15. What does Willy tell Linda about his business?
- a. He's doing great and should get a promotion in a few weeks.
  - b. Business isn't so good.
  - c. People he does business with don't seem to like him.
  - d. B & C
16. Who is The Woman?
- a. Linda
  - b. Someone with whom Willy had a brief affair
  - c. Willy's best client
  - d. Ben's wife

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Four

17. What does Willy mean, "I'll make it up to you, Linda, I'll --"? What does Linda think he means?
- a. Willy means that he'll make up for his infidelity, Linda thinks he is talking about his business and will try to make more money for them.
  - b. Willy means that he will pay more attention to her when he's home. She is thinking the same thing.
  - c. Willy means he will make more money, Linda thinks he is talking about spending more time together.
  - d. Willy means he'll spend more time with her and the boys. Linda thinks he is talking about his past indiscretions.
19. What does Willy want young Bernard to do for Biff?
- a. Willy wants Bernard to give up his position on the football team so that Biff can get on it.
  - b. Willy wants Bernard to give Biff answers for a test.
  - c. Willy wants Bernard to introduce Biff to his (Bernard's) sister, whom Biff likes.
  - d. Willy wants Bernard to beat up a bully who has been bothering Biff.
20. Willy says, "The man knew what he wanted and went out and got it! Walked into a jungle, and comes out, at the age of twenty one, and he rich..." About whom is he talking?
- a. He is talking about Happy.
  - b. He is talking about himself.
  - c. He is talking about Ben.
  - d. He is talking about Charley.
21. Who is Ben?
- a. He is Willy's brother who apparently became very successful at a young age.
  - b. He is Willy's father, who was also a salesman.
  - c. He is Willy's long time friend.
  - d. He is Willy's oldest son, who no longer keeps in touch with the family.
22. Who is Charley?
- a. Willy's other brother
  - b. A long-time friend of Willy
  - c. Willy's boss
  - d. Biff's real father

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Five

23. Charley says, "To hell with it. When a deposit bottle is broken, you don't get your nickel back." What does he mean?
- a. One may invest a lot of time and money into a child, but if the child doesn't turn out well, you won't get any satisfaction or rewards for your time spent. But, there's no use worrying about it; you just pick up and go on with your life.
  - b. He's explaining to a client that he cannot accept returns for broken goods.
  - c. If you don't live a good life, you won't have any rewards at the end of your life. In order to get to heaven, you have to be good on Earth.
  - d. He is tired of listening to Willy whine about all that has gone wrong in his life, and he's just trying to cut him off short so he doesn't have to listen to him anymore.
24. Charley and Willy are playing cards. Why does Charley leave?
- a. Willy is being rude to him and not making any sense.
  - b. He has another appointment to go to.
  - c. He's just tired.
  - d. Willy and Ben have won all of his money, so he has to quit.
25. How is what Willy's father did for a living different from what Willy does?
- a. Willy's father was a teacher. He traveled to teach short courses in different areas.
  - b. Willy's father made flutes and sold them. Willy sells someone else's product and doesn't have the pride of craftsmanship that his father did.
  - c. Willy's father was uneducated, and was never able to advance. Willy has a degree in business, although he had chosen not to make good use of it.
  - d. Willy's father was an intellectual and an inventor. He had brilliant ideas but was never able to make a profit with them. Willy never thought much about ideas; instead, he concentrated on making money.
26. Why does Charley tell Willy "the jails are full of fearless characters"?
- a. There has been a series of burglaries in their neighborhood. They have been discussing ways to scare away the young hoodlums.
  - b. Charley's son has recently been sentenced to five years in jail for armed robbery. Charley is saving face, pretending he is not afraid for his son's safety in prison.
  - c. Willy has just sent his sons across the road to a new construction site to steal more building supplies. Willy is proud of their fearlessness, but Charley sees a more practical side to it, that what the boys are doing is wrong.
  - d. Willy has shared a rather shady business scheme with Charley. Charley doesn't want to participate, and Willy calls him a coward.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Six

27. Linda says, "Attention, attention must be paid to such a person." Explain.
- a. Willy deserves our attention, our interest, and caring. Even though he is misguided, he is trying to muddle through life as well as he can.
  - b. Biff is having a difficult time, and his parents should help him instead of criticizing.
  - c. They would all do well to study Ben's methods for success and copy them.
  - d. She thinks Charley is dangerous, and wants Willy to stop talking to him. She cites several instances that happened while Willy was away, Willy disagrees with his wife.
28. Linda tells the boys that Willy won't be all right. When the boys ask why he won't, what is her reply?
- a. He is dying of cancer.
  - b. A psychiatrist has suggested that he go into a hospital for observation.
  - c. He is trying to kill himself.
  - d. She is planning to leave him, and her departure will be very difficult for him.
29. What advice does Willy give Biff on the evening before he goes to see Bill Oliver? Three of the following sentences repeat some of the advice. Which does not?
- a. Wear a business suit.
  - b. Ask for fifteen thousand dollars.
  - c. Walk in seriously.
  - d. Carry a leather briefcase.
30. How much time passes in the first act?
- a. One day passes.
  - b. Ten years pass.
  - c. Two weeks pass.
  - d. Three hours pass.
31. How much time are we given information about?
- a. We are given information about three years.
  - b. We are given information about eight years.
  - c. We are given information about the family from the time the children are small.
  - d. We are given information about the last few hours before Willy's death.

Act Two

32. Where did Biff go early that morning?
- a. He went to see Willy's boss.
  - b. He went to see Mr. Oliver.
  - c. He went to see The Woman
  - d. He went to see Charley.
33. What did Willy resolve to talk about with Howard?
- a. He resolved to talk about old times.
  - b. He resolved to talk about his family.
  - c. He resolved to talk about his past successes.
  - d. He resolved to talk about the New York job.
34. What is the result of Willy's conversation with Howard?
- a. Willy is fired.
  - b. Willy gets the New York job.
  - c. Willy quits.
  - d. Willy keeps his present territory.
35. "You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away -- a man isn't a piece of fruit!" Explain why Willy said that.
- a. He is trying to convince his family he isn't crazy - "a fruitcake."
  - b. He is telling his family they have to accept him the way he is, and never expect to be rich.
  - c. He has spent the best years of his life working for the company, and now, in his old age, they are letting him go since there is no use for him.
  - d. He finally realizes that he has to accept his own shortcomings as well as his son Biff's.
36. "This is no time for false pride, Willy. . . . You've got two great boys, haven't you?" Now that Willy really needs the boys, the reality of their worthlessness crushes his idealized version, and Willy is in a Catch-22, no win situation. Which literary element is being used here?
- a. This is a rhetorical question.
  - b. This is foreshadowing.
  - c. This is figurative language.
  - d. This is irony.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Eight

37. Why didn't Willy go with Ben years ago when Ben offered him a job?
- a. He wanted to make it on his own.
  - b. He had inflated his own business worth to Linda, so that when the opportunity came, Linda didn't see the need, since Willy was already on such a great career path.
  - c. They had a disagreement about the terms of the offer. Willy wanted to be partners, but Ben didn't. Neither would compromise so they cancelled the deal.
  - d. Linda refused to leave her friends and familiar surroundings.
38. Ben says. "What are you building? Lay your hands on it. Where is it?" What is the point of this line?
- a. Every man must take care of himself.
  - b. Ben thinks Willy would have been better off as a construction worker.
  - c. In fact, Willy hasn't done much worthwhile with his life. He is in debt, he is a failure at business, and his boys appear to be just like him.
  - d. Ben is trying to provoke Willy just enough to motivate him, but it doesn't work.
39. Where does Willy go after his conversation with Howard?
- a. He goes to church and goes to confession.
  - b. He goes to his doctor to get a prescription for sleeping pills.
  - c. He goes to buy a new car.
  - d. He goes to see Charley for money to cover his life insurance premium payment.
40. Willy wants to find out what went wrong with Biff, why he didn't do anything with his life after the age of 17. Who does he ask?
- a. He asks Bernard.
  - b. He asks Linda.
  - c. He asks Charley.
  - d. He asks Happy.
41. What reply does he receive.
- a. Biff has a learning disability and never received the proper help to compensate for it.
  - b. He was suffering from depression.
  - c. Biff was ready to go to summer school to make up the math class, but when he returned from Boston, he gave up.
  - d. There is really nothing wrong; Biff is just lazy and stubborn.



Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Nine

42. Why can't Willy work for Charley?
- a. Charley stands for the things Willy does not believe in; if Willy would work for Charley, he would admit that his whole life had been wrong.
  - b. Charley's business is not doing well. He doesn't have enough money to hire anyone else.
  - c. Charley doesn't think Willy will do a good job, but he doesn't want to spoil their friendship by saying so.
  - d. Willy's mind has been affected and he is really not capable of working a full-time job.
43. Biff says, ". . . I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been." What does he mean?
- a. He finally learns that he was adopted, and he is angry that his parents never told him.
  - b. He realized that he was raised on a false philosophy, and that most of the things that happened were glossed over and made far better than they were. Bill realized that he was a Clerk and a thief.
  - c. He realized that he has wasted his life because he never admitted that he was afraid to be successful.
  - d. He realized that he really did love his father, and it was time to admit it.
44. What was the result of Biff's meeting with Bill Oliver?
- a. He got part of the money, with a promise of more if he made good.
  - b. He got brushed aside. He would never get the money, and he would have no more meetings with Bill Oliver.
  - c. He got all of the money and Bill's full support.
  - d. Oliver gave him a year to prove his could be responsible; then he would get the money.
45. What does Happy want Biff to tell Willy?
- a. He wants Biff to paint a glossy picture of the meeting with Oliver instead of telling the truth.
  - b. He wants Biff to tell Willy he will stay home and get a job.
  - c. He wants Biff to tell Willy the truth about what happened with Bill Oliver so many years ago.
  - d. He wants Biff to make Willy realize his (Willy's) days as a salesman are over.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Ten

46. Willy says, ". . . the woods are burning, boys. Can't you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around." What does that mean?
- a. Willy is having a flashback to a time in his youth when he set the woods in back of his house on fire.
  - b. Times are changing. He thinks he is on the brink of a wave of good fortune.
  - c. Willy's world is falling apart. He had lost his job and has no resources. He is getting trapped by the years of lies he has lived.
  - d. Willy thinks he is dying, and he is contemplating the afterlife. He is afraid he will be punished for his life.
47. What does Willy do while Biff is trying to explain the facts of his meeting with Bill Oliver?
- a. He shouts curses to drown out Biff's voice.
  - b. He daydreams of the time Biff flunked math.
  - c. He washes and waxes the car.
  - d. He takes notes so he can refer to them later.
48. What did Biff take from Bill Oliver?
- a. He took a silver picture frame.
  - b. He took a fountain pen.
  - c. He took a twenty dollar bill.
  - d. He took the keys to the office.
49. Identify Miss Forsythe and Letta.
- a. They are women who come into the restaurant. Happy is more interested in getting a date with them than in the welfare of his own father.
  - b. Miss Forsythe was Willy's high school English teacher, who had great faith in him. Letta was her daughter. She had a crush on Willy
  - c. They are women who work in the office of the company Willy works for. Miss Forsythe ridicules him, but Letta feels sorry for him.
  - d. They are friends and confidants of Linda's. They have offered to help her if anything ever happens to Willy.
50. Where does Willy go?
- a. He goes to the river to look at the water.
  - b. He goes to the parking lot for a cigarette.
  - c. He goes to the restroom to compose himself.
  - d. He goes home to cry and get drunk.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Eleven

51. What is Biff's opinion of his father now, when he tells it to Miss Forsythe?
- a. Biff says he is a "poor, wretched loser."
  - b. Biff says he is a "fine, troubled prince."
  - c. Biff says he is a "gentle daydreamer."
  - d. Biff says he is a "nasty, selfish braggart."
52. Why can't Biff help Willy?
- a. He promised his mother he would not help.
  - b. He just doesn't want to.
  - c. He is afraid Happy will get jealous.
  - d. They both get frustrated and yell at each other.
53. Happy denies that Willy is his father. Why?
- a. Happy doesn't want the responsibility of caring for Willy.
  - b. He had secretly found proof of his adoption, and now wants the truth to be known.
  - c. Happy is angry because Willy is leaving all of his money (in his will) to Biff.
  - d. He does not want to admit that he is a lot like his father.
54. What happened in Boston? What do we finally find out is the problem, the secret between Willy and Biff?
- a. Biff discovered that Willy had embezzled some money. He lost his respect for Willy.
  - b. They went out drinking together. On the way home, Willy ran over a man and didn't stop to help him. Biff never forgave him.
  - c. Biff went to talk to his father and walked in on Willy and the woman with whom he was having an affair.
  - d. Biff discovered that Willy is an alcoholic. Willy denied it, and refused to get help.
55. Why did Biff go to Boston in the first place?
- a. He went to borrow some money.
  - b. He went because he wanted to get his father's signature so he could join the marines.
  - c. He wanted to convince his father to let him go on the road, too. This was their first trial trip together.
  - d. He went to ask Willy to talk his teacher into changing a grade so he wouldn't have to go to summer school.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Twelve

56. Where does Willy go after he realizes that the boys have left him at the restaurant?
- a. He goes to the park for a walk.
  - b. He buys some carrot seeds for his garden and goes home to plant them.
  - c. He goes to buy another life insurance policy.
  - d. He goes to his office to cry.
57. Why does Linda knock the flowers to the floor?
- a. She is allergic to them. She is angry because the boys knew that and brought them home anyway.
  - b. It was an accident. She didn't look where she was going.
  - c. She is furious because the boys left Willy at the restaurant.
  - d. She is having a seizure. She was trying to keep her illness a secret from the others, so they wouldn't get upset, but she couldn't control the seizure.
58. "Willy says, " A man can't go out the way he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something." What does he mean.
- a. People have to take chances in life.
  - b. It is better to try a lot of different jobs than to stick to one for a lifetime; he is getting ready to switch careers.
  - c. He is pleasant because he raised a family.
  - d. He feels like he should have contributed something to the world, and he didn't.
59. Why does Willy decide to kill himself?
- a. He can leave a lot of insurance money to Biff if his death looks like an accident. Then Biff will have a chance to be successful.
  - b. He would rather die than face Linda about his past indiscretions.
  - c. He is drunk and doesn't realize what he is doing.
  - d. He knew he had incurable cancer and didn't want to spend the rest of his life in pain.
60. What does Biff want to tell Willy before he is ready to go?
- a. He wants to tell Willy he was really a good father.
  - b. He wants to tell Willy he has decided to join the Army.
  - c. He wants to tell Willy that he (Biff) is nothing, that he accepts that now, and that he has no hard feelings towards Willy.
  - d. He wants to tell Willy that he and Happy have decided to go into business together so they can take care of Willy and Linda in their retirement years.

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Thirteen

61. Biff says, "Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?" What is the significance of this line?
- a. It shows that Biff is losing his temper; he is about to explode.
  - b. It foreshadows Willy's death.
  - c. It separates the dream/illusion motif from the "woods are burning" motif.
  - d. It is the final rift in the relationship between Biff and Happy.
62. What is Willy's response to Biff's whole scene when Biff ends up crying?
- a. He tells Biff to dry up and act like a man.
  - b. He hugs Linda and asks her where they have gone wrong.
  - c. He thinks it is remarkable that Biff actually likes him.
  - d. He feels sorry for Biff, and asks Happy to talk to him.
63. Ben says, "The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy." Explain.
- a. Treasures are hidden. One must work to find them.
  - b. The jungle represents death; the diamonds are the insurance money.
  - c. Willy did not have the courage Ben had, which is why he failed.
  - d. The sales world is a jungle, but there are some good companies. Unfortunately, Willy worked for a poor company.
64. What does Willy do?
- a. He speeds away in his car and has a fatal car accident.
  - b. He trades the old car in for a new one.
  - c. He speeds away and keeps going. He is never heard from again.
  - d. He sells the car and gives the money to the boys.
65. Why is the car an appropriate device?
- a. It is a symbol of family togetherness.
  - b. It is a symbol of Willy's search for meaning.
  - c. It is a symbol of the boys' ideas about freedom.
  - d. It is a symbol of Willy's philosophy for success in life in general.
66. Biff realizes that Willy's philosophy was wrong, and most of Willy's life was made up of illusion. What does he say?
- a. "He took a wrong turn miles back and never figured it out."
  - b. "He was a liar and a cheat. He tried to buy our love and he failed."
  - c. "He had all the wrong dreams. All, all wrong."
  - d. "His brother made millions, but he only made mistakes."

Multiple Choice Study Guide Questions - *Death of a Salesman* - Page Fourteen

67. Based on the events of the play and our knowledge of the characters, what will probably happen to Biff.
- a. He will become a productive citizen in the real world.
  - b. He will become an alcoholic and drink himself to death.
  - c. He will steal money from Oliver and end up in jail.
  - d. He will follow in his father's footsteps.
68. What will probably happen to Happy?
- a. He will support Biff and Linda.
  - b. He will run off and join the Army.
  - c. He will become more and more like Willy.
  - d. He will take over Ben's business.
69. Linda says, "We're free and clear." Which of these is not an interpretation of her statement?
- a. Biff is free of Willy's influence.
  - b. They all have free wills.
  - c. They are financially free because the mortgage on the house has been paid.
  - d. Willy is now free of worldly concerns.

ANSWER KEY - MULTIPLE CHOICE STUDY/QUIZ QUESTIONS

*Death of a Salesman*

- |     |   |     |   |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| 1.  | A | 37. | B |
| 2.  | C | 38. | C |
| 3.  | B | 39. | D |
| 4.  | D | 40. | A |
| 5.  | B | 41. | C |
| 6.  | A | 42. | A |
| 7.  | D | 43. | B |
| 8.  | C | 44. | B |
| 9.  | A | 45. | A |
| 10. | B | 46. | C |
| 11. | D | 47. | B |
| 12. | B | 48. | B |
| 13. | C | 49. | A |
| 14. | A | 50. | C |
| 15. | D | 51. | B |
| 16. | B | 52. | D |
| 17. | A | 53. | A |
| 18. | A | 54. | C |
| 19. | B | 55. | D |
| 20. | C | 56. | B |
| 21. | A | 57. | C |
| 22. | B | 58. | D |
| 23. | A | 59. | A |
| 24. | A | 60. | C |
| 25. | B | 61. | B |
| 26. | C | 62. | C |
| 27. | A | 63. | B |
| 28. | C | 64. | A |
| 29. | D | 65. | D |
| 30. | A | 66. | C |
| 31. | C | 67. | A |
| 32. | B | 68. | C |
| 33. | D | 69. | B |
| 34. | A |     |   |
| 35. | C |     |   |
| 36. | D |     |   |