

Death of a Salesman

Arthur Miller



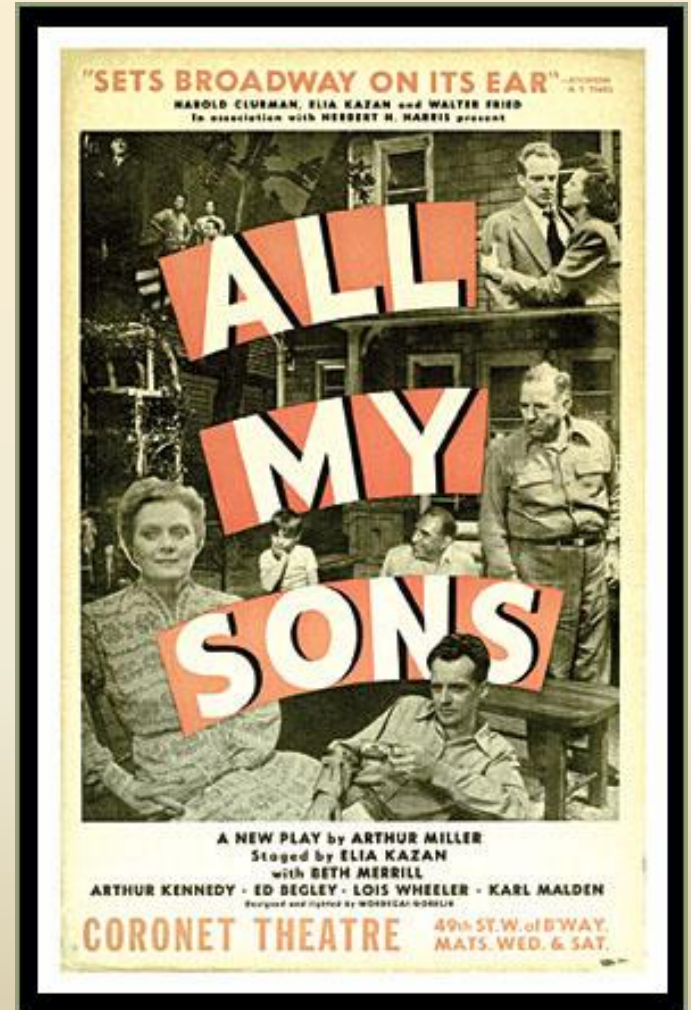
Arthur Miller



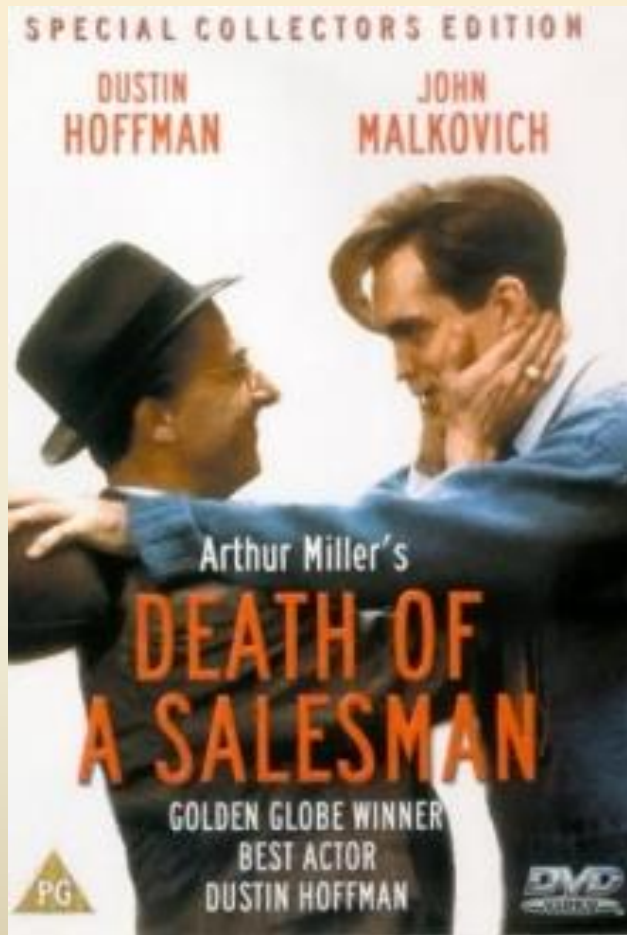
- A native New Yorker, attends the University of Michigan.
- In May, 1936, wrote his first play, *No Villain*, in six days during spring break. In May that year, *No Villain* receives the Hopwood Award in Drama, a prestigious U-M writing award.
- In 1937, that play is produced in Ann Arbor and Detroit.
- Also in 1937, Miller receives a 2nd Hopwood Award.
- Graduates in 1938

All My Sons

- After graduation, Miller writes for radio and theater. His first Broadway play, *All My Sons*, opens in 1947.
- It wins New York Drama Critics Circle Award and launches Miller as an important American playwright.



Death of a Salesman



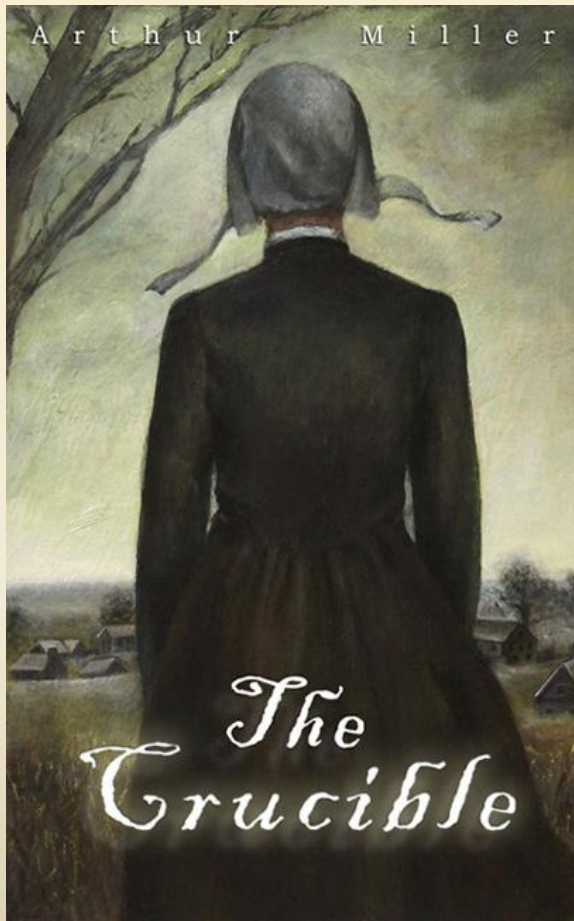
- *Death of a Salesman* opens on Broadway in 1949, directed by Elia Kazan.
- It wins the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Pulitzer Prize, and the Tony Award, among numerous other honors.

Un-American Activities Committee

- With many friends in Hollywood, Miller is called to testify before the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956 about alleged Communist activities — his own as well as those of his friends and associates.
- He refuses to “name names” and is convicted of contempt of Congress in 1957.
- In 1958, U.S. Court of Appeals overturns his conviction.



The Crucible



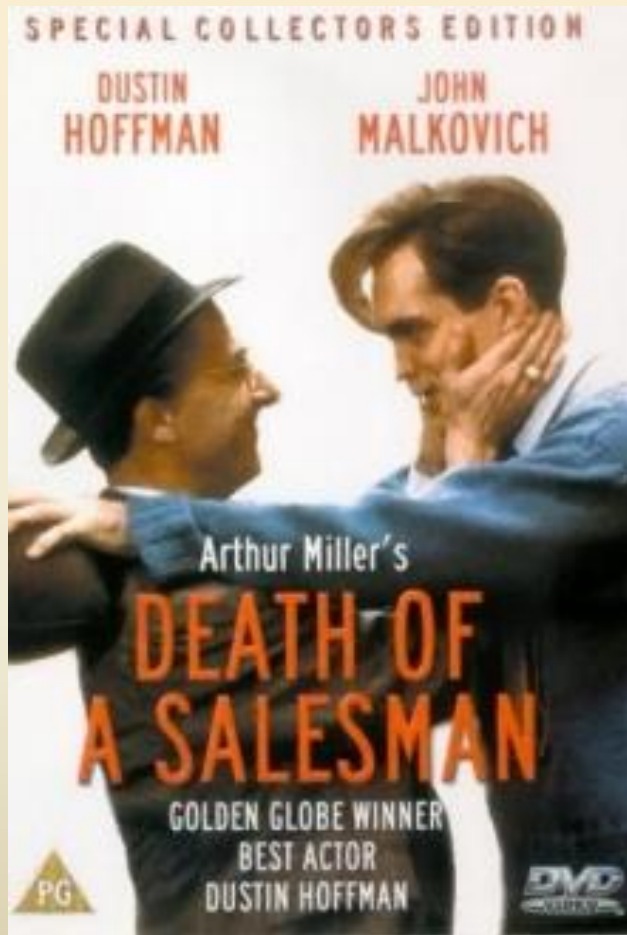
- Reacting to the Congressional “witch hunts” of the House Un-American Activities Committee, he begins writing *The Crucible* in 1950.
- It opens on Broadway in 1953. It wins the Tony Award.

Personal Life

- In 1956, Arthur Miller divorces his wife and marries... Marilyn Monroe!
- Was a stormy marriage; ended in divorce 5 years later.
- Miller continues to write and produce plays on Broadway.
- *Death of a Salesman* enjoys numerous Broadway revivals and is considered his greatest work.
- He dies in February 2005.

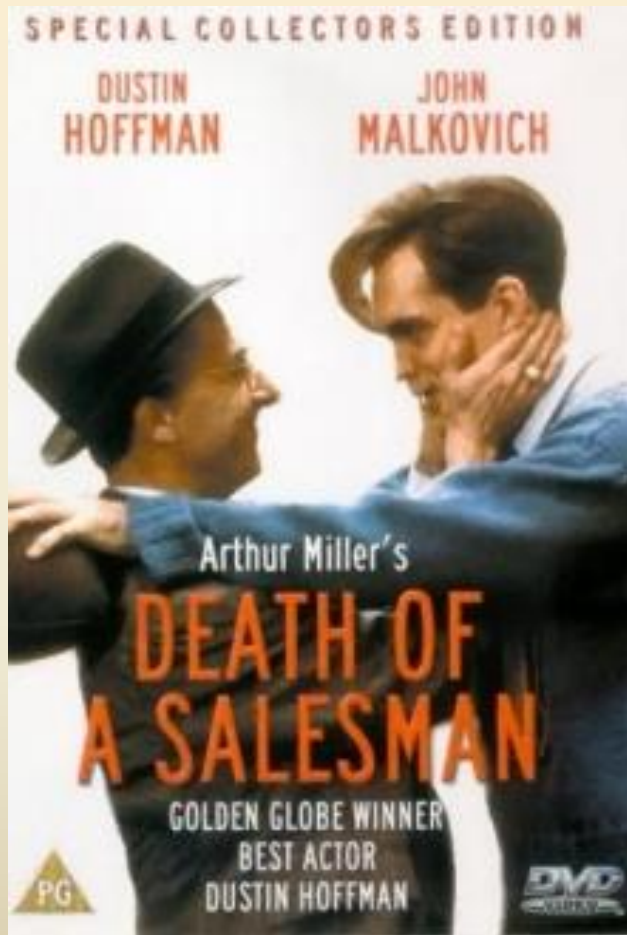


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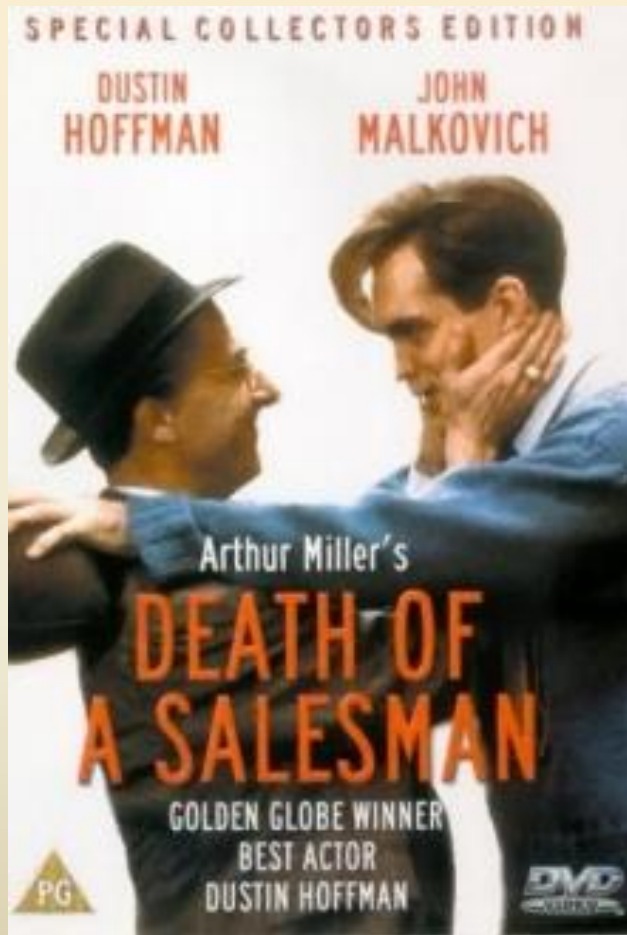
- Viewed largely as an indictment of the American Dream of seeking money and business success.
- When it first ran in 1949, the main character, Willy Loman, reminded many of their fathers and/or themselves. It moved audiences tremendously.

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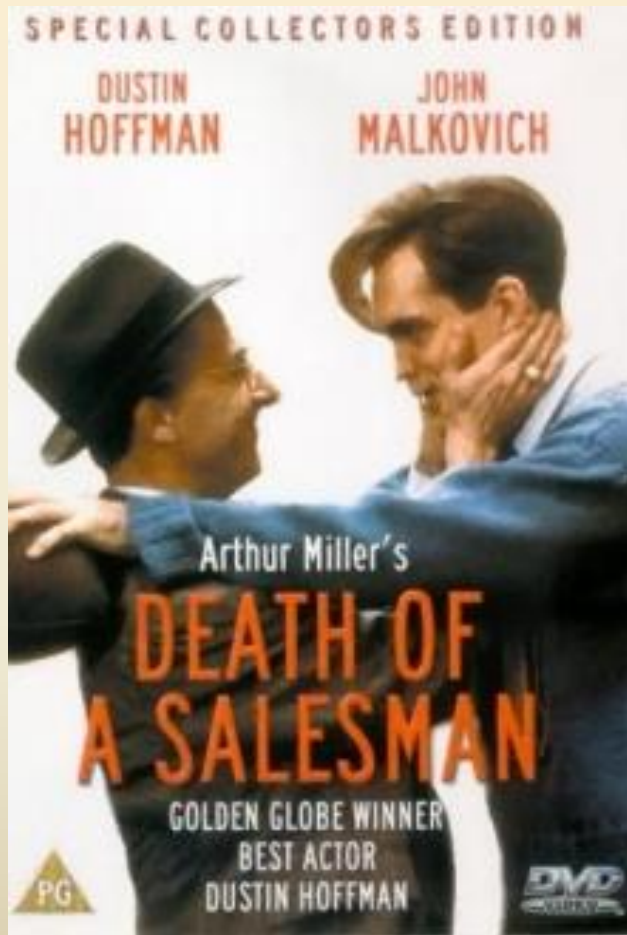
- People frequently sat silently after the final curtain went down because they were weeping.
- In his autobiography, *Timebends*, Miller tells a story about Bernard Gimbel, head of the Gimbel's Department Store chain, seeing the play and issuing an order the next day that no one who works in his stores will ever be let go because of old age.

Death of a Salesman



- Takes place in a New York City suburb, late 1940s.
- Characters are:
- Willy Loman and his wife Linda
- Their 2 adult sons, Biff and Happy
- A neighbor/friend, Charlie, and his son Bernard
- Willy's brother Ben

Death of a Salesman



- Play has 2 Acts and a “Requiem” (a very brief final act).
- Most of the action is at Willy and Linda’s home.
- Play is frequently a “stream of consciousness” from inside Willy’s head.
- He talks to himself and goes in and out of flashbacks.

20th Century Post War Drama

- 1945-1960 when most of American plays that became classics were produced
- Included pessimism and despair of the post war country as seen in realistic and symbolic dramas like Miller's
- Concerned with themes of man's responsibility and guilt, self-knowledge and self-realization and conflict between generations

20th Century Post War Drama

- Dominate characters are fantasist and liars
- Lives of businessmen and politicians are viewed as miserable and unhappy
- Flashbacks and dreams are seen as characters struggle with their lives
- Tragic deaths and graveyards are ordinary occurrences and settings
- Scripts include strange incidents and dialogue suggests sadness, discomfort, and discontent

Sources

- www.guardian
- www.brendamurphy.net
- www.factmonster.com
- <http://referaty-seminarky.sk/20th-century-drama>