

Definition of Capitalism

an economic system in which private corporations control production, distributions, and trade for profit, rather than larger groups, such as state or county, being in control.

The Ethos of Capitalism

Quote: "[People] started thinking that hard working must ensure them a luxurious life, which is called American Dream. Ultimately, each and every one becomes failure, because of capitalism. American Dream is a trap of capitalism to deceive people. ... But day dreamers never try to realize its dark face."

Meaning: Capitalism is no more than failures disguised as opportunities, and nobody realized this in the moment.

My Comment: If the situation is too good to be true, it probably *is* too good to be true. People suffered in America when they believed they should be succeeding because their belief was in the wrong idea.

**From the article "Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, a Victim of Capitalism" by Mohammad Jashim Uddin

Key Motifs - Symbols

Pantyhose/Stockings

The stockings are a significant symbol in the story, and it appears in several parts of Act 2. Overall, it represents distrust within the family and betrayal.

Fountain Pen

When Biff was in Bill Oliver's office, without thinking, he stole his fountain pen and ran down all eleven flights of stairs out of fear. Ultimately, the fountain pen is a sudden corruption after suffering from the false hopes of American Dream.

Key motif - Pantyhose/Stockings

Quote:	Explanation:
<i>[Linda] kisses him, and a silk stocking is seen hanging from her hand. Willy notices it. Willy: "Will you stop mending stockings? ... It gets me nervous."</i>	This brief moment shows the distrust that Willy feels towards Linda. Even though he is having an affair himself, he doesn't want Linda to be doing the same. This shows his selfishness, not simply in terms of his relationships with others. Because capitalism was a shocking reality for many people that believed in the American Dream, they also became selfish and desperate in order to make a living. Willy is an example of one of those people.

Key motif - Pantyhose/Stockings (cont)

The Woman: "Where's my stockings? You promised me stockings, Willy!"	In this situation, Willy is confronted with the consequences of a promise he made. He promised stockings for the woman he was having an affair with, but Biff is standing right in front of him. Willy must accept the responsibility of his actions, but he can't. The stockings symbolize how he has failed his family by not being able to support them and how he attempted to sweep all his problems under the rug. Because capitalism is destroying Willy from the inside out, he has changed drastically as a person, and has become unstable.
Willy: "I have no stockings here!"	
The Woman: "You had two boxes of size nine sheers for me, and I want them!"	

Key Motif - Fountain Pen

Quote:	Explanation:
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Key Motif - Fountain Pen (cont)

Biff: ... I don't know what came over me, Hap. The next thing I know I'm in his office--paneled walls, everything. I can't explain it. I-- Hap, I took his fountain pen." Even Biff himself does not know what he was thinking when he took the fountain pen. This shows that stealing became an instinctive action. The fountain pen is worth quite much in the setting of the play. Due to capitalism, it seems there is no way the Loman family can succeed. With all these thoughts whirling inside Biff's mind, he suddenly resorted to stealing, although he didn't expect that to solve any problems.

Willy, seeing the pen for the first time: "You took Oliver's pen? ... You stole Bill Oliver's fountain pen!" **Biff:** "I didn't exactly steal it! That's just what I've been explaining to you!" Biff shows remorse and regret for stealing the pen in this scene. It may be his guilty conscience, but it also may be his fear of confrontation that is the reason. The fountain pen symbolizes greed, or a momentary corruption in morals. However, it is clear that the motive behind Biff's sudden stealing is subconscious desperation for money.

