ACT I QUESTIONS

1. What are the values and truths that Willy tried to teach Biff and Happy as boys? Do you think these are worthwhile concepts for a father to teach his sons? Why or why not?

2. Does Linda want the same things out of life that Willy does? If not, what does she want that is different from Willy?

3. What do you think is Linda's role in Willy's life? In her sons' lives?

4. Do you believe Linda should have been so sympathetic to Willy's problems? Why or why not?

5. Do you think Linda's support of Willy strengthened his illusions of himself and the world or would he have been the same way without her?
6. How would you sum up Biff and Happy’s frustrations in life? What do each of them want that they do not have? How have each of them responded to their frustrations?

7. Biff wonders if his problems come from the fact that he’s “like a boy.” What evidence does he give to support that assertion? Do you agree with him?

8. Why do you think Happy is such a womanizer? How does his success with women satisfy him beyond the sexual level?

9. How are Biff and Happy similar? How are they different?

10. Willy constantly stresses Happy and Biff’s builds, appearances, and athletic prowess. He taught them to wear a smile, make important contacts and, above all, to be “very well liked.” How do these values compare with those praised by American society in general? Is Miller is commenting on the American value system as a whole? Why or why not?

11. How do the ways that Happy and Biff respond to their father’s value system differ?
12. Why does Willy want Biff to visit Bill Oliver so badly?

13. What does Willy’s brother Ben symbolize to him? What "answer" is he constantly looking for from Ben? Do you think Ben has the answer to Willy’s question?

14. Do you agree with Willy that being "well liked" is an important element of success? Can one be successful without being well liked? Can one be well liked and not successful? Does being well liked help one be a success?

15. How do you think Willy’s childhood affected his self-image and self-esteem? What features of his childhood do you see as having a tremendous and lasting effect on his life?

16. Why do you think Biff resents Willy so much? What do you think is its source?

17. What do you think Linda loves about Willy? Why do you think she has stayed with him all these years?
ACT II QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Miller never makes clear exactly what Willy sells? What do think he might sell?

2. Why do you think Arthur Miller included the wire recorder in the scene between Willy and Howard? What effect does it have on Willy? On the scene as a whole?

3. What does Willy’s memory of the old salesman mean to him? Why does he remember that man after all these years?

4. Did you expect the scene between Willy and Howard to end the way it did? Why or why not?

5. How do Biff’s and Bernard’s positions of power change from Act One to Act Two? Why did that change occur?

6. Describe the realizations Biff made after his visit with Mr. Oliver.
7. Why do you think Biff took Mr. Oliver’s fountain pen? What did that pen symbolize to him?

8. Do you think that Biff should have listened to Happy and lied to Willy about his encounter with Oliver? Why or why not?

9. Why do you think discovering his father’s affair affected Biff as it did?

10. Do you think Willy was a good father? A good husband? Why or why not?

11. How did Biff respond to Willy’s successful suicide by car crash? Happy? Linda? How did you respond to Willy’s suicide?

12. Do you think the characters in Death of a Salesman are realistic? Could people like these actually exist? Have you ever known anyone who reminds you of one of the characters in the play?
13. Do you agree with Biff that Willy "never knew who he was?"

14. What do you think will happen to Biff over the course of the rest of his life? To Happy? To Linda?

15. Has Death of a Salesman changed your idea of what makes a successful salesman and/or a successful person in general?

16. How much does Miller hold Willy Loman responsible for his ultimate collapse and how much does he blame forces beyond Willy’s control?

17. What does Willy’s death mean to you? Does it signify some essential human truth? Does it even have a meaning?