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"Death of a Salesman", by Arthur Miller, and "Seize the Day"

by Saul Bellow are two works that comment on American life and a moral structure that allows persons involved with it to be subject to the worst of its competitive aspects and moral strictures, in two comparable situations with different economic settings. In one we are involved with the internal functionings of a man's mind and its response to its environments and fortunes through the use of internal dialogue; and in the other, the play, through dream sequences on the stage that the main character slips into as he escapes from the present. "Wilky" Adler, or Tommy Wilhelm, goes through his day rationalizing his failure. Tommy's tragedy lies in his unwillingness to accept the fact that he can not measure up in his middle age to the young man he once was. Both men are in failure situations trying to cope with lives that have turned out to be less than what either considers ideal. We watch two human beings degenerate in these two works, and we feel that their situations lose in importance in contrast with the dramatic power of the endings of these two works. Titles are interesting, when looked at in relation to what goes on in the work. Death of a Salesman explains the final fate of the protagonist, while the bright opportunistic title of the novel proves ironic in light of Tommy Wilhelm's nervous collapse at the end of Seize The Day.

Although neither author touches the idea of leaving the contentment of farm life, which history shows to be a dominant mode of life up to the late 19th century, we can draw sharp contrasts with the harsh urban settings of these two works and rural,