

Date 1 / 17 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / Lyric

Title Dead Poets Society

Author / Director / Peter Weir

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I first watched *Dead Poets Society* in Theology 1: An Introduction to Catholicism during freshman year, but then watched the movie again on my television at home, as it is one of the required movies for the poetic vision project.

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc?)

Dead Poets Society is prominently about seven senior high school students, who attend Welton Academy, an elite prep school that has strict standards and demands of its all male students. In fact, the fundamental principles of the school that they boys are expected to live by are "tradition, honor, discipline, and excellence." At the academy, a new teacher by the name of John Keating comes to teach English, but his methods are far from the ideal Welton standards, as he has his students focus on the idea of "carpe diem" and stepping outside of their comfort zones. A few of the students, inspired by Keating and the perspective he gives them of the world, revive a literary club known as the Dead Poets Society. Surely but slowly, the boys begin to utilize their potential that Keating helps them to realize and cultivate to protest against the stringent methods and values of the school, using literature and poetry in the process. In one particular plot aspect, Neil Perry, one of the protagonists of the movie, enrolls in a Shakespearean play despite the strong disapproval of his father. Perry has suddenly found an interest in the arts and in theater due to Keating's involvement in his life. Once his father finds out about his role in the play, Neil finds no other option than suicide, as he knows his father doesn't love him for who he is and will practically disown him. After an investigation is conducted, a few of the boys, besides Charlie, decide that its best for them to blame Keating for the incident so that they don't all get kicked out of school. Eventually, Keating is fired, and the headmaster, Nolan, begins to teach the students' English class. One day, when Keating returns to class to get his belongings, many of the boys stand on their desks and salute Keating by calling out "O Captain! My Captain!" to him from the famous poem by Walt Whitman.

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

Dead Poets Society shows the contrast between traditionalist and anti-traditionalist education systems and lifestyle approaches as well as the results one achieves from living the way he truly wants to live it. In fact, the latin phrase "carpe diem," or "seize the day" is perhaps one of the most prominent themes of the movie, as it is what is encouraged by Mr. Keating's philosophy about teaching and life in general. He urges others to make their lives extraordinary, to do something outstanding, unique, and bold, and to follow their dreams. He tells his students to make the most of their lives by thinking for themselves and examining their lives rather than following blindly and obliviously into their future. Essentially, Mr. Keating acts as a catalyst to totally and entirely change the lives of some of the students at Welton, compelling them to live for themselves rather than for others because, by doing so, they will ultimately find meaning, satisfaction, and contentedness in their lives. Unfortunately, Mr. Keating essentially becomes charged with the corruption of youth because he supposedly implants into their brains unorthodox views and ideals, when, in reality, he is simply urging the creativity and boldness of the youth to persist and endure into the future in order to make the world a better place. Keating's passive rebellion against an institution shows how the established way may not be the best way, and that change is constantly necessary for society to progress into the future.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

The Dead Poets Society itself, a literary club that supposedly existed in the past at the Welton Academy, obviously progressively becomes a symbol of resistance and freedom for the students that they use to justify their bold and courageous actions. Moreover, the standing on the desk by the students and by Mr. Keating himself symbolizes an impetus for the students to look at things in a different way, ultimately transforming the students' visions of themselves as well as helping them realize their own dreams and motives in life. Had Mr. Keating not come to the school, the students would never have stepped out of their comfort zones and accomplished many of the things they truly wanted to do in life, and so Keating's presence almost symbolizes a transformation of the students' lives for the better. Many other symbols exist in the movie, but they all seemingly relate to Keating's unorthodox teachings.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections /

Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

Dead Poets Society is perhaps one of the most inspirational and motivational movies I have ever seen in my life. Not only does the movie permit standing up for justice and revision towards a better future, but is also urges people to live life to the best of their capabilities, utilizing their full potential in order to achieve what they ultimately want to accomplish in life. The movie is hopeful, optimistic, promising, and encouraging for mankind, except for Neil Perry's death of course, making the movie automatically touching and inspirational for anyone who watches it. *Dead Poets Society* also strongly and significantly reminds me of the poem "Constantly Risking Absurdity" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. In the poem, Ferlinghetti compares a poet to a trapeze artist, flinging himself all around and risking his life in search for something that will ultimately and eventually worthwhile to him. Similarly, Mr. Keating urges his students to break free of conformity and to embrace their individuality, entirely risking their positions at the stringent and orthodox school Welton Academy but ultimately giving rise to and promising personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* also goes after his goals and follows his dreams, but in a much more extreme way. Although the end result is horror, death, and destruction, Victor's pursuit at least leaves him temporarily satisfied because he knew he would not have been able to contain his inner urgings had he not followed his ambitions. Overall, I find *Dead Poets Society* to be one of the most poetic movies I have seen thus far for this project and in life in general. The Dead Poets Society itself is truly a symbol for breaking through all of those barriers and inhibitions that are holding a person back in life and living life how one ultimately wants to live. Once a person can conquer his fears of individuality and standing out, then he can finally live life poetically and with joy and genuine happiness.