Transcendental Philosophies and *Dead Poets Society*

*Dead Poets Society* tells a story about the impact of an imaginative and unorthodox teacher on a conservative prep school for boys in the late 1950’s. This movie takes place at Welton Academy, a fictitious private prep school in Vermont which values tradition and obedience. Todd, a transfer student, meets his roommate, Neil, and several of Neil’s friends. Classes seem to be dull and tedious until they meet Welton’s newest teacher, Mr. Keating. Mr. Keating, a former Welton honors student, uses unique methods to teach his students about different concepts including “carpe diem.” After hearing of Mr. Keating’s Dead Poets Society, Neil, Todd, Knox, Charlie, Cameron, Pitts, and Meeks reconvene DPS meetings. As the movie continues, the characters react to Keating’s teaching in several different ways with many varying results. These characters begin to find themselves evaluating their lives and conditions in new ways, perhaps influenced by the new perceptions they’ve adopted.

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***Characters***

This is a little tricky because some characters look similar and the boys are usually dressed similar.

**Neil:** Todd’s roommate; his father is very controlling; he did summer school

**Todd:** Neil’s roommate; transferred to Welton; his brother was “one of school’s finest”; does not like to speak in front of people

**Knox:** brown hair; looks like Charlie; his father is a friend of the Danbury’s; he meets Kris and falls in love

**Charlie:** brown hair; looks like Knox; outgoing; sometimes says things without thinking

**Cameron:** short red hair; brown-noser; intense student

**Pitts:** brown hair and crew cut; reads the poem “To the Virgins, Make Much of Time”

**Meeks:** glasses and longer red hair than Cameron; considered to be a genius

**Mr. Perry:** Neil’s father; tries to control Neil

**Mr. Keating:** English teacher; “seize the day”

**Kris:** blond hair; Knox calls her “Mrs. Danbury”; is dating Chet

**Chet:** very spoiled; jerk; is dating Kris

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While we watch, pay attention to the presence and importance of transcendental philosophies (nonconformity, independence, rebellion, being an individual, following your “calling”, the “brotherhood of humanity”, and “carpe diem”)

**Make sure to pay close attention and take notes while we watch this to be prepared for:**

* Discussions
* **An in-class essay** **that will count as a *test grade***