

Brief responses to your questions about Dead Poets Society

Why didn't Neil's father permit him to take part in the acting activity?

His father says that he wants Neil to concentrate on his studies. Perhaps he is afraid of losing his control over Neil?

What is the real role of Neil's mother in affecting Neil's speaking out his mind? Encouraging or preventing?

Neil's mother seems a rather weak and ineffectual character. There is some suggestion that she is unable to stand up to Neil's father.

Why did Neil choose to commit suicide?

There is no definite answer to this question.

We don't understand the meaning of "Dead Poets" Society".

"Dead Poets" is a joking way of referring to the famous English poets of previous centuries. The phrase reflects the fact that contemporary students don't always find this poetry very interesting or inspiring. Mr Keating aims to bring these poets and their work "alive".

We don't understand the performance of Neil and the majority of the poetry.

The play is Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Neil plays the part of Puck. You can find many summaries and other information on the internet. See if you can find any connections with the themes of the film. Note that A Midsummer Night's Dream contains a "play within a play".

The poems are:

"The Road Not Taken," by Robert Frost

Referred to by Mr. Keating during one of his lessons.

"To the Virgins," by Robert Herrick

Read during first class with Keating to introduce "carpe diem."

"O Captain, my Captain," by Walt Whitman

Referred to by Mr. Keating during one of his lessons; also a reference to what he suggest the students call him.

"Ulysses," by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Read by Neil Perry during one of the Dead Poets Society meeting in the cave.

"Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day," (a sonnet) by William Shakespeare

First poem read by Charlie Dalton (Nuwanda) to the girls he brought to the Dead Poets Society meeting.

"She Walks in Beauty," by Lord Byron

Second poem read by Charlie Dalton (Nuwanda) to the girls he brought to the Dead Poets Society meeting.

You can find the texts of the play and poetry at:

<http://promo.net/pg/> or <http://www.bartleby.com/>

Does this school still exist? What about their ways of teaching now?

Welton Academy is not a real school. You can see St Andrew's School, in Middletown, Delaware, where Dead Poets Society was filmed, at: <http://www.standrews-de.org/>

There are still schools with some of the more traditional features of Welton Academy but these are now often combined with quite progressive teaching programs and methods. Take a look at the website of Eton College (in Britain) which is probably the most famous school of this kind:

<http://www.etoncollege.com/default.asp> Look under "Studying at Eton" for information on their teaching methods.

The full script of the film is at : <http://www.impawards.com/weir/dps/script.html>

See also : <http://www10.pair.com/crazydv/weir/dps/>

<http://www10.pair.com/crazydv/weir/dps/homework.html>

At the beginning of the film, Mr Keating says, "We are food for worms". I can't understand this sentence.

After people die and are buried under the ground, worms eat their flesh. It is another way of saying that we are all mortal and should "seize the day".

After the administration found the article that Charlie wrote and Mr Keating was criticized, there was a scene between Mr Keating and his students:

Mr Keating: That was a pretty lame stunt you pulled today.

To pull a stunt - to do something to gain attention; to play a trick
Lame - weak or ineffective

Mr Dalton: You're siding with Mr Nolan? What about carpe diem and sucking all the marrow out of life and all that?

The marrow is the juicy substance inside a bone. If you chew on the bone and suck out the marrow, too, you are really enjoying the food. So "sucking the marrow out of life" means enjoying or experiencing life to the fullest.

Mr Keating: Sucking the marrow out of life doesn't mean choking on the bone. There is a time for daring, and there is a time for caution. And a wise man understands which is called for.

Mr Keating is saying that enjoying your life and being an individual doesn't mean being completely reckless. You need to exercise some caution or you might "choke on the bone" and hurt yourself. Charlie's behaviour was reckless and perhaps foolish.

When Neil's father found that Neil was going to take part in the play, he said that he made a great many sacrifices to get Neil to that school. But I want to know what's sacrifice did he make. In the film, there was not showed.

I can only guess what the sacrifices were. I would assume that he means financial sacrifices as the fees would have been very high.

Why did Charlie changed his name to Nuwanda? And why did all the other guys laugh when he said that? Did that contain some special meaning?

I have looked on the internet but cannot find any special meaning to the name "Nuwanda". It sounds exotic and special; perhaps Indian or African. It's a very different kind of name to the common English names such as "Charlie" or Neil". Also, it is a name chosen by himself, as compared with given to him by his family. I think the boys are laughing partly because the name and Charlie's "transformation" are a little surprising and partly because they are excited by it.

What are the words on the first page of Neil's book?

NEIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Neil stands in his doorway. He looks across the hall to the other room where Cameron and Charlie are standing. Cameron gives a thumbs up. Neil closes his room door and takes out his cloak and a flashlight. Setting the flashlight down on the desk, he notices a worn book, "Five Centuries of Verse", sitting there. Opening it up, he sees John Keating's name at the top followed by "Dead Poets". Below the title of the book, is written: "To Be Read At The Opening of D.P.S. Meetings." Along with several lines from Thoreau, beginning with "I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately..."