

Dead Poets Society

50 points

Today we will “read” the “text” of this film. I would like you to pay particular attention to the transformation of a particular character in the film. You may choose Neil, Charlie, Todd, Knox, Cameron, or Mr. Keating. In following the development of your character, pay particular attention to the struggle your character faces and how the character deals with his dilemma. You should also pay attention to cinematic elements. How does the director use the camera, editing, and music to help further the themes in the film? How are certain themes communicated visually? How are lighting, sound, and composition used to reinforce themes?

Issue # 1- Setting

Comprehension- What is the setting of the film?

Analysis- In what ways does the setting shape the struggles of the characters in the film?

Response 1- Prediction

Response 2- Final analysis

Issue # 2-Choose a major character to follow.

Characters:

Charlie/Sax Player, Neil/Actor, Knox/in love with Chris, Todd/Neil's shy roommate,

Your character- Who have you chosen to follow?

What is his dilemma/challenge/issue/struggle? Please give examples.

How does he deal with the issue? What changes does he make? How is his life changed, or how does it remain the same?

Issue #3- Transcendental/Romantic Examples

This film can be viewed as a battle between Transcendental/romantic philosophy and Enlightenment philosophy(think in loose terms-basically, traditional ideals based on reason, evidence, and tradition versus romantic, intuitive, emotional, etc.). As you watch the film, list examples of each philosophy.

The key components of Transcendentalism are:

Elevation of intuition over reason, the celebration of individualism and following the inner voice, self reliance, the respect for all living things, a belief in a transcendental spirit or an “oversoul,” a respect for nature, equal rights for all, and doin your own thang!

Transcendental Examples/notes

Enlightenment Examples/notes

Poems-

Read the poems attached to this sheet and discuss their relationship to the themes in the film.

“Oh, Me, Oh Life”

“Oh Captain, My Captain”

After you have finished the film, write a short reaction (1/2 page.) Who was right? Who is responsible for the tragedy? What would you have done if you were a student in Mr. Keating's class? Was the administration right? Was he a good teacher? Etc. We will discuss these issues in class. Write your response on the back of this sheet. You may also use the back for other notes.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Leaves of Grass.

O Me! O Life!

O ME! O life!... of the questions of these recurring;
Of the endless trains of the faithless—of cities fill'd with the foolish;
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light—of the objects mean—of the struggle ever renew'd;
Of the poor results of all—of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around me; 5
Of the empty and useless years of the rest—with the rest me intertwined;
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer.

That you are here—that life exists, and identity;
That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Leaves of Grass.

O Captain! My Captain!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:
But O heart! heart! heart! 5
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills; 10
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck, 15
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won; 20
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.