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Film Analysis on Dead Poets Society

The film, *Dead Poets Society*, is directed by Peter Weir, shows dramatic roles in the teaching profession, and presents the trends of the education system with deep sincerity. John Kitting, who is presented as the inspiring teacher who arrives at the Welton School, a preparatory school that teaches boys alone. He wants them to become free thinkers and explore life in a different angle other than the conventional way which the school teaches. He dives into poetry differently without critically looking at it, and encourages the students whose lives had been regimented by the school administrators and overly controlling parents. Although his beat "carpe diem" culture encourages the students to seize the day and break the wall set for them by making their own choices, it is in a way intoxicating.

We see the emphasis of the school's traditions in the first scene. In this scene, we see teenage boys on the scene, and there are some noises of muffling voices and some movements. There is a painting of students dressed in suits, ready like men leaders of the future. The camera is directed to an adolescent boy wearing a school cap and a jacket, and his mother lovingly adjusts the tie for him, reminding him to keep his shoulders back. The ideals of the painting behind the young boy are unattainable. He is just a young boy who is forced to take up a role too big for him, instead of being allowed to be himself and grow up to embrace the role knowingly. This is a portrayal of the school's traditions that must be kept, although its meaning must have

long been lost. It is the first day of school, and this tradition must be passed to the new boys, for the school administration want this to be kept intact. We see an older student opening a case and beginning to ensemble bagpipes that will be used in the ceremony. The banners show the four pillars of the school, which are tradition, discipline, honor, and excellence.

At the end of the ceremony, new students are made to hold candles that represent the light of knowledge, and the headmaster Nolan welcomes the students. The camera is directed to the crowd, where Neil Perry and his father appear with serious faces. This is an expression of the strictness the parents raised their children with, which is also expressed on the headmaster's serious face. He shows the new that they should remain serious in their learning, as he emphasizes the four pillars. He introduces the new English teacher, Keating, who stands and attracts attention from both the teachers and the students. It is the arrival of Keating that changes the conventional way of thinking of the students as he introduces the "carpe diem" culture. Keating's class of bright boys who include the newcomers (Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawke, Gale Hansen and Josh Charles). Although the school upholds its traditions strictly, they are moved to dram and are through the encouragements of Keating. He inspires them with great passion and catalyzes their actions to form a Dead Poets' Society and study poetry in a cave away from the school. In various classroom scenes, Keating is seen encouraging students to tear up pages of their texts and reads several poems that lead the boys to resist conformity.

However, in his analysis of the poems that he uses to stir the boys to take a different perspective in life, he leaves out some critical analysis required in a poem. For instance, he uses the poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost to guide the students to resist conforming to the traditions and carve their niche. However, he does not critically analyze the poem and uses

the few lines to make his point. It is what he wants to believe, rather than what the whole poem presents. Reading the poem further, we can see that the speaker of the poem was wrong for taking the road, but Keating does not include this critical analysis.

Despite his efforts, Keating does not conform to what a real poet is meant to be. According to Simpson, poets are intended to be critics despite their traits. Being a good critic involved reading a whole poem and understanding what the poet aimed to convey, then critiquing it from that point of view. A poet needs to understand poetry before creating one because literary criticism is essential in humanities. Simpson notes that every good writer is a critic, and when analyzing a poem, there is a need to critic every line. This enables one to come up with the right logic, which is presentable to the audience. As for Keating, he takes a few lines and interprets them in his favor so that they can fit the claims he is making in class. Since his students are not well-versed with analyzing poems, he would have taken the right path in showing them how to analyze poems critically. This way, they would not have taken things superficially such as moving away from school to hide in a cave to study poetry; they would have stayed put and read the poems critically while in class.

In the last scene, we see the boys that had formed the Dead Poets Society facing severe consequences as a result of their rebellion that was facilitated by Keating. Knox is called to be questioned following Neil's death as he shot himself trying to defy his father's demands that he quits the school and joins the military. Their leader, Charlie, was expelled, and Todd is feeling nervous about what might happen to him. Nolan and Todd are forced to sign a document that states that Keating caused Neil's death, and the other boys in the group sign forcefully. In Keating's classroom, all the students are seated, and Mr. Nolan says he will take over the English

class. When Keating comes to pick his things, the boys show their love for him as they are filled with emotions. Led by Todd who cries “Oh captain, my captain!” as he stands on the desk, they stand on their desks just as he had done to illustrate to them the need to look at life in a different perspective. Keating is overwhelmed by emotions and tears up, thanks them, and exits the classroom. He is happy that at least he had made an impact on the boys’ lives. The film ends just like the novel, with the boys facing tragic consequences for their rebellion. Murray notes that adaptations of books-films pairings help understand specific characteristics of the two mediums. Although critics seek to look for conclusions in these pairing, they lead to no conclusions because they only point out at the similarities and differences, as Murray notes in his article. We can see a lot of similarities with the film and the novel and also some notable differences, but they end in the same way.

In conclusion, the *Dead Poets* film has successfully shown the theme of tradition in schools, and how they are passed on from one generation to the next. It is a good adaptation of the novel with the same title, written by N. H. Kleinbaum. Keating tries to challenge this system by urging his students to think differently through poetry. However, their new perspective which leads them to form a Dead Poets Society club lead to tragic consequences, with Neil dying, Keating losing his job, and Charlie being expelled. Although Keating brings in a new perspective, he fails to analyze the works of literature critically.

Works Cited

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