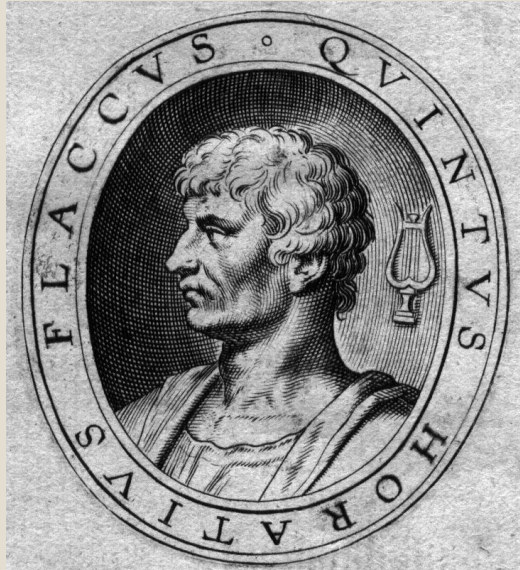




# DEAD POETS SOCIETY

The USA, 1989

# Carpe Diem // Seize the day



The author of this idiomatic phrase was Latin poet Horatius who lived in 1 century BC

# The fate of professor Keating

- The first idea of the script writers was to finish the life of professor Keating because of leukaemia, but the director rejected the idea to focus on students life



# O Captain, My Captain! by Walt Whitman

- O Captain, my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
- The ship has weather'd every crack, 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!
- O the bleeding drops of red,
- Where on the deck my Captain lies,
- Fallen cold and dead.

# What does T.S. Eliot mean by the following quote?

- "No poet, no artist of any art, has complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead."

# Main characters

- Neil Perry
- Todd Anderson
- Charlie Dalton
- Knox Overstreet
- Gerald Pitts
- Steven Meeks
- Richard Cameron



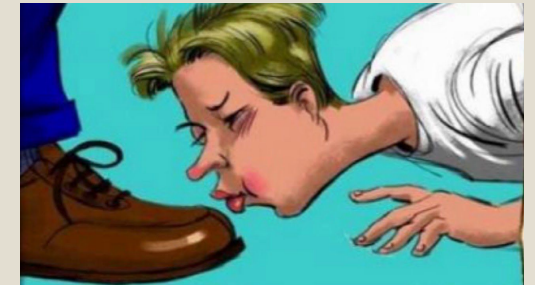
# Watching for gist

- What are the four pillars of Welton Academy?
- The four pillars of Welton are Tradition, Honor, Discipline and Excellence.
- In what year does the story take place?
- The year is 1959
- According to Mr. Keating, why read poetry? Why does he have them rip pages out of their books?
- “We don’t read and write poetry because it’s cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for.

# Vocabulary



- Pillar
- Ivy League: 8 universities that are usually considered the best in the USA
- put one's foot in one's mouth: say something that embarrasses you
- bootlicking: trying to make a superior like you by doing extra favors (slang)
- hell-raiser: a wild person who causes trouble
- swoon: lose consciousness (usually used of women, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries)
- engaged: promised to be married to someone
- jerk: (slang) rude person
- misguided: believing false ideas
- Swim against the stream
- choke on a bone
- Infuriating
- To have the main part in a play





# General questions

- What was the Dead Poets Society? What did they do? Where do you think the name comes from?
- Why would the "present administration" not look favorably on the Dead Poets Society?
- What is the symbolism in the scene where the boys go to the cave?
- How does Mr. Keating get the boys to look at life differently?
- Describe the way in which Mr. Keating brings out Todd - what is it that makes Todd come out of his shell?
- Is Mr. Keating a bad influence?
- Who is most to blame for Neil's death? Mr. Keating? Neil's father? Neil himself?

# Main problems of the film

- There are two approaches to education presented in the film - the strict, disciplined structure as opposed to a freer carpe diem attitude. WHICH do you think would be a more effective means of instruction and learning? Why?
- A second theme found in the film deals with the relationship between a teacher and a pupil and how close and informal such a relationship should be. WHAT is your opinion on this subject? What is the line between student/teacher relationships? What are the dangers between getting too informal, or being too formal? How do teachers/students maintain balance?
- A third area of discussion is the relationship between parents and children. What kind of involvement is positive and helpful and which is negative and destructive? How do students learn to cope and deal with stricter rules? What are alternatives to allowing relationships to become destructive?

# Discussion points

- 1. What are the "Four Pillars"? What would your "Four Pillars" be if you were designing a school?
- 2. Talk about an experience in school or a teacher who changed your life.
- 3. What adjectives could you use to describe the teachers at Welton? the students?
- 4. What values do you think are important to the parents of students at Welton?
- 5. What was America like in the 1950s? What major historical or cultural events were occurring at that time? (society, politics, economy, religion, military, technology, etc.)
- 6. Describe the situation between Neil and his father. What did they disagree about?
- 7. How do the boys act toward each other when they meet?
- 8. What classes do the boys take?

# Discussion points

- 1. What is unusual about Mr. Keating's English class?
- 2. What does Keating ask the students to call him? Why does he ask them to call him this?
- 3. How does Keating try to gain the boys' trust?
- 4. When introducing himself, Keating refers to a poem by Walt Whitman (19th-century American Poet) called "O Captain! My Captain!". Whitman wrote the poem in memory of President Abraham Lincoln shortly after Lincoln was assassinated. In "O Captain...", Whitman talks about a "ship" and a "fearful trip". What is he referring to through these images?
- 5. Why does Mr. Keating tell the boys to rip the pages out of the book? What does he want to teach them?
- 6. How do the other teachers respond to Keating's teaching style?
- 7. Do groups like the Dead Poets Society exist in Russia? If not, why not? If so, how are they treated by the school system? Why?