

# Dead poets society

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The great American philosopher Henry David Thoreau once said, “ The universe is wider than our views of it.” (Walden, Ch. 18-Conclusion) In Dead Poets Society, the boys at Welton Academy are faced with the challenges of excellence, discipline, tradition, and honor, which allows no room for any pursuit of personal interests or individuality. Pressure falls hard on their shoulders, and the walls of conformity start to close in around them. The boys’ diminishing carefree spirits are rescued by the Latin phrase *carpe diem*, meaning ‘ seize the day’.

Mr. Keating teaches the values of *carpe diem* so that the boys can learn to think for themselves through looking at the world from a different perspective. The idea of *carpe diem* first strikes the boys when they discover the original Dead Poets Society. The school’s literary club seems mysterious and defiant, so they dare to go against school rules and secretly revive it when intrepidity blinds reason. Upon discovering Mr. Keating’s old yearbook, Neil is the first to impose the idea of sneaking out to the cave at night.

It takes some convincing for the boys to embrace their inner rebelliousness, but before they know it they are crouching in the cave, letting the poetry whisk them away to a different world. However, the main reason they decided to create their own secret club was for the rush and excitement of rebellion, which is one major way that they misunderstand the meaning behind *carpe diem*. They are incapable of soaking in all the beauty of the poetic words because half their consciences are solely focused on not getting caught for their devious deed. Deciphering the true meaning behind *carpe diem* is constantly on the boys’ minds, which instigates them to chase their dreams in order to take matters into their own hands. Despite the later

consequences, Neil asserts his own interests by acting in a play, going against his father's orders for the first time in his life. However, the rush of doing something he is actually passionate about overpowers his obligation to obey all of the rules.

He knows that the only place where he can find his true identity is within himself, but is still afraid to disregard his moral imperative to put forth authoritative figures before his own independent authority. His act of rebellion defies all the teachings at Welton, which angers the headmaster and his parents, but proves to be an inspiration to other students trying to pry their way out of this jail cell. His last act of defiance is his way of crying out for help; if he can not live his life under his own choices, he would rather not live at all. This is one way the film can connect with the audience through empathy; a looming fear is waking up one day with the bitter realization that we have wasted all our lives spending time obediently following all the rules, and letting the years pass by without living at all. Although the boys feel guilty for Mr.

Keating's ultimate departure, they are successful in showing gratitude that their captain enforced *carpe diem*, which changed their entire view of life altogether. With his various unorthodox teaching methods, the boys learn that authority should only act as a guide—never as an absolute power.

Creating original poetry with raw human emotions is one act that teaches the boys that there is more beauty to the world than core studies. Seeing all the ordinary things around them change under the influence of *carpe diem* is an extraordinary event; the boys learn that exploring the world for yourself opens up a thousand more doors and opportunities for success. The eyes of <https://assignbuster.com/dead-poets-society-essay-samples/>

the old graduates of Welton carried hope and potential, whispering their legacy to the next generation, “ The world is their oyster.

They believe they’re destined for great things, just like many of you...

Because you see gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils.” Mr.

Keating is urging the boys to realize their mortality in order to seize the day; this lesson will remain ingrained in the boys’ minds for the rest of their lives. Alongside the major overlying theme of carpe diem, Mr. Keating is also trying to overthrow the totalitarian “ government” which rules the boys’ lives. He repeats the ideas of nonconformity, which instills fearlessness in the hearts of many. Robert Frost once wrote, “ Two roads diverged in the wood, and I chose the one less traveled on, and that has made all the difference.

” (The Road Not Taken, Stanza 4, Lines 18-20) For the characters in the film, their future lies solely in their palms, and they leave with the sense of personal growth that will continually follow them on their own roads. As members of society, this fearless nonconformity opens our eyes while simultaneously parting the gateway to our individual paths of recognition and self-discovery.