

Dead poet society

Psychology



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Dead Poet Society Analysis of Neil's Character in Light of the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most popular theories of psychology which established relation between an individual's motivation and satisfaction of needs. Maslow identified five fundamental needs of human beings and placed them in a hierarchical order in the shape of a pyramid, with the most basic and essential need at the base and the most opportunistic need at the top. The five needs identified by Maslow from bottom to top of the pyramid include physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization (Cherry, 2012). One of the assumptions of the theory is that it is only after the satisfaction of all the basic needs that an individual is able to self-actualize, and self-actualization is fundamentally needed for an individual to gain perfection in his/her field. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory applies to several characters in the movie Dead Poet Society in general, and to Neil in particular.

Neil wants to become a writer. He is a good actor, but his parents have forced him into preparing to study law in order to become a lawyer by profession like his brother. On the other hand, Neil is not interested in becoming a lawyer, but he is not bold or articulate enough to take his parents into confidence about becoming a writer.

At the Welton Academy for boys, Neil's basic needs as identified by Maslow including the physiological needs, safety needs, and love and belongingness needs are satisfied. Physiological needs include but are not limited to food and air, and obviously all living people have them met which is why they are able to survive. There was also no issue of safety discussed in the movie which suggests that it is right to think that Neil had no safety issues and <https://assignbuster.com/dead-poet-society/>

thus, his safety needs were also met. While at the Welton Academy for boys, Neil has the company of Todd and several other class-mates. They live together, study together, share experiences with one another, and do such activities as conducting DPS meetings together. Neil thus seems to have no issues of love and belongingness, as he has company to be with.

The problem occurs when it comes to the need of self-esteem. Neil wants to participate in the play *The Midsummer Night's Dream* and play the role of Puck, but his father strictly forbids him from taking part in this extra-curricular activity, and instead asks him to focus on his studies. Despite lack of approval of his father, Neil participates in the play. His zeal and spirit of acting can be estimated from the fact that his performance is adored by the audiences, and they give him standing ovation. But Neil's self-esteem is ruined when his father gets there near the end of the play and angrily takes him with him with an intention to change his school. The heart-broken Neil cannot live up to the challenge, and commits suicide. Neil would have self-actualized and become a very fine actor or writer had his father granted him his wish of choosing the profession of his choice.

References:

Cherry, K. (2012). Hierarchy of Needs. Retrieved from <http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/hierarchyneeds.htm>.

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