

The less traveled road

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“ Two roads diverged in the woods and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” Mr. Keating uses this quote to illustrate a viable lesson during one of his classes in the movie *Dead Poet’s Society*. As the new English teacher and a romantic, Mr.

Keating believes strongly in not caving under the pressure of conformity, the difficulty of maintaining your own beliefs in the face of others. Whether it is following the latest fashions, yielding to peer pressure, or joining in a raucous chant, pursuing the more traveled path is an easier escape than supporting our own beliefs. The trait of nonconformity is hard to obtain because the fear of being different is greater than our wish to express ourselves. This struggle is evident when Mr. Keating, without explaining his motives, has a group of students pace around an outside courtyard at Welton. “ You are taking a stroll,” he tells them, as they begin circling the petite brick pathway with their classmates observing.

Each lad embarks with his own style, one with long strides while another is unsure of his footing. Slowly, the rhythm of their footfalls becomes less disjointed until the resonance turns into a synchronized, dull clop, clop, clop. Mr. Keating enthusiastically cheers them on as a continuous clapping emerges from among the other boys. It accelerates as the strollers march in step, lapping the courtyard until they are halted by Mr.

Keating. Thanking the gentlemen for their participation, he transitions into the purpose of the demonstration and its tie with his lesson. Mr. Keating begins by imitating the pacing style of each of the teenagers, emphasizing that they each established their own style until folding under conformity.

Each one thought that in order to be received and to avoid humiliation, they needed to forfeit their own personality for that of the group. Mr.

Keating explains how we all have a need for acceptance, but we should believe that our values and traits are important. Even in this simple situation, it was difficult for only three boys to have faith in their beliefs rather than conform. The danger of conformity catches up with Mr. Keating, when later in the film, he is reprimanded for his personality and untraditional teaching style by the head administrator, Dr. Nolan. The headmaster suggests that the boys at Welton are at a very impressionable age and are very easily influenced.

Having witnessed Mr. Keating's demonstration in the courtyard, he asks the intent of the exercise. He immediately squelches Mr. Keating's response after hearing "to prove dangers of conformity," going on to enforce tradition in the curriculum and discipline in the classroom. Mr.

Keating makes a final attempt to defend his beliefs by explaining his motives to create free thinkers. However, Dr. Nolan contradicts this method, reiterating standard education. In this scene, Mr. Keating exemplifies pressures that befall one when compelled into conformity. He has his own unique teaching style and believes in it enough to tackle a hard-set, tradition-rich school with his goal to create free thinkers through real life situations.

Knowing that he did not need to forfeit his personality or principles to be accepted into Welton, Mr. Keating stood beside his view, although the consequences may be grave. In fact, his methods, weighing strongly against <https://assignbuster.com/the-less-traveled-road/>

the norm of Welton's curriculum, indirectly causes him to lose his job towards the end of the film. However, by taking the road less traveled by, Mr. Keating makes a remarkable impact in the lives of the boys at Welton. With the help of Mr.

Keating, the boys of Welton learn that though it may be challenging to confidently show their true colors, it is important to believe in who they are. Each day, they would face the pressure to conform to what is fashionable, or thought to be acceptable by the group. Even in the most simple of situations, going for a stroll for example, conformity can be hard to overcome. In Mr. Keating's situation, it could have been easier for him to conform to the well worn road and follow Mr.

Nolan's request. However, he believes in his values, follows his own preaching, and transforms the outlook of the boys' lives. "Swim against the stream, it will make all the difference."