Dead Poets Society Essay, Research Paper

Dead Poets Society Hysterical Text

One person’s interpretation of a story is always different than another’s. Some of us may see things that are not being shown to us. Dead Poets Society, in author Tania Modleski’s eyes has taken on a manifestation larger than the author herself. This story is not what the author will have you believe, whereas the true story was hidden in the misconception of Modleski’s beliefs. The sexual content, homoerotic tensions, and antiauthoritarian behavior, seemed to come from the author’s wishful thinking as opposed to the reality of the film.

In the film a homosexual theme could not be seen. When Mr. Keating came to the school to teach, he did not insist on being called oh captain my captain. That phrase was used only three times in the movie, once by Mr. Keating himself. Oh captain my captain was used by two separate young men as a show of admiration and respect for Mr. Keating. In contrast Modleski sees oh captain my captain as a “pious deference to male authority”(Modleski “ Dead White Male Heterosexual Poets Society” 315) because the very authority the film pretends to be challenging.

One character that just enrolled at the school and was somewhat of a loner, and misfit, and is expected to achieve great success as his brother did before him. He is an example of how some families push one child to be exactly like another i.e. his older brother. When he first comes in contact with Mr. Keating he could not speak openly in front of a crowd. This is evident when he decides not to write a poem that is to be read in front of the class the following day. When Mr. Keating calls upon him to read and he cannot, he uses the technique of spinning him around while spewing out poetic phrases. This seems to work because he belts out some poetry from within and Mr. Keating says to him “don’t you ever forget this”, knowing that the technique had worked.

There is one character that committed suicide according to Modleski because his father would not let him play a fairy in a play. What this character was trying to show was that he had finally broken free of his father’s decisions on how, and what, he should do. He auditioned for a play and got the part all by himself, without his fathers approval. This was something that he wanted to do, and was good at it. When his father forbid him to pursue acting, even second to him being a doctor, this was all he could take. Him putting his fairy crown on the open window ledge, just before committing suicide, symbolized the freeing of the actor inside, like an offering to a higher being. The boys in Welton Boarding School share what all boys their age share while at school. There are no signs of homoerotic tensions present. There are signs of groups forming and friendships being made. When they decided to form the Dead Poets Society it was a normal male bonding experience. An all male boarding school does not mean that they are all homosexuals who are crying out for recognition. The movie did not illustrate any homosexual tension between the boys at any time in the movie.

When Mr. Keating told the boys to rip out he introduction of the book he was trying to illustrate that writing poetry was not like reading a recipe. Poetry was feeling what you are writing, and it was from the heart not the mind. You cannot just put words down on paper they have to as Mr. Keating put it “Drip off your tongue”.

Standing on the desk in a nonconforming way illustrated that when you’re up there you see things in a different way. Do not follow the same old way of doing things because it stifles creativity. Mr. Keating wanted these boys to break through of their fears, and achieve more than just what was expected of them. This boarding school was very strict and old fashioned, and Mr. Keating knew this, once being a student himself. His way of breaking out was to be in the Dead poets Society were he could make-up, and read poetry without conforming to the conservative attitude of the school. When he came to this school he knew that he was going to encourage freethinking. This is why there is no explanation for him leaving the school in England. Mr. Keating probably was dismissed from the school in England for his freethinking ways. He may travel from school to school spreading the Dead poets Society way of free expression. This is illustrated when a boy returns to his room, and finds Mr. Keating’s book of poetry lying on his desk.

When Modleski critiqued this movie, with good intentions in mind, somehow she lost her way. There are two sides to every story and these boys and Mr. Keating’s has been told. The illustrations, and aforementioned reasons, show that Dead poets society is a hysterical text. We may never know the real meaning behind this movie, but we all have our interpretations of it. There are no hidden or reclusive meanings being portrayed here, just a boarding school that suppresses freedom of thought, and creativity. This is why Mr. Keating’s character comes through loud and clear.