



**BOOK REVIEW OF *DEAD POETS SOCIETY*
WRITTEN BY N.H. KLEINBAUM**

A FINAL PROJECT

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this final project is compiled by her without taking any results from other researches in S-1, S-2, and S-3 and in diploma degree of any universities. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, 16 September 2015

Linda Dwi Ariyani

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

No one should be ashamed to admit they are wrong, which is but saying, in other words, that they are wiser today than they were yesterday.

Alexander Pope

This final project is dedicated to my beloved parents

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The writer realizes that this final project is still far from perfect. She, therefore, will be thankful to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this final project better.

Finally, the writer expects that this final project will be useful to the reader who hunts something about the true meaning of time in life from the novel.

Semarang, 16 September 2015

Linda Dwi Ariyani

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Book Review of *Dead Poets Society* by N.H. Kleinbaum

1. Introduction

Generally, people are dragged to do something useful. They plan for better future. Therefore, they enter formal education. There are two methods of formal education; conventional and non-conventional. The conventional teaching methods are usual way of our formal education. The students are given tasks, material, and exercise. In other way, the non-conventional teaching methods place teacher only as the facilitator. The students are left in order to be more active in having part in the class.

Dead Poets Society tells about the story of non-conventional teaching methods that is done by the one of teacher at Welton Academy. He is John Keating. He teaches the students about the freedom to express their ideas in literature. The literary works that is taught by John Keating is the literary works of poets who have died.

The novel was written by N.H.Kleinbaum. Nancy H. Kleinbaum was born in 1948. She was an American author. She became popular through her first novel entitled *Dead Poets Society*. It is based on Tom Schulmann's film script of the same title and published in 1989. The literary writings of N. H. Kleinbaum are *Dead Poets Society*, *Doctor Dolittle and His Animal Family*, *Voyages of Doctor Dolittle*, and *Doctor Dolittle Meets the Pushmipullyu*.

The reason why the writer chooses to review this novel is because it has many moral values of education. It is also so motivating. The author gives an example about the struggle of an English teacher who wants to create creativity among his students in the English literature. The novel also introduces a new method of study, which focuses in creativity, that gets the writer interested. The review of the writer is used to show the strengths and weaknesses of the novel.

2. Summary of N.H. Kleinbaum's *Dead Poets Society*

In the beginning of the story in this novel, there was an orientation meeting at Welton Academy. Mr. Gale Nolan as the principal gave a speech to all students. He gave a speech about the four pillars in Welton Academy. The four pillars were made up of tradition, honor, discipline, and excellence. At that time, Mr. Gale Nolan also introduced a substitute English teacher, Mr. John Keating and a new student named Todd Anderson to all students.

A few days later, Todd Anderson began to recognize his friends. They are Neil Perry, Charlie Dalton, Knox Overstreet, Steven Meeks, Richard Cameron, and Pitts. The first day of school, the students got English language lessons taught by Mr. John Keating. He gave a teaching method that is different from other teachers. He gave non-conventional teaching method. This is obvious when Mr. John Keating jumped on his desk and shouted "O Captain! My Captain ". He wanted his students to call 'O Captain My Captain' to him. This quotation was taken from a poem by Walt Whitman titled Abraham Lincoln. Then, Mr. John Keating invited the students to Welton Honor Room. He explained about one of

Latin term, “Carpe Diem”, in the poems. The term means ‘take the opportunity to make life extraordinary’.

One day, Neil Perry found the yearbook of John Keating. The book explained that Mr. Keating had been a member of Dead Poets Society at Welton Academy. After that, Neil asked about Dead Poets Society to Mr. John Keating. Dead Poets Society was a secret organization that had activity in reading poems of Shelley, Thoreau, Whitman, and their own poem. They read the poem one by one in an old cave. Then, Neil and his friends revived the poem reading activity in Dead Poets Society.

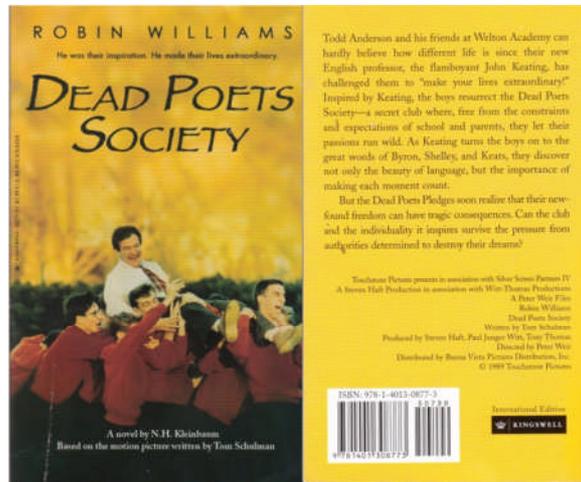
The next morning, Mr. John Keating gave lessons on understanding the poem by Dr. J. Evan Pritchard, PhD for their students. He told his students to rip some parts of the book. Some other examples of teaching methods by Mr. John Keating was rising above the table. It was intended to remind the students that they had to look at things differently. He said that if the students were sure with something, they had to maintain it. He also taught the students to have the principle of 'Carpe Diem' or Seize the day.

The next day, Mr. Keating asked all students to read their poetry. None of the students were willing to come in front of the class. Then, Mr. John Keating asked Todd Anderson to read his poems. Todd felt unconfident but Mr. John Keating assured him. Mr. John Keating asked Todd to describe Whitman’s character with his own imagination, which then was appreciated by Mr. John Keating.

One night, the members of the Dead Poets Society gathered at the cave except Neil and Cameron. At this meeting, Todd dared to read his own poems. The next day, Welton Academy was shocked by the death of Neil Perry. Neil committed suicide with a gun because his father forbade him to do role playing. After the funeral of Neil, Cameron complained to Mr. Gale Nolan about Dead Poets Society and about the teaching methods given by Mr. John Keating. Mr. Gale Nolan assume that teaching methods of Mr. Keating was wrong. This was because these methods encouraged students to do things considered as reckless behavior and pleasure. He also said that Mr. Keating encourages Neil Perry to do role playing. At the end of the story, Mr. Gale Nolan fired Mr. Keating in a not respectful way. All members of the Dead Poets Society stood on the table, for the departure of Mr. John Keating.

3. Review of *Dead Poets Society*

3.1 Cover Analysis



3.1.1 Front Cover Analysis of *Dead Poets Society*

The picture of John Keating and his students are used as a cover of the *Dead Poets Society*. This novel has 166 pages. It has the size of a book as the pocketbook. There are several symbols that are used to describe the illustration picture, quotation on the cover and the title. Firstly, the illustration of picture shows that there is a teacher who is wearing a white shirt and a tie. The teacher is being raised by students who are wearing shirts as well. It shows that there is no boundaries between teachers and students as well. Actually, the teacher wears the formal uniform. However, in this novel Mr. Keating looks so simple and casual.

In the front cover, John Keating represents as a non-conventional teacher and his students as the products of his teaching. Secondly, there are two quotations on the front cover of *Dead Poet Society*. Those are "He was their inspiration" and "He made their lives extraordinary". The word 'He' in the

quotation refers to John Keating. He was made as a source of inspiration for the students because of his creativity. Todd Anderson is one of his students that has been inspired by John Keating. During the school time, Todd is very shy and does not like literature. However, John Keating always assures him to express his ideas. Therefore, Todd can be able to express his idea and make poems. Thirdly, the title of the novel that is *Dead Poets Society* is written by N.H.Kleinbaum. She wants to evoke literary poets who has died.

3.1.2 Back Cover Analysis of *Dead Poets Society*

”Todd Anderson and his friends at Welton Academy can hardly believe how different life is since their new English professor, the flamboyant John Keating, has challenged them to “make your lives extraordinary!” Inspired by Keating, the boys resurrect the Dead Poets Society--- a secret club where, free from constraints and expectations of school and parents, they let their passions run wild. As Keating turns the boys on to the great words of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, they discover not only the beauty of language, but the importance of making each moment count.

But the Dead Poets Pledges soon realize that their newfound freedom can have tragic consequences. Can the club and the individuality it inspires survive the pressure from authorities determined to destroy their dreams.”

Actually, the Welton Academy is a competent school which upholds the values of decency, the highest standards of work, and formal classrooms. Welton Academy is located in the United States. The quotation on the back cover of *Dead Poets Society* describes the life of Todd Anderson and his friends who become different since the arrival Mr. John Keating at Welton Academy. They are free to express their ideas, even if it creates conflict in their environment. John Keating inspires his students at Welton Academy. Therefore, the students revive a secret club, Dead Poets Society. It makes them become independent in thinking. John Keating teaches poetry of Byron, the poetry of Shelley, and the poetry of

Keats. These three poets have similarity with Mr. John Keating. The similarity between Mr. John Keating and the three poets are the using of non-conventional method. It is like the method taught by Mr. John Keating at Welton Academy. Mr. John Keating learns from the experiences of those three poets, which are ultimately poured on his students.

3.2 Intrinsic Analysis of *Dead Poets Society*

In this study, the writer will focus on the intrinsic elements of this book because it is the major aspect for getting a brief description of a novel. The writer will elaborate a brief definition and explanation by reviewing the intrinsic elements in *Dead Poets Society* novel deeply. The intrinsic elements that will be discussed in this study are theme, plot, and character.

3.2.1 Theme

The theme of any literary work is the main, underlying idea of a piece of literature. The theme of *Dead Poets Society* is an education which is based on non-conventional teaching method. This is proved by the non-conventional teaching by John Keating to his students in Welton Academy. The method is to teach the students to chase their own dreams. Mr. Keating also wants to raise the creativity of students in english literature. Carpe Diem or seize the day is a principle used by John keating, which is different from other teachers do. We can see the quotation below:

“He stopped. “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,” Keating repeated. “ The Latin term for that sentiment is Carpe Diem. Does anyone know what that means?”

“Carpe Diem, “Meeks, the Latin scholar, said. “Seize the day.”

“Very good, Mr....?”

“Meeks.”

”Seize the day,” Keating repeated. Why does the poet write these lines?”
(Kleinbaum, 1989: 25)

John Keating also uses the principle ‘Carpe Diem’ to motivate the students.

It is proved by the statement of John Keating to the students, to chase their dreams.

We can see the quotation below:

“You must strive to find your own voice, boys, and the longer you wait to begin, the less likely you are to find it at all.” (Kleinbaum, 1989:61)

The quotation above states that John Keating motivates the students. The word ‘Voice’ in the quotation means as a self identity to reach dream. John Keating gives them advice to reach their dream as soon as possible because if they are not quickly, they will never get it.

3.2.2 Plot

Perrine says that plot is “the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed” (Perrine, 1987: 41). *Dead Poets Society* uses the forward plot. This is proved when the first time Mr Gale Nolan introduces John Keating in Welton Academy. Then, John becomes a substitute teacher of English. In the end of the story, he is nonrespectfully fired by Gale Nolan from Welton Academy because John Keating is considered as the reason why Neil Perry commits suicide. The arrangement of that plot is chronological, so it is called forward plot.

3.2.3 Characters

The Character is a verbal representation of a human being through action, speech, description, and commentary of authors. *Dead Poets Society* uses two types of characters. They are the protagonist and the antagonist characters.

- (1) Protagonist is the main character in a story, novel, drama, or other literary work.
- (2) Antagonist is a character who becomes the opposite of the main character (protagonist). Antagonist will argue, across, and try to shatter protagonist. (As proposed by Laurence Perrine in her book *The Elements of Fiction*, 1987:66)

The protagonist in this novel are John Keating and Todd Anderson. Meanwhile, the antagonist is Mr. Gale Nolan. In this paper, the writer will discuss the three characters. They are Todd Anderson, John Keating and Mr. Gale Nolan.

(1) Todd Anderson

Todd Anderson are not confident and shy. This is proved by the quotation of Gale Nolan that suggests Todd to choose football as the extracurricular activity. Actually, Nolan knows that Todd has the potential but Todd declines it because Todd is not confident. We can see the quotation below:

Mr. Anderson, based on your record at Balincrest: soccer, Service Club, school annual. Anything else I should know about?

Todd stood silent. He struggled to say something, but the words just wouldn't come out.

Speak up, Mr. Anderson,”Nolan said.

...Todd tried to speak again. “ I...did...but...” he whispered. Beads of sweat broke out on his brow, and he clenched his hands so tightly his knuckles turned white. As the other boys stared at him, Todd fought back tears.(Kleinbaum, 1989: 11-12)

Furthermore, Todd is shy . It proves when John Keating asks Todd to read his own poem. Todd is so desperate because he thinks he cannot read it well. We can see the quotation below:

“Look at Mr. Anderson. In such agony. Step up, and let’s put you out of your misery.”The students all eyed Todd. He stood nervously and walked slowly to the front of the class, his face the mask of a condemned man on his way to execution.(Kleinbaum, 1989: 74)

(2) Mr. John Keating

Mr. John Keating is a confident person. He is able to make his students confidence and change their thinking. He creates a method of teaching to be more attractive so his students can express their ideas. This is proven when he stand up on a table. We can see the quotation below:

“I stand on my desk to remind myself that we must constantly force ourselves to look at things differently. The world looks different from up here. If you don’t believe it, stand up here and try it. All of you. Take turns.” (Kleinbaum, 1989: 60)

John Keating as a confident person is also shown when he stand up on a table and shouts ‘O Captain! My Captain !’. The quotation is taken from a poem titled Abraham Lincoln. John Keating is similar to Abraham Lincoln. They love human freedom. Therefore, John Keating use the teaching method that gives freedom to the students to think more creative . We can see the quotation below:

He jumped dramatically onto his desk and turned to face the class. “O Captain! My Captain!” he recited energetically, then looked around the room. “Who knows where that’s from? Anybody? No?” He looked piercingly at the silent boys. No one raised a hand. “It was written, my young scholars,” he said patiently, “by a poet named Walt Whitman about Abraham Lincoln. In this class you may refer to me as either Mr. Keating or ‘O Captain My Captain!’” (Kleinbaum, 1989: 24)

(3) Mr. Gale Nolan

Dead Poets Society, Mr. Gale Nolan is not an open minded person. He is a figure who is antagonist because he strongly opposes the teaching methods which are done by Mr. John Keating. He always holds the four pillars in Welton Academy. He wants all teachers to teach the appropriate subject matter in the curriculum for college. It does not like Mr. Keating who tells his students to deviate the rules of the school. We can see the quotation below:

“John, the curriculum here is set. It’s proven. It works. If you question it, what’s to prevent them from doing the same?”

“I always thought education was learning to think for yourself,” Keating said.

Nolan laughed. “At these boys ages ? Not on your life! Tradition, John! Discipline. “He patted Keating on the on the shoulder patronizingly. “Prepare them for college, and the rest will take care of itself.” (Kleinbaum, 1989: 109)

3.3 The Strengths of N.H. Kleinbaum's *Dead Poets Society*

There are some strengths that are found by the writer based on the intrinsic elements. Firstly, from the theme aspect, N.H. Kleinbaum succeeds to make this novel become an inspiring novel. It shows a journey of John Keating who always make the teaching methods of literature more interesting. He pushes the students to think free and creative. Secondly, the story uses the forward plot. Every event in the story happens chronologically which makes it easier for the readers to follow the plot.

3.4 The Weaknesses of N.H. Kleinbaum's *Dead Poets Society*

The weaknesses of *Dead Poets Society* is the character aspect. The author tells too much about the additional figures, so that the readers may be confused in determining the main character in this novel. There are many stories that are not concerned with this main character. It may cause the readers bored with this novel.

4. Conclusion

Dead Poets Society is one of many novels that are being successfully adapted into a movie. In this book, there are many positive messages that are expressed by the author to the reader such as the non-conventional teaching method, which is able to make the students more creative and expressive. *Dead Poets Society* is a novel that is written by N.H. Kleinbaum, an American author. This book tells about a journey of an English literature teacher who provides non-conventional teaching methods in literature.

The study shows that there are some intrinsic elements that are analyzed in this novel. They are theme, plot, and characters. The review of the writer is used to show the strengths and weaknesses of the novel. The strengths of the novel are theme and plot aspect. The weakness of the novel is the character aspect.

The analysis of the cover being one of important things in reviewing this novel. This is because the cover can affect the reader to read a novel. They can be viewed at a glance without reading it. In this study, the writer analyzes the front cover of the novel from the illustration of picture, the quotation and the title. Besides, the writer also analyzes the back cover of the novel from the synopsis that is shown in this novel.

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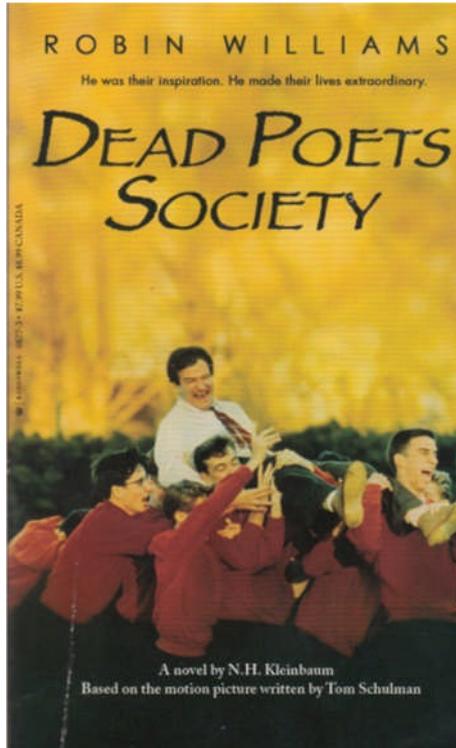
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APPENDIX

1. Author: N.H. Kleinbaum



2. Cover of the Novel: *Dead Poets Society*



Todd Anderson and his friends at Welton Academy can hardly believe how different life is since their new English professor, the flamboyant John Keating, has challenged them to "make your lives extraordinary!" Inspired by Keating, the boys resurrect the Dead Poets Society—a secret club where, free from the constraints and expectations of school and parents, they let their passions run wild. As Keating turns the boys on to the great words of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, they discover not only the beauty of language, but the importance of making each moment count.

But the Dead Poets Pledges soon realize that their new-found freedom can have tragic consequences. Can the club and the individuality it inspires survive the pressure from authorities determined to destroy their dreams?

Touchstone Pictures presents in association with Silver Screen Partners IV
A Steven Haft Production in association with Witt-Thomas Productions
A Peter Weir Film
Robin Williams
Dead Poets Society
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Produced by Steven Haft, Paul Junger Witt, Tony Thomas
Directed by Peter Weir
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