Dead Poets Society Characters

It is very important to become familiar with the characters in the movie as soon as possible. This is somewhat difficult, however, because some characters look similar and the boys are usually dressed similar. Study this list of characters before the movie.

Neil: Todd’s roommate; Neil’s father is very controlling; Neil did summer school
Todd: Neil’s roommate transferred to Welton; Todd’s brother was “one of schools finest”; does not like to speak in front of people
Knox: brown hair; looks like Charlie; his father is a friend of the Danbury’s; he meets Kris and falls in love
Charlie: brown hair; looks like Knox; very outgoing; sometimes says things without thinking
Cameron: short red hair; brown noser; very anal—uses ruler when writing notes
Pitts: brown hair and crew cut; reads the poem “To the Virgins, Make Much of Time”
Meeks: glasses and longer red hair than Cameron; considered to be a genius
Mr. Perry: Neil’s father; tries to control Neil
Mr. Keating: English teacher; “seize the day”
Kris: blond hair; Knox calls her “Mrs. Danbury?”; is dating Chet
Chet: very spoiled; jerk; is dating Kris

Vocabulary

Pillar: a column that supports the roof of a building
tradition: something that is done the same way consistently in a society
Honor: respect from society
Discipline: self-control

Ivy League: 8 universities that are usually considered the best in the USA
a stiff: a dead person (euphemism)
put one's foot in one's mouth: say something that embarrasses you
Valedictorian: the best student in a class
Dispute: disagreement

Travesty: terrible mistake
Decadence: choosing to live without self-control
excrement: solid waste that comes out of the body (medical term)
Captain: military leader
Hymnal: book of religious songs
Carpe Diem: (Latin) Seize the Day
Lads: young men (archaic, Scottish)
Invincible: cannot be conquered, cannot be destroyed

"the world is your oyster": the world is something that may have a treasure for you
One iota: a tiny amount
Fertilizing: adding nutrients to the soil
Legacy: inheritance, what someone leaves behind that is valuable

Cynic: someone who believes there is no good
Realist: someone who believes that you should admit the good and bad
Hell-raiser: a wild person who causes trouble

Amnesia: a mental disease causing loss of memory
Marrow: the material inside the bones
Demerits: official punishments, usually in the military
Swoon: lose consciousness (usually used of women, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries)
Dead Poets Society Assignments

Name: ____________________________

Please answer the following questions, the Dead Poets Society poem, and the journal assignment on a separate piece of lined paper, or type up and submit online through our class website (ensure you save it as a pdf. file if you do). Please number each question and use complete sentences.

Please create a separate title page on a piece of blank paper that includes your name, the due date, my name and the assignment title. You may include an illustration if you like. You must also do this if you submit electronically.

Please staple this sheet to your final work (unless you are submitting online).

Dead Poet’s Society Questions

Please answer using complete sentences. Be as detailed as possible and try to make connections.

1. Write about an experience in school or a teacher who changed your life.
2. How is Welton different from West Gate? Is this difference good? Explain.
3. What values do you think are important to the parents of students at Welton?
4. How do the students respond to Keating’s teaching style?
5. How do the other teachers respond to Keating’s teaching style?
6. What is the Dead Poets Society?
7. There are two approaches to education presented in the film - the strict, disciplined structure as opposed to a freer carpe diem (seize the day) attitude. WHICH do you think would be a more effective means of teaching and learning? Why?

Contribute to the Dead Poets Society with a poem…

Write an original poem inspired by the movie, Dead Poets Society. This poem can be in any style.
Dead Poets Society Journal
Carpe Diem!

Select ONE of the journal assignments below to complete. Your journal response must be at least one page in length and include your own ideas. Be detailed when explaining your thoughts. Try to make connections to your own world, other texts, movies, and more. Don’t be afraid to express yourself.

Journal Assignment #1:
Do you think that you can enjoy reading, writing, and reciting poems? Why or why not? Do you think it is important to learn about poetry? Why or why not?

Journal Assignment #2:
Read the following quote by Professor John Keating from the movie Dead Poets Society. What do you think it means? Why?

“We don’t read and write poetry because it’s cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for.”

Journal Assignment #3:
Read the following quote by Professor John Keating from the movie Dead Poets Society. What do you think it means? Explain.

“I stand upon my desk to remind myself that we must constantly look at things a different way. The world looks very different up here . . . Just when you think you think you know something you have to look at it in another way . . . When you read, don’t just consider what the author thinks, you must consider what you think.”