Dead Poets Society is a 1989 American film directed by Peter Weir and starring Robin Williams. Set in 1959 at the fictional elite conservative Vermont boarding school Welton Academy. It tells the story of an English teacher who inspires his students through his teaching of poetry.

New England, the late 1950s. Todd Anderson, a lonely and painfully shy teenager, who is under pressure by his stern parents because he must live up to his older brother's reputation to attend Yale and become a lawyer, arrives for the new semester at the Welton Academy for boys -- Todd's brother also attended Welton and was a popular and well-regarded student there. This semester begins during an orientation gathering with a speech given by the stern Headmaster Nolan, who states the academy's four pillars: Tradition, Honor, Discipline, and Excellence. Todd meets Neil Perry a friendly and ambitious student whom becomes his dorm roommate.

During the first day of classes Todd and Neil experience the various teaching methods which include speeches by the trig teacher, as well as the Latin teacher, and the math teacher who states that "all 20 questions at the end of the first chapter are due tomorrow".

In stark contrast to these orthodox teaching methods, the guys see a different side of the school when they attend English class taught by the newly arrived Mr. Keatin, whom they met briefly during the orientation -- Keating tells his class he was also a student at "Helton" (as the students secretly refer to the institution) himself many years ago. Keating enters his class smiling and whistling the 1812 Overture, and he first takes the boys out in the hallway to the school's displays cases containing photos and artifacts of the school's sports achievements.

He tells them that they all have the potential to become powerful individuals, and they are responsible for what their futures will hold. These two actions show his difference from the other teachers because no other teacher would commit the actions he does. Also, he tells the boys they may call him "Oh Captain, my Captain", (the title of a poem by Walt Whitman about Abraham Lincoln) if they dare. These examples of Mr. Keating's teachings show the boys how to think for themselves. Mr. Keating then tells the boys "Carpe Diem", which is Latin for "seize the day".

One day, Neil finds an old Welton yearbook with Mr. Keating in it. After seeing that Mr. Keating listed "Dead Poets Society" as one of his activities at the school, the boys ask Mr. Keating what this was. He replies that the DPS was a secret club dedicated to taking the meaning out of life. To do so, the members would sit in a cave near a certain pond less than a mile from school grounds and recite poetry, philosophically drawing life lessons from it to enhance their lives and appreciation of literature. With this new idea in their head from asking Mr. Keating what the DPS was, Neil and the boys decide to start up the DPS once again.

Keating's unorthodox teaching methods soon circulate quietly among the other teachers who scorn his liberal and idealist methods. During dinner, the Latin teacher tells Keating, "you are taking a big risk in making your students think they are artists". Keating replies: "I'm only trying to make them free thinkers". The Latin teacher, a reader of the Realist literature movement, rebukes him by saying, "free thinkers at age seventeen?", reciting some poetry from a Realist poet to emphasize his point. Keating recites another line "It is only in their minds that men can truly be free. T'was always thus, and always thus shall be." When the professor asks him if that passage belongs to a Realist poet, Keating smiles, telling him he'd made it up on the spot.

As Keating is about to exit the classroom, Todd finally breaks through his cowardice and self-pity and calls out: "O Captain! My Captain!" and then stands on top of his desk and faces Keating. Nolan warns Todd to sit down or face expulsion. In what is probably the movie's most touching and emotionally powerful scene, one by one, Knox, Steven, Gerard, and all of the members of the Dead Poets Society, except for Cameron and one or two other students, climb onto their desks and face Keating to salute their former teacher.

Knowing they are too many for the school to expel en masse quietly, they remain standing on their desks despite Nolan's orders for them to sit back down until he gives up and slumps against the teacher's desk, angry and emotionally defeated. Seeing that his work at the school had not been in vain, a visibly touched Keating says: "Thank you, boys. Thank you." With Todd and the other the students looking on, Keating then happily leaves the classroom with tears in his eyes, and walks out of the school for good.

In an early scene the boys are reminded of the four pillars that were the foundation to a Welton education: tradition, honour, excellence and discipline. I, like the students in Dead Poets Society, felt weighed down under the fearsome load of duty and obligation. Perhaps that’s why I was captivated by Robin Williams’s portrayal of John Keating, the unorthodox teacher who harnesses the power of literature to open his pupils’ minds.

When I watch Dead Poets Society I am reminded that time is precious; that, in the words of Bob Dylan, he not busy being born is busy dying. Dead Poets Society teaches us to resolve to lead lives of passion and conviction, mindful of the fact that in the story of our lives the script is ours to write, but the ending has long been decided.

Mr. Keating’s teachings affected Neil Perry in both negative and positive ways. For example, Mr. Keating told Neil to follow his passion for acting. Although this may seem like a positive influence, it is a negative influence. By following his passion, Neil disobeys his father, which is an act a child should never do. In addition, Neil’s inspiration from Mr. Keating makes him decide to reestablish the Dead Poets Society. Again, this is might seem positive, but it is a negative influence. By reestablishing the Dead Poets Society, he is challenging the school’s authority.

Furthermore, Neil tries to tell his father his true feelings about being “controlled.” This would be a positive influence because it shows that Neil has gained some courage. Courage is a good value that should be encouraged because it allows an individual to speak up for their beliefs. Summing it up, Mr. Keating had a negative and positive influence on Neil; however, he has done more harm than good.

In my conclusion, the teachings of Mr. Keating have a comprehensive and lucrative impact on the students. It allows them to be who they are and to do what they love to do whether it is their passion or the drive within themselves to do it. The downfall is that it would exceed the boundaries on whatever rules or regulations being put in place. There is nothing wrong in doing what you love to do but make sure you are not hurting others in the process and doing what you love creates a positive impact towards others or in the community.