ENG IV: Poetry Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Dead Poets Society***

**Socratic Seminar discussion prep**

Answer the questions thoroughly with your group members. ***Whenever possible, use specific evidence from the movie to support your argument/analysis.*** The more thoroughly you consider these quotes and questions, the more prepared you will be for our Socratic Seminar discussion.

1. Analyze the significance of the way that Mr. Keating introduces himself to the class. How does this connect to his overall purpose for teaching.
2. How does Mr. Keating get the boys to look at life differently? What specific techniques or methods does he use?
3. In your opinion, which character is transformed the most through his experiences in the film? Explain and support your argument with specific proof.
4. All the major characters of the film have personal fears to overcome. This is especially true of Todd Anderson, Neil Perry, Knox Overstreet, and Charlie (Nwanda) Dalton. Describe the fear that affects each character. Determine whether or not he overcomes this fear—and if so, how and why he did. If he failed to overcome it, explain how and why he failed.
5. Who was really the bravest of Keating’s boys? Who was a coward? Be explicit and support your answers.
6. How did the poetry book make it into Neil’s room? (Did Keating put it there?) And if so, why, after telling the boys that the present administration would not look favorably on it, would Keating do that?
7. The movie shows the battle between conformity and individuality. Analyze this for the main characters, as well as for Mr. Keating.
8. What does the Dead Poets’ Society represent? Consider your analysis of this on a variety of levels. What does it represent to the boys? To Keating? To the school administration? To the politics and social norms of the late 1950s?
9. This movie does not answer any questions. It provides choices. Comment on this.

*Connect these quotes to the central ideas in the movie. What is the significance of each quote?*

1. 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.” —Keating

*This is one of the most central quotes of the entire movie. It is the premise on which Keating bases his teaching of poetry. Analyze the significance of this quote and connect it to the central ideas in the movie*.

1. 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.
2. Show me the heart unfettered by foolish dreams And I’ll show you a happy man. *—Tennyson*

But only in their dreams can men be truly free. ‘Twas always thus, and always thus will be. *—Keating*

1. We are all food for worms, lads.

Analyze the significance of this quote and connect it to the central ideas in the movie.

1. I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately, I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, To put to rout all that was not life and not when I had come to die discover that I had not lived. *—Thoreau*

Analyze the significance of this quote and connect it to the central ideas in the movie.

1. Sucking the marrow out of life does not mean choking on the bone. Why does Keating have to point this out to the boys? In pointing this out, what statement is he making to them (which is so central to his teaching)?
2. Most men live lives of quiet desperation. *—Thoreau*

Analyze the significance of this quote and connect it to the central ideas in the movie.

1. I sound my barbaric YAWP over the rooftops of the world. *—Whitman*

What does this mean? What is a YAWP and why was Keating so intent on getting the boys to be able to sound their own YAWPS?

1. ...Two roads diverged in a wood, and I/ I took the one less traveled by,/ And that has made all the difference. *—Frost*

Analyze the significance of this quote and connect it to the central ideas in the movie.

1. O Me! O Life! O Me! O life!...of the questions of these recurring: Of the endless trains of the faithless— of cities fill’d with the foolish;.... What good amid these, O me, O life? Answer. That you are here— that life exists, and identity; That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse. *—Walt Whitman*

Analyze the significance of this quote and connect it to the central ideas in the movie.