

## About the movie “Dead Poets Society”

Some years ago I watched a movie, “Dead Poets Society” that got me thinking about the pros and obstacles of teaching in unconventional ways. Yesterday I decided to show it to my students and they were both shocked and fascinated.

When charismatic professor John Keating (played by Robin Williams) arrives at a strictly run boys academy, his unusual teaching methods breathe new life into the curriculum steeped in tradition. With his wit and wisdom, Keating inspires his students to pursue individual passion and make their lives remarkable. “O Captain, my captain” they use to call him, inspired by a Walt Whitman poem about Abraham Lincoln. Influenced by professor Keating, those students started to believe they were destined for great things, their eyes were full of hope, but still they were afraid to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable. Keating awoke them: “Carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary”.

“Weird but different”, they first thought, “unbelievable” when he asked them to rip out the pages of the book “Understanding Poetry”. Because in Keating’s class students do not measure poems, they learned how to think for themselves, they learned to savor words and language; they learned that words and ideas can change the world. “Law, business, engineering, medicine are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life but we stay alive because of poetry, beauty, romance, love”.

Maybe teachers like Keating take risks by encouraging the students to be free thinkers, to be imaginative, to be inventive, reminding them that only in their dreams they can be truly free.

The “Dead Poets Society” is dedicated to “sucking the marrow out of life” and in the enchantment of the moment they let poetry work its magic, they let poetry drip from the tongues like honey, spirits soared, women swooned, Gods created.

Like Keating, we must constantly remember our students how important it is to look at things in different ways. And when they think they know something, we have to teach them how to look at it in another way. Even though it may seem silly or wrong they must try. When they read they should not only just consider what

the author thinks, but also what they think.

This is no easy task, and students sometimes resist putting forward their own thoughts in front of the others, also because they have a great need for acceptance. We have to push them, make them feel that their beliefs are unique. Like Robert Frost said, “Two roads diverged in a wood and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference”.

We want our students to find their own path, their own way of striding. Like at the “Dead Poets Society”, with the spirit of passionate experimentation and influenced by “unorthodox teaching methods” students will understand the danger of the conformity.

At the end of the movie, professor Keating was fired. But his students will never forget him. Because he celebrated non-conformism, encouraged them to follow their passions, he understood them, studied them until he was able to see their needs and through their defenses. He knows how to disarm them, helps defuse their hang-ups, make them think in an analytical and creative way. He prepared them to face a better future.

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Article published at Macau Daily Times