

## Film Clip: Dead Poet's Society

This is one of the most famous scenes from the 1989 classic film *Dead Poet's Society*, starring Robin Williams and a very young Ethan Hawke. Set in 1959 at the fictional elite conservative Vermont boarding school Welton Academy, it tells the story of an English teacher, John Keating (Williams), who inspires his students through his teaching of poetry. The scene added is from the beginning of the movie, where Keating is urging his students to “seize the day”. They are standing in the school hallway with their poetry books. Before them, along one of the walls, is a cabinet case with class photos of students going back generations: [You can check out the movie clip here](#)

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**Keating:** Now... Mr Pitts? That's a rather unfortunate name. Mr Pitts, where are you? Mr Pitts, would you open your **hymnal**<sup>1</sup> to page 542. Read the first **stanza**<sup>2</sup> of the poem you find there.

**Mr Pitts:** “To the Virgin to Make Much of Time”?

**Keating:** Yes, that's the one. Somewhat appropriate, isn't it?

**Mr Pitts:** “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may  
Old Time is still a-flying  
And this same flower that smiles today  
Tomorrow will be dying”.

**Keating:** Thank you, Mr Pitts. “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may”. The Latin term for that sentiment is “Carpe diem”. Now, who knows what that means.

**Mr Meeks:** “Carpe diem” – That's “**seize**<sup>3</sup> the day”.

**Keating:** Very good, Mister....

**Mr Meeks:** Meeks.

**Keating:** Meeks. Another unusual name. Seize the day. “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may”. Why does the writer use these lines?

**Mr Overstreet:** Because he's in a hurry.

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<sup>1</sup> Hymnal: (noun) a book containing hymns (songs of praise to God)

<sup>2</sup> Stanza: (noun) a group of lines of poetry forming a unit.

<sup>3</sup> Seize: (verb) to take something quickly and keep or hold it.

**Keating:** No! Ding! Thank you for playing. Because we are food for worms, lads. Because, believe it or not, each and every one of us in this room is one day going to stop breathing, turn cold and die.

I would like you to step forward over here and **peruse**<sup>4</sup> some of the faces from the past. You've walked past them many times. I don't think you've really looked at them. They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. **The world is their oyster**<sup>5</sup>. They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you. Their eyes are full of hope just like you.

Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one **iota**<sup>6</sup> of what they were capable? Because, you see, gentlemen, these boys are now **fertilizing daffodils**<sup>7</sup>. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in.

Listen.

Do you hear it?

Carpe.

Hear it?

Carpe.

Carpe diem.

Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary.

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<sup>4</sup> Peruse: (verb) to look at something with attention and in detail

<sup>5</sup> The world is your oyster: (idiom) you have the ability to achieve anything you want

<sup>6</sup> Iota: (noun) an extremely small amount

<sup>7</sup> Fertilizing daffodils: (metaphorical phrase) dead