Dead Poets Society - Each question can be answered in 1-3 sentences. No answer should be longer than a single paragraph. Use complete sentences.

1. The opening sequence in the film includes initial preparations for a formal ceremony which starts off the school year and provides an occasion to reaffirm the school's vision: Tradition, Honor, Discipline, Excellence. Why do you think the director decided to use this as the opening scene?

2. From the opening sequence, the scene shifts to the inside of the dorm, and the banter between the boys in Neal and Todd's room. Why do you think the director decided to use this scene directly after the formal ceremony?

3. In the opening scenes, we learn of the tension between Neal and his father. Given what eventually happens to Neal and Mr. Keating, why is it critical to the dramatic power of Todd's final bold act that this tension be identified before Neal attends Mr. Keating's class?

4. When Neal first questions Mr. Keating about the Dead Poets Society, Keating says, "I doubt that the present administration would look too favorably on that." But then when pushed just a bit more, he says "Gentleman, can you keep a secret?" How does secrecy enhance the social value of the Dead Poets Society?

5. What types of risks do the boys take to pursue their subculture?

6. How do the risks enhance the value of the Dead Poets Society?

7. What are the values of the Dead Poets Society?

8. Aside from Neal's last act, there are three moments of physical violence in the film, Knox getting punched by the football player, Dalton getting paddled by Mr. Nolan, and Dalton punching Cameron. Choose one of these moments and explain how it is representative of the tension between the values of the dominant culture and the subculture.

9. When Neal tells Todd about his father's opposition to him being part of the play, they have a discussion, and finally Neal says, "Jesus Todd. Whose side are you on?" What did Neal understand that Todd had not yet come to terms with?

10. With the possible exception of Dalton, Neal is the character who most earnestly pursues the Dead Poets Society. Why is he both eager and able to do this?

11. When Todd receives his desk set, he is clearly disappointed, but at a loss to know what to do about it. Neal helps him out. What did Neal understand that Todd had not yet fully understood?

12. Why was Todd so afraid to speak?

13. When Knox is trying to persuade Chris to go to the play with him, he promises on "Dead Poets Society honor." When she questions what that means, he says simply, "My word." What are the two meanings of "My word?"

14. Shakespeare's A Midsummer's Night Dream is perhaps his oddest play. Too irrational and dreamlike to sustain a coherent plot, it is an imaginative, sexually charged fantasy. The closing lines of the play, as depicted in the film, have Puck addressing the audience, as if apologizing for the irrational, dreamlike quality of the play:

> If we shadows have offended
> Think but this, and is mended.
> You have but slumbered here,
> While these visions did appear.
> And this weak and idle theme,
> No more yielding but a dream,
> Gentles do not reprehend.
> If you pardon, we will mend.
> And, as I am honest Puck,
> If we have unearned luck
> Now to scape the serpent's tongue
> We will make amends ere long;
> Else the Puck a liar call.
> So good night unto you all.
> Give me your hands, if we be friends,
> And Robin shall restore amends.

Consider ways that these lines refer not to the content of Shakespeare's play, but to the tensions and role conflicts in the film.

15. Choose one character, and briefly describe the role conflict that they experience.

16. Complete the sentence: Todd's bold act in the final scene is emotionally powerful because….