

1 Watch the Apple iPad Air commercial located here: <http://bit.ly/2a7Wiil>

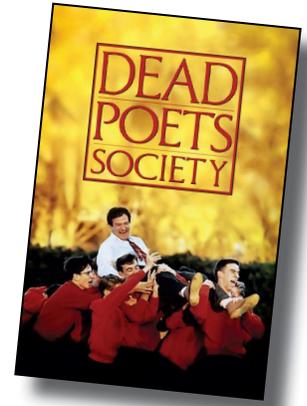
(This is case-sensitive.)

2 Answer these questions:

1. For you, which were the three strongest or most-memorable images from the ad? Why do you suppose those three images are the freshest in your mind?

2. What is the message of the ad? How does Whitman's "O Me! O Life!" poem connect?

3. The ad's narrator is the well-known comedian/actor Robin Williams and the lines are taken from *Dead Poets Society*, a popular 1989 film in which Williams plays a dedicated (and rather rebellious) teacher who tries to teach his students to break away from tradition. Why, do you suppose, the commercial's creators chose this film's sound clip instead of hiring a new actor to read the lines of the poem?



3 Read this brief article:

# Apple brilliantly waxes poetic in new iPad Air ad

An ad that launched during the NFL playoffs features poetry and humanity and words from *Dead Poets Society*. Instead of talking features, it asks, "What is your verse?"

by Chris Matyszczyk  
cnet.com  
January 12, 2014



Why do you stay alive?

Is it in order to earn a crust, so that you might save some morsel of that crust and then, when you have few teeth left, put together lots of morsels to make one slice of bread?

Is it to gain power over others, so that you can feel big while rendering them small in your mind and in your presence?

If so, Apple thinks you're not human. The company wants you to know this: "Poetry, beauty, romance, love – these are what we stay alive for."

In a new ad for its freshly-created Age of Enlightenment Party – I'm sorry, I meant the iPad Air – Apple wants you to feel that its gadget isn't a gadget. It's a tool to a dream.

"The powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse," intones Robin Williams. Well, it would be him, as some might know these words from *Dead Poets Society*.

Then he and Apple ask: "What will your verse be?"

Some will find this overwrought and pretentious for a gadget manufacturer. Yet, for me, Apple's return to its core strengths – humanity, art, and emotions – is curiously refreshing.

Last year's neurotic, metallic rumbling from Apple about what matters being "the experience of a product" can now be placed into the chillier vaults of history.

You might choose to decide that this ad tells you nothing about the iPad Air. But it's hard to deny that it says a lot about what Apple thinks it stands for – and what many believe it does stand for.

While Google has made considerable progress in mimicking and sometimes subsuming Apple's emotional credentials, an ad like this reaches for assumptive ground where most fear to tread.

It is, perhaps, an expression of confidence that Apple has decided to enter 2014 with not only a statement of intent but a re-statement of some feelings that some had thought lost.

Poetry, beauty, romance, and love in a gadget ad. There's a certain courage about that.

4 Answer these questions:

4. Writer Chris Matyszczyk says that he likes the Apple/Walt Whitman ad, but that some critics will find it to be "overwrought and pretentious." What do these words mean? Feel free to use a dictionary, if needed. Do you agree with Matyszczyk or with the inevitable critics? Explain your answer.

5. When speaking about an earlier Apple ad campaign, Matyszczyk says the materials created a "neurotic, metallic rumbling." Explain this insult. What, do you suppose, was the writer's problem with the earlier ad campaign?

6. Explain the irony of this company using Whitman's "O Me! O Life!" poem to promote sales of the iPad. (Hint: Look at the fourth line of the poem.)