

Prompt: In what ways do our values affect our acquisition of knowledge?

Word count: 949

This exhibition explores the prompt through knowledge and language, focusing on community values impacting our acquisition of language. I have defined values as ideas that individuals or communities find important and which impact their behaviour, and language as an organised means of sharing ideas within a group of knowers.

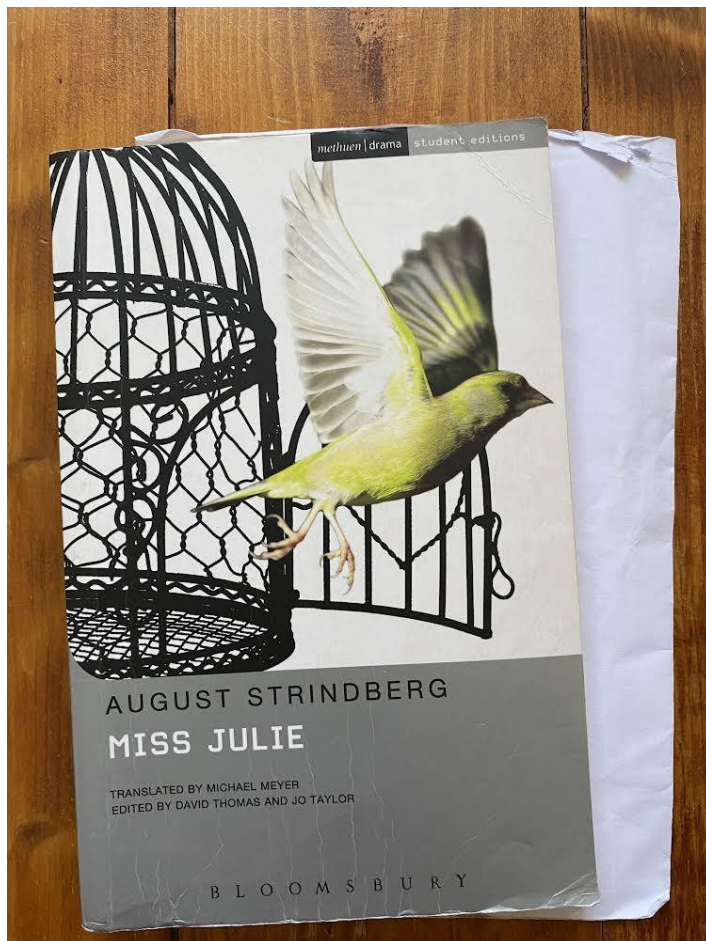
Object 1:



This is my guitar which I bought several years ago after deciding that I wanted to learn a musical instrument. My family has always valued music: my grandfather was a drummer during apartheid but couldn't win any awards because he was Indian, and my brother studied music at university and was in a band. Music was something that they valued so I wanted to acquire similar knowledge since I value family. Hence, I acquired procedural knowledge - knowledge of how to do something - of playing guitar to communicate with them. Music can be thought of as a language - it is organised and knowers in the community can convey ideas through it. So, as well as it being a common interest between me and my family which gives us something to discuss, it also helped us convey ideas more effectively

meant that I could never have an objective perspective on the political history of South Africa: within my family the article has been treasured and preserved so I have always known that it is something important plus, within the wider community of South Africans and black South Africans, I fundamentally cannot look at this article through an objective lens. The moment was so central to our country's history and when I acquired the knowledge of it, it was always through someone of colour who had lived through apartheid (segregation of different races). Thus, the knowledge was charged with emotion. Even in the article, the language used shows it was a happy event; for example, 'celebrate' and 'new age of hope' are part of the sub-title. This led to the transfer of knowledge also transferring the emotions and values surrounding Mandela being freed and suggests that the acquisition of knowledge can impact our values.

Object 3:



This is a play by a Swedish playwright, August Strindberg, in Swedish and translated into English which I studied. The play is about the sexual relationship between an upper-class woman (Miss Julie) and her father's arrogant, misogynistic footman (Jean). The play was written in 1888, when women only had a role in the domestic world, and Strindberg himself was a misogynist so the play strongly illustrates these ideas. People who value the arts and learning about different cultures could read or watch this, and understand these anti-feminist ideas as facts when they are merely Strindberg's opinions. This is especially since the facts

about class and how people lived then seem reliable - Midsummer's eve is mentioned which is a real celebration in Sweden to this day. So, this fact could lead to people believing all aspects of the play are true, including the way women should be viewed. Hence, our individual values can hinder our acquisition of knowledge in some cases. However, it seems unlikely someone would believe that Miss Julie should be treated as lesser because she is a woman unless that person already has similar values. For example, if I grew up believing that a woman's role is purely domestic, and saw this play, it would perpetuate my knowledge but if I had feminist beliefs, I would likely only regard it as a different opinion which shows how it's easier to believe something if it aligns with your personal values. Personally, my pre-existing feminist values made me view the play as offensive to women and dislike Strindberg. Therefore, values still play some role in acquiring knowledge. Another way to see values hindering acquisition of knowledge is because Miss Julie has been translated: the true meaning of the play cannot be comprehensively translated to English so its cultural significance may be lost. Therefore, for people who value acquiring knowledge of other cultures or time periods, their knowledge is incomplete.

References

Object 1: From authors own private collection

Object 2: From authors own private collection

Object 3: From authors own private collection