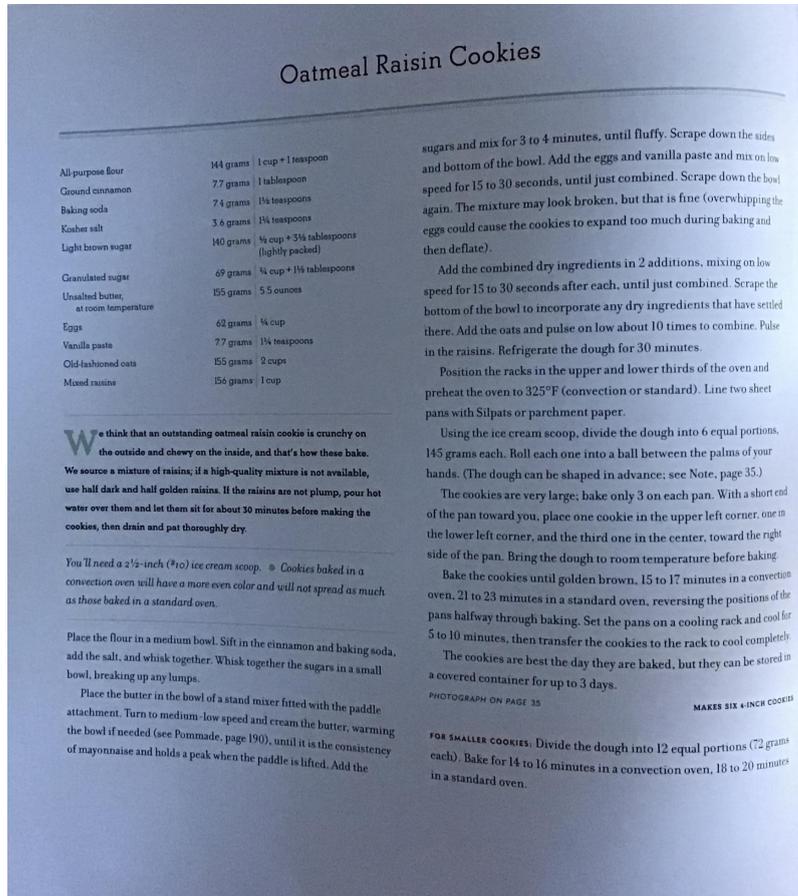


## Are some types of knowledge less open to interpretation than others?

### Object 1. Oatmeal Raisin Cookie recipe from Bouchon Bakery book



This is a recipe for Oatmeal Raisin Cookies from Californian artisan bakers at the Bouchon Bakery. Every recipe contains very prescriptive instructions and ingredient lists.

I chose this object because the Bouchon Bakery describes their baking as 'blending traditional techniques and science'<sup>1</sup>. Quantitative data allows little interpretation as by definition it is objective and empirically stated.

In this recipe, the measurements are precise e.g. 144g of All-purpose flour. The book recommends using weighing scales over measuring cups (more usual in the USA) as this enables greater accuracy. Measuring cups are inaccurate because they enable personal

<sup>1</sup> Keller, T., Bouchon Bakery, <https://www.thomaskeller.com/yountville-california/bouchon-bakery/bakery> (Accessed May 2022)

interpretation e.g. how full or how firmly the flour is packed into the cup, which may result in varying amounts of flour being used. Whereas, using weighing scales avoids personal interpretation as you explicitly see the number displayed on the scales, thus removing the opportunity for variation.

In addition, there is no possibility to interpret the information in another way than that stated in the instructions because they are so clear that you feel that if you did not follow them, you would not get the desired result. The effect of the use of prescriptive instructions, whilst demanding, gives the home baker the satisfaction of producing an upmarket artisan bakery product in their home.

This object clearly shows how a prescriptive type of knowledge such as a scientific, empirically based one, allows very little room for interpretation.

## Object 2. My annotated poem - Digging by Seamus Heaney

Global Area: identity, community  
 issue: family tradition dying out, loss of cultural practices, self exploration conflicting with tradition  
 31/03/22

ugly, stable  
 though so again convincing  
 himself his work is stable,  
 and a masculine job

Digging → Farming, agricultural context, he grew up on a thimble farm

Between my finger and my thumb  
 The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

contrast between father and son, a diff. pursuits.

idea that he's killing off his past but then when he writes 'I'll dig with it' reveals a transformation to connect with past, accept what he does

is right, masculine imagery. 'I'll dig with it'

Under my window, a clean rasping sound  
 When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:  
 My father, digging. I look down

sound triggers memory

flashback, his father has always been doing this, monotonous

convincing himself he can do poetry + carry on his lineage but in a different way

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds  
 Bends low, comes up twenty years away  
 Stooping in rhythm through potato drills  
 Where he was digging.

skill - comfortable, habitual

skillful action

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft  
 Against the inside knee was levered firmly.  
 He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep  
 To scatter new potatoes that we picked,  
 Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

father unearthing something valuable

open admiration

By God, the old man could handle a spade.  
 Just like his old man.

crux of poem, emotional heart in the middle, punctuated by poem

he carries a pen instead, breaking the generation cycle of working the land.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day than  
 Than any other man on Toner's bog.  
 Once I carried him milk in a bottle  
 Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up  
 To drink it, then fell to right away  
 Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods  
 Over his shoulder, going down and down  
 For the good turf. Digging.

praise  
 indicates precision

one word, resonates with title

Synaesthesia

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap  
 Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge  
 Through living roots awaken in my head.

stripping family tradition, sense of lineage, security, connection

alliterative alliteration, monosyllabic

both combined create the abrupt sound of the action

change of direction

no passion or desire to follow in his father or grandfather's footsteps

Between my finger and my thumb  
 The squat pen rests.  
 I'll dig with it.

looking into his past, digging into his racial past/raw material

cutting himself from the lineage of farmers.

Poem is framed by his action of writing the poem, containing his memory of the past in this poem, because his own.

This is a photo of my annotated poem 'Digging' by Irish poet Seamus Heaney that we studied in my English class in 2022. It explores how a poet, about to start writing, experiences a flashback when hearing his father digging in the garden.

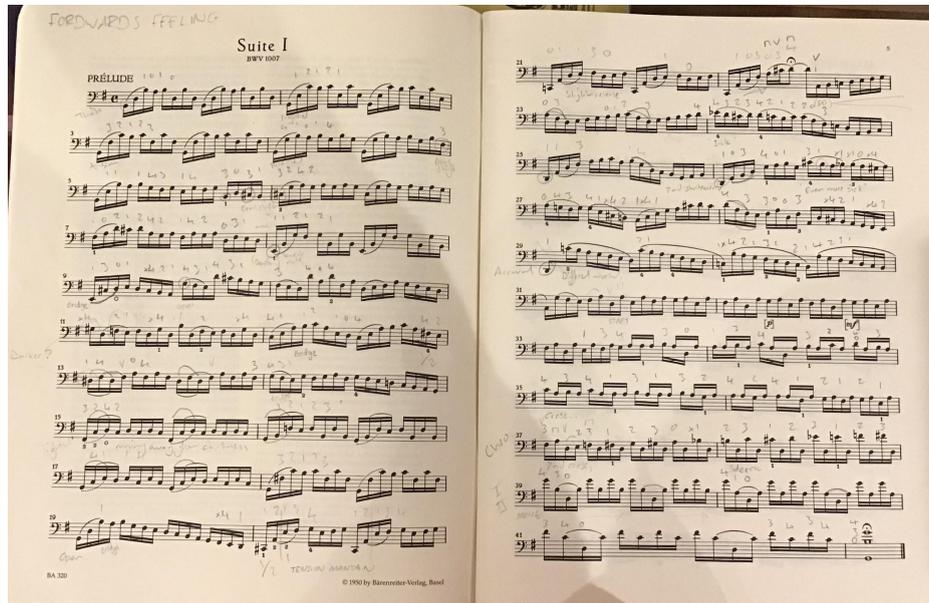
This is an example of knowledge being partly open to interpretation. Literature and poetry are types of knowledge that I would say are open to interpretation as the meaning of words can be viewed in many different ways. However, the level of personal interpretation that can be made is often limited by contextual knowledge. For example, in this poem my interpretation was limited by prior knowledge of Heaney and how he felt about breaking the family tradition of farming. With this knowledge, I was only able to see this poem as an explanation for why Heaney writes poetry which limited my capacity for interpretation.

We define a good interpretation in literature as one that incorporates contextual knowledge and evidence from the work of literature to aid understanding. As a result, my interpretation could be seen as correct; however, by using context in the Arts, the possibility for people to have an original and personal interpretation is reduced, demonstrating that contextual knowledge can make interpretation slightly harder despite our understanding being improved in the process.

Nevertheless, the context in this poem has to be actively searched for so the average layperson reading it could interpret this poem in a number of different ways depending on their personal experiences and therefore what appeared significant to them. For example, an interpretation could be that the poem is about work due to the mention of farming and writing or that it is actually about family and tradition. This is due to the way that language is used by Heaney to paint vivid images that people understand in various ways.

This poem is therefore included in the exhibition as an example of literature as a type of knowledge which allows for some interpretation due to the nature of creative language choices and the reader's personal experience which interact in a unique way. It is important to note that a knowledge of context provides some limits to interpretation.

Object 3. Prélude, Suite No.1 in G major from my book of Bach Six Suites for Violoncello solo



Here is my copy of Prélude from Suite No.1 of the Six Suites which were composed by Johann Sebastian Bach around 1720 for a solo cello. They are some of the most well known baroque cello pieces and have had numerous interpretations since they were first composed. This is in part due to the technical demands of the pieces and the lack of prescriptive dynamics that Bach originally provided. The uncertainty regarding what Bach initially intended has not only allowed interpretation within different published editions of the Suites but also in the way that individual musicians respond to the notation and their own perception of what creates a compelling performance. For example, as shown in the first line, I slur three notes together whereas I have heard other musicians slur the first two notes and play the next ones separately. This creates a different sound but also changes the flow of the music which could in turn create a different impression.

I have included this as it represents the way that I have interpreted the piece of music through my application of procedural knowledge. My interpretation has changed over time as my ability to play it has developed from technical mastery to preparing for performance. I now see it as a flowing introduction to the rest of the suites; however, I am sure that other musicians will perceive it differently.

In addition, music is often intended to be heard by an audience. This facilitates a further layer of interpretation because each member can respond in a personal way depending on their circumstances, experience and musical expertise.

Whilst the audiences for both a poem and a piece of music like this might allow a similar level of interpretation, for the cellist there is significantly more time and thought dedicated to the interpretation of this piece of music.

Overall, this object clearly shows that this type of knowledge, music, is very open to interpretation: from the publisher's editing, to the musician performing the piece and finally for anyone listening to it.

Word count: 939

## References

Keller, T. ,Bouchon Bakery, <https://www.thomaskeller.com/yountville-california/bouchon-bakery/bakery> (Accessed May 2022)

Object 1: Rouxel, S. et al, 2012, Bouchon Bakery, Artisan, New York, p32

Object 2: annotated poem - Digging by Seamus Heaney, a photo from author's private collection

Object 3: Bach, J.S, 2017, Six Suites for Violoncello solo, Bärenreiter-Verlag, Germany, p4-5