|  | **POWER** |
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| **Understanding the 12 key concepts*** *The 12 key concepts are ones that have been identified as having a particular significant relationship to knowledge.*
* *Understanding, exploring, and using these concepts will help you to understand the way knowledge is produced and used, within the core and optional themes, and the areas of knowledge.*
* *You should also try to use the key concepts as extensively as possible in the two TOK assessment tasks.*
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| **Starting points for power*** How many online definitions can you find for ‘power’?
* Which one do you think best sums up this concept, and why?
* Which of the quotes below do you think provides us with the best insight into power? Are there any you disagree with?
* How might the possession of power change the way we understand the world?
 | **Quotes on power*** All things are subject to interpretation whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth. [*Friedrich Nietzsche*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche)
* Truth is powerful and it prevails. [*Sojourner Truth*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sojourner_Truth)
* Knowledge is power. [*Francis Bacon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon)
* The power to question is the basis of all human progress. [*Indira Gandhi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indira_Gandhi)
* The power of imagination makes us infinite. [*John Muir*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Muir)
* A word after a word after a word is power. [*Margaret Atwood*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Atwood)
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| **Interlinking the key concepts*** Does power undermine our ability to be **objective** about the world?
* How much power does **evidence** provide us with when we make knowledge claims?
* Which plays more of a role in the way we produce knowledge - our **values**, or power?
* Can power obstruct the way knowledge is **justified**?
* Do those with power have **responsibilities** to ensure knowledge is used responsibly?
 | **Relating power to the TOK course*** How does power affect the way knowledge is produced within the areas of knowledge?
* In what ways can language be used to consolidate power as ideas are communicated?
* How does political and religious power influence the way we understand the world?
* Do egalitarian power structures within indigenous societies affect the way knowledge is produced?
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| **Relating power to the TOK exhibition*** IAP-3: Think about whether power affects the reliability of knowledge
* IAP-7: Think about the relationship between power and the possession (or non-possession) of knowledge
* IAP-17: Think about whether the motive for seeking knowledge is related to the acquisition or consolidation of power
* IAP-29: Think about how power can lead to the ‘ownership’ of knowledge
 | **Relating power to the Big Questions** * [**BQ1**](https://theoryofknowledge.net/members/6bq-framework/bq1-foundations/) - What relationship does power have with the production of knowledge?
* [**BQ2**](https://theoryofknowledge.net/members/6bq-framework/bq2-values/) - Does power always adversely affect our ability to understand?
* [**BQ3**](https://theoryofknowledge.net/members/6bq-framework/bq3-spin/) - How is knowledge communicated in order to protect power?
* [**BQ4**](https://theoryofknowledge.net/members/6bq-framework/bq4-perspectives/) - Do powerful perspectives always overwhelm weaker ones when it comes to understanding?
* [**BQ5**](https://theoryofknowledge.net/members/6bq-framework/bq5-creativity/) - How has knowledge been affected by the development of power over time?
* [**BQ6**](https://theoryofknowledge.net/members/6bq-framework/bq6-experts/) - How do expert knowers discern the effect of power on our ability to understand?
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| **Real-world contexts for power**The media sources below explicitly mention power, and discuss this key concept in a real-world context. Use the find command (ie Command/Control+F) to locate the term in the article or transcript of the video, and you’ll see where it features. Check back regularly, as we update these media sources every month.  |
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| ***Big Question / knowledge framework***  | ***Description of media source and story and links to the course*** |
| BQ1 */* Nature & scope | A [**Conversation**](https://theconversation.com/whats-a-miracle-heres-how-the-catholic-church-decides-170183) article, looking at what constitutes a ‘miracle’ for the Catholic Church. [*Religion*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-religion/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)An [**Aeon**](https://aeon.co/essays/what-were-doing-when-were-doing-epistemology) essay, which explores “what makes something worth believing”. [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/nov/07/can-history-teach-us-anything-about-the-future-of-war-and-peace) article, asking the question, ‘Can history teach us anything about the future of war and peace?’ [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)An [**Aeon**](https://aeon.co/videos/remarkable-historical-footage-is-locked-behind-paywalls-its-time-to-set-it-free) video, looking at how significant historical footage is ‘locked’ behind paywalls, meaning ordinary knowers are unable to draw on it when they study the past.[*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*Technology*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-technology/)A [**Wired**](https://www.wired.co.uk/article/pandemic-board-game-climate-crisis) article, looking at how a board game designer may be able to help us to understand and engage with the climate crisis. [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/feb/28/the-power-of-touch-is-this-the-sense-we-have-missed-most) article, looking at how the absence of touching those we love during lock-down has revealed the importance of this sense. [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)This [**DW**](https://www.dw.com/en/understanding-conspiracy-theories/av-53618241) video looks at how conspiracy theories develop - and how the present situation exacerbates this tendency. [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/26/5g-coronavirus-and-contagious-superstition) article, considering how the pandemic is affecting our susceptibility to rumour and superstition, and whether ‘evidence-based’ belief is making a come-back. [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*human science*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*technology*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-technology/)*,* [*language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/) |
| BQ2 / Values | A [**Project Syndicate**](https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/elon-musk-meaning-of-healthy-debate-on-twitter-by-peter-singer-2022-11) article by Peter Singer, analysing Elon Musk’s claims to be a ‘free speech absolutist’. [*Technology*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-technology/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/jul/18/a-field-of-wheat-on-a-45bn-patch-of-new-york-the-prophetic-eco-art-of-agnes-denes) article, looking at the work of environmental artist Agnes Denes, who planted a field of wheat in Battery Park, Manhattan. [*The arts*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/)*,* [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)A [**Vox**](https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/23167397/abortion-public-opinion-polls-americans) article, which attempts to understand US public opinion towards abortion rights via quantitative and qualitative information. [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*Religion*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-religion/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/17/mlk-is-revered-today-but-the-real-king-would-make-white-people-uncomfortable) opinion piece, in which the writer Michael Harriot asserts the legacy of MLK has been appropriated by groups who oppose what he stood for. [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*Religion*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-religion/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/28/statues-history-power-culture-wars-public-art) article, written by Mary Beard, who argues that public statues “have an important job to do in helping us face up to the past.” [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*The arts*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/)*,* [*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)A [**Widewalls**](https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/9-11-art/eric-fischl-tumbling-woman-2002) article, presenting a range of artworks that help us to remember and commemorate the events of November 11th, 2001. [*The arts*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/)*,* [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)A nice [**BBC**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/the-hidden-metaphors-that-shape-our-world/p08mxfx3?playlist=the-wonderful-world-of-words) video that explores the prevalence of metaphors in the way we use language. [*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)A [**New Humanist**](https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/5636/against-forgetting) article, which considers the importance of remembering historical injustices, as a way of guarding against the misuse of power in the present. [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/) |
| BQ3 / Methods, tools, and practices | A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/jul/30/liz-truss-rishi-sunak-no-10-race-dress-prada-claires-fashion) article looking at how politicians and business leaders communicate their power and agenda by the clothes they wear. [*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)A [**Smithsonian**](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-holocaust-comic-that-brought-americans-into-the-nazis-gas-chambers-180980114/) article, looking at a 1945 Holocaust comic that tried to communicate the horrors of the Nazi death camps. [*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*The arts*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)A [**Conversation**](https://theconversation.com/how-black-writers-and-journalists-have-wielded-punctuation-in-their-activism-161141) article, looking at how punctuation has been adapted as a central tool of Black activism.[*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)A [**Washington Post**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/09/23/revisionist-history-is-an-american-political-tradition/) article, looking at how the founding generation of the United States - like the leaders of any other nation - rewrote the past to consolidate their position in the present.[*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/) |
| BQ4 / Perspectives | A [**Guardian**](https://amp.theguardian.com/media/2022/oct/31/the-onion-writers-editors-parody-truth-donald-trump) article, exploring the way The Onion’s satire has developed over the past few years, and what this tells us about society. [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*The arts*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)A [**BBC**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-63290865) article, considering whether Bolivia’s high proportion of female lawmakers can inspire political change elsewhere in the world. [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)A [**Salon**](https://slate.com/technology/2022/09/feminist-science-not-an-oxymoron.html) article, arguing that the term ‘feminist science’ is not an oxymoron, and offers a powerful set of tools for examining knowledge. [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)A [**New Humanist**](https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/5909/burning-the-witch) article, considering the shockingly high rate of violence against perceived witches, and the thinking behind this phenomenon.[*Indigenous societies*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-indigenous-societies/)*,* [*Religion*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-religion/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)An [**Aeon**](https://aeon.co/essays/there-are-six-main-narratives-of-globalisation-all-flawed) essay, looking at six different narratives of the nature and effect of globalization. [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*Technology*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-technology/)A [**History Today**](https://www.historytoday.com/miscellanies/sami-camera) photo essay that looks at what happens when our documentary evidence of indigenous culture is not based on ‘asymmetric power relations, subjugation, and colonialism’. [*Indigenous societies*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-indigenous-societies/)*,* [*history*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)A [**New Republic**](https://newrepublic.com/article/157404/polarization-problem) article which discusses the problems with the way people seem to be getting more and more politically polarized. [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)This [**New Statesman**](https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/nature/2019/06/why-woods-are-important-history-any-king-battle-or-law) article explores how landscape (specifically, woodland) impacts on the events of the past in as significant a way as ‘king, battle, or war’. [*History*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/) |
| BQ5 / Methods, tools, and practices | A [**New Humanist**](https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/6021/is-psychology-the-superstition-of-our-age) article, considering whether psychology is “the superstition of our age”. [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)***,*** [*Religion*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-course/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-religion/)A [**Big Think**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYrDlJjIUuo) video, in which Jimena Canales discusses the phenomenon of ‘science demons’ - manifestations of doubt and uncertainty that existed for certain thinkers. [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Religion*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-religion/)*,* [*Technology*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-technology/)An [**FT**](https://www.ft.com/content/f1b30f2c-84aa-4595-84f2-7816796d6841) article by Yuval Noah Harari, in which he discusses what we can learn about the world from our collective response to the Covid crisis. [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*history*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)*,* [*politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*technology*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-technology/)An[**Art Newspaper**](https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/burned-banksy-now-being-sold-as-an-nft?utm_source=The+Art+Newspaper+Newsletters&utm_campaign=d140b1c1dc-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_03_03_11_04&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c459f924d0-d140b1c1dc-62182070) article, looking at how a work of art by Banksy has been burned, and turned into an ‘NFT’. [*The arts*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/)*,* [*technology*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-technology/)A [**New Humanist**](https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/5638/miracle-of-the-plague-year) article, which considers the ‘miracle of the plague year’ - 1665 - during which Isaac Newton created his law of universal gravitation. [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/knowledge-and-the-knower/) |
| BQ6 / Methods, tools, and practices | A [**Vox**](https://www.vox.com/thegrayarea/2022/10/13/23398743/the-gray-area-neil-degrasse-tyson-starry-messenger) podcast and interview with Neil deGrasse Tyson, in which he discusses how many people are unable to distinguish between fact and opinion. [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*, anything, really!*A [**BBC**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-61844299) article, discussing how to debate with those who reject conventional scientific thinking. [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*,* [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)A [**Big Think**](https://bigthink.com/thinking/just-asking-questions/) article, exploring the line between ‘healthy skepticism’ and ‘toxic denialism’. [*Knowledge & the knower*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/knowledge-and-the-knower/)*, most AOKs & themes*A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/15/empty-words-no-action-cop26-has-failed-first-nations-people) article, arguing that indigenous peoples were shut out of the Cop26 discussions - “literally and figuratively”. [*Indigenous societies*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-indigenous-societies/)*,* [*Natural sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/natural-sciences/)*,* [*Politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*Human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/13/understand-china-speak-chinese-english-language) article, which considers whether you need to speak a country’s language in order to fully understand its politics, culture, and history. [*Language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*human sciences*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/human-sciences/)*,* [*history*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/)A [**Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/11/john-le-carre-truth-was-what-you-got-away-with) conversation between John Banville and John Le Carré, reprinted on the day of the latter’s death. [*The arts*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/)*,* [*politics*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-politics/)*,* [*language*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/the-tok-themes/tok-optional-themes/knowledge-and-language/)*,* [*history*](https://theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/history/) |