

# Shared values

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**Shared Values** Shared values are internal values that people have in common with other people. These can be widespread across entire societies, such as the basic principles of Christianity within a large church setting, or they can be more focused, such as the spirit of teamwork held within a single household. Values can apply to any aspect of life as well, such as feeling dedicated to the principles of beauty and art or to the solid facts and figures of truth. These are the values compared in Emily Dickinson's poem "I Died for Beauty" that were also strong in my own home growing up.

In Dickinson's poem, the narrator says she died for beauty but her graveyard neighbor died for truth. When I read this, I thought of artists who were persecuted for their insistence on depicting the world as they saw it rather than as the political factions in power wanted them to see it. I also think about artists like Van Gogh who died of suicide as a very poor person because no one else at the time was able to recognize the beauty and the brilliance he painted into his pictures. I also think of people like Galileo who had found truth through his scientific observations and through his solid figures, but who was threatened with death if he didn't deny all that he knew in favor of the doctrines of the church. All of these people suffered as a result of their dedication to an inner truth and, as such, demonstrated a shared value in appreciating knowing more about themselves and the world around them and what it meant for society in general.

When I think about these things in relation to my own world, I realize that people are still suffering as a result of these shared values. Growing up, my mother was the most creative person I knew. We didn't have much money, but she was always brilliant at coming up with a way to make the Goodwill furniture look stylish and our Halloween costumes the envy of our friends

without spending a dime. She was dedicated to beauty in a way that expressed the values of our home – togetherness, appreciation of the small things and having a purpose in everything you do. My father was always dedicated to truth and he saw the internet as the answer to all his needs. Anytime we had a question, if he didn't know the answer from one of his books, he would look it up on the internet until he was satisfied he'd found the right one. Often, we were confused by the several answers he would come back with saying this was the one he preferred, but that we were welcome to look into some of the other answers provided. Their dedication to these values of beauty and truth often engaged them in lengthy conversations that we, as children, were barely able to follow at the dinner table.

However, they also forced my mom and dad to put a lot of distance, physically and emotionally, between themselves (and by extension us kids) and their parents who did not share these values. To the extended family, financial success and corporate game-playing has always taken hold over any other form of personal feelings. To them, one is expected to conform to the social norms that they and their corporate friends have established. Any deviation or disagreement is considered a failing and a weakness on the part of the individual who had better learn to fall in line or suffer the dire consequences of poverty and isolation.

The values of truth and beauty did indeed shut my parents out of the world inhabited by my grandparents, aunts and uncles, but they never seemed upset by this or regretful of their decision. They found another world in which to live where these values were shared and found success and joy in that world which existed outside of the awareness of the grandparents. What's

more, as Dickinson suggests, while the values of the corporation extend only so far as the corporation, the values of truth and beauty are fulfilling both in life and after death.

#### Works Cited

Dickinson, Emily. "I Died for Beauty."