

Who (What) Would You Kill?



*He went out tiger hunting with his elephant and gun
In case of accidents, he always took his mum
He's the all American bullet-headed Saxon mother's son
All the children sing*

*Hey, Bungalow Bill
What did you kill, Bungalow Bill?
Hey, Bungalow Bill
What did you kill, Bungalow Bill?*

John Lennon, Paul McCartney

This exercise was inspired by an [article in the Washington Post](#) on the US American psyche based on reviewing search habits between 2004-2024.

DEPARTMENT OF DATA

Here's what Americans want to kill, according to Google

A deep dive into Google Search data led us on a somewhat disturbing journey into the American psyche.



Excerpt:

A couple of months back, amid a now-forgotten search, we paused on “how to ...” and the search box completed with “how to kill cicadas.” What?! Who sees the raw, pre-Columbian abundance of a cicada brood emergence — they were popping up across much of the country at the time — and thinks, “These clumsy, screamy little weirdos deserve to die?” By the time you see them, the periodic ones probably only have a few days or weeks left to live. What the heck is the hurry? We feared it may speak to something deeper in the American psyche: the impulse among many folks, when confronted with an unfamiliar animal or insect on their property, to evoke a bastardization of the already questionable castle doctrine and kill it where it stands...

That this course often has participants from Canada, the easy target (pun intended) of any poem written from such an article would be the violent nature of US Americans. Well, don't judge us by our school shootings, or as one editorial cartoonist darkly put it:





There is so much information in this small article, one can write a bedbug poem for Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia. Or a brown recluse poem for Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas & Tennessee. One can find one's own state and write a poem about that. Some research on the critters in question will help your cause and give you language with which to work.

One could also follow up on the notion of the Castle Doctrine mentioned in the article, as related to the various targets of violence:

a legal doctrine that designates a person's abode or any legally occupied place (for example, an automobile or a home) as a place in which that person has protections and immunities permitting one, in certain circumstances, to use force (up to and including deadly force) to defend oneself against an intruder, free from legal prosecution for the consequences of the force used. The term is most commonly used in the United States, though many other countries invoke comparable principles in their laws...

The elements of your castle doctrine might make for a good List Poem. It does not have to be who/how you'd kill any intruder, but just the rules of engagement. The List Poem is a form that could also work with random information from the article.

As with any article offered here, or anyone you see anywhere, you could simply relate random facts and their associations in experimental lyric form as Joanne Kyger did with the biography of H.P. Blavatsky. See this.

As a poet, hate or disgust is not a rich well from which to dip into. Curiosity is a more fruitful place to start. Why is a cicada such a nuisance to USAmericans? When Bhakti and I opened the car last week after being picked up at O'Hare Airport by my sister in Chicago, we were in a neighborhood with trees and the cicadas were LOUD. It was a nice



experience as there are no cicadas in Seattle. How their song seems to have definite rhythms, with the chorus starting off with one, then a few cicadas, eventually turning into a wall of sound. And of course killing is the opposite of living in partnership with something, most especially the mind of the place that you are in and it should be your poetry goal to kill all of your ego as possible and to let the mind of place replace it in all you do.

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11:24am
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Works Cited

<https://wapo.st/47j9cXw>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castle_doctrine

<https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/List-Poem.pdf>

<https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Joanne-Kyger-Some-Sketches-from-the-Life-of-Helena-Petrovna-Blavatsky.pdf>