

# Winter 2013 Directive

## Part 1: Serial Killers

*The subject of the first part of this Directive is the gruesome and difficult subject of murder and those who commit these violent crimes. We are particularly interested in your thoughts about those who have murdered multiple victims, often known as 'serial killers'. This is a topic frequently portrayed in crime fiction, films, and television programmes and we would like you to reflect on why these stories are so popular.*

*Please use the questions below to get your thoughts flowing. As usual, you don't have to answer every question individually. They overlap and are meant to stimulate your writing.*

Please start each part of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number, sex, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember *not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply*. It is best to use initials instead of real names.

### Before you start...

List as many serial killers as you can think of. Please do this from memory and without researching the topic.

### Serial killers

Is there a particular case that has captured your attention? Which was it? What was the source of your information? Do you remember how this case made you feel? Were you curious to learn more?

Have you followed any news reports about any recent serial killers? Please say where you found out about these news stories (newspapers, websites, TV discussion with a friend etc.) and why these events interested you.

Have you ever researched a serial killer from the past or a related historical event? Which one was this? Why did you want to learn about this?

Some people seem to become particularly fascinated or even obsessed by such stories. Why do you think this might be the case?

If you have no interest in finding out about serial killers and their crimes, we would be grateful if you could write about why you feel this way.

How do you think a serial killer differs from an 'ordinary' murderer? What do you think makes a serial killer act in the way they do?

We welcome any personal stories about how this topic might have affected you, someone you know, or your local area and community.

## Books, TV, and films about serial killers

There are a significant number of books, television programs and films about serial killers. Do you have an interest in these types of stories? When we issued this Directive in 1994, we asked about the Oscar-award winning film, *The Silence of the Lambs*. Have you ever seen it, or read the book? More recently, ITV broadcast a series about Fred West, and in 2013 the events surrounding the crimes of Moors murderers, Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, were depicted as a Channel 5 drama-documentary mini-series. Did you see these programmes? Please share any thoughts about these, or any other programmes/films/books that might have caught your attention.

If you don't like these types of stories we would be grateful if you could say why.

Why do you think crime fiction about serial killers is so popular? Does the popularity of these stories trouble you? What impact, if any, do you think it might have on wider society?

Should stories about serial killers (real or fictional) be censored in any way?

## Part 2: The Countryside

*In part two of this Directive, we would like you to write about the countryside and what it means to you.*

Please start part 2 of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography.

### Your local area

Please start your response by describing the physical area you live in. Is it a rural area, a small town, suburb, big city? Please say whether you moved to this area by choice and whether you would like to move to a different area than the one you currently live in.

### First thoughts

What does the term 'countryside' mean to you? Please jot down five words or phrase that conjure up the countryside for you.

### Early memories of the countryside

What is your earliest memory of the countryside? Can you remember where you were and whom you were with? If you can, please describe what you could see, hear, smell, feel, or taste.

Do you think the countryside has changed since your earliest memory? If so, please say how.

## **You and the countryside**

How often do you visit the countryside or other rural areas? Where do you go? What do you do? How do you use the space? E.g. Bird watching, horse riding, orienteering...

Do you have a favourite countryside walk? Please give details about the route and why you enjoy this walk.

Are you/or have you ever been a member of any organisations that relates to the countryside? E.g. the National Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Young Farmers. Please share any thoughts (positive or negative) about these organisations or similar.

If you don't enjoy visiting rural areas, please write about why you feel this way. We are interested to capture this perspective too.

## **Environmental issues**

There are often news reports about the environment and the countryside. Are you worried about the impact of environmental changes on the landscape? Have you noticed any signs of climate change where you live?

What do you think about wind farms? Would you mind having one built near to where you live? What about mobile telephone masts or electricity pylons?

Have you heard of Fracking, also known as hydraulic fracturing? If so, please share any thoughts on the subject.

Is there a message that you would like to pass on to future generations about your local landscape?

## **Fox hunting and badger culls**

Fox hunting remains a controversial subject in the UK. What are your thoughts about this debate? Should fox hunting be allowed in the countryside? We welcome any thoughts on this and also any thoughts on the subject of urban foxes.

What about the badger cull which has been proposed in order to control TB in cattle? Please share whether you agree/disagree with this.

## **Special task**

The "English" countryside is often portrayed in films, TV and books, but how do *you* picture it?

Draw, or find/take a photograph of the English countryside that you find interesting. Why have you chosen this images? What makes this image look like the English countryside? Please write about this image in as much detail as possible.

## Part 3: What makes you happy?

Please start part 3 of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography.

What makes you happy and what does happiness mean to you?

Write down 10 things (or as many as you can think of) that make you happy. Be as descriptive or imaginative in your answers as you wish.

People sometimes talk about the “happiest day” of their lives. Do you have a day/time like this? Please give details.

If you could relive a moment in your life again, when would this be and why?

Maybe you feel that your “happiest day” is yet to come? How do you imagine it?

Is there anything that makes you unhappy?

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Please post your response to: **Freepost: RTGU-AYJE-YSSC, The Mass Observation Archive, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, BN1 9BP** Or by email to: [moa@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:moa@sussex.ac.uk)  
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