

Would You Squash This Bug?

Is it OK to kill bugs? Students read arguments on both sides of the debate and take a stand.

About the Story

Lexile® Measure 980L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to read and analyze a text that presents arguments on both sides of a debate, then take a stand

Featured Skill: argument writing

Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.8, W.1, SL.1, SL.4

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.

ESSENTIAL KIT
What do you need to keep your home bug-free?

SHOO IT AWAY?
Still, some people believe it's wrong to harm any living thing, no matter how small the impact of killing it might be. All insects and arachnids are living creatures, like us. Treatments poison eat. "If you see a beetle or bee stuck in the water, you can see it's struggling to survive. It's trying to live, just like every other living thing is," she says. "It's important to have a respect for life."

There are certainly plenty of ways to get rid of bugs that don't involve killing them. For mosquitoes, you can use bug spray. You can swat up

AN ESSENTIAL ROLE
Of course, not all bugs cause harm. Less than 1 percent of insect species pose a threat to people or the environment, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In fact, insects play an essential role in the web of life, regulate ecosystems, and pollinate crops. The California Academy of Sciences. Without bees and other pollinators, for example, about 100 kinds of fruits and vegetables—most vegetables—wouldn't be able to grow. Cockroaches play a key role in turning food scraps, dead leaves, and other waste into rich soil. And bees? They're a major food source for birds, reptiles, and other creatures. So maybe we shouldn't be so eager to squash every bug that bothers our way—especially because insect populations have been declining in recent years. Indeed, a 2019 report published in the journal *Science* revealed that the global insect population is dropping by about 6 percent each decade.

On the other hand, scientists say the decline is likely due to factors like climate change and the pesticides and herbicides used in large-scale farming. Killing a pest having around your body isn't really the problem.

DANGEROUS PESTS
Many people would say there's nothing wrong with killing that fly—or any bug for that matter. Scientists estimate that there are about 10 quadrillion insects wriggling, fluttering, and skittering around our planet. That's 10 followed by 16 zeros! Does one person squashing one insect really matter? Besides, squashing bugs can be a way to protect ourselves. About a quarter of Americans are afraid of insects like flies and cockroaches and mistake the spiders and scorpions, according to research from Chapman University in California. Scientists say one reason humans have a fear of bugs is for protection: Some bugs can make us ill.

Take that fly trying to snack on your Pop-Tart. Annoying? Sure. But it can also be dangerous. Houseflies lay eggs on and eat rotting garbage, animal feces, and manure, and they can pick up harmful germs as they go. When a fly lands on our food, it can pass those germs on to us.

"Flies in our kitchen can spread diseases, so I would argue it is OK to kill houseflies," says Maria Shokun, an entomologist (a scientist who studies insects) in Tokyo. The same, Shokun says, goes for mosquitoes that suck our blood, which can also spread disease.

Then there are bugs that can cause serious damage to the environment. Take the spotted lantern fly. These insects are native to Asia. But they were accidentally brought to the U.S. about a decade ago. Since then, they have been spreading from state to state, decimating

What Do You Think?
Go back to the article to find arguments that support each side of the debate. Write the information on this lines below.

Yes	No
1	1
2	2
3	3

Describe points on both sides of this debate as well as your own beliefs—and decide what you think. Take your opinion to one sentence below. This can be your thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

Take this activity further!
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Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Article read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- "Birdfoot's Grampa"
- "The Bug That's Eating America"

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Argument Terms Glossary
- Featured Skill Activity: Essay Kit
- Anchor Chart: Transitions
- Anchor Chart: Argument Essay Checklist
- Morphology Scavenger Hunt
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

1. Prepare to Read (5 minutes)

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *pesticides*, *pollinators*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

2. Read and Discuss (45 minutes)

- Read the article once as a class. Optionally, for students' first read, have them follow along as they listen to the **audio read-aloud**, located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View. Then have students silently reread the article to themselves.
- Project the article. Complete the following steps as a class, modeling text marking on your whiteboard while students mark their magazines:
 1. **Using a colored pencil, pen, or marker, write a sentence that expresses the central claim on one side of the debate.** (e.g., *It's just fine to kill bugs.*)
 2. **In that same color, circle the paragraphs that contain reasons that support the central claim.** (all of the section "Dangerous Pests" and the last paragraph of "An Essential Role")
 3. **Have students repeat steps 1 and 2 independently, but for the other side of the debate, this time using a DIFFERENT color.** (central claim: *It is not OK to kill bugs*; circle the first three paragraphs of "An Essential Role" and the first two paragraphs of "Shoo It Away")
- Have students fill in the "Yes/No" chart in their magazines based on the details they identified in the text. Sample responses:

YES:

- Bugs are annoying.
- Bugs can make us sick.
- Bugs can cause serious damage to the environment.
- There are some 10 quintillion insects on Earth; killing one doesn't matter.

NO:

- Bugs play an essential role in the web of life.
 - Most insects don't pose any threat to humans.
 - The global insect population is in decline.
 - It's wrong to harm any living thing.
 - There are other ways to get rid of insects that don't involve killing them.
- Discuss: Which supporting details do you think are the strongest? The weakest? Do you think the writer shows bias—that is, a preference for one side of the debate or the other? Explain and support your answer with text evidence.

3. Write About It: What Do You Think? (45 minutes)

- Have students work individually to complete the **Essay Kit**, a guided writing activity and outline that will help them write their own argument essay in response to this question:

Is it OK to kill bugs?

- Students can use the **Transitions** and **Argument Essay Checklist** anchor charts to help them edit and evaluate their essays.

Connected readings from the *Scope* archives:

- Poem: ["Birdfoot's Grampa"](#)
- Short Read: ["The Bug That's Eating America"](#)