

ENGL 1102:  
The Poetics of  
Sustainability

Artifact #1



INGER CHRISTENSEN,

Courtesy of Circumference,  
Poetry in Translation, <http://circumferencemag.org>



HIROSHIMA,

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# THE HUMAN INDEX

An Index of *alphabet*, by Inger Christensen

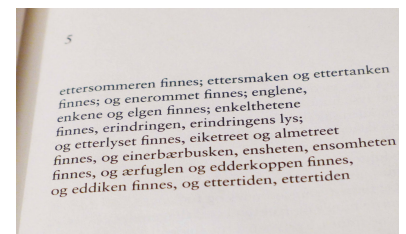


HUMAN INFLUENCE, Courtesy of

The New Inquiry, <https://thenewinquiry.com/>

## INTRODUCTION

Creating an experimental index challenged not only the way we traditionally read but also the very basis of what we consider to be human. As a group, we found ourselves asking questions such as, “Is memory human?” or “Does chrome exist?” These questions prompted us to limit which words we considered human; we decided to constrain ourselves to objects, emotions, or ideas that would not exist if humans did not exist, not just naturally-occurring things that humans have named or “discovered.” Skimming the book caused us to ponder words not necessarily for how they contribute to the book as a whole, but rather their meaning as a stand-alone word. This type of close reading forced us to recognize that every word was individually and deliberately chosen for this



ALPHABET IN ORIGINAL  
DANISH, Courtesy of Blogspot,  
[strikeno.blogspot.com](http://strikeno.blogspot.com)

poem. The seemingly-random inclusion of explicitly human words, surrounded by traditional nature words, garners attention, reminding the reader of how random humans and human development can be to the natural world. An increased presence of human words following the introduction of the atom bomb and its destruction forces a key association of the human with the destructive and a reflection upon our relationship with the non-human.

## INDEX

Aborted, 27

Abstract, 17

Achieve, 54

Adults, 66

Africa, 64

Aftertaste, 22

Afterthought, 22

Alaska, 64

Alien, 47

Alphabet, 59, 60

Alphabets, 58

Angel

Angelic, 18

Angels, 15, 47

Anyone, 74

Apartment, 75

Armageddon, 18

Atom, 24

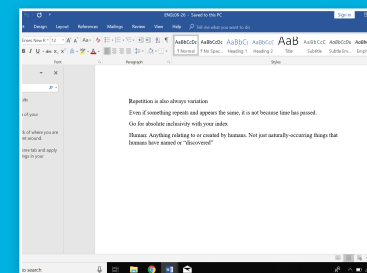
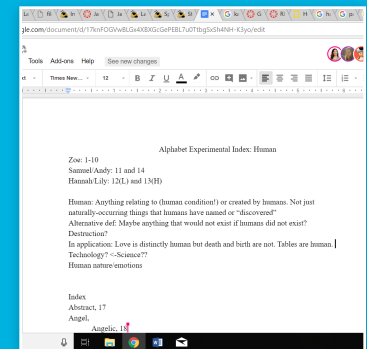
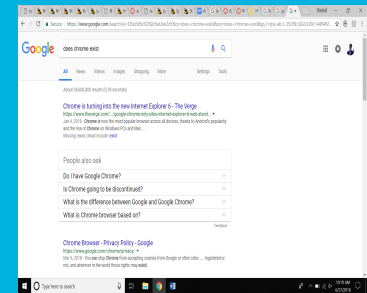
Atomic fire, 25

Atomise, 54

August, 24, 75

Autumn, 60

## OUR PROCESS



As you read and skim the book to create your index, take notes to reflect on how the reading process to complete this assignment is different than a "traditional" reading process. For example, like when you are reading for comprehension or retention. Collaboratively read and create these reading notes to create a group "Reading Experience" statement of about 200 words.

Creating an experimental index challenges not only the way we traditionally read but also what we traditionally considered to be human. We found ourselves asking questions such as, "Is humanity human?" or "Does chrome exist?" These questions prompted us to set boundaries for ourselves as to which words are considered human, we decided to limit ourselves to objects, emotions, or ideas that would not exist if humans did not exist, not just naturally-occurring things that humans have named or "discovered". Skimming the book caused us to grade words not necessarily for how they contribute to the book as a whole, but rather their meaning as a stand-alone word. The "human" inclusion of explicitly human words surrounded by traditional nature words garners attention, reminding us of how random human development can be to the natural world.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS:

When reading we're picking words not necessarily for how they contribute to the book as a whole but rather their meaning as a stand-alone word.

Continuously asking, "Is this human?"

"You can not define a word until later on in the reading, as you continue to read more, more words become human."

Allow the distribution of the words across the text speaks to the message of the text.

"I" not various forms of it are the most common words relating to humans in the text.

Other common words: child, dream, we, write.

The "human" inclusion of explicitly human words garners attention, reminding us of how random human development can be to the natural world. You can't ignore it.

Avenue, 57  
 Bed, 47, 55  
 Bench, 67  
 Berlevåg's harbour, 70  
 Body, 29, 37  
 Bomb, 23  
     Bombs, 30  
     Atom bombs, 24  
 Born, 36  
 Bottle, 50  
 Bowl, 53  
 Box, 50  
 Bread, 26, 52  
 Brick, 28  
 Brickworks, 38, 39  
 British, 31  
  
 Calendar, 36  
 Canopy, 54  
 Canvas, 73  
 Century, 23  
 Centuries, 27  
 Chairs, 47  
 Charles's Wain, 27  
 Child, 49, 50, 66, 67  
 Childhood, 37, 67, 76, 77  
 Childlike, 60  
 Children, 18, 21, 24, 25, 34

Chimeras, 27  
 Chinese, 32  
 Chrome, 65  
 Church, 74  
 Cities, 54  
 Classic, 73  
 Cloak, 52, 62  
 Cloaks, 40  
 Clocks, 74  
 Clothes, 21  
 Coffin, 41  
     Coffins, 21  
 Coin, 50  
 Commanders, 18  
 Computer screen, 76  
 Consciousness, 62, 74  
 Cooks, 29  
 Copied, 56, 59  
 Counted, 56  
 Countries, 16  
 County, 66  
 Couple, 34  
 Courage, 44  
 Coverlet, 67  
 Cradle, 52  
 Crime, 17  
 Crown, 62  
 Crucifix, 21

Cruel, 31  
 Deathbed, 51  
 Decency, 74  
 Defeat, 62  
 Defoliant, 54  
 Design, 71  
 Desire, 70  
 Despair, 55  
 Dioxin, 54  
 Dog, 75  
     Dogs, 26, 67  
 Doll, 53  
     Dolls, 14, 21, 53  
 Domestic, 23  
 Door, 29, 47  
 Doorsteps, 58  
 Drawing, 17  
 Dream, 34, 49  
     Dreamed, 22, 49, 50, 62  
 Dreamer, 34  
 Dreamers, 14, 21, 73  
 Dreams, 22, 34, 49, 73  
 Dutchman's breeches, 23  
 Eagerness, 17  
 Ear, 43  
 Eniwetok, 31, 32  
 Exalted, 52  
 Experiments, 31  
 Export, 44  
 Eye, 41  
 Face, 33  
 Factory, 63, 66  
 Fairy-tales, 76  
 Family's, 63  
 Father, 44, 66  
 Fear, 74  
 Feast, 34  
 Fence, 76  
 Figures, 38  
 Finland, 65  
 Finmark, 65  
 Fission, 16  
 Five o'clock, 66  
 French, 31  
 Fresco, 45  
 Game, 57  
 Garden, 17, 28, 76  
     Gardens, 66  
 Gävle canal, 66  
 Ghetto, 17  
 Gift, 50  
 Glass, 53  
 Glory, 18  
 Gods, 74  
 Grace, 58  
 Grandmother, 29

Grave, 50  
 Graveyard, 57  
 Guest, 34  
 Guns, 17  
 Hades, 18  
 Hand, 26  
 Hands, 60  
 Happy  
     Happily, 54  
 Happiness, 33, 71  
 Harbour, Berlevåg's, 70  
 Harvest, 18, 26  
 Heaven  
     Heavenly, 22  
 Heavens, 18  
 Helicopter, 18  
 Hideout, 27  
 Himself, 49, 51  
 Hiroshima, 24  
 His, 34  
 History, 26, 34  
 Home, 39, 49  
 Hope, 18  
     Hopes, 60  
 Horticulture, 18  
 Hostage, 74  
 Hostages, 17  
 Hotel, 34  
 Hour, 66  
 House, 28, 29, 58, 67, 76,  
 Houses, 18, 28, 58, 67  
 Human, 18, 34, 41, 55, 58, 71, 73  
 Hydrogen bombs, 30  
 Hymn, 18  
 I, 24, 28, 32, 34, 36, 38, 42, 50, 53, 57, 59,  
 60, 61, 64, 72  
 I'll, 41, 42  
 I've, 50, 51  
 Icarus, 21  
 Imagine, 51  
 Imagined, 51  
 Import, 44  
 Infrared, 76  
 Instrumental, 16  
 Iron, 23  
     Iron curtains, 23  
 Jabalpur, 23  
 Jabrun, 23  
 Jacob's ladders, 22  
 Jambo, 23  
 January, 23  
 Jayadeva, 23  
 Jerusalem, 23  
     Jerusalem's, 23  
 Jesus, 23  
 Jet planes, 23  
 Jogjakarta, 23

Johannesburg, 23  
 Jotunheim, 23  
 Jubilation, 23  
 Judas's kiss, 23  
 Judenburg, 23  
 Jullundur, 23  
 July, 23  
 June, 22, 35, 37, 46, 65, 68, 70, 72  
     Mid-June, 35  
 Jungfrau, 23  
 Jura, 23  
 Karelia, 27  
 Kill, 41  
 Killers, 14  
 Kinship, 63  
 Kitchen, 25, 29, 30  
 Know, 30  
 Lakselv, 45  
 Laughter, 33  
 Lawless, 67  
 Life, 43  
     Lifelike, 21  
 Livestock, 26  
 Living room, 26  
 Loneliness, 15  
 Longing, 33  
 Lost, 35  
 Love, 26, 27  
     Lovely, 44  
 Luck, 53  
 Luxuriant, 54  
 Machines, 75  
 Madonna, 39  
 Man, 55  
     Mankind, 44  
 Manor, 67  
 Maps, 73  
 March, 20  
 Maybe, 38  
 Me, 49, 50, 70  
 Meaningless, 71  
 Meditation, 44  
 Memory, 15, 60  
 Merriment, 44  
 Midnight, 48  
 Mind, 20, 58  
 Mine, 21, 26, 53  
 Mine shafts, 44  
 Mirror, 37, 42  
 Mirrors, 55  
 Mortals, 56  
 Mother, 37, 44, 53  
 Mouth, 34  
 My, 24, 34, 42, 53  
     Myself, 42, 53  
 Mystical, 23

Nadir, 62  
Nagasaki, 24  
Naiad, 63  
Naiads, 63  
Name, 62, 63  
    Names, 62, 63  
Namelessness, 62  
Naos, 62  
Narcissus, 27  
Newspaper, 67  
Nike, 62  
Noted, 76  
Novaya Zemlya, 31, 32  
Old, 38  
Old-fashioned, 73  
Old World, 63  
Omens, 23  
Options, 33  
Orchard, 16  
Others, 28, 45, 51, 53  
Our, 55  
Ourselves, 53  
Own, 42  
Painting, 38  
Pane, 69  
Paper, 69, 72, 75  
Parents, 34  
Passion, 33  
Path, 38  
    Paths, 67  
Patient, 37  
Pavements, 66  
Peace, 69, 72  
People, 26, 30, 39, 49, 66, 67  
Person, 50, 51  
Pickled, 26  
Pins, 21  
Pity, 44  
Plantation, 41  
Plated, chrome, 65  
Platform, 67  
Play, 33  
Plea, 30, 31  
Poem, 17, 23, 66, 70  
    Poems, 14, 71  
    Poetry, 41  
Poor, 74  
Pounds, 75  
Preserved, 52  
Printed, 67  
Province, 66, 67  
Races, 74  
Radiation, 76  
Reason, 45  
Recall, 55  
Rechristened, 52

Reflections, 55  
Regret, 66  
Relationship, 70  
Remote control, 16  
Reverence, 70  
Rich, 74  
Riddles, 21  
Roads, 29  
Romania, 65  
Room, 47, 49  
Sakharov group, 31  
Script, 56  
Scrutiny, 34  
Shelf, 29  
Shepherd, 19  
Ships, 73  
Shot, 29  
Shout, 25  
Sleepwalkers, 52  
Soap, 74  
Solace, 58, 62  
Soldier, 44  
Soldiers, 27, 39  
Somebody, 50  
Someone, 47  
Someone's, 41  
Something, 29  
Somewhere, 28, 29  
Sorrow, 42, 54, 67, 73  
Soul, 50  
Soviet Union, 65  
Speak, 44  
Spires, 52  
Spitzbergen, 64  
Spraying, 54  
Steamboat, 41  
Sterile, 18  
Story, 37  
Stranger, 66  
Street, 21, 57  
Streets, 17, 26, 28, 66  
Street-trees, 66  
Stylised, 59  
Styx, 20  
Suffering, 33  
Systemic, 16  
Table, 26, 47  
Tap, 25  
Tears, 36  
Teller group, 31  
Tents, 52  
Thanks, 42  
Themselves, 43  
They, 39, 43, 45, 48, 56, 57  
Thimble, 50  
Think, 40, 42, 66



Thoughts, 45, 73  
Threads, 54, 59  
Town, 28, 74  
Train, 67, 68  
Traveller, 49  
Trip ,36, 42, 49  
Truth, 43  
Turkey, 65  
TV, 67  
Ultrasounds, 22  
Unhappiness, 33  
Union, 55  
    Union, Soviet, 65  
Unsown, 44  
Vengeance, 18  
Victory, 62  
Village, 75  
Vinegar, 15  
Violence, 74  
Virgin, 23  
Wall, 52  
    Walls, 28, 57  
Wallpaper, 67  
War, 26  
Wax, 21  
We, 20, 21, 36, 40, 41, 45, 53, 54, 55  
Well, 75  
Whitewashed 17  
Window, 37, 68, 69  
Windows, 15  
Wine-red, 70  
Winter, 60  
Wisdom, 21  
Woman, 55, 75  
Women, 17, 26  
Word, 63  
Words, 71  
Write, 56, 59, 60, 61  
Writing, 18, 69, 72  
Written, 18, 66  
Writes, 59  
Wrong, 69  
You, 27, 28, 30, 31, 35, 39, 43, 47, 49, 72  
    Your, 21, 22, 43, 47  
Zemlya Novaya, 31, 32  
Zenith, 62