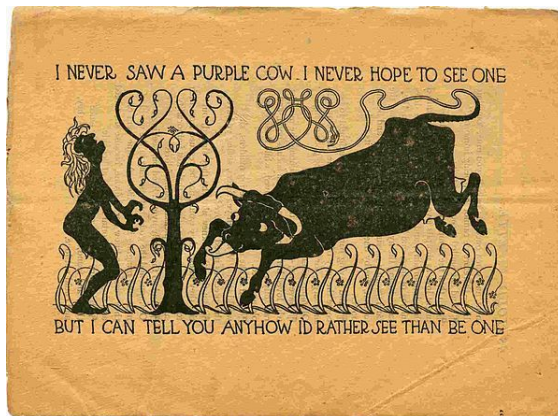


Purple Cow

For the book by Seth Godin, see *Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable*.

“**Purple Cow**” is a short nonsense poem by Gelett



The original “Purple Cow,” from 1895

Burgess which was initially published in the first issue of his magazine *The Lark* in May 1895 and became his most widely known work.^[1] In addition to being widely anthologized,^[1] it was often transmitted orally without credit to Burgess.^[2]

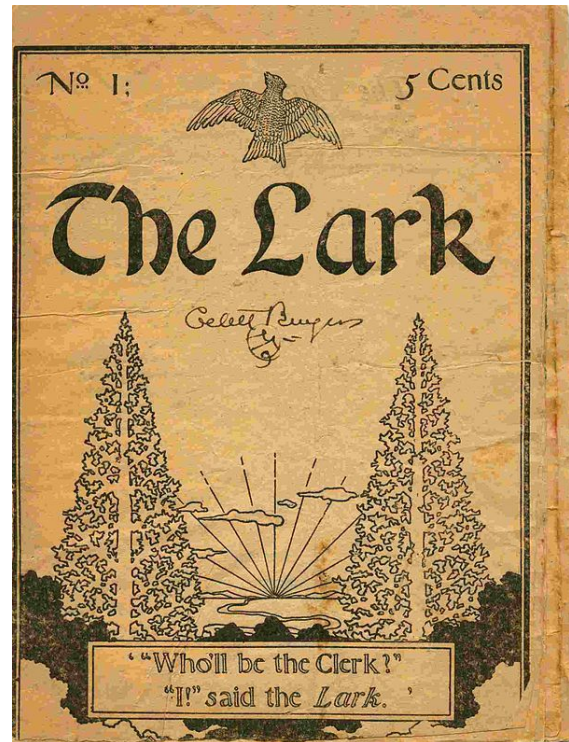
I never saw a Purple Cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one.^[1]

1. ^ “The Purple Cow”. Poetry Archive. Retrieved 26 March 2013.

It was originally published under the title “**The Purple Cow’s projected feast/Reflections on a Mythic Beast/Who’s Quite Remarkable, at Least**”^[2] the poem became popular, eventually becoming what one commentator called “[t]he most quoted poem in twentieth-century America, after “The Night Before Christmas”.^[3]

A few years after writing the poem, Burgess wrote another short poem in response, titled “Confession: and a Portrait Too, Upon a Background that I Rue,” which appeared in the final issue of *The Lark* in April of 1897.^[4]

Ah, yes, I wrote the “Purple Cow”—
I’m Sorry, now, I wrote it;
But I can tell you Anyhow
I’ll Kill you if you Quote it!^[1]



The May 1895 issue of *The Lark* in which Burgess’s “Purple Cow” first appeared

1. ^ “Gutenberg etext”. Infomotions.com. 2006-05-28. Retrieved 2012-06-26.

Many years after its appearance, publicist Jim Moran appeared at Burgess’ home with a cow he had painted purple.^[5]

Burgess had accompanied the first publication of the poem with his illustration, a cow jumping over an art nouveau fence heading towards a naked human, with both the cow and the human filled in black.^[2] A poster version of his illustration is part of the collection of the *Metropolitan Museum of Art*.^[6]

Doris Day’s song *A Purple Cow* copies the words of the poem but in an altered, non-verbatim order. Other parodies have been written by writers including O Henry.^[5]

US President Harry S. Truman, was asked by UFO researcher and publisher Jim Moseley if he’d ever seen a UFO. Truman reportedly responded by reciting Burgess poem in total, without further comment. ^[7]

Purple Cow is also the name of the ice cream shop found inside Meijer stores. Founder Fred Meijer handed

out cards for free ice cream at any Meijer Purple Cow ice cream shop to customers as part of a promotional campaign.^{[8][9]}

Marketer Seth Godin has used the phrase “Purple Cow” for the concept of marketing a product as “intrinsically different.”^[10] The phrase has also been used for the marketing concept of choosing a name which “makes your audience stop in their tracks and wonder why the title was chosen.”^[11]

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