

The zodiac killer free essay example

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The Zodiac Killer is a killer that was active from the mid-1960's to the early-1970's. The Zodiac Killer originally got his name when he sent a coded cipher to a police station claiming responsibility for a murder. In the cipher he sent a message that said, " Zodiac the killer that can't be killed" .

The self-proclaimed Zodiac Killer was directly linked to at least five murders in Northern California in 1968 and 1969 and may have been responsible for more. After he taunted police and made threats through letters sent to area newspapers from 1969 to 1974, further communication from him abruptly stopped. Despite an intensive search for the killer and the investigation into numerous suspects, no one was ever arrested for the crimes and the case remains open. The media has been captivated by the Zodiac Killer because of his relationship with media. Zodiac began sending coded messages taunting police to various newspapers very soon after his first murder.

He signed these letters with a circle with a plus sign over it, his symbol. He infamously sent a cipher that said, " This is the Zodiac speaking. By the way have you cracked the last cipher I sent you? My name is..." This was followed by a series of 13 symbols that were supposed to be his name, encoded. To this day, this code has not been cracked. At present, four separate attacks have been definitively attributed to the Zodiac Killer.

The first confirmed incident took place on the night of December 20, 1968, when 17-year-old David Faraday and his 16-year-old girlfriend Betty Lou Jensen were shot to death near their car at a remote spot on Lake Herman Road, on the outskirts of Vallejo, California. Police were left baffled, unable to determine the motive for the crime or a suspect. Then, on the early morning

of July 5, 1969, Darlene Ferrin, age 22, and her boyfriend, Mike Mageau, age 19, were sitting in parked car in a similarly remote Vallejo location when they were approached by a man with a flashlight who fired multiple shots at them, killing Ferrin and seriously wounding Mageau. Within an hour of the incident, a man called the Vallejo Police Department, giving them the location of the crime scene and claiming responsibility for both that attack and the 1968 murders of Faraday and Jensen. Despite this confession and Mageau's description of the assailant, little progress was made in the case.

On August 1, 1969, the San Francisco Examiner, San Francisco Chronicle and Vallejo Times-Herald each received an identical handwritten letter in an envelope without a return address. Beginning " Dear Editor: I am the killer of the 2 teenagers last Christmas at Lake Herman . . ." the letters contained details from the murders that only the killer could have known.

The killer went on to threaten further attacks if the letters weren't printed on the front page of the papers. Each closed with a symbol consisting of a circle with a cross through it and was accompanied by one part of a three-part cipher that he claimed contained his identity. While Bay Area police departments, with the support of the FBI, worked feverishly to track down the killer, several days later he sent another letter to the San Francisco Examiner. Beginning " Dear Editor: This is the Zodiac speaking . . .

" it also described the murders in detail and taunted police for not having been able to crack his code or catch him. However, several days later, high school teacher Donald Harden and his wife Bettye were able to solve the cipher, revealing the killer's rant, which began " I like killing people because

it is so much fun.” Then, in 1974, the letters stopped. The investigation, however, has not, and in the nearly five decades since the Faraday-Jensen murders, the inability to identify the Zodiac Killer has continued to frustrate law enforcement. At least five other murders have been tentatively linked to the Zodiac, including the 1963 shooting of Robert Domingos and Linda Edwards near Santa Barbara, California, and the 1966 stabbing death of college student Cheri Jo Bates in Riverside, California.

However, in both these and the known Zodiac murders, no suspect has ever been arrested.