

Today's poem is known as THE BULLFIGHT POEM and it was written by a bullfighter called DOMINGO ORTEGA (pronounced 'Or - tay - gah').

Bullfights mainly happen in Spain and other Spanish-speaking areas of the world. They involve a bull (which is a male cow and is usually pretty scary and fierce) being released into a big arena, where a bullfighter (known as a MATADOR (pronounced 'Mat - ah - door'), standing all alone, is waiting for it. The bullfighter waves a red cloth at the bull, and the sight of the colour red makes the bull angry (which is where we get the phrase 'it was like a red rag to a bull') and so the bull charges at the red cloth, which the bullfighter holds out next to his body, so that when the bull charges at the red cloth, it goes just past the bullfighter. And this game is repeated a few times - the bull charging at the red cloth and sweeping past the bullfighter - until the bull gets tired, and then, sadly, it gets killed. A lot of people think this is very cruel, and so they don't like bullfighting and want it banned. But there is no doubting how brave bullfighters are, standing there as a bull charges in their direction. If they get things wrong and the bull hits them, they can easily be killed - the bull has very sharp horns that can do a lot of damage to a human being on the wrong end of them.



With all that said, you can now understand a bit more about the poem. The reason I am giving you this poem today is that it was a favourite poem of PRESIDENT JOHN F KENNEDY. He kept a copy of the poem in his wallet - and he quoted it to reporters at the start of THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, to make a point about how no one really understood the pressures he was under as President, trying to deal with the Soviet Union installing nuclear missiles just a few miles from the American coastline. This is the poem:

### THE BULLFIGHT POEM

Bullfight critics ranked in rows  
Crowd the enormous Plaza full;  
But he's the only one who knows –  
And he's the man who fights the bull.

That's the poem - I told you it was short! But it says everything that needs to be said. There may be thousands of people looking at you, all of them a critic, all of them with a view as to what you should be doing - but ultimately, they can't really know what it's like to deal with a hugely difficult situation. Only the person who is dealing with it can know what that's like - only the one who 'fights the bull' can know. And there's a bit of a connection between that point and the story we will look at tomorrow.

