

Ode to Billie Joe

Bobbie Gentry

It was the third of June, another sleepy, dusty, delta day
I was out choppin' cotton and my brother was balin' hay
And at dinner time we stopped and walked back to the house to eat
And Mama hollered out the back door, "Y'all remember to wipe your feet"
Then she said, "I got some news this mornin' from Choctaw Ridge
Today Billie Joe McAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge" Papa said to Mama as he passed around the
black-eyed peas
"Well, Billie Joe never had a lick o' sense, pass the biscuits, please
There's five more acres in the lower forty I've got to plow"
And Mama said it was a shame about Billie Joe anyhow
Seems like nothin' ever comes to no good up on Choctaw Ridge
And now Billie Joe McAllister's jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge Brother said he recollected when he and
Tom and Billie Joe
Put a frog down my back at the Carroll County picture show
And wasn't I talkin' to him after church last Sunday night
I'll have another piece of apple pie, you know, it don't seem right
I saw him at the sawmill yesterday on Choctaw Ridge
And now you tell me Billie Joe's jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge Mama said to me, "Child what's happened
to your appetite?
I been cookin' all mornin' and you haven't touched single bite
That nice young preacher Brother Taylor dropped by today
Said he'd be pleased to have dinner on Sunday, oh by the way
He said he saw a girl that looked a lot like you up on Choctaw Ridge
And she and Billie Joe was throwin' somethin' off the Tallahatchie Bridge" A year has come and gone since I
heard the news 'bout Billie Joe
Brother married Becky Thompson, they bought a store in Tupelo
There was a virus goin' round, papa caught it and he died last spring
And now Mama doesn't seem to want to do much of anything
And me I spend a lot of time picking flowers up on Choctaw Ridge
And drop them into the muddy water off the Tallahatchie Bridge

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