Student Name

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English 1

Date

Most Dangerous Game- Teacher Sample Essay Prompt 2

In “The Most Dangerous Game,” Richard Connell explores the human tendency for survival at all costs. The protagonist, Sanger Rainsford, and the antagonist, General Zaroff, both see themselves as hunters in a world that is divided into two classes, the hunters and the huntees. The situation he creates allows Connell to explore a variety of questions and themes. What happens when a “civilized” person has grandiose ideas about his superiority to other species and other classes of men? What happens when those concepts are put to a life-and death challenge? To what extent will humans revert to animalistic tendencies to survive, and if so, are they still morally superior? In a suspenseful twist, each hunter is forced to become the huntee, and Connell explores the mindsets and actions as the conflict builds. Rainsford was justified in killing General Zaroff, the world is divided into two classes the hunter and the huntee if picking one I would rather be the successor, the wealthy do not have superiority to by man, and it is in human nature to survive at all cost.

As the story begins Rainsford philosophizes with his hunting partner about the great hunting they are about to experience when they pick up the jaguar guns in Rio. When his partner has some qualms about the fear and pain felt by their prospective prey, Rainsford accuses him of being soft. Rainsford tells his partner, “Who cares how a jaguar feels?”(60). His partner replies, “Perhaps the jaguar does” (60). The beginning of this story expresses the hunter mentality and sets the exposition of the story. Shortly thereafter, Rainsford falls off his yacht and finds himself in the palatial chateau of General Zaroff, a hunter, who has only one passion in life, and that is to hunt. Zaroff’s philosophy is that “Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and if needs be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure” (69). After tales of the most victorious hunts to this date, Rainsford learns that his “thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite,” (65) plans to turn him into one of his prey. Rainsford fulminates, “Good God, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder”(69). Rainsford refuses to hunt men with Zaroff; thus he is forced into becoming the prey, the huntee, while Zaroff is the hunter. After a short burst of panic, trying to put distance between himself and Zaroff, Rainsford collects his thoughts and draws upon his experiences in the war and on his past hunting experiences, and he becomes the hunter. Rainsford constructs a Malay man-catcher intended to impale his newfound enemy. Zaroff reacts defensively as a threatened animal, or as the huntee, as he “sensed the danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape” (54). Now Rainsford draws on animalistic instincts, and getting himself out of the quicksand “like some prehistoric beaver, he began to dig”(56). After building another deadly trap for General Zaroff, Rainsford “crouches” behind a tree and watches as his deadly spike misses the mark and kills one of Zaroff’s dogs. Soon Zaroff continues to hunt, and he returns with a whole pack of dogs. This is when Rainsford knows “how an animal at bay feels”(57) as fear grips him, thus answering the question posed by him to his earlier hunting partner about, “Who cares how a jaguar feels”(40). As Zaroff, the hunter, closes in on Rainsford, Rainsford dives out into the sea to escape from Zaroff and his hunting dogs, risking all. Another twist comes when Zaroff returns to his chateau believing that his prey has been killed on the dive into the ocean. Rainsford turns the table on Zaroff and becomes the hunter again. They draw their swords, both as hunters, but for the first time, Zaroff is the weaker animal, the prey, and is killed by Rainsford.

 Thus, as each man weaves back and forth between being the hunter and the huntee. Connell mocks the idea that man with his reasoning should disregard the animal world and kill for sport. Rainsford as a dynamic character has had to lose his humanity and rethink his role as the superior species and a civilized character. He had to be put into the “huntee” role in order to grapple with his animalistic instincts for survival and to understand that he is both hunter and huntee, thus gaining compassion for the weaker things of this world. Therefore, the theme is prevalent as it is human nature for man to try and survive at all cost.