

Literature/Writing Connection: *The Most Dangerous Game* High School

TRAIT FOCUS: ORGANIZATION

Lesson Objective

Students use the elements of narrative storytelling to organize their ideas and details.

Using Plot Structure for Organization

The classic plot structure is one most students will recognize on sight, even if they are not able to label the individual steps: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. It's easy enough to cover the basics of plot structure during literary analysis. However, classroom writing instruction also benefits from utilizing this organizational structure.

Plot structure is like climbing a mountain. The rising action is the climb, the climax is the peak, and the falling action is the satisfying descent on the other side. This analogy can be used to show student writers how to order narrative events, how to organize their writing to heighten suspense, and also when to include more or fewer details so that the reader reaches the mountain's summit in a satisfying way.

The short story "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell is an excellent mentor text with a clear classic plot structure. Integrate the following Literature/Writing Connection lesson into your writing curriculum as a way of introducing your students to this organizational writing strategy.

Story Overview

When hunter Sanger Rainsford is shipwrecked on a mysterious island, he encounters a hunter even more obsessed—and more bored—than himself. General Zaroff has hunted every type of animal imaginable and bested them all. He is left quite depressed and unchallenged until he devised a new type of game, one that can reason...man.

Rainsford becomes Zaroff's next prey. Will Rainsford survive the three days necessary to win his freedom? Or, will he become just another of Zaroff's trophies?

Edge of Your Seat Writing

1. Incorporate the following exercise as part of your instruction on using organizational strategies during prewriting a narrative. Students will have already chosen a topic and brainstormed details. Next comes the time to organize their ideas into a suspenseful narrative.
2. Explain that writers employ suspense when they want to excite their readers and keep them turning pages until the very end. To accomplish this, you start with a challenge, have your characters attempt to overcome that challenge, then build toward the climax. This is called plot structure.
3. Discuss the following elements of plot structure with your class: exposition (beginning of story), rising action (complications arise), climax (most excitement), falling action (tension subsides), resolution (the end).
4. Tell your students they will now see this plot structure in action. Read and discuss "The Most Dangerous Game" with your class. After, identify how the story satisfies the plot structure:
 - Exposition: Rainsford on the boat
 - Rising Action: Zaroff hunts Rainsford
 - Climax: Rainsford jumps off cliff
 - Falling Action: Zaroff's dinner
 - Resolution: Rainsford sleeps in Zaroff's bed
5. Next, have your students craft an organizational chart with the five elements of plot structure down the left side of the page. Keeping Connell's story in mind, have them identify which of their own narrative ideas, events, and details fit into the categories. They may find that they need to add or delete events. Ultimately, however, they should come away with a fully-developed plot structure for their own narrative writing.