**Most Dangerous Game Exemplar**

**Essay Prompt: Describe how author establishes the mood in the opening of the story, and the impact of this. Be sure to cite evidence from the text.**

Even though the human attention span is quick to wander, mere made-up fictional words can hold it and even effect how readers feels. In the opening of The Most Dangerous Game by Richard Connell, a nobleman named Rainsford, falls from his yacht near a foreboding island. Right away, the author uses literary devices to establish a dangerous mood that, full of suspense, impacts how the reader feels.

The author creates a sense of danger through sensory imagery. The men on the ship try to see an island, but cannot because of the darkness. The night was like “moist black velvet” that “pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.” The visual darkness creates mystery, and words such as velvet, pressed and warm create physical sensations that can almost be felt. Even more, it is so dark that Rainsford believes “that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids.” Being unable to see would make anyone feel unsafe. This fear holds the reader’s attention.

The author increases the sense of danger through how Rainsford’s shipmate Whitney describes the emotions people feel toward island. Whitney shares how sailors have “a curious dread” of the island ahead, that even the toughest sailors’ eyes “held a look I never saw there before” and that it “broadcast[s] vibrations of evil”. Some even believe the air about the island “was actually poisonous”. Rainsford admits that he did feel “a sudden chill” when he saw it. This suggests that it is unsafe if people dread it, especially if it sends out vibrations or feelings of evil. The use of the word “evil” suggests more than merely unpleasant feelings, but something far more terrible. These terrifying word choice descriptors work together to create a growing feeling of urgent interest in the reader’s mind.

Sound descriptors further strengthen the dangerous mood. After he falls from his yacht and reaches this island, Rainsford hears “a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.” The feeling of danger grows when Rainsford hears actual terrorized screams in the dark night near the island. This is particularly frightening because the reader does not know what this noise came from which leaves one feeling unsure and unsettled. This mood of terror combined with this new uncertainty creates the suspense that keeps the reader glued to the page, with heartbeat pounding.

The descriptors of darkness, dread, and terrifying screams all drive home that the island is unsafe. These descriptors, mere made-up words, create a real feeling of suspense as readers, and may even make hearts pump faster. Creating such suspense holds the reader’s attention, but does even more. It creates a gripping feeling. If we have a message that we care about, instead of stating it directly, we can use strategies such as creating deep feelings of suspense in our listeners to hold their attention. Greta Thurnburg did this when she opened her UN speech by saying, “This is all wrong”. She created a fear or almost panic feeling in listeners that fully got their attention and may have helped them better listen to her. Our words have the power to create feelings in listeners, and in ourselves too. We can use them for effect to direct how we, or others, feel, for better or worse – depending on our goals.