

# Three Examples of the Thesis Revision Process

Genre: **Literature Response** Text: **“The Most Dangerous Game”**

Prompt: **What lead to General Zaroff’s Downfall?**

## EXAMPLE #1:

### Student Generated Thesis:

**In the story The most Dangerous Game what lead to the downfall of General Zaroff could be that he told Rainsford of his plans, he thought too highly of himself, and he didn’t expect how skilled Rainsford was at hunting**

### First Round of Basic Revisions to Thesis:

**In Richard Connell’s “The Most Dangerous Game” what leads to General Zaroff’s downfall is that he tells Rainsford of his plans, thinks too highly of himself, and underestimates Rainsford’s hunting skills.**

### Reasoning for / results of Revisions:

- Short story titles are put in quotation marks
- Author’s name needs to be included
- Literature is written about in PRESENT tense – as if the story is currently happening
- Language like “could be”, in general, is too wishy-washy for a thesis – a thesis needs to take a stand
- Tightened and condensed the language
- Corrected the inaccuracy – Zaroff knew from the beginning that Rainsford was a skilled hunter (it may in fact still be in an inaccuracy to say that he underestimated Rainsford at all, but that is where the ASSERTION of the thesis statement comes into play...)
- [One might also question if Zaroff telling Rainsford his plans really had anything to do with his downfall...]

### Still Existing problems:

- Could read / flow more smoothly
- The thesis is an ‘equal sign’ structure (note the ‘\_\_\_ is that \_\_\_’ structure); there is nothing *wrong* with this, but it is generic and not very compelling
- The thesis is a three-part structure (note it lists three reasons of support)
  - *Most students have been trained to structure a thesis this way, and it is a good starting point, but you really want to outgrow this as quickly as possible. A three part thesis is simplistic, predictable (= boring), and constricting. A three part thesis locks the writer in to a 5 pp essay, but 5 is an arbitrary number. You do not want the number of 3 to limit your thinking about a topic, i.e. omitting key points because you have more than three, or adding a third irrelevant or weaker point to boost your count. If you have a 9 pp essay are you going to list that many things in your thesis? Also, more than one paragraph in a paper can be on the same topic, which is called elaboration and development. To move away from the 3-part thesis, look at your arguments as a whole – what universal assertion can you argue that all your points will fall under?*

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## Second Round of Possible Revisions:

**In Richard Connell’s “The Most Dangerous Game” General Zaroff telling Rainsford of his plans, thinking too highly of himself, and underestimating Rainsford’s hunting skills leads to his downfall.**

### Reasoning for / Results of Further Revisions:

- Rearranged syntax to eliminate the feel that the thesis is the response to a teacher-asked question
- Tightened and condensed the language
- **NOTE:** This particular thesis is a Three-Part thesis (listing three ideas) this is **NOT** the only way to structure a thesis – this is a learning point not the end goal. → Might not the first and third point in this list both fall under the second – that Zaroff is overconfident? Might not that then be the central assertion of the thesis and the other ideas can then be brought up in the body of the paper under that one umbrella assertion?

### Still Existing problems:

- The thesis is an ‘equal sign’ structure (note the ‘\_\_\_ is that \_\_\_’ structure); there is nothing *wrong* with this, but it is generic and not very compelling
- The thesis is a three-part structure (note it lists three reasons of support)

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## Third Round of Possible Revisions:

**In Richard Connell’s “The Most Dangerous Game” thinking too highly of himself leads to General Zaroff’s downfall.**

### Reasoning for / Results of Further Revisions:

- *Eliminated 3-part structure by reducing redundancies (in this case 2 of the original 3 were examples of the other)*

### Still Existing problems:

- *There are countless more ways to play around with the language. → What could be said instead of “thinks too highly of himself”? Maybe “overconfidence” “conceit” “arrogance” etc.*

**EXAMPLE #2:** \* *Note, the assertion, and even the language, is very similar to example #1*

Student Generated Thesis:

**In The Most Dangerous Game, by Richard Connell, General Zaroff thought too highly of himself and underestimated Rainsford's hunting skills because he was being too cocky.**

**First Round of Basic Revisions to Thesis:**

**In Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" General Zaroff thinks too highly of himself and underestimates Rainsford's hunting skills.**

Reasoning for / results of Revisions:

- *Short story titles are put in quotation marks – long works are in italics, short works are in quotations*
- *Putting the author's name before the title eliminates the word "by", and in some cases also the need for commas; any revisions that help a sentence to read more clearly and to be more direct helps your writing to be its most effective*
- *Literature is written about in PRESENT tense – as if the story is currently happening*
- *The last part of the thesis is eliminated because:*
  - *It is redundant of the first part*
  - *Language such as "cocky" is too informal, especially for a thesis statement*

Still Existing problems:

- *May want to consider if over estimating oneself and underestimating one's opponent are the same things, or two different things... (As long as you can back up your reasoning, you could go in either direction...)*
- *Structure is a little generic, both examples so far begin with the word "In"*

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**Second Round of Possible Revisions:**

**General Zaroff's overconfidence and his underestimation of Rainsford prove fatal in Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game".**

Reasoning for / Results of Further Revisions:

- *Restructuring the syntax achieves variation from other examples [i.e. content comes first, title and author second]*
- *Changing diction achieves variation and strengthens originality (two things that can make a thesis more compelling)*
- *Added a 'result' to the thesis' assertion. [This was NOT necessary, it was just an option, but the use of 'fatal' in this additions adds some interest to the thesis]*

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**Third Round of Possible Revisions:**

**General Zaroff's history of easily besting all previous 'opponents' leads directly to his fatal underestimation of Rainsford in Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game".**

Reasoning for / Results of Further Revisions:

- *This revision was not necessary, but shows further options...*
- *Assertion is more contextualized as the thesis provides a bit of background for the overconfidence*
- *Diction is a little stronger/more dynamic: "besting" "directly" "fatal"*
- *Rather than listing two factors with an "and" as appears in both the original and first revision, the two factors are built into the assertion as a cause and effect*

### EXAMPLE #3:

#### Student Generated Thesis:

**The reason of General Zaroff's downfall was the surplus of supplies he had available because he had peace of mind and he could rest without thinking the other man could kill him unlike Rainsford.**

#### First Round of Basic Revisions to Thesis:

**The reason for General Zaroff's downfall is the surplus of supplies he has available to him that Rainsford does not – Zaroff has peace of mind and is able to rest and regroup out of jeopardy.**

#### Reasoning for / results of Revisions:

- *Restructured sentence for better clarity and readability (i.e. "reason of" is not correct English, it should be "for")*
- *Literature is written about in PRESENT tense – as if the story is currently happening*
- *The "unlike Rainsford" is relocated for greater clarity and more impact*
- *The use of "because" in the original is problematic: a.) it could be misread as the beginning of a prepositional phrase; b.) in formal writing "the reason for.." is followed by "is that" rather than "is because; c.) further reasons outlined below. Here a dash is used to replace the "because" for clarity*
- *Tightened and condensed the language*

#### Still Existing problems:

- "The reason for" opening is dry and formulaic – too much like an answer to a question (does not come off as natural)
- The alliteration of "surplus of supplies" might not be best as it's not exactly accurate (Are they physical supplies? If not, can there be a surplus?)
- The thesis seems to be saying two different things – there is a disconnect between what it *sounds* like the thesis is arguing and what it is *actually* arguing:
  - a.) [the mislead] supplies / access [this leads readers to think that Zaroff would then have an advantage]
  - b.) [the actual assertion] too much comfort results in weakness
- Both the story's title and author need to be included
- The dash used to replace the "because" has not fixed all the problems: c.) both the 'because' conjunction and the dash equate 'peace of mind' and 'rest' to supplies
- The connection being made between the seeming advantage of rest and safety and a downfall has not been made explicit enough [This is HUGE – it is a really original assertion, but it can so easily be lost if not clarified]

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#### Second Round of Possible Revisions:

**Unlike Rainsford, who is fighting for his life in Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game", General Zaroff has the benefit of rest and recuperation, which ultimately weakens him as Rainsford never takes a break from the 'game'.**

#### Reasoning for / Results of Further Revisions:

- *"The reason for" structure is eliminated for a more compelling and natural style*
- *Author and text title need to be included*
- *Eliminated "surplus of supplies" as it was a misnomer*
- *The central argument in the assertion is made explicit*

#### Still Existing problems:

- *There are countless more ways to play around with the language. i.e. instead of "never takes a break" it could be "never stops playing" etc.*

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#### Third Round of Possible Further Revisions:

**Unlike Rainsford, who is fighting for his life in Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game", General Zaroff has the benefit of rest and replenishment; however, rather than revive him, the seeming advantage of respite builds a false sense of safety while conversely Rainsford never stops playing the 'game', scrambling all the while for a tactical upper hand.**

#### Reasoning for / Results of Further Revisions:

- *Just another (more verbose) alternative for saying the same thing (more words is NOT "better" – this is a style thing. Sometimes parenthetical phrases can beef up and strengthen a thesis, but if done poorly meaning can get lost)*

#### Still Existing problems:

- *There are countless more ways to play around with the language. For one, the parenthetical phrases could be reduced*