

VOCABULARY LISTS : LITERATURE

"The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell

February 20, 2013 By [Vocabulary.com](#) (NY) 

On an isolated island in the Caribbean, a man washes ashore from a shipwreck. He thinks he's safe, but who is that eccentric royal in charge of the island, and what is he really hunting? Find out in the short story by Richard Connell -- "The Most Dangerous Game."

dread

✓ fearful expectation or anticipation

*Sailors have a curious **dread** of the place.*

dank

✓ unpleasantly cool and humid

*"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the **dank** tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.*

palpable

✓ capable of being perceived

*"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was **palpable** as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.*

cannibal

✓ a person who eats human flesh

" **Cannibals?**" suggested Rainsford.

tangible

✓ perceptible by the senses especially the sense of touch

Sometimes I think evil is a **tangible** thing--with wave lengths, just as sound and light have.

muffle

✓ deaden (a sound or noise), especially by wrapping

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there but the **muffled** throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

mystify

✓ be a mystery or bewildering to

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, **mystified**.

recede

✓ pull back or move away or backward

*Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the **receding** lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet.*

doggedly

✓ with obstinate determination

*They had come from the right, and **doggedly** he swam in that direction, swimming with slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength.*

extremity

✓ the greatest or utmost degree

*It came out of the darkness, a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an **extremity** of anguish and terror.*

vitality

✓ an energetic style

*He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh **vitality** he swam toward the sound.*

"Vitality," in this context means "with life".

jagged

✓ having a sharply uneven surface or outline

Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness;
he forced himself upward, hand over hand.

dense

✓ having high compaction or concentration

Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs.

peril

✓ a state of danger involving risk

What **perils** that tangle of trees and underbrush might
hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then.

flounder

✓ walk with great difficulty

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of
weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore,
and Rainsford **floundered** along by the water.

lacerate

✓ cut or tear irregularly

*Some wounded thing--by the evidence, a large animal--had thrashed about in the underbrush; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was **lacerated**; one patch of weeds was stained crimson.*

bleak

✓ unpleasantly cold and damp

***Bleak** darkness was blacking out the sea and jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights.*

palatial

✓ relating to a large and stately mansion

*His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a **palatial** chateau; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.*

chateau

✓ an impressive country house (or castle) in France

*His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial **chateau**; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.*

bluff

✓ a high steep bank

*His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial chateau; it was set on a high **bluff**, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.*

menacing

✓ threatening or foreshadowing evil or tragic developments

*The **menacing** look in the eyes did not change.*

cultivated

✓ developed by human care and for human use

*In a **cultivated** voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said, "It is a very great pleasure and honor to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."*

aristocrat

✓ a member of the nobility

*He had high cheekbones, a sharpcut nose, a spare, dark face--the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an **aristocrat**.*

medieval

✓ relating to or belonging to the Middle Ages

*There was a **medieval** magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory tables where twoscore men could sit down to eat.*

feudal

✓ relating to a system where vassals are protected by lords

*There was a medieval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of **feudal** times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory tables where twoscore men could sit down to eat.*

refectory

✓ a communal dining-hall, usually in a monastery

*There was a medieval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast **refectory** tables where twoscore men could sit down to eat.*

modesty

✓ formality and propriety of manner

*I think I may say, in all **modesty**, that I have done a rare thing.*

ardent

✓ characterized by intense emotion

*He was a very rich man with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea, and he was an **ardent** sportsman.*

cavalry

✓ troops trained to fight on horseback

*I went into the army--it was expected of noblemen's sons--and for a time commanded a division of Cossack **cavalry**, but my real interest was always the hunt.*

debacle

✓ a sudden and violent collapse

*"After the **debacle** in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar to stay there.*

imprudent

✓ not wise

*"After the debacle in Russia I left the country, for it was **imprudent** for an officer of the Czar to stay there.*

analytical

✓ using or skilled in using reasoning

*Now, mine is an **analytical** mind, Mr. Rainsford.*

surmount

✓ get on top of; deal with successfully

*The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and **surmounted** it with success.*

bewilderment

✓ confusion resulting from failure to understand

*Rainsford's **bewilderment** showed in his face.*

grisly

✓ shockingly repellent; inspiring horror

*This is a **grisly** joke.*

Puritan

a member of a group of English Protestants who in the 16th and 17th centuries thought that the Protestant Reformation under Elizabeth was incomplete and advocated the simplification and regulation of forms of worship

*Ah, well, doubtless you had **Puritan** ancestors.*

scruples

✓ motivation deriving from ethical or moral principles

*But I think I can show you that your **scruples** are quite ill founded."*

barbarous

✓ primitive in customs and culture

*That would be **barbarous**.*

elude

✓ escape, either physically or mentally

*If my quarry **eludes** me for three whole days, he wins the game.*

invariably

✓ without change, in every case

***Invariably**, Mr. Rainsford, **invariably** they choose the hunt."*

braggart

✓ a very boastful and talkative person

*Then he added, hastily: "I don't wish you to think me a **braggart**, Mr. Rainsford.*

grotesque

✓ distorted and unnatural in shape or size

*The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made **grotesque** patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.*

stealthy

✓ marked by quiet and caution and secrecy

*Once he thought he heard **stealthy** steps in the corridor outside his room.*

sallow

✓ unhealthy looking

*The lights of the chateau were out now, and it was dark and silent; but there was a fragment of **sallow** moon, and by its wan light he could see, dimly, the courtyard.*

solicitous

✓ full of anxiety and concern

*He was **solicitous** about the state of Rainsford's health.*

ennui

✓ the feeling of being bored by something tedious

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said, "

Ennui..."

thicket

✓ a dense growth of bushes

*The general raised his **thickets** of eyebrows; he seemed hurt.*

venerable

✓ profoundly honored

*He filled Rainsford's glass with **venerable** Chablis from a dusty bottle.*

futile

✓ producing no result or effect

*He saw that straight flight was **futile**; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea.*

intricate

✓ having many complexly arranged elements; elaborate

*He executed a series of **intricate** loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox.*

zealous

✓ marked by active interest and enthusiasm

*Even so **zealous** a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark.*

apprehensive

✓ in fear or dread of possible evil or harm

*An **apprehensive** night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle.*

tapestry

✓ a wall hanging of heavy fabric with pictorial designs

*He flattened himself down on the limb and, through a screen of leaves almost as thick as **tapestry**, he watched.*

pungent

✓ strong and sharp to the sense of taste

*Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its **pungent** incense-like smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils.*

uncanny

✓ surpassing the ordinary or normal

*The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have **uncanny** powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.*

precariously

✓ in a manner affording no ease or reassurance

*Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned **precariously** on a smaller, living one.*

protruding

✓ extending out above or beyond a surface or boundary

*His foot touched the **protruding** bough that was the trigger.*

mocking

✓ expressing contempt or ridicule

*He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping his heart, heard the general's **mocking** laugh ring through the jungle.*

placid

✓ not easily irritated

*That had been a **placid** pastime compared to his digging now.*

cower

✓ show submission or fear

*Then he **cowered** back.*