

## Claims and Counterarguments

A claim is a \_\_\_\_\_.

You make claims anytime you write a \_\_\_\_\_ or a

\_\_\_\_\_.

1. To make a precise claim, you must give details.
  - a. This is a **weak claim** or thesis statement for an essay: Madame Loisel in “The Necklace” and Della in “The Gift of the Magi” are similar in some ways but different in others.
  - b. How could you make this stronger or more precise?
  
2. Write a precise claim for your overall presentation. This will serve as your thesis statement. What exactly do you plan to present? Remember, it must relate to **each** woman.

A counterargument is a statement in which you \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

A rebuttal is used when you \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

1. **Counterargument:** Some may argue that Della and Madame Loisel are similar because they both seem to be materialistic. After all, they both have an intense desire for new possessions: Della yearns for new hair combs while Madame Loisel craves all the luxuries that come with being wealthy.
2. **Rebuttal:** However, this claim is not completely true because their attitudes toward the possessions are very different. When Della receives the combs from her husband, she is appreciative and grateful because she realizes he has sacrificed significantly in order to buy the expensive combs. On the other hand, when Madame Loisel’s husband offers to buy her a new dress for the party, she is not satisfied or thankful, but instead states that she also needs new jewels to complete her outfit.

**3. When you write counterarguments, it helps to use a certain phrases to show contrast. You may use some of the following phrases:**

- a. *Many people [believe/argue/feel/think/suppose/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here]*
- b. *It is often [thought/imagined/supposed/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here]*
- c. *[It would be easy to/One could easily] [think/believe/ imagine/suppose/etc.] that [state the counter-argument here]*
- d. *It might [seem/appear/look/etc.] as if [state the counter-argument here]*

**4. When you write a rebuttal, you might use some of the following phrases:**

- a. *What this argument [overlooks/fails to consider/does not take into account] is ...*
- b. *This view [seems/looks/sounds/etc.] [convincing/plausible/persuasive/etc.] at first, but ...*
- c. *While this position is popular, it is [not supported by the facts/not logical/impractical/etc.]*
- d. *Although the core of this claim is valid, it suffers from a flaw in its [reasoning/application/etc.]*

## Persuasive Argument Outline:

### Introductory Paragraph:

**Introduction:** Hook your audience with an interesting opening.

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**Background:** Give background information to your case.

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**State your claim:** Create a precise claim that clearly states what you will prove in the **ENTIRE** argument.

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**Body Paragraph #1: Counterargument** Prove that your opponent is wrong. Make a claim defending your client. Use the paragraph format we have discussed and practiced.

**Counterargument:**

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**Rebuttal:**

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**Descriptive Sentence #1 defending your client.**

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**Textual Evidence**

- **Quote Set Up:**

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- **Quotation with citation**

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- **Explanation**

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**Descriptive Sentence #2 defending your client.**

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**Textual Evidence**

- **Quote Set Up:**

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- **Quotation**

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- **Explanation**

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**Conclusion Sentence/Transition to next paragraph:**

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**Body Paragraph #2: Your argument** Prove that the other woman is more worthy of blame. Make a claim about why she deserves to be punished.

**Claim:**

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**Descriptive Sentence #1 about why this woman is worthy of blame**

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**Textual Evidence**

- **Quote Set Up:**

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- **Quotation (with citation)**

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- **Explanation**

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**Descriptive Sentence #2 about why this woman is worthy of blame:**

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**Textual Evidence:**

- **Quote Set Up:**

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- **Quotation (with citation)**

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- **Explanation**

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**Conclusion Sentence/Transition to next paragraph:**

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**Conclusion Paragraph:**

**Summarize your argument.**

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**End with a call to action in which you ask the judge and the jury to find your client innocent and the other woman guilty.**

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## Sample from “The Most Dangerous Game”

Killing another human for any reason is a wrong action, except for cases when killing is performed in self-defense. In the story “The Most Dangerous Game,” Rainsford kills General Zaroff after Zaroff forces Rainsford into a savage game in which Rainsford becomes a hunted animal and Zaroff the hunter. While it is clear that Rainsford did kill Zaroff, this killing was not murder, but rather an action of self-defense because Zaroff was a psychotic and deranged killer who would have killed Rainsford if he had not defended himself.

It might appear as if Rainsford is a cold-hearted killer since he admits to having killed General Zaroff in his bedroom. However, what this statement fails to consider is that Rainsford’s actions were merely in self-defense; he had to take another life in order to save his own. Rainsford tried to leave the island and not participate in the hunt at all. However, General Zaroff was insistent and demanding, never allowing Rainsford the opportunity to not participate in the hunt. After explaining to Rainsford about his favorite sport of hunting humans, Zaroff suggests that Rainsford and Zaroff play the game. Rainsford wants to leave the island immediately, but Zaroff says, “The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan’s” (Connell 67). Zaroff claims to give Rainsford the choice to leave the island but really if he refuses to be hunted, Rainsford will be beaten and tortured by Ivan, who used to be an official knouter. Rainsford really has no choice but to participate in the hunt, so killing Zaroff is simply the consequence of forcing him to play. Additionally, Rainsford was an experienced hunter who set many traps to try to persuade General Zaroff to give up the hunt. At one point, he digs a secret pit and places spikes in the bottom, hoping Zaroff will fall in and be trapped. Yet, when Zaroff comes upon the pit, his dogs fall in instead, and Zaroff says, “You’ve done well, Rainsford. Your Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs” (72). Rainsford also tries making a Malay man-catcher and a recoil knife but none of these traps causes General Zaroff to stop hunting Rainsford. He will only be satisfied once Rainsford is dead, so Rainsford had to kill him or the game would never be over. Rainsford was only protecting himself by killing General Zaroff, but General Zaroff’s personality actually begged Rainsford to kill him.

General Zaroff was a psychotic and sick individual whose ideas would never be tolerated if he lived off the deserted island. General Zaroff was a mad man who found pleasure in hunting others. At one point in the story, General Zaroff finds Rainsford hiding in a tree, but does not kill him then. He calls out to Rainsford, “If you are within sound of my voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you” (Connell 71). Zaroff actually enjoys the torture and pain he is making Rainsford endure. He chooses not to kill him at this point, so he can continue to torture Rainsford during the hunt. When Rainsford has the opportunity to kill Zaroff, it is clear that doing so is his best option, or risk being hunted for the rest of his life. Moreover, at the end of the story, it is actually General Zaroff who suggests that one of the men will die. When he finds Rainsford hiding in his bedroom, Zaroff says, “One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford” (Connell 74). Zaroff threatens to kill Rainsford by stating that one of the two men will be eaten by the dogs so Rainsford has no choice but to defend himself against Zaroff, who up until this point has continually inflicted pain and torture on Rainsford. If Zaroff had never been so uncivilized to suggest the hunting game in the first place, he would not have had to die by Rainsford’s sword.

Rainsford admits that he killed General Zaroff, yet it is apparent that he had no choice and that taking General Zaroff’s life, actually saved Rainsford’s own life. General Zaroff was uncivilized and cruel to even suggest hunting another human so being killed was the punishment he had coming to him. I ask the jury and the judge to find Rainsford innocent of murder since what he did was not out of hatred, but purely out of self-defense.