

Name_____

Author's Purpose

You Show - A summative assessment

"Go Ahead, panic" by Dave Barry

Every so often, I head for Sun Valley, Idaho, because I have friends there, and because Idaho contains large quantities of nature. The problem is that my friends are never content to sit around with a cool beverage and look at the nature from a safe distance, as nature intended. No, my friends want to go out and interact with the nature in some kind of potentially fatal way.

Frenzied suicidal outdoor interactivity is big in the Sun Valley area. Everybody you see is wearing a helmet and those really tight shorts that outdoorsy people wear. There is no outdoor activity too hazardous for these people; they climb sheer cliffs barehanded; they ride bicycles down steep ski slopes; they leap off mountainsides and soar hundreds of feet in the air suspended from what appears to be a café awning. I suspect that sometimes, having run out of other dangerous things to do, they go out into the forest and run headfirst into boulders. You laugh, but this is probably a growing sport, with its own monthly magazine (Rock Butting).

So inevitably, when I am in Idaho, my friends involve me in some insane outdoor activity. One time, my friend Ridley talked me into climbing way up an absurdly dangerous tree, a tree that was surrounded by the corpses of squirrels that had fallen to their deaths while attempting to ascend it.

On my most recent trip, my friend Erasmo talked me into whitewater kayaking. Erasmo runs a river company that sends tourists, with guides, in rafts and kayaks down the Salmon River, which is very scenic and also the same temperature as liquid nitrogen. Erasmo insisted that I'd enjoy riding this river in a kayak, a small boat that gets its name from the Eskimo words "kay" meaning "boat," and "ak" meaning "that should not be occupied by anybody who is not a licensed Eskimo."

When Ron and I got to the Salmon River, our guide, Lloyd, had us put on Spider Man-style wetsuits and life jackets and helmets. We were feeling manly and outdoorsy until Lloyd pointed out, quietly, that our helmets were on backward. After we turned them around, Lloyd gave us a briefing on how to kayak, which mostly consisted of what to do if you fall out of the kayak. What you do is: Don't panic. This is the same advice I've been given in every sport I've ever tried. Just once I wish the guide would say: "If something goes wrong, flail your limbs and scream in terror." Then I'd feel qualified.

After our briefing, Ron and I got into our kayaks and pushed out into the river to practice our paddling skills. In a few minutes we found that by stroking out paddles on the left or right side, forward or backward, we were able to have absolutely no effect on what our kayaks were doing. Our kayaks were taking direction only from the Salmon River, which was telling them: Go downstream NOW! So we did. In a few minutes, we hit our first rapids, which were officially classified as a Class 3 rapids ("Not Always Fatal").

I made it through, using the veteran kayaker technique of closing my eyes, so that the river could not see me. I will not humiliate anybody by naming names here, but Ron fell out of his kayak. Fortunately, Lloyd rescued him; otherwise Ron would have drifted all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

After that, the river got calmer and we did pretty well. In conclusion, kayaking is a fun sport that I recommend to everybody who has a sense of adventure and a good HMO _medical plan). I plan to do it again. Maybe I'll see you out on the river some day! Assuming my eyes are open.

