

To build a fire: man's pride

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To Build a Fire by Jack London is a story of a man who believed that he is larger than nature itself, that he could conquer anything—even seventy-five degrees below zero. Throughout the story, London clearly depicted a very cold place, a place which obviously no human could survive. According to one critique, the story “ pits one man alone against the overwhelming forces of nature”. Probably due to humans' achievements, the man has become engulfed with pride and has carelessly ignored the power of nature. The protagonist was described as a man who is keen to details and, through most of the story, exuded confidence that he could cross the place. In fact, he already had a targeted time when he could reach his other companions. He did not have apparent fear of danger and seemed to rationalize to himself so as not to face the real situation: “ Maybe, if he ran on, his feet will thaw out; and anyway if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys”. It was only near the end of the story did he realize the danger that he entered himself into, the death that he could have easily avoided. If he was not as arrogant enough to perceive the “ old-timers” as “ womanish” and heeded their advice, the man would never have died and would have enjoyed “ camping out with the boys. ” His arrogance took its toll—nature took his life.

Reference

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3. To build a fire. In L. Jewell (Ed.), Reading and writing about literature (1st ed.).
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