

# The wrath of nature



Jeff Neukirch Peter Ermey LITR-221 February 10, 2013 The Wrath of Nature Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire" are both naturalistic short stories in terms of fighting the elements of nature.

Both short stories communicate the consequences of not respecting the power nature has and the potential of taking life. In comparison, both writers prove that man is not in complete control of their own fate and free will is ineffective when dealing with the wrath of nature. All that tempt fate or have the displeasure of being a victim of fate can do, is suffer through what the element of nature brings upon them. Crane's short story "The Open Boat" is about the lives of four men forced together in a small dinghy and in order to survive they all must endure the struggle together. With the massive rage of the open sea, furious winds, and intense chill in the air, they find themselves working together for survival. Crane's characters in this short story experience nature's true lack of sympathy concerning their direct wellbeing. Crane essentially demonstrates to the reader that in their fight to survive one of the few things they have in common is their pride. However, when pride gets in the way, mistakes made can play a significant role in the outcome of life's decisions.

London's "To Build a Fire" the characters foolish pride gets in the way of his surviving the elements of the Yukon. The characters in both Crane and London's short stories share a common theme in dealing with their own pride as well as nature's fury. The focus of this story is not based solely on the characters survivability, instead he directs the reader to focus more on the powerful forces of nature. The most influential forces of nature

proved to be temperatures ranging from fifty to eighty degrees below zero, overwhelming deep snow, and hidden ice of the Yukon.

The fact remains in both stories that nature is not forgiving and challenges these men as they fight to live by using all means necessary. Unfortunately, the men's fate may have already be decided despite their last attempts of survival. Crane leads the reader on a long journey in hopes the characters survive. Once they are in sight the life-saving station, they find no one around to save them from the crushing waves of the sea.

Though the men could not reach shore do to the rough seas, each man concludes that their chances of surviving are bleak at best but remain hopeful. While the four men eventually made it to shore and out of the unforgiving sea, the men learned a valuable lesson that humans are forever defenseless when it comes to nature's fury. London's character continues on his journey being of selfish mind, never thought once of not surviving. Being at the wrong place at the wrong time, he breaks through the ice and enters the frigid waters up to his knees.

Knowing that time was not on his side, he was aware that it was a matter of time before he would freeze to death if he did not act now, build a fire to dry his clothing and warm his feet and legs. During his suffering through the numbing pain, he continuously reminisced of the advice given by the old-timer of Sulphur Creek wishing that had paid more attention. However, London's character, through his own mistakes, ultimately suffers as an avalanche of snow from atop tree he sat under snuffed out his fire, which was his last connection to surviving the elements of the Yukon. In both ???

The Open Boat and To Build a Fire, the authors create their stories by making nature the key ingredient, which proves itself as being a worthy adversary as each of these men fight to stay alive. The laws of nature are unforgiving as she has no interest in or is even aware that these men are caught in the fury of her throws. Putting nature aside for a moment, authors Crane and London captivated the reader by leading them to believe that each man is going to survive. Crane leads his reader to believe that his characters are certain to meet their death and contrary to the reader's surprise, all four men survive. London however, surprises the reader by allowing the reader to build an assumption that the man will survive the elements of the Yukon.

To the readers surprise London's character met his demise when his last chance of survival was met by his own fate. The unexpected turn in each story leaves the reader surprised yet satisfied with the outcome. -Work Cited Crane, Stephen. The Open Boat. American Literature After the Civil War. Create edition, McGraw-Hill, 2011.

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To Build a Fire. American Literature Since the Civil War. Create edition. McGraw-Hill, 2011. 114-124. E-Book.