

"to build a fire" jack
london



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

"To Build a Fire" is a classic chronicle written by Jack London. It deals with a youthful man who does not take into account the caution of experienced prospectors who advise him to never travel unaccompanied in the Alaskan wilderness, especially in the period of extremely cold weather. However, the young man refuses to follow this advice as he begins his journey to join his cronies at their mining base. This journey would take him approximately one day to accomplish. In addition, the narration highlights several themes including the unresponsiveness of the environment, intuition over intellectualism, survival, the importance of storyline over character, lack of good judgment, a fascination with procedures, delineation of individuals in the lower social class, as well as the sensible language that befit such individuals and settings (Evans & Jameson 32).

The narration reveals a lot about its environmentalist origin from the very beginning. This story sounds, more or less, like a training manual as the entire narration is based on the ways of performing various acts, for instance, putting up fires, keeping away from risky springs, and finding one's way through a creek. In addition, there exist additional procedures like the manner in which the snow layers and ice have developed in the Yukon, as well as the ice that has built up on the man's beard. The title further brings out the essence of survival. In relation to the narration, naturalism is involved with the profound arguments that tend to disclose the animalistic character of a man. On the other hand, London's tale highlights one of the oldest and important struggles in life and literature, which is nature versus man (Nickens 45). According to the story, the man faces the danger of freezing in the nasty cold. Nonetheless, his ego and arrogance drive him to

ignore the advice given to him as he proceeds with his journey. With the brutality of the chilly environment, sheer survival, other than his determination to look for gold, would turn out to be his preoccupation.

The man is evidently not a skilled Yukon traveler. He does not take into account all the information that signals danger. As brought out by London, he underrates the cold, as well as disregards the absence of travelers in the last month. Once more, procedures are imperative. As illustrated, " he does not make any mental processes... taking facts and assigning them increasing significance". Though this might appear like an academic deficit, the man really lacks instinct, which is the insensible comprehension of what the diverse facts signify. The dog, on the other hand, is pure instinct. Although it does not understand the cold in the same way as the man, it possesses " inherited knowledge" about it. Due to this, the dog becomes aware of the dangers of the cold, the risks associated with the spring, the ways of removing the ice stuck in its toes, and even the impact of going too close to fire.

Despite the fact that the central struggle goes on between man and nature, it would be incorrect to assert that the man is enthusiastically assaulted by nature. Nature does not insist on injuring the man. As brought out, " it would be just as cold without the man's presence". To a certain extent, the environment is unresponsive to the man. This is because it does not assist him in any way, and will not notice his demise. Similarly, the dog is not bothered by the man, but itself (Nickens 63). London simply expresses the objective information despite the fact that it might negatively characterize the man. For instance, in expressing the man's failure to make intellectual

leaps, London asserts that, " there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head." The author does not outrightly denounce the man's foolishness. He says, " The trouble with him was that he was without imagination." This serves to indicate that the man will only face troubles as a result of such a deficit.

Similarly, the author maintains a sense of neutrality with his objective, prose, and the manner in which he narrates the story. He mostly centers on the storyline as he does not clearly outline the man's history. This is substantiated by the fact that London does not mention the man's name. In addition, the name of the dog is also unknown. The man does not only represent himself, but stands for the rest of humanity, particularly the human race that fights against the natural world. Furthermore, according to the naturalist custom, the man is clearly not from the upper social class. In the same way as " the boys," he anticipates to attain wealth by looking for gold, as was the case with many individuals during the late nineteenth century. Naturalism supposes that an individual ought to take charge of situations as there are several possible outcomes. In view of the fact that the naturalistic ideology is founded on fundamental links, it is possible to envisage the consequences of one's deeds. The man was not able to anticipate his " falling through the snow", and for that reason, he merely views this as " bad luck". Consequently, he does not expect that his another act - setting up fire beneath a spruce tree - would lead to potentially important results, such as putting out the flames.

The fact that the man disregards the old-timer's counsel and thoughtlessly sets fire below the spruce tree illustrates that he is unable to make

associative psychological projections, which correspond the fundamental links. This is also highlighted at the beginning of the narration when the author indicates that, “ the man refused to meditate upon the cold and expand his thinking to more universal ideas about mortality” (London78). Additionally, the man regularly conducted certain procedures, such as setting up fire. Based on this, it is clear that procedures are the fundamental links in the naturalistic ideas. Nevertheless, the man takes notice of these procedures only when he views them to be beneficial. When the course of action is probably destructive, he disregards it. The author even associates the underlying disturbance of the spruce tree branches as a “ procedure”

The man’s indisposition to reflect more deeply on the subject of procedures is related to the hardships he faces in keeping the fire burning. It may also be seen that the man is not only reluctant, but also unable to reflect on these procedures. Due to this, he does not predict the fire going out. In addition, he does not consider himself responsible for that. The reference to the man’s subsequent action, initially regarded as a “ fault” by London and then as a “ mistake”, puts forward the combination of two arguments. First, the man ought to have anticipated the various dangers linked to Yukon. However, his behavior would ultimately be determined by nature. Survival turns out to be the fundamental inspiration for the man as he “...defends himself against nature” (Lyon 67). His frantic attempts to keep his body warm contrast with the unresponsiveness of the Yukon. This is based on the fact that the environment simply maintains its nature, “ brutal cold”, and it also does not take into consideration the man’s survival.

Despite the fact that he fights off the thoughts of dying in the beginning, he soon engages in causal meditation, entertaining himself with the images of his body being frozen, and even of discovering it the following day. This is a truly theoretical, as well as innovative, way of thinking. Nevertheless, by the time he does this, it is already overdue since projections of fundamental links can contribute very little at this level. His thoughts are futile because whatever had been offered to him by naturalism in the sense of free will had absolutely vanished by this time. The author suggests that a man's hand is naturally a special advantage. Therefore, the hands should be used to operate tools, which are products of an individual's intellect. Contrary to his suggestion, the narration illustrates how the hand betrays the man. London reveals that the man is unable to properly utilize the matches and use the knife, so both tools are wasted. With regard to nature, his intelligence is inconsequential. On the other hand, the dog's intuition succeeds. It not only intuitively becomes aware of the man attempting to mislead it in some way, but also applies its natural special advantage - the fur - to keep it warm and safe (Nickens 72). While the animal is not intellectually able to cook food for itself and to create fire, it still knows, on an instinctive level, how to acquire essential things for survival. London states that this is a much more important feature, than intelligence, especially in such a cold-blooded, cruel surrounding.