

The not celebrated as a hero and

Sociology



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The texts "To Build a Fire" and "The Return of a Private" are two works from this semester that outline the contrast between naturalism and realism.

In Jack London's work "To Build A Fire", he depicts nature as an overpowering force that man cannot overcome. We see this in the main characters persevering battle to survive through the cold and the death of the main character despite this perseverance. Hamlin Garland's "The Return of a Private" illustrates the life of Private Smith when he returns home from the Civil War to find his farm in jeopardy. Instead of a lovely reunion and the bliss of home life in comparison to war, he is faced with the reality of coming home and it's almost as if he never went off to war in the first place. Upon return he was not celebrated as a hero and given comfortable accommodations, but slapped in the face with the struggles of the working middle class.

The focus of realism is on the true struggles of the average human, and often concentrates on the middle and lower class because they tend to face more hardships in life than the wealthy do, simply due to their socioeconomic class. Naturalism is similar to realism in that it is a form of realism focused on the natural aspects of the world. In naturalism, nature is one of, if not the only, force in our lives that determines our fate and it cannot be altered by human action. The context that these stories use both realism and naturalism in provides with explicit differentiation between the two topics. The main characters fight against nature in "To Build a Fire" evidently represents the side of naturalism. Their overconfident and persistent battle against nature that ultimately ends in the inevitable death of the character shows the helplessness of man and the power of nature in this story.

In "The Return of a Private", Private Smith was optimistic that the war was as bad as it could get and coming home would only be the best yet to come. However, the author demonstrates the challenge of overcoming one's socioeconomic conditions with the shock of returning to the reality of personal economic crisis. The minimal effect that war had on Private Smith's life afterwards advocates for the honest representation of the brutalities of life used in realism. Realism mostly focuses on social movements, everyday life difficulties, and relativism. "The Return of a Private" clearly portrays realism in the author's focus of the endless struggles of the working class. Naturalism focuses more on the specific force of nature and the conflict it presents to man.

"To Build a Fire" is an excellent representation of naturalism as it illustrates man's powerlessness against nature and the brutality it can inflict on man. Both stories are a clear representation of their respective topics and help the reader to deeper distinguish the difference between them in the context of literature.