

Jack londons to build a fire

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The traveler is portrayed as a man who was not in the habit of deliberating upon the consequences of decisions or deeds even if they concerned what most would consider life-and-death situations. London describes the traveler as one who lacked imagination and thus the ability to think ahead. He was 'quick and alert' by London's description of him in the 'things of life' but not in its 'significances'. (London, 736) However, from his reactions to his worsening circumstances, it is evident that the traveler was a man of considerable physical strength, optimism, and self-confidence. The latter bordering on bravado as the story suggests. He opts to take the trail he did to check out possibilities of getting timber in the spring showing him to be ambitious and hardworking. Eventually, when he does lay himself down to freeze to death, the traveler has the strength of character to admit to himself his mistakes as also to rise above his panic and terror to ensure that he met death decently.

Analyzing the conflicts in the plot, a beginning could be made with the character of the traveler himself. He was brave and determined as well as fool-hardy and careless. He was persevering, hardworking and ambitious yet his attitude towards his animal was one bordering on hate and cruelty. Thus there is a conflict of positive traits of character with negative ones.

The larger conflicts present in the plot relate to the idea of respecting the power of the universe and the possibility of its creator. Thus authority in the form of the advice of the old-timer and the might of nature at its harshest and cruelest were challenged by the traveler as he set out for fulfilling his ambitions for a bigger share of timber. Had he succeeded his would have been a success story in the face of adversity. That he failed makes this a lesson for those who believe they can take chances with their souls and

lives.

The setting of the whole episode underlines London's objective of highlighting the power of the universe over mortal man. Thus the traveler is alone except for an unfriendly dog on a trail covered with a week's snow in the absolute worst of Alaskan winters.

The symbolism of the traveler's good luck and expectations rising as the day progresses and waning as the afternoon gives way to evening is not lost on the reader. The traveler fades out with the day and the dog deserts him as the night comes on. Here again, is a demonstration of nature's might over mortal man.