

"To Build a Fire" Jack London (p. 603)

Answer the following questions using specific examples from the text. Include page numbers with your answers.

The Narrator/ The Environment

1. How would you describe the man in London's story?
2. How experienced is the man? Is he a novice? Prepared? Provide evidence from the text and include a page number.
3. What does the man seem to think of his own abilities?
4. How does the man behave in relation to his environment? Give specific examples from the text with a page number.

Setting- Re-read the opening paragraph.

5. Make a list of adjectives from the opening paragraph.
6. How would you describe the setting in this opening paragraph? (Look back at the adjectives you listed.)
7. What is the mood of this opening paragraph? How do you know? Explain.
8. What is the author's purpose for creating the mood you described in item 7?
9. What is the man's reaction to the landscape?

The Narrator

10. What point-of-view the narrator is adopting in this story—first or third person? How do you know?
11. Identify passages in the story where the narrator either has knowledge unknown to the characters themselves or where the narrator provides his own commentary. Provide specific examples from the text and include page numbers.
12. How would you describe the tone of the narrator? Explain your answer with evidence from the text.
13. Does the narration foreshadow subsequent events? How? Cite specific examples.
14. How does the narrator feel about the character(s) at this point in the story? How do you know?

Knowledge vs. Instinct

15. Explain the differences between knowledge and instinct.
16. First compare the main character to the Sulphur Creek old-timer who gave advice. What are some key differences in their attitudes towards nature and their knowledge of nature?

Next, compare the man and the dog:

17. How is the relationship between the man and the dog discussed at first? Provide specific examples from the text.
18. What did the dog instinctively understand that the man did not?
19. How does the man and dog's relationship symbolize the man's relationship to his environment?

The Ending

20. What does the man's failure to "build a fire" symbolize? Explain your answer.
21. Does the man have either knowledge or instinct? Explain with examples from the text. Include page numbers.
22. Did the man finally gain knowledge at the end of the story? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.
23. What is the significance of the dog's final movement towards civilization at the end of the story? What does this suggest about the dog's relationship to nature? Is instinct driving this movement?