
Symbolism in To Build a Fire by Jack London

Jack London's "To Build A Fire" explores the stubbornness of man. And the risk men take to achieve something even if it is not in their reach. The setting takes place in the woods during Yukon winter which is one hundred and thirteen degrees below freezing point. Now throughout this story winter or nature symbolizes dominance you can't change the outcome of nature. The man, dog, and nature are all important symbols throughout this story as they show a characteristic of human life.

First of all a very important symbol is the "Yukon Trail" when the man takes off from the right direction. That's a symbol of risk see before the man left off the right direction of the trail he was on the correct path with his boys or in another term his companions. The main trail symbolizes safety and security and the departure from his comrades symbolizes the danger that he is to face ahead throughout the story. The relationship of man and nature are very important as you read through this story see a trail helps man survive nature and survive the wilderness. As well as the expectations a person needs to survive the wilderness. "The trouble with him was that he was without imagination he was quick and alert in the things of life but only in the things and not the significance." Jack London shows no sympathy for the man he seemed to make the character arrogant and very disrespectful to the environment of the elders all of the good attributes were given to the dog. To me it seems Jack London likes the dog more than man.

Another important symbol is the old man the old timer at Sulphur creek he is used repeatedly as a symbol throughout the story. The old man gave the man advice stating that "No man should be out here if temperatures are below zero especially alone by yourself." The old timer bridges the gaps between human and nature. Because he has a very healthy perspective on how nature can be a threat if not being cautious. The dog also sees the view of the natural world and the dog seems to know that the man cannot rely on his resources for survival. "And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger." The old timer or old man had been very serious in laying down the law stating that no man must travel alone in Klondike after fifty below. See its more of intellect vs instinct because the old timer is trying to convey to the man that he has no chance of with standing that Yukon weather. But with the man it is instinct why because he knows of the harsh wind but he chooses to still go instead for the search. But the mans fellow traveller the dog has a very natural instinct the man dies because of his miscalculation's of his trip and underestimates the power of nature. Every problem the man encountered he realized that the old timer was correct moments before his death the man admits to the old timer. "You were right, old hoss you were right." The man mumbled to the old timer of Sulphur creek. See I believe that it was luck that the man met the old timer from Sulphur creek because the old man speaks of taking someone with the man so the man is not alone in the wilderness. Also if you notice the old timer talks about keeping your feet dry and then he states this about the cold "There must be no failure when it is seventy five below zero a man must not fail in his attempt to build a fire that is if his feet are wet the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy five below." So throughout this story all the old timer was doing was trying to help guide the man but negligence by the man led to his downfall that is why to me it is human vs nature.

Third and important symbol is the fire it shows the difference between life and death. The title of

the story keys in the important role of fire within the story the goal of the man is to build a fire and he fails later on in the story. The Building of fire symbolize life in the story but it shows life through human knowledge skill and also technology and failure by the man to build the fire is showing the failure of things expressed by man and by the brutal cold of nature.

eduzaurus.com