

QUICK CARD: “TO BUILD A FIRE”



<i>Reference</i>	<p>“To Build a Fire.” Jack London. (1902) ISBN-13: 978-1453607947</p>
<i>Plot</i>	<p>Ignoring the advice of the old man of Sulphur Creek, the man travels alone with his dog in dangerously cold temperatures to meet the rest of his group. Along the way he breaks through the ice and gets his feet wet. He tries to build a fire to ward off frostbite, but he does so under a tree and snow melts and drops down, quenching the flames. His hands then become too numb to build a second fire. In desperation he tries to kill his dog in order to use its insides for warmth, but sensing the man’s fear the dog does not respond to his commands. Panicking, the man runs wildly through the snow until he finally collapses and slowly gives in to the warmth of death. The dog runs away to find a new fire-provider.</p>
<i>Setting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yukon Territory • A cold and gray day without sun. • 70 degrees below zero, or 107 degrees of frost. Pretty cold.
<i>Characters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The man- not a native of the area. The author does not give him a name, implying the universality of “the man’s” condition. It also gives an impersonal nature to his character. • The dog- natively bred to the area. Looks to the man for fire and food and leaves him when he cannot provide it. • The old man of Sulphur Creek- native to the area, he has warned the man against traveling in such cold conditions.
<i>Conflict</i>	<p>Man vs. Nature: The man vs. the harsh conditions of the natural world.</p>
<i>Theme</i>	<p>The impersonal and unfeeling nature of the world. The worthlessness of man’s reason/ higher faculties in the face of a harsh world. Man’s frailty and limitations.</p>
<i>Literary Devices</i>	<p>Foreshadowing Understatement Naturalism/ Realism: a philosophy/ worldview stating that all things have natural causes. The supernatural is denied power.</p>