To Build A Fire Essay, Research Paper

Affects of a naturalistic world

?To Build a Fire?

Everyone at some point in time, tries to accomplish feats that are almost near impossible. Warnings from others, more experienced with some of life’s pitfalls, go unheeded to those subject to grandiosity. London?s ?To Build a Fire? illustrates that man is insignificant in the face of nature, and that if man sets himself up against nature he will ultimately be defeated. London?s ?To Build a Fire? is a story of a man whose life comes to an end when he ventures into the Yukon trail with only a dog for his companion. Ignoring the warnings of the day along with the warnings of the old timer, the man proceeds on the journey of making camp by six o?clock. It is the setting of the story that reveals how week man is against nature. The man?s pride as well as his attitude toward nature will be affected and influenced eventually by forces of nature.

As the reader is first introduced to the man, he has the attitude that he knows everything he needs to know about nature and how to survive the weather. ?The tremendous cold and the absence of the sun had no effect on the man?(910). ?He was alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not the significance?(910). These two quotes suggest that the man was aware of the day but due to his ignorance he did not realize the mistake of making that journey. The man’s ego makes him take the journey alone without notice of external things of nature that would influence him later.

The affects of naturalism are exhibited when he stops for lunch and forgets to start a fire as soon as he sits down. This is the first sign that the cold is beginning to affect him. Instead of being cautious or frightened, the narrator explains that, ?He chuckled at his foolishness?(913). At this point he still does not realize the significance of being properly prepared both physically and mentally. However the surrounding setting is starting to influence his reaction to how cold it really is. He starts realizing that his hands were going numb, and that he felt a stinging sensation when his feet made contact with the ground. This influence is not strong enough to make the man change his attitude that he is stronger than nature.

The man?s ignorance leads to his fall in the next part of the story when he lights the fire and becomes overconfident in himself. This becomes obvious to the reader when the man thought to himself, ?here he was; he had a accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself?(915). This new found confidence is soon extinguished when the fire goes out. ?It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake?(916). At this point it is very clear that nature is getting the best of him. The reader is told that, ?The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death?(916). ?If he only had a trail mate he would have been in no danger now?(916). After realizing the danger of his surroundings his thought process changed drastically, and no he was not influencing nature but was influenced by nature itself.

From the evidence of what the man sees as a mild day, he jumps to the conclusion that the day won?t bring any harm to him. He believes that he is significant in this huge world, but in reality he finds out that he was like a grain of sand along the beaches of the West Coast. No matter how hard he tried, nature always had the upper hand. The story shows that is one thing to know about the power of natural world, but another to understand the significance of its power. It exemplifies that no one man can overcome the overwhelming power of nature and shows that their will always be conflicts of man vs. nature and ignorance vs. intelligence.

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