

Significance of the Dog in To Build a Fire

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Significance of the Dog in To Build a Fire

With regard to Jack London's, "To Build a Fire", I will attempt to analyze the significance of the dog, however in doing so I will need to discuss not only the dog, but the man and nature as well, because they all impact one another with equal significance. It is my opinion that throughout most of the story the dog is to represent a living creatures innate instincts (although I was lead to question this at the end), the man represents desire and sheer will (although he also shows many signs of repressed instinct), and nature represents the force which triggers instinctual behavior (perhaps

a temporary barrier if obeyed, or potentially a life [ending blow](#) if disrespected).

At the beginning of the story the man takes a moment to reflect upon the many miles of vast bleak desolation that he had traveled, not to consider his insignificance in the world, nor to contemplate his luck in overcoming the terrain, but to merely look back at his conquest. He made himself aware of the tremendous cold as he spat in the air, "before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled". By performing this action he realized that it must be much colder than fifty below likewise he was aware of the possible dangers involved when one travels in this type of cold, however he had a goal in mind and these [warnings](#) of nature went unanswered.

The dog, "a big native husky, the proper wolf-dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf", was hindered by the severe cold. Even though it was naturally equipped to survive the intolerab...

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...or the powerful, but realizing that they are

a means to an end. In other words if they don't step out of line and do what is required of them, they will be afforded food and shelter, however if they do step out of line they will be struck down for their disobedience.

Perhaps London's' view of the dog represented his hopes for the Socialist Party, just as in the end of the story, when the man died (powerful corporations), the dog lived to see another day (the working class), and in

this scenario nature would stand for justice (or perhaps God), allowing the meek to inherit the earth. As I said I can't be certain what the true significance of the dog would be, but after taking a great deal of time to consider the meaning of the story I appreciate it a great deal more, and I am intrigued to learn more about Mr. London.

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