**To Build a Fire Notes**

**Jack London**

* Born John Griffith Chaney in San Francisco
* January 12, 1876 – November 22, 1916
* American novelist, journalist, and social activist
* One of the first fiction writers to obtain celebrity (worldwide) and a large fortune from his writing.
* He was part of a radical literary group called the crowd in San Francisco, and advocated for unionization, socialism and the rights of workers.
* His parents were Flora Wellman and probably William Chaney. Flora was living with Chaney at the time of conception. They were probably married, but we don’t know for sure due to loss of records in 1906 because of an earthquake.
* Flora accused Chaney of demanding she get an abortion and then tried to kill herself.
* Jack was partially raised as a baby by Virginia Prentiss, a former slave, but eventually went back into his mother’s custody in late 1876 when she married John London.
* He worked a lot when he was younger.
* 1897 – He was 21 at University of California Berkeley. He wrote to William Chaney in Chicago. William denied being Jack’s father, saying that his mother slept around and that William was impotent.
* Jack was sad about this and dropped out of school and went to the Klondike during the early gold rush.
* The gold rush was rather detrimental to his health, and he got scurvy.
* His story “To Build a Fire”, which was his most famous, was based on experiences he had in Dawson.
* He saw writing as a business and a ticket out of poverty.
* 1900 – He made $2000, which amounts to $71k today.
* 1900 – He married Bessie Maddern, out of friendship as they did not love each other.
* They had two daughters, Joan (1901) and Beck (1902).
* 1903 – Their relationship grew strained and they began to break up.
* Later he served as a war correspondent in the Russo-Japan War.
* 1905 – He got married to Charmain Kittredge. She was his perfect match. They did not have children.
* He died in 1916. At the time of his death he was suffering from dysentery, alcoholism, and uremia (a manifestation of kidney failure). He was in extreme pain and took morphine for it.

**Types of Conflict**

1. **Person vs. Person -** In this type of conflict, one person is pitted against another. It is classic and quite common. One person is struggling for victory over another.
2. **Person vs. Self -** In this type, a character finds themselves battling between two competing desires or selves. Often this is one good and one evil.
3. **Person vs. Fate/God -** This type of conflict occurs when a character is trapped by an inevitable destiny; freedom and free will often seem impossible in these stories. This trope is common in Greek mythology. What can humans do in the face of gods and fate?
4. **Person vs. Nature -** In this kind, humankind comes up against nature, battling for survival against its inexorable and apathetic force. The hero may be forced to confront nature, or the protagonist may be seeking the conflict, trying to exert dominance over nature.
5. **Person vs. Society -** This is where the dystopian genre comes in. The person against society conflict follows the storyline of an individual or a group fighting, sometimes successfully and sometimes not-so-successfully, against injustices within their society.
6. **Person vs. The Unknown/Extraterrestrial -** This is a common thread in science fiction and supernatural horror movies and books. In this type of conflict, the protagonist battles against an entity that isn’t entirely known or comprehensible, whether it’s extraterrestrial or metaphysical.
7. **Person vs. Technology/Machinery -** The popularity of this genre has risen steadily over the last hundred years, and in the face of increasing mechanization and improving artificial intelligence, it’s not hard to see why. This type of conflict focuses on a person or group of people fighting to overcome unemotional and unsympathetic machinery that believes it no longer requires humanity.