**A. The Man**

1. How would you characterize London’s protagonist, “the man”? What do you know about him?
2. Compare the man and the dog. How do they differ?
3. The man knows how to build a fire. What does this tell us about him?
4. The narrator says: “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 in the significances.” What does this mean? Is it inevitably a problem?
5. What is the significance of the fact that the man is not named?

**B. The Man’s Surroundings**

1. Characterize the man’s surroundings. Where is the story set? What is the scenery like?
2. Consider the images London uses to set the scene—for example, “the spittle crackled . . . in the air” or the “muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the [tobacco] juice” or “the cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on the unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow.” What kind of moods and feelings do these images create?
3. What attitude toward nature does the man display? Compare the man’s attitude in the first few pages of the story to his final moments.
4. What attitude toward nature do you, as reader, experience while reading this story?

**C. The Man’s Motives and Purposes**

1. Use evidence from the text to determine what motivates the man to act as he does. What drives him? Why is he out on such a cold day?
2. How do you explain the man’s seeming indifference to the cold?
3. Trace the man’s changing attitude toward the old-timer from Sulphur Creek. Why does he resist the old man’s advice? Why does he acknowledge, as he lies dying, that the old man was right?
4. Given the opportunity to make this journey again, under similar circumstances, do you think he would take it? Or do you think he learned something of significance from this experience that would alter his behavior or attitudes in the future?
5. What do *you* learn from his experience?

**D. Assessing the Man**

1. What do you think of the man? Do you regard him as an admirable hero—independent, resourceful, rugged, and resilient? Or a reckless fool—proud, overconfident, unimaginative, and blind? As something in between? In some other way? Explain, using specific examples and evidence from the text.
2. Had he successfully made it back to camp, would your judgment of him differ?
3. What do you think of the man’s purposes? Are they less worthy than those of other adventurers? Why, or why not?
4. What do you think London thinks of his own protagonist?

A. Might the unforgiving, frigid environment that London depicts—an environment that seems altogether to resist human intentions—provide a clue?

B. Might London’s own stylistic devices—for example, his numerous repetitions of words like “cold,” “know,” “fire,” and so forth—provide a clue?

1. Is the man (or a failing of his character) responsible for what happens to him? Or is he just an unlucky victim of an accident (“It happened”)?