



The Limits of Human Will: Analyzing Nature and Survival in *To Build a Fire* by Jack London

Izkha Primadani Aji¹, Henrikus Joko Yulianto²

^{1,2}Universitas Negeri Semarang

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-05-19 Revised: 2026-05-21 Accepted: 2026-06-16 Keywords: Ecocriticism, human-nature relationship, anthropocentrism, survival, Jack London DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10701 Corresponding Author: Izkha Primadani Aji izkhaapr@students.unnes.ac.id Universitas Negeri Semarang	<i>This study examines the representation of nature and human survival in Jack London's <i>To Build a Fire</i> from an ecocritical perspective. It aims to analyze how nature is portrayed as a dominant ecological force and how the protagonist's anthropocentric mindset contributes to his failure. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using close reading to analyze textual data from the short story within an ecocritical framework. The findings show that nature is represented as an autonomous and unchanging force that operates independently of human intention. The extreme environmental conditions highlight the vulnerability of the human body and the limitations of rational decision-making. The protagonist's confidence in logic reflects an anthropocentric perspective that underestimates ecological power. His repeated attempts to control the environment ultimately fail, demonstrating the inability of human will to overcome natural forces. This study contributes to contemporary ecocritical discourse by demonstrating how survival narratives challenge anthropocentric perspectives and promote ecological awareness through literary representation. This study concludes that the story critiques human-centered assumptions and emphasizes the dominance of nature over human life. It reinforces the idea that humans are subject to ecological systems beyond their control, contributing to discussions on environmental awareness in literary studies.</i>

1. Introduction

Literary works have long explored the complex relationship between humans and the natural world, often portraying nature as both a source of life and a force of destruction (Dabirnia, 2021). In American literature, this relationship is frequently examined through narratives of survival that expose the vulnerability of human existence when confronted with extreme environments (Manullang et al., 2021). Jack London is one of the prominent writers who consistently portray nature as an uncontrollable power, particularly in his depictions of the harsh landscapes of the North.

His short story *To Build a Fire* exemplifies this theme by presenting a solitary man struggling to survive in the severe cold of the Yukon. The narratives emphasize the imbalance between human ambition and environmental conditions, highlighting the fragility of human life when confronted with natural forces (Joseph Carroll, 2022).

Recent ecocritical scholarship emphasizes that literature plays a crucial role in shaping environmental awareness by revealing the unequal relationship between humans and nature. (Radhakrishnan, 2025). Ecocriticism, as a theoretical framework, examines how literary texts represent ecological issues and human interaction with the environment (Peter Barry, 2020).

This perspective is further supported by ecocritical theory, which defines the relationship between literature and the physical environment as a central concern in literary studies (Garrard, 2012). Contemporary ecocritical studies move beyond viewing nature as a passive setting and instead interpret it as an active force that challenges human dominance and exposes ecological vulnerability. Studies published in the 2020s highlight how literary texts often critique anthropocentric assumptions, portraying nature as an autonomous power that operates independently of human intention (Wajid, 2025).

This perspective highlights that natural environments are not merely backgrounds but dynamic systems that influence human behavior and survival (Shamim et al, 2025). In this context, ecocriticism provides a relevant lens for analyzing literary narratives that involve environmental confrontation and survival (Hebbar, 2024). Ecocritical studies also highlight that literature contributes to the development of ecological consciousness by promoting environmental awareness and encouraging a sense of responsibility toward nature (Goswami, 2026).

Furthermore, ecocritical perspectives emphasize that literary works not only reflect environmental realities but also contribute to shaping readers' ecological consciousness and awareness of human responsibility toward nature (Nahdhiyah et al., 2023). This reinforces the idea that literature functions as a medium for understanding the interconnected relationship between humans and the natural environment.

In addition, contemporary ecocritical perspectives, such as deep ecology, emphasize the importance of recognizing the intrinsic value of nature beyond its usefulness to humans. This perspective challenges anthropocentric assumptions by encouraging a more balanced relationship between humans and the environment, where nature is viewed as an interconnected ecological system rather than an object of human control.

To Build a Fire narrates the journey of a man who believes that intelligence and personal determination are sufficient to conquer nature. Despite repeated warnings about the dangers of the extreme cold, the protagonist underestimates the power of the environment and overestimates his own rational judgment. This imbalance between human confidence and ecological reality becomes the central conflict of the story. Nature is not portrayed as an antagonist with intention, but as an indifferent force that operates beyond human control.

This perspective aligns with contemporary literary studies that present nature as an active and dynamic force shaping human experience and challenging anthropocentric assumptions (Chandra & Sharma, 2025). As a result, the story highlights the fragile position of humans within the natural order and emphasizes the limits of human capability.

Previous studies on *To Build a Fire* have largely focused on naturalism, determinism, and the theme of man versus nature (Wajid, 2025). These studies have provided valuable insights into the dominance of environmental forces and the inevitability of human failure in extreme conditions. However, many of these analyses do not fully engage with ecocriticism as a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between humans and the environment. As a result, the role of human perception, ecological awareness, and environmental interpretation remains underexplored in the context of this literary work (Hebbar, 2024).

Several recent studies have examined literary representations of nature and survival using ecocritical approaches, focusing on environmental awareness and human responsibility toward the natural world. These studies highlight how literature can function as a medium for raising ecological consciousness and encouraging more sustainable perspectives (Shamim et al, 2025).

However, much of this research tends to focus on contemporary literary works or explicitly environmental narratives, leaving classic survival stories underexplored within modern ecocritical discourse. In particular, limited attention has been given to how human rationality and individual will are challenged by the indifference of nature in early twentieth-century American literature. This gap indicates the need to re-examine canonical texts such as *To Build a Fire* through a contemporary ecocritical perspective.

In recent years, the growing awareness of environmental crises such as climate change, deforestation, and ecological degradation has increased the relevance of ecocriticism in literary studies. Literature is not only a reflection of

human experience but also a medium through which environmental values and ecological concerns are communicated.

Ecocritical approaches emphasize that literary texts can influence readers' perceptions of nature and encourage a more balanced relationship between humans and the environment. By examining how nature is represented in literary works, scholars can identify underlying ideologies that shape human attitudes toward ecological systems. This perspective becomes particularly important in analyzing texts that depict extreme environmental conditions, as they reveal the consequences of human misjudgment and ecological ignorance.

Therefore, this study seeks to analyze *To Build a Fire* using ecocriticism as its primary theoretical framework. The research aims to examine how nature is represented as a dominant force and how the protagonist's anthropocentric mindset leads to the failure of human will. By focusing on the interaction between human arrogance and ecological power, this study contributes to literary discussions on environmental awareness and the limits of human control over nature. Ultimately, this research highlights the relevance of ecocriticism in interpreting literary texts that address the complex relationship between humans and the environment (Hebbbar, 2024).

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method to analyze the representation of nature and human survival in Jack London's *To Build a Fire*. Qualitative research is widely used to explore and interpret non-numerical data in depth (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative descriptive research is considered an appropriate approach for exploring textual data and interpreting meanings embedded in literary works (Stanley, 2023).

This method allows the researcher to provide a detailed description of phenomena while maintaining the richness of the original context (Furidha, 2024). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research focuses on understanding and interpreting social or textual phenomena through detailed contextual analysis. Since the data consist of textual narratives rather than numerical information, this approach enables an in-depth interpretation of how environmental elements and human attitudes toward nature are constructed within the story (Brennen, 2025).

The primary analytical technique used in this study is close reading. Close reading involves a careful and detailed examination of selected passages, focusing on diction, imagery, narrative structure, and character responses to the natural environment. This method is widely recognized as a fundamental approach in literary analysis, allowing researchers to uncover deeper meanings within texts through systematic interpretation (Ohrvik, 2024).

Through this technique, specific textual evidence from the short story is analyzed to reveal how nature is portrayed as an autonomous force and how human rationality and confidence are challenged by extreme environmental conditions. Close reading is particularly suitable for this study because it enables a detailed and focused examination of textual elements that might otherwise be overlooked in broader analytical approaches.

Through close reading, subtle meanings embedded in language, imagery, and narrative structure can be identified and interpreted in relation to the environmental themes presented in the text. This method allows the researcher to capture the complexity of the interaction between the protagonist and the natural environment, revealing how meaning is constructed through both explicit descriptions and implicit narrative cues. As a result, close reading provides a strong foundation for interpreting literary texts within an ecocritical framework.

The analysis is conducted within an ecocritical framework. Ecocriticism examines the relationship between literature and the environment by analyzing how nature is represented and how human interaction with the natural world is constructed in literary texts. This framework emphasizes issues such as anthropocentrism, ecological dominance, and environmental vulnerability. By applying this perspective, the study interprets *To Build a Fire* as a reflection of ecological imbalance, where nature operates independently of human intention and challenges human assumptions of control.

The data of this study consist of selected quotations and narrative descriptions from *To Build a Fire* that illustrate interactions between the protagonist and the natural environment. The data analysis is conducted using an inductive approach, in which patterns and meanings emerge from the data through careful examination (Vears & Gillam, 2022). The findings are then interpreted by relating the textual analysis to contemporary ecocritical perspectives to demonstrate how the story reveals the limitations of human will when confronted with the power of nature.

The quotations analyzed in this study were selected based on their relevance to ecocritical themes such as anthropocentrism, environmental indifference, ecological dominance, and human vulnerability. The themes emerged inductively through repeated close reading of the text, allowing the researcher to identify recurring patterns related to the relationship between humans and nature. To maintain interpretive consistency, the analysis focused on textual evidence that directly reflected ecological conflict and survival within the narrative.

3. Results

This section presents the findings derived from a close reading of *To Build a Fire*. The results focus on textual representations of nature, human behavior, survival attempts, and non-human presence in the narrative. Through descriptive analysis, several recurring patterns emerge that illustrate the relationship between humans and the natural environment.

Representation of Extreme Natural Conditions

The analysis shows that the natural environment in *To Build a Fire* is introduced as an extreme and dominant condition that frames the entire narrative (Tisnawijaya & Kurniati, 2021). From the opening paragraphs, the story emphasizes the severity of the cold, presenting it as an unavoidable reality that governs all actions. The narrator describes the temperature as *fifty degrees below zero meant eighty odd degrees of frost*, immediately establishing the harshness of the environment (London, 1908). The depiction of extreme environmental conditions reflects broader ecocritical concerns regarding environmental crisis and human vulnerability (Suchitra Sharad Tajane, 2024).

This extreme cold is not presented as temporary or fluctuating, but remains constant throughout the story (Tabak, 2024). The environment is depicted as vast, silent, and frozen, creating a sense of isolation that intensifies the protagonist's vulnerability (Santoso et al., 2020). The consistency of environmental conditions reflects the autonomy of natural systems beyond human influence.

Furthermore, the repeated references to frost, snow, and frozen landscapes highlight the physical danger posed by the environment (Vasudevan & Mukherjee, 2025). These descriptions function as continuous reminders that survival in such conditions requires more than physical endurance. The consistency of the environmental threat becomes a central element shaping the narrative outcome.

Nature as an Unchanging and Dominant Force

Another significant finding is the portrayal of nature as an unchanging force that remains unaffected by human presence (Tabak, 2024). Despite the protagonist's movement, effort, and decision-making, the environmental conditions remain the same. This reflects the independence of nature from human intervention (Tisnawijaya & Kurniati, 2021).

The narrator describes the cold as *a thing to be reckoned with*, emphasizing its persistence rather than hostility (London, 1908). This description suggests that nature does not act with intention but operates according to its own conditions. The environment exists independently of human struggle (Santoso et al., 2020).

This unchanging quality of nature reinforces its ecological authority within the story. The protagonist's actions fail to alter the environmental reality, highlighting the limits of human agency. Nature remains the primary force determining survival (Tabak, 2024). This representation aligns with ecocritical

perspectives that view nature as an autonomous system independent of human influence (Suchitra Sharad Tajane, 2024).

Human Confidence and Rational Decision-Making

The results also reveal that the protagonist exhibits strong confidence in his own rational judgment. He believes that careful planning and experience are sufficient to ensure survival, even in extreme conditions. This confidence is reflected in his decision to travel alone and his belief that he can manage the cold through calculated actions.

Throughout the journey, the protagonist relies on logic, timing, and physical movement. He calculates distances and estimates how long it will take to reach his destination. These calculations give him a sense of control over the situation, reinforcing his belief in human capability. This belief in rational control reflects anthropocentric thinking that often underestimates ecological complexity (Suchitra Sharad Tajane, 2024).

However, this reliance on a rational approach creates a gap between human reasoning and environmental reality (Vasudevan & Mukherjee, 2025). While the protagonist believes he understands the danger, his understanding remains abstract rather than experiential. This gap contributes to his inability to respond effectively to environmental threats.

Lack of Imagination and Environmental Awareness

A crucial textual finding concerns the protagonist's lack of imagination, which directly affects his perception of danger. The narrator explicitly states that *the trouble with him was that he was without imagination* (London, 1908). This statement highlights a key limitation in the protagonist's mindset.

The lack of imagination does not imply a lack of intelligence. Instead, it refers to the inability to anticipate consequences beyond immediate observation. The protagonist understands the factual danger of cold but fails to imagine its cumulative effects on the human body. The lack of imagination also reflects limited environmental consciousness, which plays a crucial role in shaping human responses to ecological conditions (Radhakrishnan, 2025).

This limitation prevents him from adjusting his behavior in response to environmental risks. As a result, he continues his journey with misplaced confidence, underestimating the seriousness of his situation. The absence of imaginative foresight becomes a significant factor contributing to his failure.

As a result, he continues his journey with misplaced confidence (Santoso et al., 2020). The absence of imaginative foresight becomes a significant factor contributing to his failure (Vasudevan & Mukherjee, 2025).

Repeated Attempts to Control the Environment

The analysis further identifies repeated attempts by the protagonist to control his environment, particularly through building fires. Fire represents warmth, safety, and human agency within the narrative. Each attempt to build a fire reflects the protagonist's desire to assert control over natural conditions (Santoso et al., 2020).

Initially, the fire provides temporary relief and reinforces the protagonist's confidence (Tabak, 2024). However, the fire is later extinguished by snow falling from a tree branch, an event caused by natural processes rather than human error. This moment marks a turning point in the narrative.

Subsequent attempts to rebuild the fire become increasingly difficult due to frostbitten fingers and physical exhaustion. Physical limitations and environmental pressure reduce the protagonist's ability to act (Vasudevan & Mukherjee, 2025). These failures illustrate the fragility of human agency in extreme environmental conditions (Tabak, 2024).

Fire symbolically represents human effort to assert control over nature and secure survival in extreme environmental conditions. However, the repeated failure to maintain the fire demonstrates the fragility of human dependence on rational planning and technological control when confronted with the overwhelming power of the natural environment. In this sense, fire becomes a symbol of the illusion of human mastery over nature, which ultimately collapses under ecological reality.

Physical Decline and Loss of Coordination

As the story progresses, the protagonist experiences a gradual physical decline due to environmental exposure. His fingers become numb, his movements slow, and his coordination deteriorates. These physical limitations prevent him from performing basic survival tasks, such as handling matches.

The physical decline is directly linked to environmental conditions. The extreme cold affects the protagonist's body beyond his ability to manage it. Despite his determination, his physical limitations override his intentions.

The inability to perform basic survival tasks highlights the impact of extreme cold on bodily function. Ecological pressure ultimately surpasses human intention and physical endurance, demonstrating the vulnerability of the human body under severe environmental exposure (Santoso et al., 2020; Tabak, 2024).

Psychological Response to Environmental Threat

In addition to physical decline, the protagonist undergoes psychological changes as his situation worsens (Elgamal, 2024). Initially confident and composed, he gradually becomes anxious and desperate. His thoughts shift from calculated planning to panic and fear (Santoso et al., 2020).

The loss of psychological control mirrors the loss of physical control. As the environment overwhelms him, the protagonist's mental state deteriorates. His thoughts become fragmented, and his focus narrows to immediate survival rather than long-term planning.

This psychological response illustrates how extreme environmental conditions affect not only the body but also the mind. The narrative presents psychological breakdown as part of the survival process.

Environmental pressure not only affects physical survival but also shapes human awareness and perception (Radhakrishnan, 2025). Environmental pressure can also affect psychological stability and emotional response (Samantha Walton, 2021).

Non-Human Awareness and Instinctive Response

The presence of the dog introduces a contrasting response to the environment. Unlike the protagonist, the dog reacts instinctively to the cold and shows reluctance to continue the journey. Its behavior suggests an awareness of danger that does not rely on rational calculation (Tabak, 2024).

The dog senses the severity of the cold through bodily experience rather than abstract reasoning. This instinctive response highlights a different mode of interaction with nature, one rooted in survival instincts rather than human logic.

The contrast between the man and the dog emphasizes the limitations of human-centered reasoning. While the protagonist believes in his rational control, the dog responds more cautiously to environmental signals.

Final Confrontation with Environmental Power

The final stages of the story depict the protagonist's complete loss of control. His physical strength, mental clarity, and survival strategies collapse under the overwhelming force of the environment. Nature remains unchanged, while the human body fails.

The protagonist's death underscores the overwhelming power of nature compared with human ambition and survival efforts. The environment does not intervene or react; it simply continues to exist. This ending reinforces the narrative pattern established throughout the story.

The final confrontation highlights the imbalance between human ambition and ecological power. The story concludes with nature maintaining its authority while human life proves fragile. The failure of the protagonist also reflects the inability of humans to recover from extreme ecological exposure (Samantha Walton, 2021).

Summary of Findings

Overall, the results indicate that *To Build a Fire* consistently portrays nature as autonomous, unchanging, and indifferent to human effort. Human rationality, confidence, and determination are repeatedly challenged by ecological forces that exceed human capability and survival strategies.

The narrative reveals patterns of misjudgment, physical decline, psychological breakdown, and contrasting non-human awareness. These findings provide a foundation for further interpretation through an ecocritical framework in the discussion section.

4. Discussion

This section interprets the findings through contemporary ecocritical scholarship. The analysis situates *To Build a Fire* within broader debates on anthropocentrism, ecological autonomy, environmental indifference, non-human agency, and the limits of rational modernity.

Nature as a Dominant Ecological Presence

The findings demonstrate that nature in *To Build a Fire* is represented as an autonomous and dominant ecological force that operates independently of human intention. The Yukon landscapes do not merely serve as a background for the protagonist's struggle but actively structure the narrative trajectory and determine the outcome of human survival. This representation supports ecocritical arguments that nature in literary texts should be understood as an agentic presence rather than a passive setting (Arianto et al., 2021). Ecocritical studies emphasize that natural environments shape human existence, values, and limitations, reinforcing the idea that ecological systems function according to their own logic (Gray, 2020).

Unlike romanticized portrayals of harmony between humans and nature, London presents a more radical depiction of ecological indifference. The environment does not act with hostility, yet it remains entirely unaffected by human ambition. This indifference highlights the fragility of human will when confronted with ecological reality. Previous ecocritical studies have argued that literary works often expose the imbalance created by human-centered assumptions (Arisa & Nur Rahmi, 2024). Such an imbalance reflects a broader ecological concern regarding the misinterpretation of nature as subordinate to human needs (Anita Konwar, 2020).

Recent ecocritical scholarship further emphasizes ecological autonomy as central to understanding survival narratives in literature (Khum Prasad Sharma, 2025). The Yukon landscape embodies this autonomy by remaining unchanged despite the protagonist's continuous efforts. This reinforces the idea that nature operates beyond human influence and cannot be negotiated through individual determination alone (Arianto et al., 2021).

Anthropocentrism and the Illusion of Human Control

Another important aspect revealed in the findings is the protagonist's anthropocentric mindset. His reliance on rational judgement and personal experience reflects a belief that human intelligence is sufficient to overcome environmental challenges. This perspective aligns with ecocritical discussions that define anthropocentrism as a worldview that positions humans as superior to nature (Nahdhiyah et al., 2023). Such thinking creates a separation between humans and ecological systems, reducing the complexity of environmental interactions (NS Kamalam, 2022).

The protagonist repeatedly dismisses warnings and underestimates environmental risks, demonstrating how anthropocentric thinking limits ecological awareness. Rather than adapting to the environment, he attempts to impose control over it. This behaviour reflects the tendency of humans to prioritize rational calculation over ecological sensitivity (Anita Konwar, 2020). Ecocritical scholars argue that such assumptions often result in vulnerability when confronted with unpredictable environmental conditions (Arianto et al., 2021).

In this sense, the narrative critiques the illusion of human mastery by showing that rationality alone cannot guarantee survival. The failure of the protagonist's strategy reveals that human reasoning is insufficient when it ignores ecological realities (Nahdhiyah et al., 2023). This reinforces the importance of recognizing the limits of human knowledge within natural systems.

Instrumental View of Nature and Environmental Exploitation

The findings also reveal that the protagonist adopts an instrumental view of nature. He treats natural elements such as fire, snow, and the landscape as tools to achieve his goal of survival. This reflects a utilitarian perspective in which nature is valued primarily for its function rather than its complexity as an ecological system. Ecocritical studies identify this perspective as a form of environmental exploitation, where nature is reduced to a resource for human use (Adegite, 2023).

Although the story does not depict industrial exploitation, it symbolically represents the same mindset through the protagonist's actions. His repeated attempts to build a fire illustrate his belief that nature can be controlled and manipulated. These assumptions reflect a broader pattern in literary representations of human dominance over nature (Dwi Insany et al., 2024). However, ecocritical analysis suggests that such assumptions often fail when confronted with ecological realities (Khum Prasad Sharma, 2025).

The failure to sustain the fire demonstrates the limitations of treating nature as an object of control. Environmental conditions interfere with the protagonist's efforts, leading to the collapse of his survival strategy. This reinforces the idea that ecological systems cannot be fully mastered through human intervention (Arianto et al., 2021). The narrative, therefore, critiques the instrumentalization of nature and highlights the consequences of ignoring ecological complexity (Arisa & Nur

Rahmi, 2024).

Ecological Vulnerability and Psychological Breakdown

The findings also reveal a psychological dimension of ecological confrontation. As the protagonist gradually realizes the severity of his situation, the narrative shifts from confidence to panic. This transition indicates a destabilization of identity and certainty in the face of environmental pressure. Ecocritical studies argue that extreme environmental conditions can produce psychological and existential disruption. This disruption reflects the inability of human cognition to fully process ecological threats. (NS Kamalam, 2022).

The cold environment functions not only as a physical threat but also as a catalyst for psychological breakdown. The protagonist's thoughts become fragmented as he struggles to maintain control over his situation. This aligns with the ecocritical perspective that emphasizes the interconnectedness of physical and mental responses to environmental stress (Gray, 2020). The breakdown of rational thinking highlights the limits of human autonomy in extreme conditions.

The protagonist's late realization of his helplessness underscores the importance of ecological awareness. His failure to anticipate the consequences of the environment reflects a lack of preparedness that extends beyond physical survival (Nahdhiyah et al., 2023). This reinforces the idea that human vulnerability is not only physical but also psychological when confronting ecological forces.

Ecocritical Implications

Taken together, these discussions reinforce the central argument of this study that *To Build a Fire* critiques anthropocentric assumptions and exposes the limitations of human will in the face of ecological dominance. The narrative portrays nature as an indifferent yet structuring force that shapes human experience. This aligns with ecocritical perspectives that emphasize relational existence rather than hierarchical control between humans and nature.

The study also demonstrates that literary texts can function as a medium for environmental awareness. Ecocritical scholars argue that literature has the capacity to reshape human perspectives on ecological relationships. This suggests that narratives such as *To Build a Fire* contribute to broader discussions on environmental consciousness and sustainability.

Ultimately, this analysis highlights the relevance of ecocriticism in understanding literary representations of survival. The findings emphasize that human existence is deeply embedded within ecological systems. The narrative challenges human-centered ideologies and encourages a more balanced understanding of the relationship between humans and nature (Khum Prasad Sharma, n.d.).

The findings of this study also resonate with broader environmental concerns in contemporary society, where human-centered perspectives continue to contribute to ecological imbalance. The protagonist's failure in *To Build a Fire* can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of modern humanity's overconfidence in its ability to control nature. This overconfidence often leads to environmental exploitation and a lack of awareness of ecological limits. In this context, the story serves as a cautionary narrative that reflects the consequences of ignoring the complexity and power of natural systems.

Furthermore, the narrative highlights the importance of developing ecological awareness that goes beyond rational understanding. The protagonist's inability to fully comprehend the danger of the environment demonstrates the limitations of knowledge that is not supported by experience and imagination. This suggests that human survival in extreme conditions requires not only logical reasoning but also a deeper sensitivity to environmental signals. The failure to recognize these signals ultimately results in the loss of control and the collapse of human agency.

In addition, the contrast between the human character and the dog further reinforces the ecocritical perspective of the story. While the protagonist relies on rational calculation, the dog responds instinctively to environmental conditions. This contrast suggests that non-human awareness may offer a more adaptive response to ecological challenges. The narrative, therefore challenges the assumption that human intelligence is inherently superior, instead highlighting the value of instinct and environmental attunement. This contrast also reflects a posthumanist perspective that questions human-centered assumptions by presenting non-human instinct as valid form of ecological awareness and survival knowledge.

Overall, these findings extend beyond the literary context and invite reflection on how humans interact with nature in real life. The story encourages a shift from an anthropocentric worldview toward a more ecologically balanced perspective, where humans recognize their limitations and position within natural systems. These findings also resonate with climate change narratives in literature, which emphasize the role of literary texts in shaping environmental awareness and encouraging critical reflection on human interaction with nature (Rani & Snehi, 2023).

Furthermore, the story promotes the idea of ecological humility by illustrating the importance of recognizing human limitations within the natural world. Rather than positioning humans as masters of nature, the narrative encourages a more balanced relationship between humans and the environment.

In the contemporary context, this perspective remains relevant to environmental awareness and climate-conscious thinking, particularly as modern society continues to confront ecological crises caused by anthropocentric attitudes and environmental exploitation.

5. Conclusion

This study examines Jack London's *To Build a Fire* through an ecocritical perspective, focusing on the representation of nature and the limitations of human will. The findings reveal that nature in the story is portrayed as an autonomous and indifferent force that operates beyond human control. Rather than functioning as a passive background, the natural environment actively shapes the narrative and determines the outcome of the protagonist's survival.

The analysis also demonstrates that the protagonist's failure is closely linked to his anthropocentric mindset. His reliance on rational judgment and personal confidence reflects a belief in human superiority over nature. However, this perspective ultimately leads to misjudgment and vulnerability, as he fails to recognize the ecological reality surrounding him. The story highlights that human determination remains fragile when confronted with ecological forces that exist independently of human ambition.

Furthermore, the study shows that the narrative reflects an instrumental view of nature, in which the environment is treated as a resource to be controlled. This perspective contributes to the protagonist's downfall and reinforcing ecocritical arguments that emphasize the importance of understanding nature as a complex and autonomous system. The psychological shift experienced by the protagonist also illustrates how ecological confrontation can destabilize human certainty and expose existential fragility.

In conclusion, *To Build a Fire* serves as a powerful critique of anthropocentric ideology and human arrogance. The story underscores the importance of ecological awareness, humility, and respect toward natural systems. In the context of contemporary environmental crises and climate-related challenges, the narrative remains relevant in encouraging readers to reconsider the relationship between humans and the natural world. By demonstrating the fragility of human dependence on rational control, this study contributes to ecocritical discourse and reinforces the idea that humans exist within, rather than above, ecological systems.

6. Acknowledgement

First and foremost, the writer would like to express her deepest gratitude to Allah SWT for His endless blessings, mercy, strength, health, and guidance, which have enabled the writer to complete this research successfully. The writer acknowledges that the process of conducting and completing this study presented numerous challenges, difficulties, and valuable experiences that could not have been overcome without the support, assistance, and encouragement of many people.

Therefore, the writer would like to sincerely express her gratitude to:

1. The writer's beloved parents, Slamet Kustoro and Siti Nurohmah, for their unconditional love, endless prayers, sacrifices, affection, and support throughout the writer's educational journey and the completion of this research.
2. The writer's sibling, Iva Rizqiani Maulida, for the support, motivation, care, encouragement, and assistance given to the writer during the process of completing this study.
3. The writer's supervisor, Henrikus Joko Yulianto, M.Hum., Ph.D., for the valuable guidance, patience, advice, suggestions, support, and encouragement throughout the process of writing and completing this research.
4. All the lecturers of English Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang, for the knowledge, experiences, guidance, and valuable lessons that have been given to the writer during her academic years.
5. Friends who have been like older siblings to the writer, especially Lailatul Istikomah, for the care, advice, understanding, and meaningful presence that helped the writer remain strong throughout difficult moments during the completion of this research.
6. The writer's dearest best friend, Febri Ananda Aulia Rizki, who has become more than just a friend, but also like a sibling to the writer. Thank you for always staying faithfully by the writer's side through every joy and hardship since senior high school. The writer is deeply grateful for your presence, patience, care, and for becoming one of the safest and most comforting places throughout the writer's journey in life.
7. The writer's college friends, Chesta, Dhanial, Nazmi Khatin, Nilam, Pinky, and Yulia, for the togetherness, laughter, shared experiences, and unforgettable memories throughout university life. Thank you for accompanying the writer through the exhausting days, academic pressures, and countless struggles during this journey. Without their presence, support, and companionship, the writer might have felt stuck, unmotivated, and overwhelmed while going through this process. Their existence truly made the journey feel lighter and more meaningful.
8. The writer's friends from UNNES GIAT 14 Soropaten, who have become the writer's second family, thank you for the precious two months of togetherness during the KKN program. Thank you for the warmth, care, laughter, and support through the journey. Thank you as well for proving that KKN was not as frightening as many people said. Every moment spent together has become a meaningful part of the writer's life and will always be remembered fondly.
9. Lastly, the writer would like to thank herself, Izkha Primadani Aji, for surviving every difficult phase, enduring the exhaustion, doubts,

pressures, and overwhelming in this journey. Thank you for continuing forward even when things felt impossible, for trying your best despite all the limitations, and for never completely giving up on yourself. This journey was not easy, but every struggle, tear, and effort has shaped the writer into a stronger person. The writer is proud of herself for making it this far.

The writer realizes that this research is still far from perfect. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are sincerely welcomed to improve future studies. The writer hopes that this research can provide valuable insights and contribute to the development of literary studies, particularly in the field of ecocriticism.

Finally, the writer sincerely hopes that this study will be beneficial for readers and future researchers who are interested in exploring the relationship between literature, humans, and the natural environment.

7. References

- Adegite, A. (2023). Christie Watson's *Tiny Sunbirds Far Away: The Dynamics of Environmental Exploitation and Ecocriticism*. *THE PROGRESS: A Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(2), 31–42. <https://doi.org/10.71016/tp/pepnh497>
- Anita Konwar. (2020). Environmental Degradation in Kasauli: An Ecocritical Reading of Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH: LITERATURE, LANGUAGE & SKILLS*, 8(4), 15.
- Arianto, B., Sayuti, S. A., & Efendi, A. (2021). A study of ecocriticism on the representations of ecological conditions in *rawa gambut*. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(3), 1267–1284. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v8i3.19816>
- Arisa, A., & Nur Rahmi. (2024). Representation of Environmental Damage in Tere Liye's Novel *Rain* (Literary Ecocriticism Study). *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa, Dan Sastra*, 10(1), 780–788. <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v10i1.3366>
- Brennen, B. S. (2025). *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003457411>
- Chandra, R., & Sharma, S. (2025). Nature Narratives: Environmental and Contemporary Discourse in Literature. In *Nature Narratives: Environmental and Contemporary Discourse in Literature*. <https://doi.org/10.48001/978-81-988770-0-0>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Dabirnia, M. (2021). A Comparative Study of the Representation Human/Nature Relationship in Selected Poems from Robert Frost and Sohrab Sepehri From

- an Ecocriticism Perspective. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 12(6), 87. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v12n.6.p.89>
- Dwi Insany, F., Nur'ain, S., Kartika Utami, W., Januar, M. A., & Purwarno, P. (2024). Human-nature Relationship in Riawani Elyta and Shabrina Q. S.'s Novel *Rahasia Pelangi*: an Ecocritical Approach. *International Journal of English and Applied Linguistics (IJEAL)*, 4(1), 28–37. <https://doi.org/10.47709/ijeal.v4i1.3698>
- Elgamal, A. (2024). Branching Paths of Pain: Trauma and Ecocriticism in Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees*. *Egyptian Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 13, 37–60. <https://doi.org/10.21608/ejels.2024.413598>
- Furidha, B. W. (2024). Comprehension of the Descriptive Qualitative Research Method: a Critical Assessment of the Literature. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.56943/jmr.v2i4.443>
- Garrard, G. (2012). *Ecocriticism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Goswami, R. (2026). Ecological Consciousness in English Literature: Environmental Perspectives and Sustainable Solutions. 26(March), 69–82.
- Gray, D. (2020). "Command these elements to silence": Ecocriticism and *The Tempest*. *Literature Compass*, 17(3–4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12566>
- Hebbar, V. (2024). Exploring Eco criticism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature and the Environment. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 11(1), 69–73. www.ijrar.org
- Joseph Carroll. (2022). *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Emotion*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367809843-9>
- Khum Prasad Sharma. (n.d.). Colonial Imposition and Ecological Menace in *Fire on the Mountain and The Living Mountain*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i2.2084>
- Khum Prasad Sharma. (2025). Colonial Imposition and Ecological Menace in *Fire on the Mountain and The Living Mountain*.
- Manullang, T. A., Kuncara, S. D., & M, F. (2021). Relationship Between Human And Environment Using Ecocriticism in *The Legacy Of Heorot Novel*. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Seni (Sesanti)*, 335–340. <http://eprosiding.fib-unmul.id/index.php/sesanti>
- Nahdhiyah, Rahman, F., Abas, H., & Pattu, M. A. (2023). Ecocritical study on relationships between humans, nature, and god in the novel *the Alchemist*. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2170019>
- NS Kamalam, M. T. (. (2022). Ecocriticism in Nature-Human interface in the Select Short Stories of Lakshmi Kannan: 'Muniyakka' 'Nandanvan' and 'Islander'.
- Ohrvik, A. (2024). What is close reading? An exploration of a methodology. *Rethinking History*, 28(2), 238–260.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2024.2345001>
- Peter Barry. (2020). *Ecocriticism in Beginning theory* (fourth edition).
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526153524.00018>
- Radhakrishnan, G. V. (2025). The Role of Literature in Shaping Environmental Consciousness: Ecocritical Perspectives in Modern English Literature. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 2(1). <https://acr-journal.com/>
- Rani, V., & Snehi. (2023). Climate change narratives: The role of literature in shaping environmental awareness. *International Journal of Advance Research in Multidisciplinary*, 897–904.
- Samantha Walton. (2021). Nature Trauma: Ecology and the Returning Soldier in First World War English and Scottish Fiction, 1918-1932. *The Journal of Medical Humanities* 42 (2), Pp. 213-223, ISSN 1573-3645.
<https://doi.org/DOI 10.1007/s10912-019-09591-9>
- Santoso, T., Atfalusoleh, S., Kusmanto, H., Hasjim, N., & Al-Ma'ruf, A. I. (2020). The relationship between humans and natural environment in luka perempuan asap novel by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab: Literature ecocritics review. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 9(1), 25–30.
- Shamim, Dr Mohd, Dr Usha Sahu Dwivedi, D. V. K. (2025). Ecocriticism in Literature: Examining Nature in Contemporary Fictions. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.25215/2455/1002039>
- Stanley, M. (2023). Qualitative descriptive: A very good place to start. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003456216-4>
- Suchitra Sharad Tajane, D. S. S. T. (2024). Ecocriticism In Literature: Examining Nature and the Environment in Literary Works. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(6), 2162–2168.
<https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i6.5675>
- Tabak, E. D. (2024). Taxonomies of exclusion: Storytelling, naming and classification in an age of extinction. *Cambridge Prisms: Extinction*, 2.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/ext.2024.7>
- Tisnawijaya, C., & Kurniati, G. (2021). Sustaining Life with Trees: Ecocriticism Perspective in Selected Picture Books. *Lire Journal (Journal of Linguistics and Literature)*, 5(2), 233–253. <https://doi.org/10.33019/lire.v5i2.121>
- Vasudevan, H., & Mukherjee, A. (2025). Ecocritical extraction analysis: A method for studying resource exploitation and environmental justice in literature. *MethodsX*, 14(May), 103384. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2025.103384>
- Vears, D. F., & Gillam, L. (2022). Inductive content analysis: A guide for beginning qualitative researchers. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-Professional Journal*, 23(1), 111–127.
<https://doi.org/10.11157/fohpe.v23i1.544>
- Wajid, Q. (2025). Ecocriticism: Associating Literature and Ecology to Raise Environmental Consciousness. *Manar Elsharq Journal for Literature and Language Studies*, 3(3), 50–57. <https://doi.org/10.56961/mejlls.v3i3.1061>