Introduction to Design Thinking: Character Analysis in Jack London’s "To Build a Fire"

Adapted from Design Thinking for Educators By Debra J Drummond

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“To Build a Fire” Interview Questions

1. London writes, “He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances.” What does this tell us about you? What is your character like?

2. Why don’t you worry more about the cold? What is alarming/absurd about your reaction to the frostbite?

3. Why do you think London continues to emphasize the coldness, and how you had never felt such cold before?

4. Why does London point out that the dog acts from instinct?

5. While eating, what startles you? Why is this important?

6. After deciding not to eat your lunch, how does your outlook of your situation drastically, albeit briefly, change?

7. What do you think London means when he says, “This man [you] did not know cold”?

8. When you fall in the river, you curse your bad luck. Is “bad luck” really to blame? Why or why not?

9. In the paragraph where you reflects on “old-timers” and “men who are men” what does this tell us about your mentality and beliefs?

10. What happens to your fire and why?
Discovery

**Your mission:** Redesign the survival experience for "the man/newcomer." Start by gaining empathy.

**Interview**

Notes from your interview

**Insights**

Record your insights
Character Analysis Text-Dependent Empathy Map

Be sure to include page # references

List the explicit/implicit inferences about the character based on the data detailed in the Empathy Map:
Interpretation: Defining Needs

Capture findings

**needs:** things the **newcomer** is trying to do*
  *use verbs

**insights:** new learnings about the **newcomer**'s feelings/ worldview to leverage in your design*
  *make inferences from what you learned

Write Point-of View or Need statement*

The newcomer needs a way to
  *(user)*

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

*make inferences from what you learned

because, unexpectedly, in his world,

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

*POV (user+need+interesting learning)=a Claim
Ideation

**Ideate:** generate alternatives to test.

Sketch or List 25 radical ways to meet the newcomer’s needs
Evolution: Prototyping and Testing

**Build and test.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Build your solution.</th>
<th>Share your solution and get feedback.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make something the newcomer can interact with!*</td>
<td>+ What worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a prototype.</td>
<td>? Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be sure to include detailed explanations about how the prototype addresses the newcomer’s need.</td>
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