



“The King of Mazy May”

Jack London

Survival and the Strength of Character

Literary Focus: Characterization and
Character Motivation



Essential Question #1

What methods do authors use to develop a character?

- ◆ Describe how a character looks
- ◆ Portray how a character thinks
- ◆ Present what others say or think about the character
- ◆ Make a direct statement about a character's behavior or personality

Types of Characters

Do you know the difference between the protagonist and the antagonist?

Define each term in your notes.

**Remember, a protagonist may work against more than one antagonist.

Type of Conflicts for Characters

- ◆ Man vs. Man (external)
- ◆ Man vs. Nature (external)
- ◆ Man vs. Society (external)
- ◆ Man vs. Himself (internal)

In this story, our protagonist faces more than one antagonist. After reading the selection, be ready to tell which two conflicts describe his experience.

Character vs. Character

As you known, words can have multiple meanings.

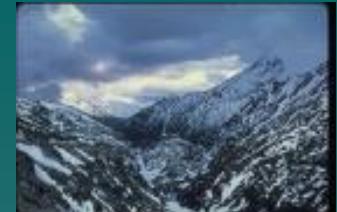
A character is the individual that takes part in a story or drama.

However... a different definition...

Character is the traits that people have which define their values, ethics, and morals.



Author Background



Jack London, an American writer during the early 20th century, is the author of this short story.

He wrote many novels and short stories including *Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*.

London based many of these stories on his personal experiences in Alaska and the Yukon Territory during the Alaskan gold rush.

Background to the Story

- ◆ The setting of this story is the Yukon Territory in northwestern Canada.
- ◆ The first gold was discovered here in a small creek off the Klondike River in the 1890s.
- ◆ Eventually, tens of thousands of Americans swarmed to the area in search of gold, but they faced obstacles such as below-freezing temperatures, lack of food, a fierce environment, and few established settlements. Many died in their quest for gold.
- ◆ However, within the first ten years of discovery, over \$100 million in gold was removed from the region.



Map of the Yukon Territory



Background to the Story

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFfIJCrZtGE>

Background to the Story

One of the primary modes of transportation during that time (and even today) is dog sleds.



Background to the Story

The main character in this short story is Walt Masters, a fourteen-year-old boy who lives with his father, a gold miner.

Although Walt has not experienced many things like other kids his age due to the isolation of his home, he still faces difficult choices and must solve problems by doing the “right thing.”



Essential Question #2

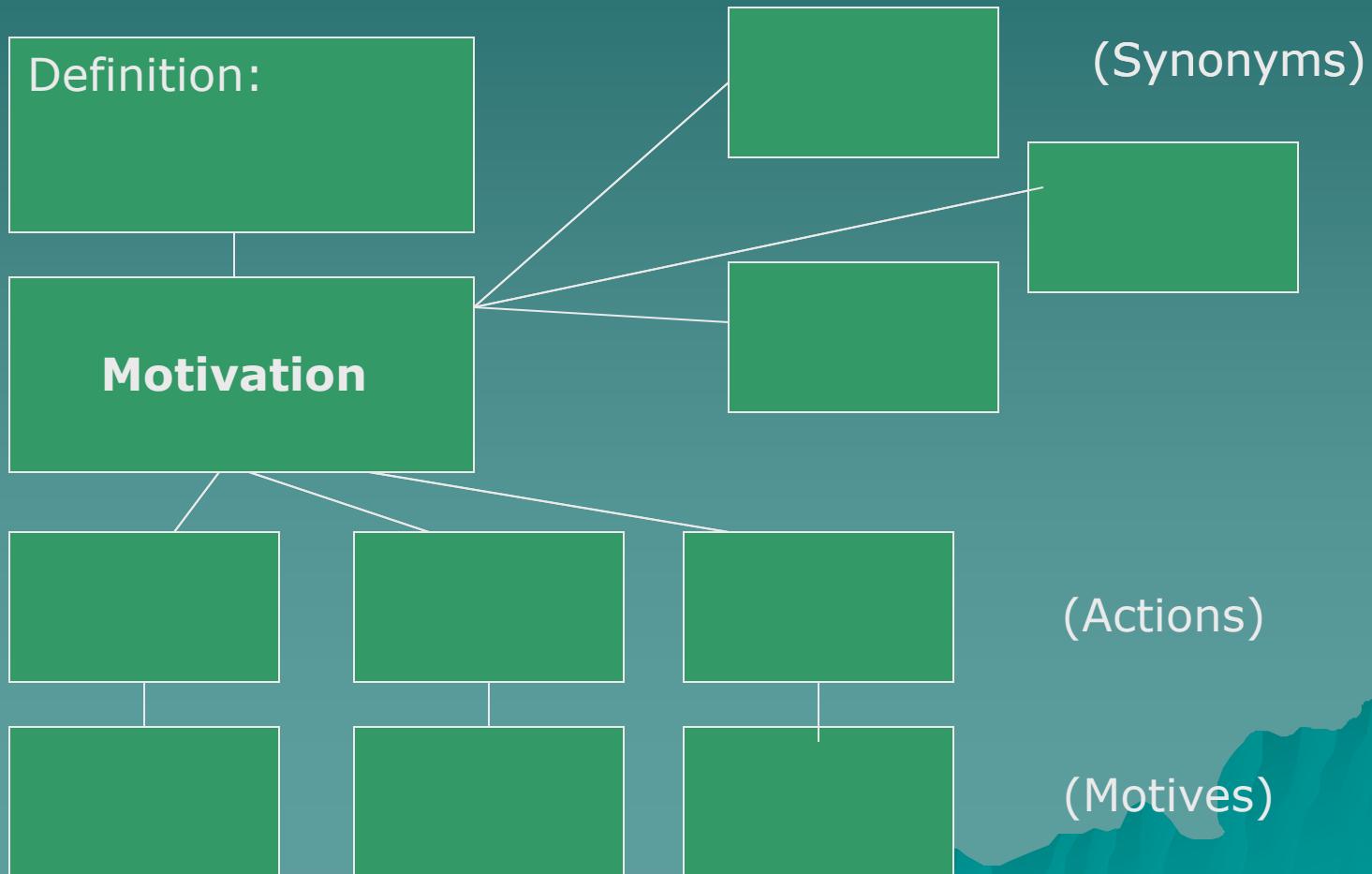


How can a reader understand a character's motivation?

By examining the character's actions, thoughts, feelings, and behavior

What is motivation?

Create a word map for “motivation.”



Vocabulary—Words to Know

- ◆ **antic:** an odd or extravagant gesture or act; a prank
- ◆ **capsize:** to overturn or cause to overturn
- ◆ **commissioner:** a person authorized (by a commission) to perform certain duties
- ◆ **flounder:** to make clumsy attempts to move or regain one's balance
- ◆ **liable:** likely
- ◆ **peer:** to look intently, searchingly, or with difficulty
- ◆ **prospector:** one who explores an area for mineral deposits (gold) or oil
- ◆ **stampede:** a sudden headlong rush or flight of a crowd of people
- ◆ **summit:** the highest point or part; the top
- ◆ **yaw:** to swerve off course momentarily or temporarily

As you read...

Think about the character, the values, of our protagonist, Walt Masters.

Be ready to discuss how his survival through a dangerous situation represents his strength of character as it relates to doing the right thing.

Post-Reading Activity

Copy the organizers below into your notes. Be prepared to complete information about the main character's traits as an individual as well as his motivation for action during the story.

