

Learning English

American Stories

To Build a Fire

by Jack London

Lesson Plan
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Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *To Build a Fire* by Jack London.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

Lesson Elements

Prepare

Present

Practice

Self-Evaluate

Expand

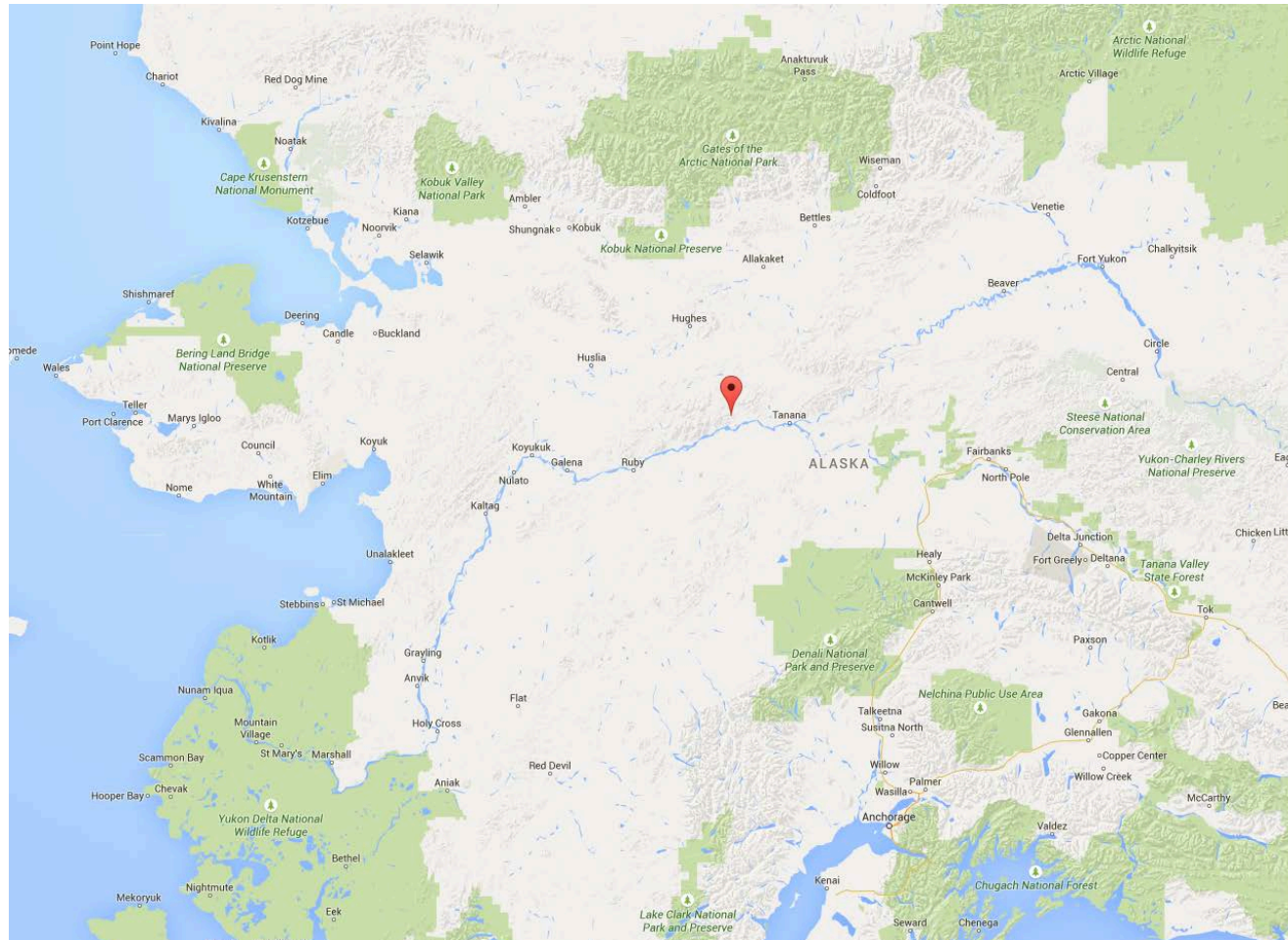
Prepare

Introduce the story. “Today we will read *To Build a Fire*, by Jack London. It is a story about a man chooses to travel in very dangerous conditions. How do you prepare for dangerous weather?”

Listen to students’ answers. If living in a warm climate, you could give an example of preparing for a heavy rain, or for a dry period.

Show the map of Alaska and Henderson Creek. Teach the vocabulary for the story.

Henderson Creek, Alaska



Vocabulary

creek - *n.* a place where a small amount of water flows

glove - *n.* a covering for the hand that has separate parts for each finger

withdraw - *v.* to take something back, away or out

tremendous - *adj.* very large or great

blazing - *adj.* very hot, fast, or powerful

aware - *adj.* feeling, experiencing, or noticing something

Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *focus* to help us understand the story. I’m going to focus on the details that help me understand how the man feels. I’ll show you how to do this.”

Play or read aloud to “Then he stood up and started walking on the frozen stream again.”

Model the strategy: “The first part of the story describes where the story happens. There is snow and ice everywhere. The man is wearing warm clothing but still feels uncomfortable. Let’s make a list of the details and how the man feels about each one.”

Make a chart like the one on the next slide. Tell the students that there is little explanation for how the man feels. Tell them that they must think about how the man probably feels based on what is said in the story.

Focus on Details

<u>Details</u>	<u>How the man feels</u>
wearing warm clothes	uncomfortable
frozen stream	easier way to walk
thin ice	falling in the water would be bad
falling in the water	frozen feet would be deadly
food in his clothing	stop from freezing

Practice

Prepare students for the next part, “Now it’s your turn. Let’s listen to some more of the story. As we listen, focus on the details in the story. Can you see how the man feels about his surroundings? Take out a piece of paper. Write a chart listing the details.”

Play or read aloud to “This time, he must not fail.”

Have students sit with a classmate and say aloud what they wrote about each detail. Tell them to share with their classmate how the man reacts to the each detail.

Give students time to discuss the details.

Ask several students to share and write how the man felt about them on the board or screen as on the following slide.

Focus on Details (2)

<u>Detail</u>	<u>How the man feels</u>
feet are wet to the knees	angry because of the delay
sixty degrees below zero	must not fail to build a fire
frozen feet, fingers and nose	worried
fire burning strongly	he saved himself
snow falls on the fire	shocked

Ask students to listen again. “As we read the rest of the story, think about how the details change the mood of the story. How do each of these details make you feel? Add that to your chart in another column.”

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Ask students to share with their classmate how the man reacts to the details and how they react themselves.

Focus on Details (3)

<u>Details</u>	<u>How the man feels</u>	<u>How I feel</u>
tremendous cold	may not be able to start a fire	nervous for what happens next
hands burning	he cannot move his hands at all	afraid of what the means for the future
the dog is watching	kill the dog and use it for warmth	this is cruel but may be necessary
he cannot hold the knife	fear that he might die	this must mean he will die
he cannot feel fingers, nose or feet; is warm and comfortable	he knows he will die	sad that he did not survive

Self-Evaluate

Ask students to stay with their partner and talk about the end of the story: “What does the story teach us? Remember it is the first winter in the Yukon for the man. And the story says, ‘The old men had told him that no man should travel alone in the Yukon when the temperature is sixty degrees below zero.’ What do you think Jack London is saying about the young man?”

Give students time to talk about the story’s lesson.

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, *focus*, when you read? Did it help you understand the main character’s feelings in the story? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how *focusing* helped you today.”

Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *focus* on the details?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. *Focusing* helps you notice the important details. We connected the details to our guesses about what the man felt in the story. This can also work well when you are trying to remember a history lesson, or a biography of a famous person. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

Our story today is called "To Build a Fire." It was written by Jack London. Here is Harry Monroe with the story.

The man walked down the trail on a cold, gray day. Pure white snow and ice covered the Earth for as far as he could see. This was his first winter in Alaska. He was wearing heavy clothes and fur boots. But he still felt cold and uncomfortable.

The man was on his way to a camp near Henderson **Creek**. His friends were already there. He expected to reach Henderson Creek by six o'clock that evening. It would be dark by then. His friends would have a fire and hot food ready for him.

A dog walked behind the man. It was a big gray animal, half dog and half wolf. The dog did not like the extreme cold. It knew the weather was too cold to travel.

The man continued to walk down the trail. He came to a frozen stream called Indian Creek. He began to walk on the snow-covered ice. It was a trail that would lead him straight to Henderson Creek and his friends.

As he walked, he looked carefully at the ice in front of him. Once, he stopped suddenly, and then walked around a part of the frozen stream. He saw that an underground spring flowed under the ice at that spot. It made the ice thin. If he stepped there, he might break through the ice into a pool of water. To get his boots wet in such cold weather might kill him. His feet would turn to ice quickly. He could freeze to death.

At about twelve o'clock, the man decided to stop to eat his lunch. He took off the **glove** on his right hand. He opened his jacket and shirt, and pulled out his bread and meat. This took less than twenty seconds. Yet, his fingers began to freeze.

He hit his hand against his leg several times until he felt a sharp pain. Then he quickly put his glove on his hand. He made a fire, beginning with small pieces of wood and adding larger ones. He sat on a snow-covered log and ate his lunch. He enjoyed the warm fire for a few minutes. Then he stood up and started walking on the frozen stream again.

A half hour later, it happened. At a place where the snow seemed very solid, the ice broke. The man's feet sank into the water. It was not deep, but his legs got wet to the knees. The man was angry. The accident would delay his arrival at the camp. He would have to build a fire now to dry his clothes and boots.

He walked over to some small trees. They were covered with snow. In their branches were pieces of dry grass and wood left by flood waters earlier in the year. He put several large pieces of wood on the snow, under one of the trees. On top of the wood, he put some grass and dry branches. He pulled off his gloves, took out his matches, and lighted the fire. He fed the young flame with more wood. As the fire grew stronger, he gave it larger pieces of wood.

He worked slowly and carefully. At sixty degrees below zero, a man with wet feet must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire. While he was walking, his blood had kept all parts of his body warm. Now that he had stopped, cold was forcing his blood to **withdraw** deeper into his body. His wet feet had frozen. He could not feel his fingers. His nose was frozen, too. The skin all over his body felt cold.

Now, however, his fire was beginning to burn more strongly. He was safe. He sat under the tree and thought of the old men in Fairbanks. The old men had told him that no man should travel alone in the Yukon when the temperature is sixty degrees below zero. Yet here he was. He had had an accident. He was alone. And he had saved himself. He had built a fire.

Those old men were weak, he thought. A real man could travel alone. If a man stayed calm, he would be all right. The man's boots were covered with ice. The strings on his boots were as hard as steel. He would have to cut them with his knife.

He leaned back against the tree to take out his knife. Suddenly, without warning, a heavy mass of snow dropped down. His movement had shaken the young tree only a tiny bit. But it was enough to cause the branches of the tree to drop their heavy load. The man was shocked. He sat and looked at the place where the fire had been.

The old men had been right, he thought. If he had another man with him, he would not be in any danger now. The other man could build the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire again. This time, he must not fail.

The man collected more wood. He reached into his pocket for the matches. But his fingers were frozen. He could not hold them. He began to hit his hands with all his force against his legs.

After a while, feeling came back to his fingers. The man reached again into his pocket for the matches. But the **tremendous** cold quickly drove the life out of his fingers. All the matches fell onto the snow. He tried to pick one up, but failed.

The man pulled on his glove and again beat his hand against his leg. Then he took the gloves off both hands and picked up all the matches. He gathered them together. Holding them with both hands, he scratched the matches along his leg. They immediately caught fire.

He held the **blazing** matches to a piece of wood. After a while, he became **aware** that he could smell his hands burning. Then he began to feel the pain. He opened his hands, and the blazing matches fell on to the snow. The flame went out in a puff of gray smoke.

The man looked up. The dog was still watching him. The man got an idea. He would kill the dog and bury his hands inside its warm body. When the feeling came back to his fingers, he could build another fire. He called to the dog. The dog heard danger in the man's voice. It backed away.

The man called again. This time the dog came closer. The man reached for his knife. But he had forgotten that he could not bend his fingers. He could not kill the dog, because he could not hold his knife.

The fear of death came over the man. He jumped up and began to run. The running began to make him feel better. Maybe running would make his feet warm. If he ran far enough, he would reach his friends at Henderson Creek. They would take care of him.

It felt strange to run and not feel his feet when they hit the ground. He fell several times. He decided to rest a while. As he lay in the snow, he noticed that he was not shaking. He could not feel his nose or fingers or feet. Yet, he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He realized he was going to die.

Well, he decided, he might as well take it like a man. There were worse ways to die.

The man closed his eyes and floated into the most comfortable sleep he had ever known.

The dog sat facing him, waiting. Finally, the dog moved closer to the man and caught the smell of death. The animal threw back its head. It let out a long, soft cry to the cold stars in the black sky.

And then it turned and ran toward Henderson Creek...where it knew there was food and a fire.

You have just heard the AMERICAN STORY called "To Build a Fire." It was written by Jack London and adapted by Dona de Sanctis. Your storyteller was Harry Monroe.

Words in This Story

creek - *n.* a place where a small amount of water flows

glove - *n.* a covering for the hand that has separate parts for each finger

withdraw - *v.* to take something back, away or out

tremendous - *adj.* very large or great

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About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.





CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.






CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.







Metacognitive Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set goals. -Plan the task or content sequence. -Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies). -Preview a text.
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Check your progress on the task. -Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem? -Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task. -Assess how well you have used learning strategies. -Decide how effective the strategies were. -Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determine how you learn best. -Arrange conditions that help you learn. -Seek opportunities for practice. -Focus your attention on the task.



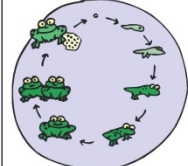
Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task. - Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge. -Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.
Make Inferences	 Use Clues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use context and what you know to figure out meaning. -Read and listen between the lines. -Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.
Make Predictions	 Crystal Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anticipate information to come. -Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text. -Make an estimate (math). -Make a hypothesis (science).
Personalize	 Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.


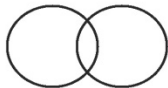


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language. -Recognize cognates.
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.
  USE YOUR SENSES		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information. -Use or draw a picture or diagram.
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding. -Sound out/vocalize. - Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.






Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language. -Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.
  USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS		
Find/Apply Patterns	 abacus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply a rule. -Make a rule. -Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules. -Identify patterns in literature (genre). -Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.
Classify/Sequence	 Life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Categorize words or ideas according to attributes. -Classify living things; identify natural cycles. -Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies. -Sequence events in history.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading. -List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
 		
USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES		
Access Information Sources	 <p>Look it up!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials. -Seek out and use sources of information. -Follow a model -Ask questions
Cooperate	 <p>Together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 <p>I can do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.