Sample Annotated Bibliography Entry: Literary Criticism Packet

“To Build a Fire.” *Short Stories for Students*. Vol. 7. Detroit: Gale, 2008. Print.

The selection from *Short Stories for Students* on “To Build a Fire” offers three pieces of literary criticism on the short story, as well as an overview of how the text was initially received by critics. In Jill Widdicombe’s essay on London’s work, she argues that the cold acts as an antagonist to the man, plaguing him throughout the story and ultimately killing him. Joan D. Hedrick examines three works in London’s short story cannon, “The White Silence” “In a Far Country” and “To Build a Fire” and asserts that a shift towards a more pessimistic view of the value of human solidarity can be traced throughout each of the texts. James I. McClintock also foregrounds London’s pessimism in his critical piece, commenting on London’s rejection of human reason in “To Build a Fire.” The information in these essays is reliable, as the reference collection, *Short Stories for Students*, is reputable and academic. Additionally, the authors of the essays devote significant amounts of their scholarly research to studying London, so therefore they are well – versed in the authors’s work. Widdicombe, Hedrick, and McClintock’s pieces are useful because they allow one to develop his or her understanding of different components of the short story. For example, James I. McClintock suggests that the man’s fall through the snow to be symbolic of the power of reason collapsing, an analysis that allows the reader of “To Build a Fire” to move beyond simple, plot – based interpretation of the text. Ultimately, the *Short Stories for Students* selection is useful for anyone who is interested in considering the thematic implications of “To Build a Fire,” and it would also be indispensable as a reference for someone who is writing an literary – analysis based essay on the piece.