

"There's a lot of blood and violence, but maybe that's the best way to think about what it's like to be true to your nature." Shane, 11



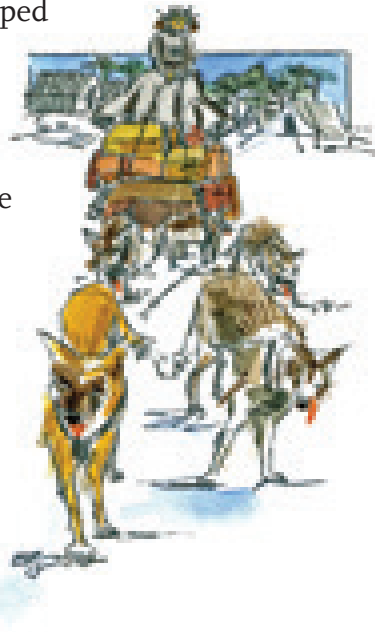
THE CALL OF THE WILD

JACK LONDON

Buck recognised the wild brother. He was whining softly, and they touched noses. A second wolf, old and battle-scarred, came forward and sniffed noses with him; he sat down, pointed his nose at the moon, and broke out in a long wolf howl. Buck, too, sat down and howled.

Buck, a big, powerful dog, is kidnapped from his California home and sold as a sled dog in the Arctic. In his new environment he must learn quickly how to deal with man's club and dog's fang, or he will not be able to survive.

He is transformed by two opposing forces – his love for John Thornton who saved his life, and the memories that awaken within him of the ways of his ancestors, both dogs and wolves. How will Buck survive, and not just survive, but become a leader of dogs and eventually a leader of wolves?



THE CALL OF THE WILD

Jack London



Retold by Hagit Borer
Illustrated by Melanie Reim

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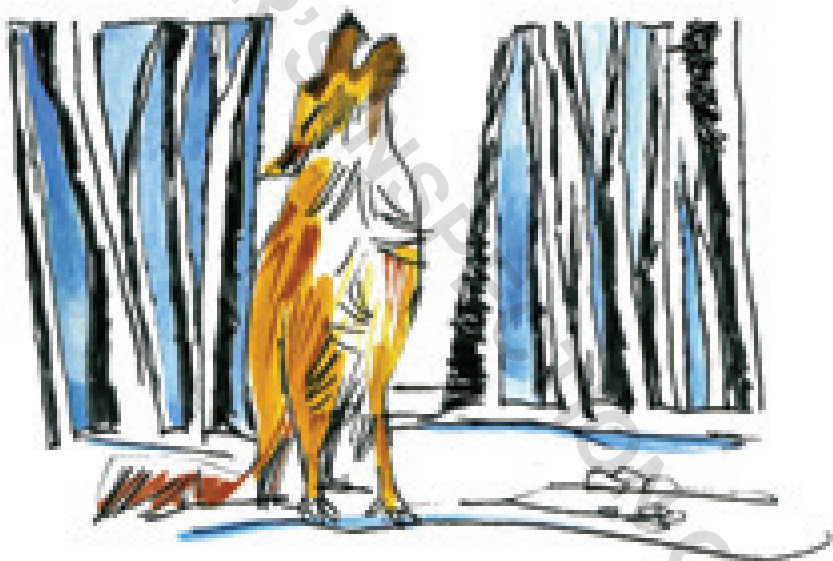
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THE CHARACTERS

Buck

Buck was stolen from his home to be a sled dog in the Arctic. How will he fare in his new harsh kill-or-be-killed world, and will he be able to resist the allure of the wild wolves?



The man with the red sweater

A dog trader who beats stolen dogs into submission with a club and then sells them on as sled dogs – but will he manage to subdue Buck?



François and Perrault

These French Canadian mail couriers add Buck to their team and teach him the value of good judgment and fairness, but will they be able to protect Buck once their mission is over?



Spitz

Spitz is the fierce, cunning and vicious leader of the dog team. Will he succeed in killing Buck and defeating his challenge to the leadership?



Hal, Mercedes and Charles

A motley group of inexperienced American gold-seekers; will the dogs survive the abuse and the incompetence of these masters?



John Thornton

Thornton is a noble and brave gold-seeker who saves Buck's life. Will Buck be able to save Thornton's life in return?



Curly

Curly is a friendly Newfoundland who just arrived in the Arctic. Will she survive her new harsh life?





THE CALL OF THE WILD

Buck knew he was riding in a baggage car. He had travelled too often with Judge Miller not to recognise the shrieks of a locomotive. But this was different. Several times during the first night he sprang to his feet when the car door rattled open, expecting to see the judge, but each time it was instead the bulging face of his tormentors, and the joyful bark that trembled in his throat would twist into a savage growl.

He could not understand what it all meant. What did they want with him, these strange men? Why were they keeping him pent up in this crate? He was still half dazed and suffering intolerable pain in his throat and tongue from the rope they used to choke him, and he felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending disaster.

For Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that thousands of men were rushing into the Arctic in search of gold, and these men wanted heavy dogs, just like Buck, with strong muscles and furry coats. Buck's father, Elmo, was a huge Saint Bernard, and his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog. During the four years since his puppyhood he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat, roaming the sun-kissed estate of Judge Miller's place in Santa Clara, ruling the grounds. Nothing had prepared him for



the treachery of the gardener's assistant, who handed him over to strangers in exchange for money, or for the rope that immediately tightened around his neck. Never, never in his life had he suffered such vile indignity!

Throughout the next day, Buck raged at his tormentors through the bars of his cage. But when he flung himself against the bars, quivering and frothing, they laughed. They growled or poked sticks at him, which he promptly assailed with his teeth until he realised it was amusing them.

For two days and nights Buck had nothing to eat or drink. He did not mind the hunger so much, but the lack of water and the inflammation of his parched and swollen throat caused him great suffering. And during those two days and nights his fury grew and grew. His eyes turned blood-shot, and he was changed into a frothing fiend. So changed was he that the judge himself would not have recognised him.

lived in Dawson City for a while, and then travelled inland to the Stewart River, where he and his companions staked claims to eight goldmines. The description of the trip east which John Thornton and his partners take is based on that experience. Jack London spent the long Arctic winter reading Charles Darwin's pioneering book on biological evolution, *The Origin of Species*, which had great influence on him. For Jack London, Buck is an example of the 'survival of the fittest', matching the author's understanding of Darwin's work.

In his short lifetime – he died in 1916 – Jack London published over fifty books, and for a while was one of the most widely read authors in the world. *The Call of the Wild* was first serialised in the *Saturday Evening Post* in the summer of 1903, then published as a book a month later.

The Klondike Gold Rush started in San Francisco in 1897, when ships started arriving at San Francisco carrying large amounts of gold discovered by explorers in the Yukon Territory. During the next three years as many as 100,000 people left their jobs and their families to go to Alaska and the Yukon Territories in Canada in the hope of striking it rich. A few did get very rich, but most returned home empty-handed.

Dawson, the largest town established during the gold rush, at one point had more than 30,000 inhabitants.

Wherever the explorers went, they found groups of native people who had lived off the land for centuries; sometimes these people resented the intrusion of the 'white man' and attacked their camps. In *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London's Yeehats are a fictitious native tribe embodying the human wildness of the north.

The journey to the areas where gold was discovered was long and very difficult. In the winter, temperatures in the Yukon can drop to as low as minus 60°F, and even short exposure without adequate protection could result in death. The worst thing, however, was getting wet, which makes the cold even more dangerous. Horses proved to be quite inadequate for the climate, which is why dogs were recruited to the task.

In the winter much Arctic travel was along frozen riverbeds, which provide convenient and easy routes on which sleds could move quickly. For the rest of the year, travel was a combination of river rafting and hiking through mountainous terrains which are not suitable for sledding; then people had to carry everything themselves.