

# The Call of the Wild

(Jack London)

## Summary

Buck is a dog with strong muscles and a furry coat, living comfortably in California. One day he is “kidnapped” and sent to Alaska.

At that time gold is found in the Klondike, Canada. Many people want heavy dogs like Buck to pull a sled between Skagway in Alaska and Dawson in the Klondike.

His first master is courier for the Canadian Government. During the toil and long journeys, Buck learns ways for survival in the wild and his instincts long dead become alive again. He defeats Spitz, one of his mates, and takes the position of the team leader.

Then a Scotsman buys the dog team as the mail train.

Again, it is sold to two Americans. On their way to Dawson, Buck’s life is saved by John Thornton.

Thornton is an ideal master for Buck. Buck loves him and does many things to help him.

Thornton and his partners go into the East and finally find gold. At nights Buck hears the call that lures him to the wild. Indians attack and kill Thornton and his partners. The last tie is broken. There’s nothing that binds him to man. Buck joins the pack of wolves and now seems truly at home as a creature of the wild. (209 words)

## After Reading

It seems Jack London is excellent in creating realism and suspense with specific details. Descriptions of nature, particularly the harsh nature of Northland are still very vivid in my mind. We have good reason to believe so if we know that in 1897 London himself spent a year looking for gold in the Klondike and in 1903 wrote this novel, based on his experiences in that harsh, northern land.

There are two types of conflicts, the inner one and the outer one, the contrast of which I found to be quite interesting. The inner conflict is, of course, the one in Buck. The whole story is a long process through which Buck is transformed and his primitive beast is aroused. Now and then Buck is in a dilemma, torn between the freedom of the wild and his

loyalty to Thornton. But at the last moment, when Thornton was dead, he has gone to the world beyond. The outer conflicts are man vs. nature (a hard trail for gold), man vs. animal (maneuvering the dog team), and animal vs. animal (Buck and Spitz).

In this sense, the title of this novel, *The call of the Wild*, has dual meanings: it lures people to the wilderness in search of gold; it also turns animals wild. (213 words)