

# The Call of the Wild

by Jack London

## Teacher's Guide

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## Synopsis

### Chapter One: Into the Primitive

In fall 1897, after the discovery of gold in the Klondike region of Northwest Canada, prospectors and adventurers create a demand for sled dogs. In Santa Clara Valley, California, Buck, a four-year-old, 140-pound St.

Bernard-Scotch shepherd lives a pampered life with Judge Miller. Manuel, the gardener's assistant who tends the estate, steals Buck to sell for cash to pay off debts. He leads Buck to the College Park railroad station and places a rope around his neck.

A man exchanges \$50 for Buck, who has no inkling of his fate. Gradually suspecting treachery, he resists too late. The man strangles him with the rope and transports him to Seattle aboard a truck, ferry, and the baggage car of an express train. For two nights, Buck rages against tormentors and suffers from lack of food and water.

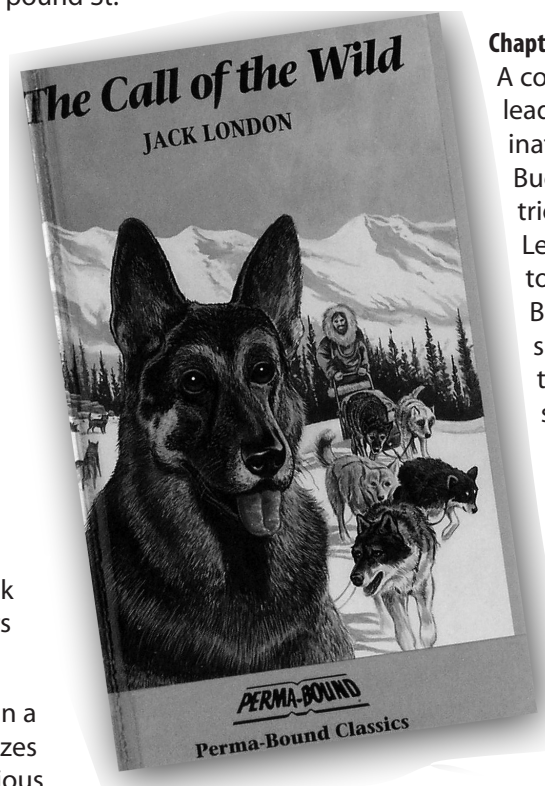
On his arrival, the owner puts Buck in a cage. A man in a red sweater brutalizes Buck with a club. He becomes ferocious and attacks the man, who beats him repeatedly. Bloody and defeated, Buck chooses to submit. Perrault and Francois, mail couriers for the Canadian government, buy Buck and a Newfoundland named Curly and ship them on the *Narwhal* to the Klondike. In the hold, Buck meets Dave and Spitz as the boat crosses the Queen Charlotte Sound.

### Chapter Two: The Law of Club and Fang

On Dyea beach outside Skagway, Buck encounters snow for the first time and learns the rules for surviving in the arctic wilderness. The savagery of a pack of dogs ends the life of Curly, a female unacquainted with slash-and-run wolf tactics. From her death, Buck learns that he

must rely on his strength and skill to stay alive.

Perrault and Francois harness him to their sled in front of Dave, the wheeler, Joe, Sol-leks, and Billee. Instructed by Francois's whip and Dave's teeth, Buck masters trace and trail up the Chilkoot Divide. At night, he burrows into the snow like the other dogs to keep warm. He also learns to steal bacon without getting caught.



### Chapter Three: The Dominant Primordial Beast

A conflict between Buck and Spitz, the lead dog, develops as Spitz tries to eliminate Buck from rivalry for leadership. Buck avoids a showdown until Spitz tries to steal his warm burrow. At Lake Le Barge, as Buck rages at his tormentor, starving dogs attack the camp. Buck forgets Spitz as he and the other sled dogs and their owners fight off the invaders. During the battle, Spitz slashes at Buck, who manages to stay on his feet. The men drive off the pack and gather their battered team. Perrault and Francois worry that the attackers may have been rabid.

They push on the 400-mile route to Dawson. Along the way, Francois makes moccasins from his boots to cover Buck's sore feet. At Pelly River, Dolly goes mad and targets Buck. He flees

from Dolly and runs in a circle until Francois crushes her skull with an ax. Spitz chooses this moment to attack Buck, whom Francois saves by driving Spitz away with a whip. After a week's rest, drivers and team push on toward the coast.

Buck undermines Spitz's authority and waits for an opportunity to destroy him. When Buck and the team chase a snowshoe rabbit, Spitz makes the kill. Buck crashes into Spitz to fight for leadership. Spitz has the advantage of experience; Buck resorts to unforeseen tactics by crushing Spitz's forelegs. He easily kills his crippled rival.

## Chapter Four: Who Has Won to Mastership

In victory, Buck insists on the lead, which François gives him. In a short time, Buck excels in the position. At Skagway, Perrault and Francois take a new assignment and turn the team over to a Scotch half-breed as part of a dozen-dog mail train to Dawson. The merciless route enfeebles Dave, the wheeler, who refuses to give up his place in harness. The new owner shoots him to end his misery.

## Chapter Five: The Toil of Trace and Trail

On the grueling thirty-day return swing of the Salt Water Mail from Dawson to Skagway, the team survives, but their owner trades them to three newcomers, Hal, Charles, and Mercedes. The trio are ignorant of survival in the wild and too arrogant to take advice from old-timers. After overloading the sled with luxuries, they force the exhausted team and some inexperienced dogs back on the trail. Some die on the way from fatigue.

At the thinning ice over the White River, Buck refuses to lead the team further. John Thornton, who camps nearby, prevents Hal from beating Buck to death for disobeying and cuts the dog from the traces. The team proceeds onto the ice, which cracks. The sled, dogs, and owners sink into the river.

## Chapter Six: For the Love of a Man

John nurses Buck to health and earns his devotion. Buck makes friends with Nig and Skeet, who become his playmates. To prove Buck's loyalty, John orders him to jump over a cliff. He halts Buck from the fatal leap just in time and resolves never to risk Buck's life again. At Circle City, Buck attacks a miner named Black Burton who hits John.

That fall, after a boating accident, Buck saves Jack from drowning in the rapids of Forty Mile Creek. At a saloon in Dawson that winter, John wagers Matthewson \$1,000 that Buck can pull a 1000-pound load of flour. Buck wins the bet. The Skookum Bench king offers \$1,200 for Buck, but John refuses.

## Chapter Seven: Sounding the Call

With the \$1,600 in winnings, John and partners Pete and Hans prospect for gold to the east. After traveling uncharted territory to McQueston, the trio discovers a rich placer and make camp. As John and his partners pan for gold, Buck roams the wild and makes friends with a wolf. The love for John and the call of the wild pull Buck in opposite directions. While he sleeps at the campfire, he dreams about primeval ancestors. During Buck's chase of a moose, Yeehat Indians massacre Thornton and his partners.

Buck returns and finds the Indians celebrating. He rips out the chief's throat and scatters the other Indians. John's death severs Buck's last tie with civilization. The Yeehats call him a ghost dog after he gives into the primordial urge and roams the Northland as a wolf pack leader. Each summer, he returns to John's abandoned camp and howls for the master who loved him, then departs with the other animals to sing the song of the pack.

## Timeline

1840	Hudson Bay trader Robert Campbell explores as far as the Pelly River.
1843	Campbell descends the Lewes River to the upper Yukon.
1848	The California Gold Rush lures hordes with get-rich-quick dreams. Campbell establishes a trading post at Fort Selkirk.
1851	Campbell moves downstream to Fork Yukon, Alaska.
1852	Chilkoot Indians pillage Fort Selkirk.
1858	Reports of gold on Fraser River in British Columbia lure prospectors to Canada.
1873	The Northwest Mounted Police is established.
1878	George Holt is the first white man to cross Chilkoot Pass.
1880s	Travelers hurry from Lynn Canal, Alaska, into the Yukon.
1887	Joe Ladue and George M. Dawson, Director of the Geological Survey of Canada, stake out the territory around Dawson.
Dec. 1, 1894	Miners form the Yukon Order of Pioneers to ensure their rights and to protect gold claims.
Aug. 17, 1896	George W. Carmack and two Indian guides, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, strike gold on Bonanza Creek.
1897	Jack London journeys to the Yukon and scales Chilkoot Pass.
1898	A scandal erupts from the government's dealings with Indians over Yukon land rights.
July 13, 1898	Canada establishes the Yukon Territory as a separate entity.
1899	The Yukon Gold Rush ends.
July 19, 1900	The Yukon Railway enters service.
1949	The Yukon River is officially named.

## Author Sketch

John Griffith “Jack” London was born John Chaney in San Francisco, California, on January 12, 1876, the unacknowledged son of Professor William Henry Chaney, a wandering astrologer, and Flora Wellman. His mother married John London, a farmer, who gave the five-year-old boy a legal patronym. London’s youth, which he spent in the waterfront slums of Oakland, was a time of delinquency, desperation, and unemployment.



London quit school at fourteen but educated himself through extensive reading. Before the age of 23, he held a variety of jobs—newsboy, oyster pirate, longshoreman, coal-shoveler, sailor, seal hunter, and factory and laundry worker—and traveled east with tramps, even serving a 30-day sentence in Erie County, New York, for vagrancy after spending the night near Niagara Falls because he couldn’t afford a hotel room. After his release, he eagerly returned to California and looked for more permanent living arrangements.

For one semester in 1897, London studied philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley, read Marx, Nietzsche, and Darwin, and joined the socialist party. Restlessness spurred him toward a gold-prospecting trip to the Yukon in 1897 and gave him a perspective for fiction based on the wild. There, with the aid of Indian guides and other adventurers, he scaled Chilkoot Pass and immersed himself in the Northland mindset. At 24 he married Bessie May Maddern and settled down to serious writing. Three years later, he abandoned Bessie and their daughters Joan and Becky for Charmian Kittredge, whom he married and lived with on a 130-acre farm in Glen Ellen.

Broke, ailing, and hounded by creditors, London accepted an advance from his publisher to produce *The Call of the Wild* (1903). He followed with *The Sea Wolf* (1904), *White Fang* (1906), *Martin Eden* (1909), and forceful short stories such as “To Build a Fire,” which he published in *The Century* in 1908. After success came his way, he described the San Francisco earthquake and wrote war commentary for the Hearst newspaper chain and *Collier’s* magazine, lectured, and voyaged to the South Seas and Caribbean. He sailed his ketch, the *Snark*, as far as the South Pacific in 1907, but abandoned his plans to go around the world. In 1910, Charmian gave birth to their daughter

Joy, who died two days later. In 1913, his new house burned, leaving him deeply in debt and unable to replace the structure.

London’s nonfiction includes social criticism, notably treatises on class warfare and poverty, which he examined firsthand in London’s East End. He commiserated with human suffering because of his own wretched childhood, bouts of alcoholism, and addiction to tobacco and opiates, which he took for intestinal problems. While battling cancer of the throat, London injected himself with a fatal dose of morphine on November 22, 1916, and died at the age of 40.

A sizeable collection of London’s works, photographs, and notes is housed in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. A trail at Kalaupapa on Molokai Island commemorates the visit of Jack and Charmian London in 1907. The Jack London State Historic Park in Glen Ellen preserves 50 acres of his Beauty Ranch and includes a museum and the site where the author is buried.

## Critic’s Corner

London, a friend of Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain, was the most widely read author of the early twentieth century. He achieved instant success with his first novel and churned out fifty books in twenty years. From his experiences, he mastered naturalism, a meticulous examination of nature common to scientists. For *The Call of the Wild*, he wrote a vigorous, detailed sketch of elemental instincts in dog and man against the powerful odds of cold, violence, injury, and the constant threat of rivals and unpredictable weather. This cogent intermeshing of environment and character resulted in a realistic study of animal behavior that continues to draw readers young and old.

The use of beast fable as a point of view draws London’s story of the Yukon from a human to an animal perspective. By picturing the brutish conditions of the wild, which he experienced for only one season, he establishes the survival instincts that protect human drivers and sled dogs. The re-creation of rapids, soft ice, snowstorms, and deadly cold at 50 degrees below zero proves London’s premise that life on the Arctic circle demands top performance of mind and body. The quality of his description has so permeated American literary history that people often falsely conclude that London lived many years as a prospector and adventurer.

# The Call of the Wild Jack London

*The Call of the Wild* has appeared on the screen in two films. In 1935, Darryl F. Zanuck made a black and white cinema of the story, which bears little resemblance to the original. By making a young widow fall in love with a prospector, the film relegates most of the drama to humans. Starring Clark Gable and Loretta Young, the film earned little respect from reviewers.

In 1972, a European remake starring Charlton Heston and Michèle Mercier came closer to the original fiction, but still failed to achieve London's initial intent. A 1993 remake filmed in British Columbia starred Rick Schroder and a German shepherd as Buck. The movie stressed violence over theme.

Two titles from the 1990s made additional stabs at London's fiction. *White Fang*, beautifully filmed in 1990 with Klaus Maria Brandauer and Ethan Hawke, made a youth-oriented version of the dog-and-man aspect of the London's fiction. Four years later, Walt Disney's *White Fang II: The Myth of the White Wolf*, returned to extremes of character and behavior. The simplistic take suited the understanding of very young movie-goers with an Indian princess and scenery shot in Colorado and British Columbia.

## Other Works By Jack London

### Novels

*The Assassination Bureau, Ltd.* (1963)  
*Before Adam* (1907)  
*Burning Daylight* (1910)  
*A Daughter of the Snows* (1902)  
*The Game* (1905)  
*The Iron Heel* (1908)  
*The Little Lady of the Big House* (1916)  
*Martin Eden* (1909)  
*Mutiny on the Elsinore* (1914)  
*The Scarlet Plague* (1915)  
*The Sea-Wolf* (1904)  
*The Star Rover* (1915)  
*The Valley of the Moon* (1913)  
*White Fang* (1906)

### Short Stories

*Children of the Frost* (1902)  
*The Faith of Men & Other Stories* (1904)  
*The God of His Fathers & Other Stories* (1901)  
*The Red One* (1918)  
*Island Tales* (1920)  
*Lost Face* (1910)

*Love of Life & Other Stories* (1907)  
*The Son of the Wolf: Tales of the Far North* (1900)  
*The Turtles of Tasman* (1916)  
*South Sea Tales* (1911)  
*The Strength of the Strong* (1914)

### Play

*Scorn of Women* (1906)

### Nonfiction

*The Cruise of the Snark* (1911)  
*John Barleycorn* (1913)  
*Letters from Jack London* (1965)  
*The People of the Abyss* (1903)  
*Revolution and Other Essays* (1910)  
*The Road* (1907)  
*War of the Classes* (1905)

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## General Objectives

1. To assess themes of accomplishment and self-reliance
2. To note the interplay between tone and atmosphere
3. To evaluate a dog's need for comfort, achievement, and stability
4. To discuss episodes of loss, betrayal, and vengeance
5. To comment on the use of round, flat, and stereotypical characters
6. To analyze human and animal instinct
7. To characterize sense impressions from a dog's point of view
8. To characterize a naturalistic novel
9. To discuss survival techniques
10. To summarize the value of naturalism as a storytelling mode

## Specific Objectives

1. To chart Buck's development from pampered pet to feral pack animal
2. To contrast parallel scenes, such as the deaths of Dolly and Dave
3. To characterize traits that endear Buck to his owners
4. To assess the author's focus on ruthless male figures, particularly Manuel, the man in the red sweater, the Yeehat chief, and Black Burton
5. To describe Buck's communion with the primordial past
6. To characterize life on the trail for the uninitiated newcomer
7. To predict how the legend of the ghost dog will grow and change
8. To explain the purpose of dramatic scenes, such as Buck's first fight to the death and the \$1,000 bet
9. To evaluate the job of leader and wheeler
10. To account for London's reputation as a frontier writer

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Jack London's style, present the following terms and applications:

**Irony:** an implied discrepancy between what is said or done and what is meant, as found in the disobedience that merits a beating when Buck refuses to pull the sled across the icy river. London stresses the ignorance and naivete of newcomers to the Yukon and the terrible end to Hal, Charles, Mercedes, and their team after they press on and plunge through the ice to disappear into the water.

**Literary Foil:** a character who serves as an opposite or as a standard by which another character is matched. Buck becomes his own foil as he evolves from the judge's sated pet into a kidnap victim, sled dog, team leader, prospector's dog, hunter of a black bear, and member of a wolf pack. The slow development of self-preservation in Buck distances him from the dog that once swam and frolicked with children in the estate luxury and warm climate of the Santa Clara Valley.

**Realism:** a re-creation of life in theme, plot, setting, mood, and characterization. London stresses the hardships that Buck has no knowledge of. From choking and clubbing, Buck travels by truck, rail, and ferry before boarding the *Narwhal* for the trip north. The reality of small servings of salmon, nights burrowed in snow, days of pulling to the extremes of will and muscle, and rest periods when drivers check pads for wear and wounds introduces Buck to the fearful extremes of a working life in the Yukon.

## The Importance of Setting

Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* develops from the warm, sunny Santa Clara Valley of California, where the judge grows raisins, to a fearful passage north by conveyances that are new to Buck. Accustomed to a loving, trusting relationship with humans, he passes from one master to another. They trade him for cash and force him into submission in a crate lacking food and water. From truck, train, and ferry, he passes to a hold with other dogs aboard the *Narwhal*. From Seattle to Dyea beach, he undergoes a gradual shift from warmth to snow and temperatures reaching 50 degrees below zero.

# The Call of the Wild

Jack London

Landmarks and settlements flash on Buck's itinerary as he helps to deliver the Salt Water Mail. In the hands of Perrault and François, he moves north from Skagway to the Chilkoot Divide, Lake Bennett, and beyond. By night, the sameness of camping and darkness offer him little rest before the next day's torment begins again. In the hands of an unnamed Scotch half-breed, the long mail route continues from Cassiar Bar onward. At a high point in Buck's development into a dog of the wild, he exults in "the pride of trace and trail."

Returned to Skagway, the nightmare of journeys inland and back to the coast worsens as Buck passes into the ownership of beginners—Hal, Charles, and Mercedes. They understand nothing about packing for the trail and purchasing dogs and food for the journey. At the White River on the way to Dawson, where the trio ignore John Thornton's advice about the dangers of a spring thaw, Buck comes close to death, but survives through instinct about the safety of the trail.

Passed to the care of John Thornton, Buck travels a new and different route and has time to acclimate to the joys of the wilderness. Given time to sleep and roam at will, he begins welcoming the forest call into his soul. On the way to the headwaters of the Tanana, Buck saves his beloved owner from the rapids and remains his devout companion through a winter in Dawson. Taken into the Stewart River district to prospect for gold, Buck explores "the backbone of the continent." Set free from human control after Yeehats kill his master, Buck falls back on the wilderness dreams that draw him into the wolf pack of wild brothers in "the smiling timber land" and into long grasses and hunts for meat in the lower valleys.

## Cross-Curricular Sources

### Article

"Yukon Indians and the Gold Rush," *Klondike Weekly*, Feb. 27, 1998.

### Novels

Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*

Edna Ferber, *Cimarron*, *Giant*, and *Saratoga Trunk*

Paula Fox, *Slave Dancer*

Carlos Fuentes, *Old Gringo*

Jean Craighead George, *Julie of the Wolves*

A. B. Guthrie, *The Big Sky*

James N. Hall and Charles B. Nordhoff, *Mutiny on the Bounty*

Ruthann Lum McCunn, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*

Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* and *Moby Dick*

James Michener, *Hawaii*

Scott O'Dell, *Streams to the River*, *River to the Sea* and *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

O. Henry, *Heart of the West*

Conrad Richter, *Early Americana and Other Stories* and *The Sea of Grass*

O. E. Rølvaag, *Giants in the Earth*

Louis L'Amour, *Sitka*

Jessamyn West, *Friendly Persuasion*

Gloria Whelan, *Silver*

Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Long Winter*



## Short Stories

Gertrude Atherton, "The Wash-Tub Mail"  
John Muir, "Stickeen"  
Carl Stephenson, "Leiningen Versus the Ants"

## Poetry

Hamlin Garland, *Son of the Middle Border* and *Main-Travelled Roads*  
Robert Service, "The Ballad of Yukon Jake," "The Law of the Yukon," and "The Cremation of Sam McGee"  
Walt Whitman, "Pioneers, O Pioneers!"

## Nonfiction

Pierre Berton and Henry Van Der Linde, *The Klondike Stampede: The Great Klondike Gold Rush*  
Jim Brandenburg, *White Wolf: Living with an Arctic Legend*  
Dominique Cellure, *Travelers of the Cold; Sled Dogs of the Far North*  
Harry Gordon-Cooper, *Yukoners: True Tales of the Yukon*  
Robin Lee Graham, *Dove*  
Thor Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki*  
Gary Paulsen, *Dogsong*  
Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Literature*  
Elinore Pruitt Stewart, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*

## Internet

"Golden Dreams: The Quest for the Klondike,"  
[www.wshs.org/text/klondike/index.htm](http://www.wshs.org/text/klondike/index.htm)  
"Gold Rush Fever,"  
[www.richmond.edu/~pstohrhu/learn/gold.html](http://www.richmond.edu/~pstohrhu/learn/gold.html)  
"Jack London State Historic Park,"  
[www.parks.sonoma.net/JLPark.html](http://www.parks.sonoma.net/JLPark.html)  
"Klondikegold.com,"  
[www.klondykegold.com/history.htm](http://www.klondykegold.com/history.htm)  
"The Royal Canadian Mounted Police,"  
[north-van.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/history.html](http://north-van.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/history.html)  
"The Great Klondike Gold Rush,"  
[www.gold-rush.org](http://www.gold-rush.org)

## Videos/DVDs

*The Call of the Wild*  
Jeremiah Johnson  
*Learning to Be Assertive, AMS Video*  
*Pioneers and the Promised Land, Library Video*  
*White Fang*

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- comfort
- kidnap
- brutality
- team
- labor
- exhaustion
- self-preservation
- loss
- instinct
- wilderness

### Motifs

- coping with a savage environment
- understanding human cruelty
- loving and losing
- grasping the role of leader
- comprehending primordial feelings
- coping with inexplicable threats

## Meaning Study

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the novel. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. "Old longings nomadic leap,  
Chafing at custom's chain;  
Again from its brumal sleep  
Wakens the ferine strain." (Chap. 1, p. 1)  
*(The epigraph that introduces the novel presents the theme of Buck's transformation from a pet of Judge Miller's family into a feral pack dog running with wolves on the Yukon outback. London establishes that the pattern exists in the bestial instincts from centuries past that turned the dog from a wild animal into a tame house pet. The animal strain that sleeps below consciousness reawakens. Buck abandons memories of settled life in the Santa Clara Valley for free roaming in the wild.)*
2. His eyes turned blood-shot, and he was metamorphosed into a raging fiend. (Chap. 1, p. 7)  
*(On the long journey from California, Buck gradually loses his naivete about human behavior as he experiences confinement, mistreatment, and neglect. By growling, flinging himself against the bars of his crate, quivering, and frothing, he turns vicious toward the men who torment him and give him neither water nor food.)*

3. He swiftly lost the fastidiousness which had characterized his old life. (Chap. 2, p. 21)  
*(Once a dainty eater, Buck learns that he must snatch for his food and protect it against theft from fellow team dogs. He learns thievery by snatching a side of bacon and even manages to pass suspicion on to the hapless Dub, whom Perrault punishes. London declares that this transformation marks "his adaptability, his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have meant swift and terrible death.")*
4. With the aurora borealis flaming coldly overhead, or the stars leaping in the front dance, and the land numb and frozen under its pall of snow, this song of the huskies might have been the defiance of life, only it was pitched in minor key, with long-drawn wailings and half-sobs, and was more the pleading of life, the inarticulate travail of existence. (Chap. 3, pp. 34-35)  
*(London heightens the fearful drama of Buck's transformation into a pack dog by setting the scene under the aurora borealis or Northern Lights, a boldly hued arc that extends for miles into the atmosphere. Paralleling the earth's magnetic field, the lights result from electrons bombarding the earth's upper atmosphere.)*
5. A hundred yards away was a camp of the Northwest Police, with fifty dogs, huskies all, who joined the chase. (Chap. 3, pp. 36-37)  
*(The Northwest Mounted Police, established in 1873, policed the frontier and furthered positive relations with Indians while suppressing lawlessness, illegal whiskey traffic, and claim jumping in the Yukon. In 1904, King Edward VII renamed the force the Royal Northwest Mounted Police.)*
6. Next came official orders. (Chap. 4, p. 45)  
*(After a mighty 14-day run at the rate of 40 miles per day in temperatures steady at fifty below, François and Perrault, like the dogs in the traces, return to their own harness and obey the will of their employers, who dispatch them elsewhere. When the team passes to the Scotch half-breed, François's tears at parting with Buck express the sad parting between loving owner and sled dog that neither can avoid.)*
7. They had worked the trip out with a pencil, so much to a dog, so many dogs, and so many days, Q. E. D. (Chap. 5, p. 50)  
*(London applies Q.E.D., the mathematical term for Quod erat demonstratum [Thus it was proved] to the question of how much food to pack for fourteen dogs. Hal, who is a poor disciplinarian, begins overfeeding by doubling the ration, followed by underfeeding when he realizes that he has violated his formula for making the food carry them to the end of the long, arduous trip.)*
8. "Gad, sir! Gad, sir!" stuttered a member of the latest dynasty, a king of the Skookum Benches. (Chap. 6, p. 83)  
*(The Chinook term "skookum" translates as strong or tough, a suitable descriptive for the macho types who wager with John Thornton against Buck's ability to start a heavy load frozen to the ground. "Bench" refers to a collection of dogs.)*
9. When Buck earned sixteen hundred dollars in five minutes for John Thornton, he made it possible for his master to pay off certain debts and to journey with his partners into the East after a fabled lost mine, the history of which was as old as the history of the country. (Chap. 7, p. 86)  
*(One of the recurrent motifs of frontier literature, the fabled lost mine characterizes Thornton's dreams of enrichment, which he shares with other get-rich-quick types who flock to the Yukon in search of gold. London warns at the outset, "Many men had sought it; few had found it; and more than a few there were who had never returned from the quest.")*
10. Buck multiplied himself, attacking from all sides, enveloping the herd in a whirlwind of menace, cutting out his victim as fast as it could rejoin its mates, wearing out the patience of creatures preyed upon, which is a lesser patience than that of creatures preying. (Chap. 7, p. 97)  
*(London observes Buck's evolution into a predator through naturalism, a philosophy of biological inquiry that views the influence of heredity and environment on the animal kingdom. The sacrifice of moose from the herd becomes a mechanistic, instinctual feeding on lesser beings. To Buck's success at feeding himself on animals in the wild, London applies determinism, a detached picture of life as though it lacked volition, pride, and planning. Rather, Buck appears to kill solely to satisfy the hunger pangs of his stomach.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

### Motivation

1. What turns Buck into a fighter?  
*(From his introduction to cruelty at the railway station when the rope chokes him, Buck begins suspecting humans of treachery, snarling and snapping at them, and trying to escape from his crate. In Dyea, he witnesses the wolf-like slash-and-run tactics that quickly end Curly's life and reduce her corpse to a pulp. In harness for the first time, Buck learns to obey Dave, the wheeler,*



but becomes a night-time warrior to protect his allotment of salmon and his burrow in the snow.

As Buck develops into a master sled dog, he creates enmity with Spitz, an experienced leader who recognizes Buck's rivalry. To defeat Spitz and end the extended tension between them, Buck fights outside the usual battle strategy by crushing his rival's foreleg and circling him until Spitz wears himself out. Buck retains his fighting ability in future battles, including the attack of Black Burton on John Thornton. The final battle with the Yeehats pits Buck against the chief. After tearing out the man's throat, Buck retreats into the wild, hunts a bear and moose when he needs food, and survives by his instinctive fighting ability.)

## Setting

2. How do Hal, Charles, and Mercedes meet their fate?

(The constantly shifting setting forces characters—human and dog—to adapt to the dangers of the Yukon. After Hal, Charles, and Mercedes overpack a sled at Skagway and team fourteen unlikely dogs to pull them into the wilderness, the animals gradually succumb to the misery of the trip and the hardships of overfeeding and underfeeding. Buck, who functions mechanically as his teammates die one by one, instinctively recognizes the arrival of the spring thaw.

At the White River, Hal insists that Buck pull the sled over the ice. Buck, who has learned about cold and steady footing on the ice, is willing to risk his life to a beating rather than continue over thin ice. John Thornton, who whittles peacefully in the background, tries to convince Hal that the river is too dangerous for a crossing. The rescue of Buck from Hal's club at the riverside becomes a symbol of Buck's future life with a man willing to put himself into danger for a dog. With little fanfare, London describes how Hal foolishly mashes on and drives his sled into the cracking ice. Sled, team, and humans vanish beneath the ice without a trace.)

## Character Development

3. Why does Buck love John Thornton?

(The introduction of John Thornton to the story restructures the relationship between man and dog. His first champion, François, whips Buck into shape to keep him going over the mail route, but takes pity on his sore pads and weeps at their parting. For personal reasons, Thornton intercedes between Buck and Hal to keep the man from killing the disobedient dog. After Hal drives on to his death and that of his family and team, Thornton becomes the fair and loving owner who treats Buck's wounds, feeds and rests him by the fireside, and introduces him to Nig and Skeet, two companion animals who have the leisure to play dog games.

After numerous surprisingly savage episodes in his life, Buck is thrilled to have a steady, dependable human master like Thornton. Willingly, he prepares to jump from a cliff for John and attacks Black Burton, a miner who hits his master. After rescuing John from a boating accident in the rapids at Forty Mile Creek and after winning a bet by pulling a thousand-pound load of flour, Buck belongs forever at his master's side. After Yeehats murder John, Buck resists the call of the wild to avenge John's death and to return each summer to mourn his passing.)

## Historical Setting

4. What does London illustrate about frontier history in the death of John Thornton?

(An ideal dog owner, John Thornton adjusts well to the wilderness. Like other frontiersmen who brave the Northland, he learns to adapt to cold, physical hardship, and human interaction. As are most of the men, he is a loner far from home who must survive by pluck and logic. Nonetheless, he gets into the spirit of boasting and gambling with drinkers at the saloon and twice risks Buck by urging him to jump over a cliff and to pull a sled carrying 1,000 pounds of flour. Witnessing his dog's total devotion, John ceases to risk losing him.

The major weakness in John's character is endemic on the Yukon in 1896—the frontier lust for riches from placer mines, shallow places in the earth's crust where prospectors easily remove gold nuggets. Lured by a rumor of a lost treasure to the east, John is willing to join with Pete and Hans and trek into unknown territory to an abandoned cabin to sluice and pan for gold. The historical significance of John's daring epitomizes an era that brought thousands flocking to strikes in California, Alaska, and Nevada without regard to Native American inhabitants and their territories. The trio gives no thought to the response of the Yeehats to insurgents. The rush north into the Yukon enticed neophytes who learned too late that the Canadian northwest was not easily tamed.)

## Theme

5. What is the law of club and fang?

(In Chapter One, Buck learns that a human subduer may be smaller in size and weight, but that his use of a club can force the 150-pound dog into submission. Grudgingly obeying the law of the club, Buck allows the human at the railway station to impose his will, not by moral right, but by superior force. The result is the transformation of Buck from friendly house pet to a snarling savage pounding the bars of his crate and raging against his tormentors that he has no food or water.

In the wilderness, Buck encounters the law of the fang. After observing dogs savaging Curly and reducing her to a torn carcass, Buck begins to understand that he must assure his own survival through physical force. Much of his learning involves

*unlearning the more genteel rules of civilization that he had obeyed at Judge Miller's estate in California's Santa Clara Valley. In the Yukon, the only good is that which contributes to his survival in a brutal frozen environment.)*

## Interpretation

6. Why does London choose a poetic title for the novel?

*(Long before the title of London's novel became a cliché for a return to bestiality, it cleverly and elegantly stated the transformation of Buck from pampered estate pet to feral animal. The use of simple, monosyllabic words for a title departs from the scientific terms of social Darwinism and from complicated biological explanations of Buck's yearning for life in the wild.*

*Buck experiences a connection with biological instinct that London defines as simply as though he were describing a human dream. The wolf call that lures the dog for weeks from John's campfire translates into temporal and physical terms the unspoken yearning in Buck for freedom to live as nature dictates. After John's death, Buck has no reason to return to human campfires. He has gradually equipped himself for the wild and deserves the opportunity to run free as his ancestors did. Both poetic and scientific, the title summarizes the passion within the great dog to merge with nature and live as his instinct directs.)*

## Conflict

7. Why does pulling a sled cause dissension in the dogs?

*(Living in close confines under harsh conditions, the sled dogs grow snappish and deadly. From his experience with Curly's death, Buck learns that dogs revert to pack mentality when they spy a sign of weakness. Attached to harness for the first time in his life, he must learn by trial and error how Dave turns the team and why François whips the dogs to make them function as one. By night, the dogs, weary and foot-sore, again must display their strength in protecting their allotment of salmon and choosing and guarding a burrow in the snow.*

*The constant comparison of strength and will in Buck and Spitz imbues Buck with a desire to lead. Gradually working his way up to leader, he takes the front position by killing his rival. From a new perspective, however, he learns that pulling from the front does not end his troubles. Dissension breaks out anew in the team after Hal, Charles, and Mercedes create a team of 14 dogs of indiscriminate background and ability to pull a sled. Instead of fighting rivals for top spot, Buck watches as wheelers succumb to overfeeding, hunger, and exhaustion. Dissension passes from Buck quarreling with other animals to Buck defying his master, a foolish neophyte in the Northland who tries to force his lead dog to pull a sled onto thinning ice to the jeopardy of all.)*

## Atmosphere

8. What types of environment does Buck encounter? *(From the opening scenes at Judge Miller's California estate in the Santa Clara Valley, where Buck has lived for four years, he departs from the orchard with Manuel to an express train bound for Seattle. Broken, Buck passes to two mail deliverers, Perrault and François, who hitch him to a sled harness at Dyea beach and mush him over hundreds of miles of Northland territory. After the Scotch half-breed takes charge of the team, Buck encounters a monotonous, debilitating run from Skagway to Dawson and back.*

*When newcomers—Hal, Charles, and Mercedes—buy Buck and the team, they set out from Skagway and work the dogs to death one by one. Ignorant of survival in the Northland, the trio makes a fatal mistake as winter turns to spring. At the White River, the dog passes to John Thornton, who rescues him and rehabilitates him at a peaceful campsite.*

*Adventures with John take Buck to town and to the East. In unknown territory, the trio finds an abandoned cabin and set up their prospecting operation. Gradually, the call of the wild lures Buck spiritually and physically from human control. After Yeehats kill his master, Buck surrenders to the Yukon wild and lives like a wolf in a pack.)*

## Author Purpose

9. Why does the novel appeal to readers?

*(In lists of favorite books, The Call of the Wild recurs in the treasured reading of people of all stations and abilities. The success of London at creating a dog hero passes beyond a mere dog story to a study of natural instincts in the Yukon wilderness. Because Buck lies peacefully by his master and allows the feral past to creep into his consciousness, the reader feels the gradual loss of civilized ways as Buck learns to live among other beings in the wild and to maintain supremacy.*

*Readers typically identify with the will to dominate, the atavistic urge that Buck recalls from the time his ancestors encountered the unidentified hairy man. Buck shows his will to regain his freedom and his desire to lead, but he wins control only by fighting rivals and surviving perils. London's presentation of the theme of survival of the fittest builds reader loyalty to the hero, who deserves his autonomy. In elegant prose stripped to the bone of pretense, London speaks the dog's story without unfair representation or flowery phrases. By the end of the story, the passage of Buck into Yeehat ghost lore produces a pleasing ending tinged with the yearning of the great dog for the man who once loved him.)*

## Structure

10. Why does London set up the story in stand-alone chapters?

*(London creates an episodic novel from chapters that are complete in themselves. Each increment in Buck's transformation from civilized life to the wild reveals his interaction with a set of characters, but he is the only character who appears in each segment. After London makes use of characters at each stage of the novel, such as Curly, Dave, and Spitz, he disposes of them and moves on with Buck's adventures in the Northland.)*

*As the story moves inexorably toward Bucks' reversion to the wild, London illustrates how various incidents propel him farther from Judge Miller's pet to a runner with the wolves. The episodes point up the steps of the process as Buck's character shifts at the end of Chapter Seven, when Buck has become the giant timber wolf that the Yeehats call the ghost dog. Like the wolves he runs with, he retains a shred of connection with humanity by his annual return to wail his loss of John Thornton.)*

## How Language Works

Drawing on rhetorical skills, Jack London applies numerous poetic techniques to make his sentences resound with meaning.

1. As though taking Buck's part, London asks in human style a rhetorical question, "What did they want with him, these strange men?" The innocence of Buck's curiosity prefaces a long and painful acquaintance with human manipulators who care nothing for Buck's confusion, pain, or displacement from his old life.
2. Alliteration, metaphor, and extensive descriptors build on Buck's rise to full physical power: "A carnivorous animal, living on a straight meat diet, he was in full flower, at the high tide of his life, overflowing with vigor and virility." The pairing of *f* and *v* sounds and the modification of animal by carnivorous, living, and overflowing enhance the image of Buck's development into the peak of condition.
3. To express the disgust that Buck feels for his lot, London describes his journey over the mail route with a periodic sentence: "Four times he had covered the distance between Salt Water and Dawson, and the knowledge that, jaded and tired, he was facing the same trail once more, made him bitter." By ending the sentence with the most important word, bitter, the author establishes the

depth of Buck's analysis and his recognition that he may have to run the cyclical itinerary until he drops.

4. London applies repetition and alliteration to Buck's endless labor: "Day after day, for days unending, Buck toiled in the traces." The linkage of words by *d* and *t* sounds and the reiteration of day expresses the monotony and torment of work without goal, without rest.
5. London applies a simile to Buck's understanding of the call that pulls him into the wilderness: "He linked the past with the present, and the eternity behind him throbbed through him in a mighty rhythm to which he swayed as the tides and seasons swayed." As though Buck were an integral part of nature, the author connects him to cyclical shifts of tide and season that eventually guide his life. In the end, Buck is one with the nomadic life of the wolf.

## Across the Curriculum

### Art

1. Use desktop publishing to create a memorial to John Thornton or the Yeehat chief, a family crest for the Jack London family or the Skookum Bench King, a map of Beauty Ranch or the Salt Water Mail route, advertisements for sled dogs or guides to the Chilkoot Divide, figurehead for the *Narwhal*, Dyea or Seattle welcome sign, tourist map of the Pacific coastline from Santa Clara Valley to the Yukon, shipboard or harbor rules, or newspaper accounts of prospecting or transporting goods and mail by dog sled.
2. Join with a group to draw a frieze or cartoon strip of Buck's adventures. Show the development of his expertise in pulling, burrowing into the snow, leading, fighting, protecting his food, and staying alive.

### Cinema

1. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the novel which would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and stunts.
2. View *White Fang*, *The River*, *A Night to Remember*, *The Call of the Wild*, *The Poseidon Adventure*, and *Ice Station Zebra*. Contrast Buck's courage with that of human char-

# The Call of the Wild

Jack London

acters in film.

## Drama

1. Draw stage settings for a dramatization of different scenes from the novel. Supply sketches of costumes and props.
2. Create a storyboard account of Buck's departure to the wild.

## Economics

1. Discuss John Thornton's collection of \$1,600 in wagers. Contrast this figure against the wage of a writer, prospector, saloon owner, ferry captain, or mail carrier of the period.
2. Create a web site introducing children to varied work animals. Include sled and guide dogs, guard dogs, corpse- and narcotics-sniffing dogs, elephants, llamas, camels, water buffalo, donkeys, mules, horses, monkeys, chimpanzees, dolphins, and seals.

## Education

1. Role-play the job of a dogsled driver or postal manager selecting dogs to train for service. Outline the steps necessary to introduce a new dog to the team, attach harness, teach the commands, examine paws for wear or wounds, show how to protect servings of salmon, avoid fights, and demonstrate how to make a burrow in the snow for the night.
2. Propose a curriculum for a class to teach panners how to search for gold in placer mines. Comment on operating a sluice box, protecting the body from cold and wet, making a claim, following a trail in the snow to a lost treasure, and obeying local laws.

## Geography and Culture

1. Create a mural or web site on the settlement of the Yukon. Comment on the sharp separation of classes into prospectors, saloon owners, mail carriers, women, and Indians. Account for the high attrition of newcomers during hard times before the area acquired grocery stores, trading posts, forts, mail service, law officers, and a railroad.
2. Create a map on which you pinpoint locations of pertinent scenes. Determine what part of the story takes place in Alaska and what part in

Canada.

## Health

1. Make a written report on the debilitating effects of cold. Explain why John requires a period of rehabilitation before he returns to prospecting in the wild. Discuss why François's handmade leather foot covers save Buck from trauma to his pads.
2. List life-saving and first aid skills essential to survival in the arctic, particularly swimming and diving, CPR, exterminating animals with rabies, treating bruises and fatigue, and warding off the effects of extreme cold.

## History and Social Studies

1. Make a report on the liberation of women and sexual mores in London's lifetime. Explain why the author belittles the character of Mercedes as a silly, frivolous, and self-absorbed minor character whose custom it was "to be helpless." Why would London imply that women had no place on the Yukon frontier? How does the squaw contrast Mercedes?
2. Report orally on the physical and psychological effects of clubbing, choking, caging, and starving. Account for the sound of Buck's voice, his breathing problems, snapping and snarling, and his suspicion of all who pass his crate. Contrast Buck's environment in John's camp with earlier camps on the trail.
3. Summarize the events that occur during the Iditarod. Explain why these springtime activities ease the tensions that build during a long, cold winter and how they establish camaraderie among local residents of Alaska.
4. Investigate and create a media display concerning the role of the RCMP in the survival of prospectors.
5. Make a timeline of Jack London's life and career. Note the publication of each major work, travels, marriages, children, jobs, and growth of his reputation, both in the United States and England. Insert information about the parallel careers of his colleagues, Mark Twain and Robert Louis Stevenson.

## Language Arts

1. Make an exhaustive alphabetized glossary of technical and scientific terms from the novel.
2. Using examples from the novel, make an extended definition of feral animal. Define the “call” that turns Buck into a pack runner in the wild.
3. Make a list of sensory images under the headings of sound, touch, sight, smell, and taste. For example, “He raged through the camp, smelling and digging in every likely place, snarling so frightfully that Pike heard and shivered in his hiding-place.”
4. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, poems, and stories that describe the hard life on the frontier.
5. Make a list of books that you would take along on an extended trip to the Yukon. Divide your list into fiction, nonfiction, and reference. Include a diary or journal and explain how you would record your experiences.
8. Compose a theme in which you compare London’s depiction of a seagoing voyage aboard the *Narwhal* with similar episodes in Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd* or *Moby Dick*, James Michener’s *Hawaii*, Theodore Taylor’s *The Cay*, Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, Paula Fox’s *Slave Dancer*, James N. Hall and Charles B. Nordhoff’s *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and Alex Haley’s *Roots*. Outline the passing scenery as the boat passes Seattle and British Columbia on its way to the Yukon.
7. Write an extended definition of naturalism. Give specific examples from any of London’s novels or short stories, especially *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, and “To Build a Fire.”
8. Create an online chart of evocative, poetic techniques found in London’s writing. Concentrate on dialect, alliteration, tactile imagery, repetition, periodic and balanced sentences, caesura, onomatopoeia, simile, hyperbole, understatement, cacophony, euphony, and metaphor.

## Law

1. Read aloud state laws governing the rights and responsibilities of a prospector in the Yukon. Explain the need for firearms like the Colt revolver among people who make their living in the wild.

2. Make a chart of advice to John, Pete, and Hans concerning how to stake a claim and pan for gold and how to have bags of gold assayed to determine their worth.
3. Make an extended definition of the slang term “shanghai.” Explain how it describes Buck’s sudden disappearance from Judge Miller’s estate in the Santa Clara Valley and his rapid transport north.
4. Discuss with a group why governments make laws against tormenting, neglecting, or mistreating animals.

## Math

1. Use a variety of shapes from a computer graphing program to illustrate the rise and fall of west coast gold rushes. Contrast them to similar surges in silver, oil, and uranium prospecting.
2. Collect lines from the novel that disclose passages of time and distance. For example, note how long Buck travels over the Salt Water Mail route and how long he lives with John Thornton.
3. Determine how many miles Buck covers on his initial voyage from California to Seattle and Dyea Beach.

## Psychology

1. Discuss the nature of bullying, tyranny, and random violence. Explain why the microcosm of a dogsled often explodes into senseless savagery, then returns to brooding and veiled threats between the leader and rivals.
2. Explain how humans and animals differ in their responses to hard labor, sleep deprivation, fear, suspicion, hunger, and cold. Discuss why lying by the campfire with John Thornton contents Buck and gives him a chance to dream.
3. Describe aloud the drive for survival. Explain why Dave refuses to give up his position in harness and why Buck goes to dangerous extremes to rescue John from the rapids.
4. Write an encyclopedia entry on dog training. Explain how owners determine how to master an undisciplined dog without harming its body or breaking its spirit.

## Science

1. Chart the migratory lifespan of a wolf in the Yukon wilderness. Contrast it with human activities based on need, whim, physical need, business, or logic.
2. Make a web site study of the ecology of the Yukon. List indigenous animals such as moose, wolves, and black bear along with the natural predators and food plants of each. Note adaptive techniques by which sled dogs survive cold.

## Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of disruption and violence in the lives of the characters.
2. Compile a list of actions and statements that demonstrate the frontier spirit.
3. Compose a scene in which Judge Miller discovers Buck's disappearance and trails Manuel to the railroad station. Enumerate ways that the judge might trace Buck all the way to Dyea.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each.

## Teacher's Notes

## Vocabulary

Complete each of the following sentences with an appropriate synonym for the word in parentheses from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

callous	fabled	inexorable	palpitant	soliloquized
callowness	fundamental	insidious	pertinacity	stamina
convalescence	futile	intimated	plethoric	vigilant
domesticated	impartial	jaded	retrogression	wantonness
enticed	incoherent	obdurate	snarling	whirlwind

1. Buck had merely (hinted) \_\_\_\_\_ his displeasure.
2. Perrault and François were fair men, calm and (unbiased) \_\_\_\_\_ in administering justice.
3. Buck's development or (backward movement) \_\_\_\_\_ was rapid.
4. The (wily) \_\_\_\_\_ revolt led by Buck had destroyed the solidarity of the team.
5. There was no hope for Spitz. Buck was (unyielding) \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Hal's cartridge belt advertised his (immorality) \_\_\_\_\_.
7. As Buck grew stronger, Skeet and Nig (lured) \_\_\_\_\_ him into all sorts of ridiculous games.
8. O'Brien thumped down a (full) \_\_\_\_\_ by the side of Matthewson's.
9. Buck and the hairy man were alert and (watchful) \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Buck killed to eat, not from (waste) \_\_\_\_\_.
11. "Answers to the name of Buck," the man (muttered) \_\_\_\_\_.
12. The man's club had beaten into Buck a more (basic) \_\_\_\_\_ and primitive code.
13. The (tamed) \_\_\_\_\_ generations fell from Buck.
14. François swore strange barbarous oaths and stamped the snow in (pointless) \_\_\_\_\_ rage.
15. François was (unmoving) \_\_\_\_\_.

## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match each of the following phrases from the novel with its meaning. Place the letter of your answer in the blank at left:

- |                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ 1. despatches         | A. train              |
| _____ 2. the wild brother   | B. wolf               |
| _____ 3. a sated aristocrat | C. legendary treasure |
| _____ 4. express car        | D. team drivers       |
| _____ 5. aurora borealis    | E. northern lights    |
| _____ 6. rotten snow        | F. mail               |
| _____ 7. Sunland            | G. long talk          |
| _____ 8. poor sore feets    | H. thaw               |
| _____ 9. mushers            | I. pull               |
| _____ 10. frozen horsehide  | J. unexplored region  |
| _____ 11. gas               | K. dog food           |
| _____ 12. the call          | L. California         |
| _____ 13. Eldorado          | M. team               |
| _____ 14. virgin East       | N. instinct           |
| _____ 15. mush              | O. Buck               |

### Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. To get even with Judge Miller for cheating him out of his pay, Manuel steals Buck and sells him for \$50.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The man in the red sweater is unable to beat Buck into submission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Dave and Sol-leks want nothing more than to be left alone and to toil in the traces.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Buck feels no hurt or disappointment when Perrault and François sell him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Hal and Charles cannot even out food for the fourteen sled dogs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. John Thornton tries to warn the newcomers that the ice on the White River is thinning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Buck no longer hears the call of the wild after he learns to love John Thornton.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Unlike most of the men in the Yukon, Thornton is not really interested in searching for gold.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Claim jumpers murder Thornton, Pete, and Hans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In the harsh Yukon, the unfit do not deserve to survive.



## Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

### Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill in the blanks below with a word or phrase which completes the sentence. Place your answer in the space provided.

1. On \_\_\_\_\_ beach, Buck encounters \_\_\_\_\_ for the first time and learns the rules for surviving in the arctic wilderness.
2. The savagery of a pack of dogs ends the life of \_\_\_\_\_, a defenseless female unacquainted with \_\_\_\_\_-and-run wolf tactics. After a husky knocks her down, the others rip her corpse.
3. Instructed by François's \_\_\_\_\_ and Dave's teeth, Buck masters trace and trail up the \_\_\_\_\_ Divide.
4. Along the way to Dawson, \_\_\_\_\_ makes moccasins from his \_\_\_\_\_ to cover Buck's sore feet.
5. At \_\_\_\_\_, Perrault and Francois take a new assignment and turn the team over to a Scotch half-breed as part of a dozen-team \_\_\_\_\_ train to Dawson.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe how local people like the squaw, Black Burton, Matthewson, O'Brien, Hans, Pete, and drinkers at the saloon make the most of Yukon hardships.
2. Explain why Buck runs with the pack.
3. Discuss London's image of Mercedes as a silly, trivial woman in a dangerous place.
4. Account for the impact of Curly and Spitz's deaths on Buck.
5. Summarize events that lead up to the one thousand-dollar bet.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Select the phrase that completes each of the following sentences. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. On Judge Miller's estate, Buck is
- Manuel's beloved pet.
  - a sated aristocrat.
  - a primordial beast.
  - companion and protector of the judge's sons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The law of the club refers to
- human dominance.
  - survival of the fittest.
  - rules of the trace and trail.
  - Yeehat menace in the arctic wilderness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Buck learns the lessons of the dog team primarily from
- the man in the red sweater.
  - Spitz.
  - Dave.
  - the newcomers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Buck encounters humans that
- respect his leadership as wheeler.
  - misunderstand him.
  - inspire primordial dreams.
  - pass out of his life forever.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Buck's chief antagonist is
- François.
  - Dave.
  - Spitz.
  - a rabid wolf.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Hal, Charles, and Mercedes die because they
- insist on traveling in winter.
  - are too savage for the demands of the wild.
  - fail to adapt to the environment.
  - are overcome by the lust for gold.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Buck does not prove his loyalty by
- trying to jump off a cliff.
  - backing away from the Yeehat chief.
  - saving Thornton from drowning.
  - pulling a heavy sled.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In the camp, Buck dreams of
- the ways of his ancestors.
  - the warm, sun-kissed California valley.
  - following the trail east with Thornton.
  - leading a team from Skagway to Dawson.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Buck is not free to respond to the call until
- Yeehats drive him away.
  - the prospectors decide to return to Stewart River.
  - the trio pans gold.
  - he finds his master's corpse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The expression of naturalism is most obvious in
- the inhuman greed of prospectors.
  - Buck's metamorphosis.
  - the adventures of Buck on the way to the station.
  - François's tears for Buck.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The squaw
- knows how to trade for what she wants.
  - recognizes the dog's need for moccasins.
  - substitutes horsehide for salmon in Buck's diet.
  - points out the location of the abandoned cabin to the east.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. After recovering from the boat accident,
- Skeet and Nig teach Buck to hunt moose.
  - the Scotch half-breed trades for a new team at Skagway.
  - Thornton determines to make camp.
  - Buck retreats into the wild to run with wolves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Buck gains his legendary name from
- the Skookum Bench king.
  - Yeehats.
  - Matthewson.
  - men on the Salt Water Mail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Buck is puzzled by
- the wheeler's job.
  - Thornton's order to jump.
  - dogs burrowed in the snow.
  - the taste of salmon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Thornton is drawn to
- a bet of \$1,600.
  - the laughter over dogs running loose on main street after Hal's sled overturns.
  - the sight of Yeehats circling his camp.
  - rumors of a lost treasure.

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## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part II: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Fill in the blanks of the following sentences.

1. Manuel, a \_\_\_\_\_'s helper, sells Buck for \$\_\_\_\_\_.
2. With a great tug, Buck pulls a sled carrying \_\_\_\_\_ pounds of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Every \_\_\_\_\_, Buck returns to the valley where \_\_\_\_\_ died.
4. Because Buck refuses to cross the \_\_\_\_\_ River, \_\_\_\_\_ beats him nearly to death.
5. At \_\_\_\_\_ City, Buck attacks Burton, a miner who hits \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided.

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| _____ | 1. Where does Buck learn the law of the club?                      |
| _____ | 2. What food does Buck steal without getting caught?               |
| _____ | 3. Which dogs want only to pull the sled?                          |
| _____ | 4. On what does John spend the money he wins?                      |
| _____ | 5. What demand grows in the Yukon at the beginning of the novel?   |
| _____ | 6. What herd animals does Buck prey on?                            |
| _____ | 7. What animal is beset by mosquitoes?                             |
| _____ | 8. How much does Buck weigh in his prime?                          |
| _____ | 9. What association does the judge belong to?                      |
| _____ | 10. Which dog dies immediately after the <i>Narwhal's</i> arrival? |

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how Buck learns to hunt in the wild.
2. Contrast Judge Miller, François, and John Thornton as dog managers.
3. Describe examples of survivalism in the wild.
4. Summarize the hardships of a Yukon mail route.
5. Describe Hal, Charles, and Mercedes's first departure with a dog team.

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

- |                  |                |                  |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1. intimidated   | 6. callowness  | 11. soliloquized |
| 2. impartial     | 7. enticed     | 12. fundamental  |
| 3. retrogression | 8. plethoric   | 13. domesticated |
| 4. insidious     | 9. vigilant    | 14. futile       |
| 5. inexorable    | 10. wantonness | 15. obdurate     |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. H  | 11. G |
| 2. B | 7. L  | 12. N |
| 3. O | 8. M  | 13. C |
| 4. A | 9. D  | 14. J |
| 5. E | 10. K | 15. I |

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. F  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. T | 10. T |

#### Part III: Completion (20 points)

1. Dyea, snow
2. Curly, slash
3. whip, Chilkoot
4. François, boots
5. Skagway, mail

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. C  | 11. A |
| 2. A | 7. B  | 12. C |
| 3. D | 8. A  | 13. B |
| 4. D | 9. D  | 14. C |
| 5. C | 10. B | 15. D |

#### Part II: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

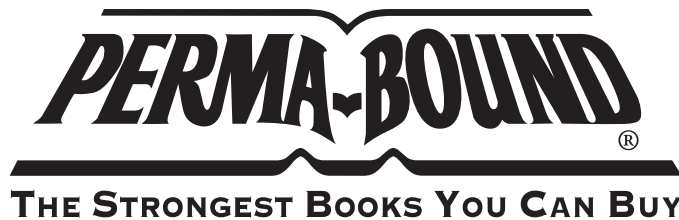
1. gardener, 50
2. 1,000, flour
3. summer, Thornton
4. White, Hal
5. Circle, John

#### Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. railroad station  | 6. moose          |
| 2. bacon             | 7. black bear     |
| 3. Dave and Sol-leks | 8. 150 pounds     |
| 4. prospecting       | 9. raisin growers |
| 5. for dogs          | 10. Curly         |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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