



# The Call of the Wild

*Jack London*

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## **The Call of the Wild** Jack London

Jack London was an American writer and social activist best known for the popular classics *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, and *The Sea-Wolf*. *The Call of the Wild* is a classic still read by many school-aged children today about the adventures of a dog named Buck, a 140 lb Saint Bernard and Scotch Shepherd mix. Buck is abducted from a comfortable life as a pet and tossed into the chaos of the Klondike Gold Rush and the brutal realities of frontier life. Buck changes hands a number of times before landing in the kindly hands of John Thornton. By the end, Buck sheds the veneer of civilization and relies on primordial instinct and learned experience to emerge as a leader in the wild.

"To this day Jack London is the most widely read American writer in the world," E. L. Doctorow wrote in *The New York Times Book Review*. Generally considered to be Jack London's greatest achievement, *The Call of the Wild* brought him international acclaim when it was published in 1903. His story of the dog Buck, who learns to survive in the bleak Yukon wilderness, is viewed by many as his symbolic autobiography. "No other popular writer of his time did any better writing than you will find in *The Call of the Wild*," said H. L. Mencken. "Here, indeed, are all the elements of sound fiction."

"Jack London, having made us acquainted in his previous stories with the people of the Far Northwest, proceeds in his latest and best book; '*The Call of the Wild*,' to introduce us to a little lower stratum of the same society – a most fascinating company of dogs, good, bad, and indifferent, of which a huge fellow, St. Bernard and collie crossed, named Buck is the bright particular star.

"Better still, Mr. London's dogs are not merely people masquerading in canine skins. At least this is true to a far greater extent than has usually be the case even with the best dogs of fiction; and during the delightful hour it takes to read this story one feels that he is really in a world in which dog standards, dog motives, and dog feelings are the subject of analysis, and that Mr. London himself has somehow penetrated a step or two behind the barrier which often seems to slight and transparent between man and 'man's best friend.'

"The story is really the record of the uncivilizing of Buck, the process by which the latest wild impulses of his nature, evoked by the life of hardship to which he was subjected, gradually gained the ascendancy, and finally called him back for good and all to the life of the forest and the leadership of a pack of wolves.

"If nothing else makes Mr. London's book popular it ought to be rendered so by the complete way in which it will satisfy the love of dog fights apparently inherent in every man. Very nearly every dog's paw was against Buck, and he won his way not only to eminence, but even to just plain ordinary permission to exist, by proving himself times out of number the best all-around dog in the train. It is the rule there that no civilized dog can stand up against the 'huskies,' or native dogs, but Buck accomplished even that remarkable feat because he had intelligence enough to adapt himself to new conditions." -*The New York Times*, July 25, 1903

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