

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

The Call of the Wild

Jack London

NOVEL UNITS[™]



NEW WAYS TO TEACH READING,
WRITING, & CRITICAL THINKING



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THE CALL OF THE WILD

by
Jack London

Teacher Guide

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Note

The text used to prepare this guide was the Puffin Classics softcover, published by The Penguin Group, 1982. Page references may vary, if other editions are used.

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, visualizing

Literary Elements

Point of view, story elements,
mood, characterization,
conflict, climax, similes/
metaphors

Listening/Speaking

Role playing, discussion,
interviewing, debate

Vocabulary

Word mapping

Comprehension

Predicting, cause/effect

Writing

Response journals,
freewriting, descriptive,
news writing, letter writing,
research

Writing Idea

Read about Darwin’s theory of evolution. Explain what he means by “survival of the fittest” and explain how that principle applies to Buck’s behavior in this chapter.

Literary Analysis: Mood

Mood is the strongest feeling or emotion in a piece of writing. The terms used to describe the mood of a novel are generally the same words we use to describe a person’s mood: angry, sad, fearful, etc. The mood often changes in different parts of a story. Have students reread the passage describing Curly’s death (page 24) and examine how the mood in that passage differs from the mood in the passage describing Spitz’s death. (The mood of the first passage is one of horror and anger; the mood of the second is one of pride and jubilation—“He deserved it.”)

Chapter 4

Vocabulary

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| obdurate 54 | solidarity 56 | celerity 56 | curiously 56 |
| heredity 59 | percent 56 | lugubriously 56 | floundered 63 |
| convulsive 64 | | | |

Discussion Questions

- How did François react when he found out that Spitz was dead? Why? (He was impressed and relieved; now that the tension was over, the dogs would make better time.)
- With Spitz dead, who was chosen as lead dog? (Buck.) How did Buck make it clear that he wanted that position? (Buck drove Sol-leks out of the lead position, refused to be caught and homesick in any position except as lead.)
- Why did the men give in to him? (After an hour, they wanted to get going.) Were they sorry later? (No, he proved to be an excellent lead dog.)
- How did François and Perrault leave Buck’s life? Where? (On arrival at Skaguay, they received orders to go elsewhere.) Do you think he missed them afterward?
- What did Buck dream of by the campfire on the way to Dawson? (Judge Miller’s place, the man in the red sweater, the death of Curly, good things to eat, a primitive man) Why do you suppose he wasn’t homesick? (He has reverted in large part to his primitive self and is no longer the dog he was in California.)
- How was the cook like the primitive man in Buck’s primordial memories? Why do you suppose Jack London described them in similar terms? (See diagram on page 17.)

Cook	Dream-Man
"half-breed" by the fire rounded, muscular longer-legged	hairy, short by the fire stringy muscles long-armed

- Why did the driver put Dave in the harness, knowing that it would kill him? (Dave was miserable when taken out of the harness, refused to run behind the sled, bit through Sol-leks traces, making a circle he still wanted to lead.) Did the driver have sympathy for the dog? (Yes)
- Why do you suppose Jack London refers to the "Scotch half-breed" without giving him a name? What attitude does this suggest? (He is emphasizing the parallel between this man and the anonymous primitive man in Buck's dream.)
- Why did the "Scotch half-breed" shoot Dave? (He was too sick to pull, and miserable when left behind.) What were his alternatives? How do you think he felt about doing it? Why did he leave Dave in the camp, then walk back to shoot him? (probably so that the other dogs would not witness the killing) How do all the other dogs feel? (They knew what had happened and probably realized it could have been them.)
- How is Buck different in this chapter than he was in the first three? (In the first three chapters he was learning how to survive in the wild, calling up his instincts; now he is thoroughly acclimated.) How do you think he will behave in the final two chapters?
- Prediction:** What will happen to the dogs once they deliver the load of mail to Skaguay?

Writing Idea

Compose one of the letters that Buck and the others are delivering to the gold miners from their families.

Literary Analysis: Setting

The setting of a story is the *time and place* for the events. *In what year does this story take place?* (1897; see page 11.) *Where do Buck and the others live with Judge Miller?* (San Francisco, California) *What major U.S. cities did Buck pass through on his way to the Klondike?* (San Francisco and Seattle) *In what country is Buck now?* (Canada)