



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## THE CALL OF THE WILD

BY JACK LONDON



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Reading****Geography**

**Objectives:** Identifying geographic locations from the story on a map of the era  
Using a 1900's era map to locate geographic areas from the story

**Activity**

1. Locate the following places on the following Official Map of the Klondike and Yukon Region from 1897. Place the numbers 1 – 11 next to the correct location on the map.
  1. Klondike Region
  2. Dawson
  3. Dyea
  4. Chilkoot Divide or Pass
  5. Big Salmon and Little Salmon Rivers
  6. Pelly
  7. Tahkenna River
  8. Lake LaBarge
  9. White Horse Rapids
  10. White Pass
  11. Skagway (Not on the map – approximate location)
2. Trace a path from Skagway to Dawson, going through the White Pass, by the White Horse Rapids, over the Tahkenna River, stopping at Pelly, crossing the Big and Little Salmon Rivers, and then on to Dawson City.
3. Save this map; you will need it for the survival guide created in a future activity.

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## Chapters 1 and 2

### Characterization and Theme I

**Objectives:** Tracing the change in Buck's character/temperament after he is kidnapped from his home in the Santa Clara Valley  
Recognizing theme and providing supporting detail

#### Activity

After leaving the home of his puppyhood, Buck has many new experiences or firsts. For example, in Chapter 1, Manuel places a rope around Buck's neck. Buck does not like the rope, but he accepts it because he trusts man and assumes that man has wisdom beyond his own. Buck is surprised when the strange man tightens the rope around his neck, cutting off his air.

“Never in all his life had he been so vilely treated, and never in all his life had he been so angry.” (Pg. 13)

Buck experiences two firsts—he is badly treated, and he is angry.

Complete the following chart, noting the firsts Buck experiences in the beginning two chapters. The first one is done as an example.

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 1 – 5****Foreshadowing**

**Objective:** Identifying passages in the text which foreshadow later action

**Activity**

Begin a Foreshadowing Log for Chapters 1 – 5. Find passages from the story that foreshadow events or actions later in the novel. Note to the Teacher the impression the foreshadowing has on you as a reader. What questions does it raise in your mind that might pique your interest or build suspense? Finally, as you continue to read, complete the chart by indicating when, where, or how the author subsequently fulfills the foreshadowing. The first one is done for you as an example. Find at least one additional example of foreshadowing in each of Chapters 1 – 5.

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**Chapters 3, 4, and 5****Mood and Writing**

**Objectives:** Recognizing how descriptive language can be used to convey a mood and an image  
Using descriptive detail to create image and mood

**Activity**

An author uses words to create visual images. Through the use of specific details, the writer conveys both a mood and an image. For example, in Chapter 3, London describes the hungry dogs who invade the camp:

“Never had Buck seen such dogs. It seemed as though their bones would burst through their skins. They were mere skeletons, draped loosely in draggled hides, with blazing eyes and slavered fangs. But the hunger-madness made them terrifying, irresistible. There was no opposing them.” (Pg. 28)

The mood of this passage is one of fear and tension. The image the reader visualizes from this passage is that of desperate, fierce, starving dogs.

As you read Chapters 3, 4, and 5 complete the following **Mood and Image Chart**. Find two or more passages in each chapter and Note to the Teacher on the chart what the passage conveys. Find passages that convey different moods such as happiness, contentment, fear, loneliness...

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapters 6 and 7

### Plot

**Objective:** Relating elements of native culture to the plot of a novel

#### Activity

Read the following information about Alaskan totem poles. List three facts about totem poles you find interesting.

The Innuits of southeastern Alaska were one of six tribes to carve totem poles. The poles told stories of important events in the tribe's history. Figures on the poles were not gods, and they were not worshiped. They were symbolic of important figures from the tribe's past.

Totem poles often had bold carvings and massive size. Most poles were carved from red cedar and often painted with yellow, red, blue, and black—all colors which could be obtained from natural materials. Some tribes traded with white settlers to get additional paint colors.

The raising of a new totem pole was a reason for a large ceremony attracting hundreds of people. The village that carved the pole hosted the large festival so that totem poles became a symbol of prosperity.

The top figure or carving on the pole was usually the clan crest—often an eagle, raven, thunder bird, bear, etc. The remaining figures on the pole represented characters and events in a story

In Chapter 6, Buck performs several extraordinary acts demonstrating his love and devotion to Thornton. London describes Buck's deeds as putting "his name many notches higher on the totem-pole of Alaskan fame." In small groups, create a totem pole telling the story of Buck's love for his master. You can build a totem pole, using construction paper and colored pencils, or you can simply draw a picture of your totem pole.

Some incidents you might include are

- Buck jumps into the river to save Thornton.
- Buck attacks and nearly kills the man who hit Thornton.
- Buck pulls a sled loaded with one thousand pounds.

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## Chapters 6 and 7

### Panel Discussion

**Objectives:** Analyzing and evaluation newspaper articles  
Inferring the thoughts and opinions of the author

#### Activity

Following this page are two stories about pit bull attacks, one article on landlord/tenant law, and an editorial opinion defending pit bulls. Read these articles in small groups and consider the following questions:

1. Should pit bulls be banned from residential areas?
2. Should the owners of pit bulls be held responsible, morally, financially, and criminally for the behavior of their pets?
3. Are pit bulls a misunderstood breed that are unfairly labeled as vicious?
4. Why do people want to own pit bulls?
5. How far can a parent of a young child go to protect a child if there is a potentially dangerous pit bull living in the neighborhood?
6. What behaviors do you think a dog must demonstrate to be labeled “vicious”?
7. Consider the idea of naturalism—that man and animals are both prisoners of instinct, environment, and heredity. If this theory is correct, can the problem of the pit bull be solved?

Also as a group, consider the text of *The Call of the Wild* to support your conclusions about what Jack London's position would be on this issue. For example, London writes,

“Irresistible impulses seized him. He would be lying in camp, dozing lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head would lift and his ears cock up, intent and listening, and he would spring to his feet and dash away, and on and on, for hours,…” (Pg. 69).

This passage implies that London believes dogs, like Buck, are driven to actions by forces they do not understand and cannot resist. There may be other parts of the novel that lead you to a different conclusion. Look for details to support your opinions.

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 6 and 7****Theme**

**Objective:** Identifying incidents in a plot which support the novel's theme

**Activity**

In Chapter 7, Buck leaves the love and safety of John Thornton's camp to roam, like a wild wolf, in the forest. After Thornton's death, for Buck, "the last tie was broken. Man and the claims of man no longer bound him." (Pg. 76) Thematically, his transformation from a civilized house pet to a wild dog/wolf is complete.

Create a three-panel cartoon depicting Buck's transformation from Thornton's loyal dog to a wild dog. Use three different incidents from Chapter 7 to create the three panels of the cartoon. Add any appropriate captions or heading.



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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapters 6 and 7

### Characterization, Legend, and Writing

**Objective:** Interpreting character traits from the text to create a poem or song which commemorates or memorializes the character

#### Activity

At the end of the book, London writes that the Yeehats, the Alaskan Indians, tell of:

“...a Ghost dog that runs at the head of the pack. They are afraid of this Ghost Dog, for it has cunning greater than they, stealing from their camps in fierce winters, robbing their traps, slaying their dogs, and defying their bravest hunters.” (Pg.77)

Buck has become a legend to the Yeehats. When they speak of the Ghost Dog, they confer extraordinary talents to the supernatural dog.

In small groups, write a poem or a song about each of the following incidents. The first line of the poem is also provided for each of the incidents. Refer to the book to find details about each incident. In your song or poem, exaggerate the incident so that Buck and his actions are bigger than life, like a legend.

1. On Pages 71-72, Buck returns to camp a changed dog after he kills the black bear; he knows that he is a killer. Write a poem with the first line “Never was there such a dog” describing the transformation Thornton sees in Buck.
2. On Page 72, as soon as Buck leaves the camp, he becomes transformed into a wild animal. Write a poem with the first line “At once he became a thing of the wild.”
3. On Page 74, Buck tirelessly tracks the bull moose. Write a poem about this kill with the first line “He pulled the great moose down.”
4. On Page 75, Buck attacks the Yeehats who killed Thornton. Write a poem about this attack with the first line “A live hurricane of fury.”
5. On Page 76, Buck mourns for Thornton. Write a poem about Buck’s feelings with the first line “The last tie was broken.”
6. On Page 77, write about the dog who answers the call of the wild with the first line beginning, “The ghost dog...”

Each group should select one poem/song to perform for the class.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Wrap-Up

### Being A Critic

**Objective:** Writing a review for the book *The Call of the Wild*

#### Activity

Some critics believe that this novel illustrates Darwin's theory of the "survival of the fittest." Write a two-paragraph discussion of this theory and whether it applies to this story. In a three-paragraph essay, discuss the thematic idea that it is natural for both men and animals to seek power and dominance over others. Support your conclusions with incidents from the text and/or from life.

Some critics believe that Jack London's use of anthropomorphism is overdone – almost silly. Write a two-paragraph essay of your opinion about whether this writing technique enhances or detracts from the story. Did you think it was overdone? Create a new cover for this book, illustrating your understanding of the meaning of the title, *The Call of the Wild*.

Write a book review for this novel, stating what you liked and disliked about it. Note to the Teacher whether you might recommend it to a friend. If you have access to the Internet, look at sample book reviews at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). If one of the lessons of this story is that "life is a struggle," what ideas does London give the reader on how to survive life's hardships? List and support five specific incidents from the story that demonstrate Buck's ability to adapt to difficult situations. Jack London was a self-educated man who reportedly read up to nineteen hours a day. If you could talk to him today, what books would you recommend to him? He was a man who lived an adventurous life. Make a list of three books and explain why you recommend each.

Some critics believe that Jack London's writings are misanthropic—that he hates or distrusts all people. Do you agree or disagree with this statement. Write a two-paragraph essay citing incidents from the story to support your position. Read *White Fang*, another novel by Jack London. Compare it to *The Call of the Wild*. Do they share similar themes, characters, settings, and writing techniques? Make a chart that shows the similarities or differences in these four areas. Find and read a biography of Jack London. Write a three-paragraph essay discussing how his life is reflected in his work and what one experience seems to have greatly influenced his life.