

# Jack London

## THE CALL OF THE WILD

### Summary

When we first met up with Buck, he lived in the Santa Clara Valley, on Judge Miller's property. He was the ruler of his domain, uncontested by any other local dogs. He was a mix between a St. Bernard and a Scotch Shepherd dog. He weighed one hundred and forty pounds, and he carried every one with utmost pride. Buck had everything he could want. One night, while the judge was away at a raisin grower's committee meeting, the gardener, Manuel, took Buck away from his home. Buck was then sold, and thrown in a baggage car. This would be the beginning of a new, cruel life for Buck. On his ride to wherever he was going, Buck's pride was severely damaged, if not completely wiped out by men who used tools to restrain him. No matter how many times Buck tried to lunge, he would just be choked into submission at the end. When Buck arrived at his destination, there was snow everywhere, not to mention the masses of Husky and wolf dogs. Buck was thrown into a pen with a man who had a club. This is where Buck would learn one of the two most important laws that a dog could know in the Klondike. The law of club is quite simple, if there is a man with a club, a dog would be better off not to challenge that man. Buck learned this law after he was beaten half to death by the man who had the club. No matter what he tried, he just couldn't win.

Buck was sold off to a man who put him in a harness connected to many other dogs. Buck was bad at first, but eventually, he learned the way of trace and trail. Buck had to learn many things if he was to survive in this frigid land. He had to learn to sleep under the snow, and to eat his food as fast as possible so as not to have it stolen. At about this point in the book, we see Buck start to go through a metamorphosis of sorts. He transforms from a housedog to a more primitive, savage version of his former self. It was as if hundreds of years of knowledge, learned by his ancestors, were dug up and brought out. Buck proceeded to lose all the fat in his body and replace it with muscle. Buck was no longer Judge Miller's pet. He was a machine of survival and triumph. Most Southland dogs like him ended up dead because of their inability to conform. Buck was born to lead the team, but one dog would do everything possible to try and keep him down. This dog's name was Spitz. Spitz was a white wolf dog who was a proven champion in confrontation and was as crafty as they come. It was clear that he and Buck would not work well together. When dogs have confrontation in the Klondike, only one survives. This was because of a law

called fang. The law of Fang is such that, when two dogs fight and one is knocked to the ground, that is it. The rest of the spectators will instantly pounce on the downed dog and make quick work of it.

All of these unspoken rules had turned Buck into the Best dog to ever roam the Klondike. Buck did eventually fight Spitz and send him to his death. After all of the transformations and cruelty he had been through, you would think that Buck would never be able to trust another human. He was being starved to death by a gold seeking group who had not brought enough food for the dogs. When Buck could finally not move another step, a man from the group started to beat Buck. As the blows grew less and less painful, and he was fading farther and farther, Buck knew he was dying.

While Buck was being beaten, a man named John Thornton came forth and took Buck from his attacker. The man nursed Buck back to health, and from that day forward, Buck lived for that man. Buck loved him with all his being.

After being with this man for quite some time, Buck started to hear a call from far away. He started paying more and more attention to this call. He went out for days at a time searching for its source. This call was the call of the wild. He had a will to go off and be with other dogs. He felt the urge to be free from man and catch his own food. One day, Buck finally left for good. He was accepted by a pack of wolves that treated him like a wolf himself. And so the transformation was complete. Buck had changed from a dog, to a beast of nature.

# Main Characters

The most important characters of the story are:

- ❖ Dogs:
  - Buck; the main character, a Southland dog, a mix between a St. Bernard and a scotch shepherd, at first a true city dog and at the end the beast of nature
  - Spitz; Buck's biggest enemy, a mix between a dog and a vicious wolf, born to be a leader, represents everything opposite of Buck (he's not a city spoiled dog, but a true warrior)
- ❖ "Good guys":
  - Judge Miller; first Buck's owner, an honest man, who liked Buck a lot, unfortunately, he wasn't able to stop Buck being dog-napped
  - John Thornton; last Buck's owner, very similar to Judge Miller, he also represented everything that is good
- ❖ "Bad guys":
  - Manuel; a Judge Miller's gardener, the man who dog-napped Buck, the man which is the biggest reason for Buck's suffering
  - Perrault; not completely a bad guy, at first he was cruel with Buck, but later he becomes more friendly with Buck

Beside listed characters there were many other dogs and a few other dog-owners.

# Vocabulary

These were unknown or strange words I have found in the story:

- canoe: a boat of the kind used by north American Indians
- growl: make a deep rough sound in the throat to show anger or give warning
- harness: leather bands that fasten an animal to the thing it is pulling
- sympathy: understanding and sharing other people feelings
- sledge: a vehicle with runners instead of wheels, used for taking heavy loads across snow
- rapids: a place where a river runs fast
- pack: a hunting group of wolves or wild dogs
- moose: a kind of very large deer with big flat horns, found in the northern parts of north America
- bull: a male moose
- club: a heavy wooden stick, thick at one end, used as a weapon

## Answers to questions from the book

- Because of the gold.
- Judge Miller.
- He trusted him.
- A club.
- François and Perrault.
  
- Run forward.
- In the snow (outside).
- 12
- A rather large piece of meat.
- Because otherwise somebody would steal it from him.
- From the woods.
- Dolly.
- He killed her.
- In a little town.

- A week.
- Spitz did.
- Buck did.
  
- He wanted to be number one.
- Mail.
- 3 days.
- Dave.
  
- At least a week of.
- To move on immediately.
- Charles and Hal.
- They were too tired.
- John Thornton.
- They were too tired.
- He whipped them.
- Buck refused.
  
- They liked each other.
- Slowly.
- Buck attacked him.
- Because it was self-defence.
- He wasn't paying attention.
- They were worried.
  
- Gold.
- They hunt it down.
- Because of a call, the call of the wild.
- A wolf.
- John Thornton.
- A moose.
- Indians killed him.
- Buck killed him.
- He was too fast.
- A wolf.
- All of them.