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## IMAGE OF A DOG IN JACK LONDON'S NOVEL "THE CALL OF THE WILD"

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### ANNOTATION:

The Call of the Wild is a short adventure novel by Jack London, published in 1903 and set in Yukon, Canada, during the 1890s Klondike Gold Rush, when strong sled dogs were in high demand. The central character of the novel is a dog named Buck. The story opens at a ranch in Santa Clara Valley, California, when Buck is stolen from his home and sold into service as a sled dog in Alaska. He becomes progressively more primitive and wild in the harsh environment, where he is forced to fight to survive and dominate other dogs. By the end, he sheds the veneer of civilization, and relies on primordial instinct and learned experience to emerge as a leader in the wild. Jack London's The Call of the Wild is a singular classic. It is a great novel that can be appreciated by readers of all ages, as well as a philosophical book that provides an action-packed adventure. Oddest of all, it is an experimental novel (half of the characters are canine, including the hero) that is a thrilling pleasure to read. No wonder this American novel has never lacked readers both here and abroad.

**Keywords:** *The Call of the Wild, Jack London, dog stories, a philosophical book, the novel chronicles, adventure novel, image of dog*

### INTRODUCTION

Four years as a domesticated pet have not extinguished Buck's primordial instincts or imagination. He courageously survives brutal cruelty from humans and the wilderness, and he becomes the leader of his dogsled team. He endures hunger and fatigue, learns to scavenge for food, and fights with a rival dog. Despite all this hardship, Buck is "mastered by the sheer surging of life" for the first time. Ultimately, Buck struggles between his love for his last master, John Thornton, and his desire to answer the mysterious call of his ancestors.



Drawing from Egerton R. Young's historical narrative *My Dogs in the Northland* (1902), Jack London wrote *The Call of the Wild* in only one month. It first appeared in summer 1903 as a serialized work in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Although London was paid only \$2,750 for the novel, he won instant literary fame and wide popularity. London's artistic intentions were often misunderstood. After one particular critique from President Theodore Roosevelt and naturalist John Burroughs, London wrote a letter of explanation:

"The writing of *The Call of the Wild*... was in truth a protest against the 'humanizing' of animals.... Time and again ... I wrote, speaking of my dogheroes: 'He did not think these things; he merely did them'... These dog-heroes of mine were not directed by abstract reasoning, but by instinct, sensation, and emotion, and by simple reasoning." For this, and for London's vivid description of the struggle for survival in a hostile environment, generations of children and adults have found *The Call of the Wild* an unforgettable adventure.

**The Dogs Buck** The narrator tells the story from Buck's point of view. Stolen from his California home to labor as a sled dog in the Klondike, Buck quickly learns to survive and triumph. In addition to his cunning, patience, and strength, Buck's greatest quality is his imagination, which allows him to fight by both instinct and reason. He may be a dog, but he is more human than many of the people around him. Buck's story is cyclical: he is introduced as a pampered prince, and the story concludes with Buck as a veritable king of beasts. In between, Buck undergoes experiences that provide him with greater insight about the world. Aside from his physical prowess, Buck's distinguished by his ability to learn and adapt. He goes from being the new kid on the block to the head of the sled team, ousting another alpha dog on the way. By the end of the story he's a force to be reckoned with. For example, throughout the novel, Buck will be seen to possess various types of qualities that are traditionally attributed only to human beings. In one instance, we will see him possessing such qualities as loyalty, love, revenge, ambition, and other qualities usually associated with human beings.

Whom or what do we write about when we write about dogs? This thesis attempts to answer this question in part by analyzing the ways in which dogs have been reductively represented in literature, particularly in wilderness narratives that tend to mistake nature and culture as separate spaces. The two narratives I focus on to demonstrate this argument are William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942), and Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* (1903). I begin with establishing the opposite poles that various texts seem to gravitate toward when portraying animals. On one end, we often read texts that sentimentalize, mythologize, or anthropomorphize animals. On the opposite end, texts err on the side of stressing scientific observation to the point that the human is detached from nonhuman animals. Faulkner's text seems to emulate the former and London's the latter. In both cases, the narratives deny the subjectivity of animals and their lived experience. The consequences of misrepresenting animals in literature are far reaching, extending at times to the way humans end up being treated. In the case of *The Call of the Wild* and *Go Down Moses*, the way dog characters are represented mirrors the representation of the Native American characters. Dogs and Native Americans seem to textually converge in the figure of the signifier guide, the object-tool through which privileged characters are able to transcend their cultural trappings into a more "natural" existence. This transcendence usually occurs at the expense of the guide's life or well being. This thesis focuses on problematizing this type of dog story and concludes by offering potential alternatives for more productively writing about dogs in literature.

## **Conclusion**

Jack London is not just an author of dog stories. He is according to some literary critics, one of the greatest writers in the world. His stories are read worldwide more than any other American author, alive or dead, and he is considered by many as the American finest author. This work presents Jack London as a man who is valiant, wise, adventurous, a good worker, and a dreamer who tries to achieve his goals. He shows that poverty is not an obstacle to get them. His youth experiences inspire him to create his literary works. His work exemplifies traditional American values and captures the spirit of adventure and human interest. His contribution to literature is great. We can

find in his collection of works a large list of genres like novels, short stories, non-fiction, and autobiographical memoirs. These genres contain a variety of literary styles, adventure, drama, suspense, humor, and even romance. Jack London gets the materials of his books from his own adventures; his philosophy was a product of his own experiences; his love of life was born from trips around the world and voyages across the sea. Through this work we can discover that the key of London's greatness is universality that is his work is both timely and timeless.

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