

A photograph of a wolf standing on a snow-covered log in a winter forest, howling with its mouth open and head tilted back. The background shows snow-covered evergreen trees.

The Call of the Wild Study Guide

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For the novel by
Jack London



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Synopsis

Set during the Klondike Gold Rush (1897–98), *The Call of the Wild* follows the life of Buck, a kidnapped dog who is forced to become a sled dog in the frozen lands of Canada's Yukon Territory. Buck must learn the ways of both the miners and the other sled dogs if he is to survive. As Buck conquers his fears and learns the "law of club and fang," he begins to rise against his adversaries. Buck eventually comes to accept his fate and, after a hard life, finds acceptance and love with his final master. In the end, however, Buck answers the call of the wild.

Through Buck's adventures, readers are given insight into the rigors of the north and the struggles of people in search of gold and the possibility of a better life. *The Call of the Wild* provides a fascinating glimpse into both history and the heart of man and beast.

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6. fastidiousness

Definition:

Sentence:

7. clamor

Definition:

Sentence:

8. peril

Definition:

Sentence:

Questions:

1. How does Curly's death teach Buck about the law of club and fang?
2. Describe Buck's two reactions to Curly's death.
3. How does Buck learn to pull the sled?
4. Why can't Spitz discipline Joe?

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5. Both Dave and Sol-leks seem indifferent to the other dogs. Describe the transformation of their personalities when they pull the sled.
6. Explain why this personality change is important to the story.
7. List four characteristics Buck acquires as he transforms into a more primitive sled dog.

Analysis:

8. *Setting* refers to the time, place, and environment in which a story takes place. Describe the setting of the opening of Chapter 2.
9. Why does London describe Buck's fear of being trapped when he awakens in his snow nest as a "token that he [Buck] was harking back through his own life to the lives of his forebears?"
10. London focuses on Buck's education in the ways of the frozen north, from his learning the primitive laws to finding a place to sleep. Even Perrault "prided himself on his knowledge . . . which. . . was indispensable." Why is knowledge so important?
11. *Hyperbole* (hi-PER-bo-lee) is a literary term for dramatic exaggeration to emphasize, shock, or amuse. For example, "Randall was so skinny, when he stuck out his tongue he looked like a zipper" is hyperbole to amuse. On the other hand, "When Henrietta realized she had slept through her

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19. Read Genesis 39; Daniel 3:1–30; Daniel 6; Acts 3:1–10 and 4:1–21. Next to the names of the people below, write what hardship or threat they faced and how they responded.

	<u>Threat/Hardship</u>	<u>Response</u>
Joseph:		
Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego:		
Daniel:		
Peter & John:		

20. London also says that anyone who does not discard his moral nature “would fail to prosper.” Review the situations of the men in the previous question. Is it true that holding to the truth caused them to fail to prosper? Is prospering more important than being right and having a clear conscience? Read Matthew 6:19–21, 25–34. What does this passage say about worrying about prospering and our priorities?

Optional Activities:

1. As London describes Buck’s and the other dogs’ actions, he uses words that imply the animals are choosing based on a moral system. He refers to Spitz “laughing” at the death of Curly and Buck “hating” him because of it. Dave is “fair and very wise”; Pike and Buck “steal” bacon. Have a class discussion about whether animals have a sense of morality. Are their actions based on “good” or “bad,” or are they based on punishment and reward, or making their owner or the person in power happy, or at least not annoyed. Do they simply try to do the thing that is easiest and causes the least disruption in their lives, or do they try to do the “right” thing?
2. London says that the theft of the bacon “marked Buck as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment.” Conduct an experiment in the home about whether pets will steal food even in “civilized” situations—or “under the law of love and fellowship,” as London calls it. First, set up

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Wisdom combines knowledge, understanding, and action; implying again that we should clearly understand the workings of the world, but we are to be innocent of doing evil. The Luke passage is a little more complex. Jesus uses an example of a manager who mismanages his master's money, but then shrewdly gains favor with his master's debtors so they will act kindly toward him when he loses his job. Jesus then tells us that we should use our worldly wealth to gain friends for ourselves. But we must pay close attention to what follows, because Jesus then talks about being honest and trustworthy with our resources, and he reminds us that we must remember to worship God, not money. In these verses, Jesus is telling us that just as the dishonest manager understood what would gain favor with his master's debtors, we should know what gains favor with people of the world, but we should do so only in an honest and trustworthy way. He is very clear about this in verses 11 through 13. All of the passages are clear that we must know the workings of the world, but remain innocent in our actions. In other words, we are not to be naive. We should always be smart about the way we do things, we should not be taken by surprise. Buck, on the other hand, purposefully uses the ways of the world in his quest for leadership of the dog team. He is sneaky, disruptive, and dishonest, and his actions hurt the entire team. The wisdom of the scriptures above tells us that we should understand such tactics, but never use them ourselves. One benefit of such knowledge is that it enables us to better defend ourselves against such actions.

20. a. God commands that we should not think of ourselves as better than other people; rather, we should think of and assess ourselves truthfully and honestly as God has given us gifts. We are to recognize that God has enabled each of us to do separate jobs, so we can work together effectively. b. God expects us to love each other and give honor to other people. We are to have sympathy for each other, be hospitable and giving, and be agreeable, not argumentative. c. He tells us that we are to forgive our enemies, not repay them with evil. We are to do all we can to live peaceably with all people and overcome evil with good. d. In this chapter, Buck's actions do not fit at all with Romans 12. In fact, his actions are very nearly opposite the instructions in this passage.

Chapter 4

Vocabulary:

Part One:

1. swiftness, speed; 2. inundated; 3. boring, tedious, dull, lacking in variety; 4. everlasting, continuous; 5. flounder: to struggle clumsily; lugubriously: in an exaggerated mournful or sad way; 6. compelling, irresistible.

Part Two:

1. stubbornly resistant; 2. declined, expired; 3. ability to recover; 4. shining; 5. gloomy; 6. bewildered, puzzled; 7. longing for.

Questions:

1. François harnesses Sol-leks as the lead dog because he does not notice Buck there, and he feels that Sol-leks is the best lead dog he had left.
2. When François harnesses Sol-leks in the lead dog spot, Buck pounces on Sol-leks and drives him back.
3. Buck refuses to be harnessed into his old position and instead runs around dodging the clubs and drivers for an hour. Eventually François and Perrault give up and make him the lead.