

The Call of The Wild



By

Jack London

A Novel Study
By Nat Reed

The Call of the Wild

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each section of the novel study focuses on one chapter of the novel and is comprised of five different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language and Extension Activities

A portfolio cover (p.7) as well as a Checklist (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to the following:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include survival (in the far north), perseverance, courage, loyalty and friendship, pride, personal growth.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying / creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*
14. Identification of a *cliffhanger*

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel
4. Five W's Chart

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists and antagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Write a letter to a friend
4. Complete an Observation Chart
5. Conduct an interview
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card

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Synopsis

First published in 1903, *The Call of the Wild* is regarded as Jack London's masterpiece. Based on London's experiences as a gold prospector in the Canadian wilderness and his ideas about nature and the struggle for existence, *The Call of the Wild* is a tale about unbreakable spirit and the fight for survival in the frozen Alaskan Klondike. (The Publisher)

Author Biography

L. M. Montgomery

Jack London, whose life symbolized the power of will, was one of the most successful American writers of the early 20th Century. His stories of men and animals against the environment, and survival against hardships were drawn mainly from his own experiences. London grew up in poverty in the slums of Oakland, California. At the age of 17, he ventured to sea on a sealing ship. The turning point of his life was a thirty-day imprisonment that was so degrading it made him decide to turn to education and pursue a career in writing. His years in the Klondike searching for gold resonate in many of his stories and novels, among them, *The Call of the Wild*, and *White Fang*. Another of his novels, *The Sea-Wolf*, was based on his experiences at sea. He retired to his ranch near Sonoma, where he died at age 40. (Biography courtesy of: www.jacklondon.com)



The Call of The Wild



By Jack London

Name: _____

The Call of the Wild

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The protagonist of *The Call of the Wild* is not a person, but a dog, Buck, whose life goes through some dramatic changes when he's kidnapped and taken from his home and beloved master. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist** – one you find hard to forget?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

demesne	imperious	consignment	progeny	treachery
eloquent	conveyance	metamorphosed	conciliated	impartial

1. During his stay, the timid terrier _____ into a savage dog.
2. The dog sled was the most convenient _____ for most travelers.
3. It was unusual that so many of the cat's _____ were calico in color.
4. The conceited princess had quite an _____ attitude.
5. The audience recognized the prime minister to be a very _____ speaker.
6. The mediator _____ the opposing factions with wise words of diplomacy.
7. It is most important that an umpire be _____, no matter who is playing.
8. Buck felt that he had the right to rule over his vast _____.
9. The public could scarcely believe the _____ of the two assassins.
10. The _____ of food was barely enough to keep them alive.

Questions



1. What is the setting of the beginning of Chapter One?

2. How would you describe Buck's early life? What affect did this have on his personality?

3. Buck is _____ years old in this chapter and weighed _____ pounds.
His father had been a huge _____.

Good to Know

The **Klondike Gold Rush** of 1897 is mentioned in this chapter. Buck doesn't know it yet, but this event would prove to be a huge factor in his life. This gold rush took place in a region of Canada known as Yukon Territory. Over 100,000 prospectors rushed to this area of the world with the hope of striking it rich. The majority failed in their efforts while only about 4000 people actually were successful in their pursuit of riches. The equivalent of one billion dollars in gold was removed from this area around 1900.



4. How did the man that Manuel sold Buck to manage to control him?

5. Novels such as *The Call of the Wild* (written over one hundred years ago) tended to be less sensitive about the use of labels which were often demeaning to different groups of people. Chapter One contains at least two ethnic slurs: **squarehead** (directed against German and Scandinavian people); and **half-breed** (a person of mixed racial heritage). How important do you think it is for writers to be sensitive in their portrayal of different groups of people? Defend your answer.

6. Buck learns many unfortunate lessons as this chapter unfolds. At one point the author says, *a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be **obeyed**, though not **conciliated***. What do you think is the difference between obedience and conciliation? How important do you think it is for a dog to have a conciliatory attitude toward his/her master?

7. How was the club a revelation to Buck?

8. If you were Buck, what attitude would you adopt in order to assure your survival?

9. Describe your impression of the man in the red sweater.

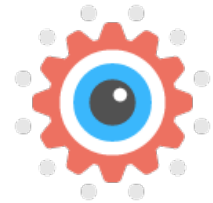
Language Activities



A. Choose ten words from this chapter with two or more **syllables**. Indicate the syllables by drawing a line between each syllable. **Example:** good / bye.

B. Personification

Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. In Chapter 1 the author writes, ... *the Narwhal... rolled and pitched and bucked like a thing possessed. In this sentence the ship is compared to a bucking horse.*



a) Why do you think personification is a literary device used by many authors?

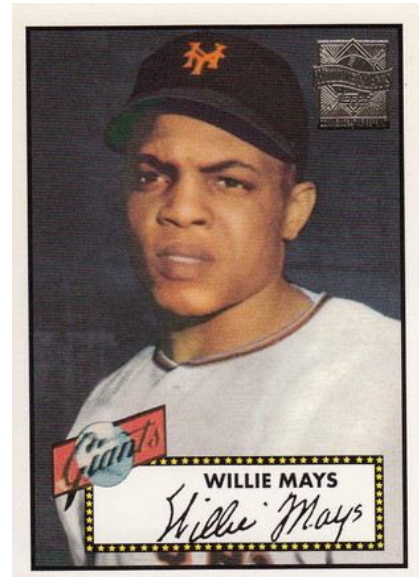
b) Create your own example of personification.

C. Collector's Cards

Sports Cards have been a very popular collector's item for a number of years. A Willie Mays 1952 Topps rookie card is worth \$3000.00 today.

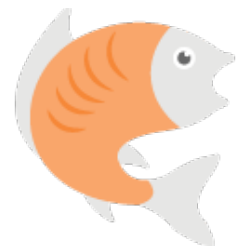
A number of breeds of dogs are mentioned in this chapter: **Japanese pug, Mexican hairless, fox terrier, Saint Bernard, Newfoundland and Scotch shepherd.**

Design a card for the dog of your choice, either from the above list or another dog which would make a great sled dog. The front of the card should feature a picture of the dog, and the back should include at least four interesting facts about it, i.e. appearance, size, diet, personality traits, important characteristics, etc.



D. Caviar Words

The author of this novel is noted for his use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 6 examples of each type of word, you may use any chapter of the novel to find these words.



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words

Extension Activities



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.

Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of *The Call of the Wild*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6