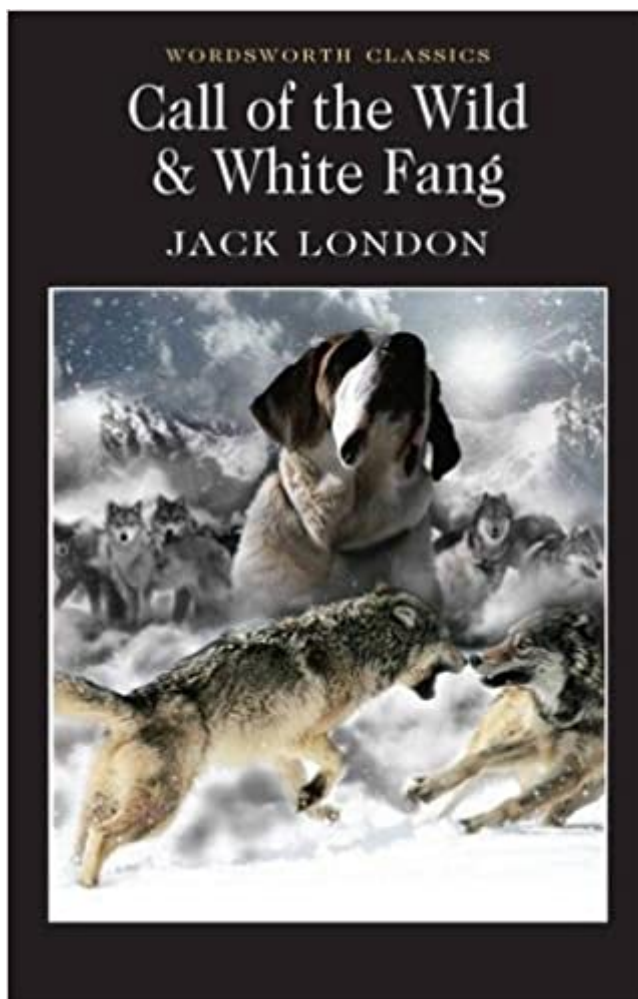


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# Call Of The Wild And White Fang (Wordsworth Classics)



## Synopsis

With an Introduction and Notes by Lionel Kelly, University of Reading *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906) are world famous animal stories. Set in Alaska during the Klondike Gold Rush of the late 1890s, *The Call of the Wild* is about Buck, the magnificent cross-bred offspring of a St Bernard and a Scottish Collie. Stolen from his pampered life on a Californian estate and shipped to the Klondike to work as a sledge dog, he triumphs over his circumstances and becomes the leader of a wolf pack. The story records the decivilisation of Buck as he answers the call of the wild, an inherent memory of primeval origins to which he instinctively responds. In contrast, *White Fang* relates the tale of a wolf born and bred in the wild which is civilised by the master he comes to trust and love. The brutal world of the Klondike miners and their dogs is brilliantly evoked and Jack London's rendering of the sentient life of Buck and *White Fang* as they confront their destiny is enthralling and convincing. The deeper resonance of these stories derives from the author's use of the myth of the hero who survives by strength and courage, a powerful myth that still appeals to our collective unconscious.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

One hundred and one years after its publication, it is still enthralling. The opening chapters are haunting, their depiction of the wilderness of snow, ice and forest faced by gold prospectors exquisite and terrifying. The menace of ever-present death, for man, dog and wolf alike, in a setting of remorseless beauty, is bracing and humbling. *Herald Raw* narratives of visceral appeal whose cinematic energy cry out for film adaptation --Robert McCrum *Observer* A searing book about man

and animals and the inherent wildness in the nature of the dog. It's a very stark book in some ways but it really conjures up the atmosphere of Gold Rush-era Yukon Daily Express

Jack London was born into poverty in San Francisco in 1876. Before his success as a novelist, London spent a lot of time avoiding a life as a manual worker and, in the process, experienced many things that became central to his plots. He ran away from home, bought a sailing boat and became an oyster pirate - a story recounted in *John Barleycorn*. His best-known novel, *Call of the Wild*, was drawn from his own experience of the Klondike Gold Rush, a time that would inspire many of London's short stories as well. London became addicted to writing after winning a short story competition in the *San Francisco Morning Call* in 1893. It earned London \$25, the equivalent of a month's wages. Dozens of books followed - including *John Barleycorn* (1913), *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906). He published an average of three or four books a year. He died in 1916.

The story begins with White Fang's mother, a half wolf, half dog, a wild predator in the Arctic who literally stalks her prey that includes dogs and humans. After a while, and I won't get into the gory details, but there are many, she mates with a full bred wolf to produce a litter, including White Fang, who ends up being the only survivor of the breed. Being in his cave for a while, he comes out and discovers the world, his world, being the Arctic, in Alaska and the Yukon. Coming upon humans for the first time, he looks upon them as gods, and comes under three different masters, one Native, one cruel master who only uses him for dog fights in a betting ring, and then is rescued by a more benign owner who ends up taking him to California in the end. This wolf is trained to protect his owners, though he hated his second master, to pull dog sleds, and most of all, to defend himself. There are three different stories of the wolf being under these masters, doing all sorts of chores, and you learn something of Arctic life during the Alaskan gold rush. Most off, the author delves into the mind of the wolf, how he thinks, and how he deals with the world. The main plot here is that White Fang lives like a dog, but cannot completely adapt himself to the dog's instincts, as his masters and their kin expect him to do. He does not jump for joy at the sight of his master, or other humans. He is suspicious of all other dogs, and lets them know, by fighting them, that he is the one in charge. The wolf will go as far as to kill other animals, both for food and to prove his own superiority. However, he is faithful to his masters, but to no other human. The wolf has to constantly be trained not to kill certain animals and to respect the master's kin, but can and will defend his master, and family, against any outside intruder, even to kill them. The main point here, I think, is

that wolves are not dogs. Wolves have natural instincts that cannot be trained out of them. They can interbreed with dogs, but dogs are much too domesticated, and wolves are too wild ever to become pets. This book pictures the struggles of this fact, with White Fang struggling with his inner nature, trying to overcome them to adapt to the world of humans. The wolf succeeds, but not without many harsh lessons.

My 13 year old son needed to pick a book to read off of a given list of selections. I prompted him to choose White Fang by Jack London. I thought it would keep his interest since it is a good read. He enjoyed this book very much and even continued to read ahead of his reading assignments. Rarely does read ahead and keep interest in a book he is required to read, so he most certainly enjoyed this book and it kept his interest. I would recommend White Fang for older children.

Enthralling story brought vividly to life. A book of its time, though, calling white men "superior gods" - that was jarring and excessively uncomfortable to read. Even more uncomfortable to read were the descriptions of the beatings, and the minute details of the dog fights, described almost with enjoyment so much were they lingered over. I am not a huge animal lover, but intensely dislike any abuse of animals, and these descriptions were extremely difficult to read. If you are sensitive to this kind of thing, please be aware there is a large stomach-churning section that is very upsetting. The persecutor gets his comeuppance though, as do all villains. Almost made me love the wilds of the Yukon, but not entirely - it's cold enough here in Toronto. :P

It's easy to see why Jack London's stories have become classics. As you read the books you feel like you're there when everything is happening. There's a better quality in the descriptions of what's going on. To me, it seems like the quality of his stories are something that modern day writers should strive for.

I know it's a classic and it is a great story filled with amazing imagery. For that, I like it quite a bit. But, to this reader, 3 sentences in every paragraph could be cut and the book could still hold together. Especially when Jack is talking about meat. We get it Jack! Animals eat meat and aren't all ceremonial about it! Anyways... fairly entertaining book with some of the dryness you'd expect with the age. The first part of the book is a great hook and it all flows perfectly. Great adventure.

White Fang is a timeless classic that is easy to read over and over and over. I first picked up the

book at the age of 11 in 2004 and it's still just as beautiful today as it was back then, even though I understand more of it now that I'm older. *White Fang* primarily focuses on survival - What must be done to survive, and if you do survive, what kind of person/wolfdog have you become? At one stage Jack London sums up the Wild as "Eat or be eaten. Kill or be killed." *White Fang* rises to the challenge, and after a lifetime of hardships has become a relentless killer, unlovable and unloving. However, his circumstances change rapidly, and *White Fang* must learn how to love or else he will perish. The book also focuses on cruelty, loyalty and the remarkable formation of the sled dog team in the sub-arctic temperature of Yukon Territory, Canada, in the Klondike Gold Rush at the end of the 19th century. As it is a rather old book (1906 was the original publication, I believe, making this book 104 years old at the time of this review) some of the expressions and terms can be a little hard to understand - One that had me giggling like a little girl was "burning faggots". However, with the handy-dandy dictionary installed on your Kindle, enlightenment is only a few clicks away. The text is dense, so I don't suggest it to readers who have short attention spans or a low tolerance for classical literature. But if you're willing to give it a go you will be very pleased to have read this fantastic novel. This book is great for wolf, dog or animal lovers, and I'd recommend it to anyone who has an appreciation for wild animals. There is a fair bit of violence in this novel (Ripping of throats and other such charming things), but once a reader overcomes this there is nothing in the way of enjoying the amazing, timeless journey of *White Fang*.

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