



[The Call of the Wild](#), by Jack London

In A Nutshell

Published in 1903, *The Call of the Wild* is Jack London's famous novel. Set during the Alaskan (Klondike) Gold Rush, the novel's protagonist is a dog named Buck who is taken from a life of comfort and thrown into the wilds of Alaska and northern Canada. Since the novel deals with Buck as though he were a person with thoughts and emotions, it is known for its odd point-of-view. *The Call of the Wild* focuses on the idea of primitivity – what is wild about you as a person...or an animal – that harkens back to the time before cell phones, cars, judges and houses.

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Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 Buck is certainly content in his house in the "sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley" at the outset of the story before he undergoes enormous change. Does he betray himself, or return to his true nature?
- 2 Is Buck's relationship with Thornton based on love, or loyalty? Is there a difference? How is this different than what Buck might have had with his old master, Judge Miller, in the beginning of the story?

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- 3 At times, Buck gives in to orders to save himself beatings or other misfortune. Yet at other times he steps up and fights, such as when he wants to take the place of Spitz as lead dog. How does Buck balance submission with dominance, and is there an overall trend towards one from the other as the novella progresses?

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