

Call of the Wild Book Notes

Call of the Wild by Jack London

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Author/Context

Jack London is a man who is often misunderstood because of the complexity of his life. Considered by some to be oozing with shallow virility and machismo, London is instead a man filled with sensitivity and wisdom about the human condition. Born on January 12, 1876 to the unmarried Flora Wellman and William Chaney in San Francisco, California, John Griffith Chaney was renamed John Griffith London, later called "Jack," when William denied that he was his father, and Flora instead married John London, Jack's stepfather. His early years were spent in San Francisco, where he began reading classic stories at the age of eight, an interest that would only continue to spread when the London family moved to nearby Oakland two years later. Jack continued to attend school and took on a number of different jobs ranging from a newspaper route, being an oyster pirate in San Francisco Bay, and a factory laborer. After graduating from the eighth grade in 1890, London toured the country, marching with a labor union to Washington, DC, and then wandering around the northeast as a hobo, meeting new friends in Boston and Buffalo.

After returning to Oakland, Jack was determined to complete his education, enrolling in Oakland High School, where he is a prolific writer for the school's newspaper. Later he became interested in the Socialist Party, influenced no doubt by his days as a factory laborer, and this anti-capitalist political philosophy would shape his later writing as well. Eventually London went to the University of California at Berkeley in 1896. Impoverished and disappointed with academic life, London dropped out of college soon after, heading northward to Alaska where the Klondike Gold Rush is in full swing. He returned after a short time, empty-handed and discouraged by the rugged, icy weather. Jack made a return trip later that year, reaching the Yukon Territory but he did not find any gold. Empty-handed, Jack went back to his mother again, who was struggling to survive after her husband's sudden death. Jack London became the man of the house, writing furiously. Soon after, Jack was offered a steady job as a postal worker, but he turned it down in hope that he could support himself solely off of his writing. Fortune smiled upon him, however, when short story "To the Man on Trail" was published soon after in *Overland Monthly* in 1899.

After this initial victory, popularity came more easily to London. His short stories gained wider acceptance in the American reading community, as he forged the way for this new genre and a literary style moving away from the romanticism that filled the nineteenth century towards the realism of the twentieth. Filled with confidence, London published *The Son of the Wolf*, marrying his first wife Bessie in 1900. However, it was not until the serialized publication of *Call of the Wild* in the *Saturday Evening Post* during the summer of 1903 that London became a national sensation, separating from Bessie in favor of the new love of his life, Charmian. In 1904 London journeyed to Asia to serve as a war correspondent in the Russo-Japanese War, writing *The Sea-Wolf* among other works, publishing furiously upon his return, and involving himself in the Socialist Party of Oakland. Tired of urban life, London then bought a huge ranch complex in Glen Ellen, California, north of San Francisco, honeymooning soon after with Charmian in the Caribbean. He writes firsthand newspaper reports about the devastating San Francisco



Earthquake of 1906, publishing *White Fang* soon after. By this time, London had enough money to build a magnificent boat named the Snark, fit to travel around the world, setting sail with his wife on a planned seven year world voyage in 1907. Venturing first to Hawaii, London met with the native headhunters there.

Suddenly afflicted by sickness, he had to cancel the rest of the planned trip and returned to California, much to his intense disappointment. He sold the Snark and spent time on his ranch in Glen Ellen for the next few years, publishing *Martin Eden* (1909), *South Sea Tales* (1911), and *Smoke Bellow* (1912). In 1912 he took a sea voyage around South America, but the following year brought great tragedy to Jack London's life. His nearly completed dream mansion on the ranch property, Wolf House, burnt to the ground in a mysterious fire; his jealous ex-wife Bessie harassed him again; Charmian miscarried her pregnancy; and the ranch itself had a poor year for crops. He nevertheless published *John Barleycorn* (1913) and *The Valley of the Moon* (1914). In 1915 Jack went to Mexico as a news war correspondent during the Mexican Civil War, although the short war already over by the time he arrived there, much to his dismay. Returning to California, London wrote one more novel, *The Star Rover*, and also resigned from the Socialist Party he had worked for so devotedly throughout his life because of its lack of "fire and fight." He succumbed to death on November 22, 1916, soon after eating his dinner. Passing away at the age of forty after hours of pain and with a doctor present, London's official cause of death was kidney failure.

Overall, London wrote over fifty novels and dozens of short stories, although nothing was ever as popular as his initial *The Call of the Wild* (1903). Inspired by London's own arduous journey from California to the Yukon Territory during the Klondike Gold Rush, this book parallels London's struggle to strip aside the excesses of his city upbringing, with Buck's inward fight to survive. It took a second trip to Alaska before London was prepared to face the untamed wilderness, revealing that he had to overcome his inner fears first. Like Buck, London traveled the Chilkoot and the Dyea Pass, ending at the mining center of Dawson City. Near his death, when doctors urged London to quit drinking alcohol, stay indoors, and watch his diet, he ignored them and continued to live as he always had. A man most comparable to Ernest Hemingway in his craving for risk and adventure, Jack London would rather have lived fully, or rather not live at all. During his travels, London discovered a primal strength that he, like Thornton, can admire from afar, but which he can never have for himself. Like Thornton, London's life ended early, silencing whatever bold dreams he had for the future, except for those glimpses of London's fervent imagination one can gain in reading the colorful books that are this man's greatest wealth.

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Plot Summary

Buck's father was the beloved St. Bernard that belonged to Judge Miller in the pastoral hills of the Santa Clara Valley in California, and his mother was a great German Shepherd. Judge Miller owns a huge mansion complex with other dogs, horses, stables, vineyards. Buck loves this calm existence, carrying the Judge's grandchildren on his back and serving as the Judge's faithful companion, as his father had been before him. However, one summer day in 1897, the Judge's gardener unjustly sells him for a meager price, and from there the brave dog begins a long journey ending in Dyea, Alaska. Buck is sold away to a Canadian pair named Perrault and Francois in need of sled dogs. Arriving on the mainland, Buck encounters many obstacles in this cold, icy place quite unlike where he grew up. Among these obstacles is the cruelty of many humans, other vicious dogs, and the cold weather itself. With these two Canadians, Buck forges a relationship of respect, pulling them from the Yukon Territory where the Klondike Gold Rush is raging, to Alaska, since Perrault is a special messenger for the Canadian government.

After Buck sees his dog friend Curly torn to pieces by the other sled dogs, he learns that life now is a basic matter of day to day survival. As Buck becomes wiser as a sled dog, he plots his revenge against another bully dog named Spitz, eventually killing him in battle. Perrault makes Buck the new sled team leader, until the Canadians receive new orders, leaving this sled team behind. The dogs are instead put to work at Dawson City hauling mail from the miners. This is much harder work, and Buck quickly grows tired of it, as do the other dogs, since they do not get any rest at all. Finally arriving in Skaguay, Alaska after traveling for thousands of miles without any rest at all, Buck's sled team comes under new ownership yet again, this time to three inexperienced American pioneers named Charles, Hal, and a woman, Mercedes.

These people know nothing about traveling through the Northland, and they badly mistreat Buck. Fortunately, Buck is saved by John Thornton after a terrible beating from Hal because he says that he is too tired to pull the sled any more. In reality, he felt a sense of "impending doom," and simply refused to lead his team to danger. He knew that the ice was weak and that they would be traveling over a river.

Hal, Charles, Mercedes, and the surviving dogs in the sled team all drown as the trail beneath them collapses suddenly. Thornton then gives Buck exactly what he has been yearning for: a long rest. Nursed back to health, Buck grows strong again as spring arrives, filled with love for this man who saved his life. He goes on many travels with John, saves him from drowning in a wild river, and eventually wins him a large sum of money. Thornton invests this award in an expedition to the north to discover a secret gold mine. Buck happily accompanies him, excited to be exploring a new frontier, and this journey ends when John Thornton locates a stream where the gold glistens "like yellow butter."

At this point, Buck becomes very restless. Thornton and his partners are busy mining the gold, so Buck ventures out to explore the forest himself, following an inner voice



within him that is the "call of the wild," encouraging him to hunt prey just like his wolfish ancestors. Yet his love for John Thornton is stronger than the call of the wild, pulling him away from the forest periodically, as on one occasion when he befriends a wild wolf, running with him through the trees, and as he runs back to Thornton's camp, the wolf howls mournfully for him to stay. More time passes, and Buck decides to hunt the largest moose in a passing herd, spending days on this expedition, waiting patiently for the proper moments to attack, until finally the monstrous beast is pulled down. Buck stays for awhile, munching the carcass and resting, before he returns to the camp as he had done so many times before. This time, however, everyone in the camp, including John Thornton, has been murdered by the Yeehats. Flying into a rage, Buck ravages these men, tearing their throats and roaring with madness.

Buck wonders what to do next now that John is dead, while nevertheless gloating over the fact that he has killed men. A nearby wolf howl captures his ears, and he follows the sound to an approaching wolf pack, battling several of these creatures to prove his worth, and is accepted as one of their own. He is reunited with his old wolf friend and runs into the forest, wild once more after generations of oppression at man's hands. Buck becomes a legend, murdering hunters and Yeehats in the forest, referred to as the "Evil Spirit" and the "Ghost Dog," spawning a new breed of wolf. Overall, *The Call of the Wild* conjures up a lost world, filled with people and place names that were so common at the turn of the twentieth century, but which have since faded away into history, lost and forgotten. It is by reading Buck's story that one can once more remember life as it was, digging up this hidden wealth from deep caves of time.



Major Characters

Buck: A dog who bears his enormous size from his father, a St. Bernard, and intelligence his mother, German Shepherd. Brown-haired with white patches on his nose and chest, Buck grows up in northern California on Judge Miller's homestead, where he leads a carefree existence free from any harm. However, when Manuel sells Buck away he encounters many obstacles to be overcome in a ruthless struggle to survive in the Alaskan wilderness as a sled dog, first for Perrault and Francois, later for the Scotch half-breed, and then for three Americans who mistreat him. Saved by John Thornton, an enamored Buck joins this man on an expedition deep into the Yukon Territory to discover gold. There, Buck undergoes a remarkable metamorphosis, hunting prey in the wilds and eventually joining a wolf pack after Thornton's murder by the Yeehats. He finally listens to the voice of the wild within him, calling out for him to return to the primal ways of his wolfish ancestors.

Perrault: A French Canadian man who joins Francois on the Narwhal after Buck is purchased in Seattle. Perrault is a special courier for the Canadian government, responsible for delivering important messages throughout Alaska and the Yukon Territory. Buck grows to respect Perrault because of the fairness with which he treats the sled dogs, punishing those who are bad and rewarding those who do well. Perrault and his partner Francois bid a final farewell to Buck one day in Skaguay, Alaska, after receiving new orders from the government.

Francois: A French Canadian man who purchases Buck with Perrault in Seattle before traveling aboard the ship Narwhal, bound for Dyea, Alaska. Francois is mainly responsible for driving the sled team and caring for the dogs, and he forms a close bond with Buck over time. When Spitz disappears, Francois knows immediately that Buck is responsible for his death. Buck grows to respect Francois because of his fairness, although Francois hugs Buck one final time before he departs elsewhere, having received new orders from the Canadian government. Buck doesn't see him again.

Spitz: A bullying dog so named because he was brought by a whaling captain from 'Spitzbergen,' located on the island of Svalbard north of Russia and Norway. An experienced sled dog, Spitz is the leader of the team, although he is arrogant and treacherous. When Curly dies, Spitz offers no assistance, causing Buck to hate him. Tensions between Buck and Spitz escalate as Buck covets Spitz's leadership position. Eventually, a final fight between the two dogs leaves Spitz with a broken leg, and he is then ripped to pieces by the other dogs whom he had belittled and bullied for so long.

Hal: A nineteen year old brother of Mercedes from America, Hal is unused to the harsh weather in the Northland. Having dreams of striking it rich during the Klondike Gold Rush, this young man is cruel and brash, often mistreating the sled dogs terribly. After nearly beating Buck to death until he is saved by an enraged John Thornton, Hal then defiantly drives the remaining sled dogs ahead onto a melting trail, where he then drowns beneath the ice along with Mercedes and Charles.



Charles: A middle-aged man and husband of Mercedes, also from America. Charles is a lazy man, accustomed to the luxuries of urban life, who knows nothing about life out on the trail, although he holds high hopes of getting rich in the Klondike Gold Rush. Bossed around by his wife Mercedes and her arrogant brother-in-law, Charles later becomes more argumentative when they begin to run out of food. He offers no assistance to Buck as Hal is beating him before his very eyes, nor does he assist Hal when he is being attacked by Thornton because he feels too tired. Charles tries to turn back after Hal and Mercedes drown, but the ice collapses around him and he falls beneath the frigid waters himself.

Mercedes: Sensual and selfish, Mercedes is the only female human to appear in the story. Accustomed to the luxuries of life in urban America, she is forced to abandon her huge wardrobe of outfits to lighten the dogsled. Mercedes appears at first to show compassion, urging Buck to obey Hal and Charles so that they won't beat him, but later she worries only about herself and insists on riding in the sled because she is tired of walking. This added weight to pull contributes to Buck's extreme fatigue, even though he is doing the best he can, and it is partly responsible for causing the ice to break that kills her, Charles, Hal, and the surviving sled dogs. Mercedes' selfishness brings death to everybody.

John Thornton: A compassionate, wise, sensible man who always craves another adventure. Bearing the greatest resemblance to the author in character and in name (Jack London's given name was John London), John Thornton rescues Buck from Hal's cruel whip, nursing the poor dog back to health. Buck grows to love this man because of this kindness, helping Thornton in turn when he is drowning in a river, when he is attacked by another man, and also when John makes a bet that Buck can pull a sled weighing half a ton all by himself. Thornton then takes Buck on a new adventure for gold in the Yukon Territory, although he is killed by the Yeehat warriors while Buck is away hunting moose in the forest. Upon returning to the camp, Buck slays these dancing Yeehats in rage, mourning for his dead friend. His love for Thornton had always been stronger than the call of the wild; however, with Thornton dead, Buck reenters the forest and joins a wolf pack, living life from then on as a wild beast.

Minor Characters

Judge Miller: A wealthy, retired judge who owns a spacious estate in California's Santa Clara Valley. Buck's St. Bernard father had been Judge Miller's devoted companion, and Buck succeeds him in fulfilling this role. The Judge's gardener steals Buck away, and he never sees the Judge again.

Manuel: Judge Miller's gardener. Afflicted by gambling debts, Manuel unjustly sells Buck away to a stranger at the railroad station.

Man in the red sweater: An experienced dog handler in Seattle. The man in the red sweater breaks Buck out of the crate where he has been enclosed for two days without food or water. Buck is enraged, but the man teaches him humility by hitting him with a club; each time Buck attacks, the man in the red sweater outsmarts him, eventually



hitting him in the genitals as a final blow. Beaten, Buck calms down and eagerly eats food from the man's hand. The man in the red sweater sells Buck to Francois and Perrault.

Dave: An antisocial dog who runs directly behind Buck on the sled team, nipping his legs when Buck makes mistakes. He lives for the sled, and at all other times Dave does not want to associate with any of the other dogs, dying while still struggling to pull the sled although his body has become sick. The Scotch half-breed shoots Dave with his gun, relieving the poor dog from his suffering.

Curly: A cheerful Newfoundland dog purchased by Francois and Perrault, whom Buck first meets aboard the Narwhal. Curly's life is short lived, however, as she is torn to pieces by the other sled dogs when she nudges one of them to play. Buck forever resents Spitz because he laughs during this massacre, offering no assistance.

Billee: Brother dog of Joe. Billee is good-natured and friendly just as Curly had been, although he is a bit more streetwise as well about how to approach the other sled dogs. Billee collapses after Hal's mistreatment, and the man breaks his skull in frustration with an ax while laying in the snow.

Joe: Brother of Billee. Unlike his good-natured brother, Joe is very gruff and tough, defending himself against the bullying Spitz on occasion. Joe survives until the very end, when he drowns beneath the ice with Hal, Charles, and Mercedes collapses beneath them.

Sol-leks: An old, seasoned sled dog who only had one eye. Like Dave, Sol-leks (whose name means 'Angry One') lives only to pull the sled, but at all other times he is quiet and antisocial. Sol-leks pulls directly in front of Buck, setting an examples for him. Sol-leks survives until the very end, when he drowns along with Hal, Charles, and Mercedes when the trail collapses beneath them.

Pike: A sneaky sled dog, secretly stealing food from the sled drivers among other things. Buck quickly learns from him how not to get caught. No longer having the energy to be sneaky, Pike eventually drowns along with Hal, Charles, and Mercedes when the trail collapses beneath them.

Dub: Dub tries to copy Pike in committing sneaky antics, but he is clumsy about it and often gets caught by Perrault and Francois. Because of this, Dub is the general scapegoat whenever anything goes wrong. Too tired to continue along the trail and nursing a wounded shoulder, Hal shoots Dub in the head with a gun in order to end his suffering.

Teek: A faithful husky sled dog, acquired with Koona by Francois and Perrault. Buck quickly trains Teek how to pull the sled. Because he joins the team so late and has more energy than the other dogs, Teek survives until the very end when the trail collapses beneath the sled, and he drowns along with Hal, Charles, and Mercedes.



Koona: Added to the team along with Teek, Koona is also a faithful husky, quickly trained by Buck. Starving to death and tired, Koona collapses along the trail because of Hal's cruel mistreatment. Koona is probably axed in the head to end his suffering, just as Billee had been the day before.

Scotch half-breed: A sled driver who takes charge of the team after Francois and Perrault's departure. The Scotch half-breed treats the dogs fairly as they pull mail back and forth to Dawson City, although the heavier loads prove to be an increasing pain for the dogs. When the dogs are completely worn out after arriving in Skaguay, Alaska, the Scotch half-breed leaves the dogs when they are sold to Hal, Charles, and Mercedes, because he is getting fresh, new dogs that can do the job better than Buck's team.

Skeet: A friendly Irish setter belonging to John Thornton. As Billee had been, Skeet is very good-natured and licks Buck's wounds, nursing him back to health in a motherly sort of way. Skeet dies at the side of a pool containing John Thornton's body, 'faithful to the last,' murdered by the Yeehat warriors.

Nig: A large black dog, half bloodhound and half deerhound belonging to John Thornton. Like Skeet, Nig is extremely friendly towards Buck as they journey throughout the Yukon Territory. Buck finds Nig's dead body near the camp, with a Yeehat arrow ruthlessly pierced through his back.

Hans: Thornton's traveling partner, along with Pete. These two bring the raft to carry Thornton and Buck to Dawson City when the trail begins to melt away, and later, Hans helps to pull John to safety after he pulls into a raging river. Hans later dies after being shot countless times by Yeehat arrows that stick out of his back 'like a porcupine.'

Pete: Thornton's other traveling partner, along with Hans. Pete, with Hans, brings the raft that carries Buck and Thornton to Dawson City; Pete helps to pull Thornton to safety after he nearly drowns in a river. Pete is cruelly slain in his sleeping bag by the Yeehat warriors, where Buck finds his dead body after returning to the camp.

Matthewson: A wealthy man who places a bet with John Thornton. Convinced that Thornton's dog Buck cannot pull a sled weighing one thousand pounds, Matthewson wagers sixteen hundred dollars that Buck will fail. He is proven wrong, however, when Buck accomplishes this enormous feat, and Thornton wins all of his money, using it to embark on an expedition deep into the Yukon to find gold.

Yeehats: A fictitious Native American tribe. The Yeehats attack Thornton's camp, murdering all of its inhabitants, although Buck unleashes his fury against them when he returns. The Yeehats flee the camp, terrified and thinking that Buck is a creature with supernatural powers called the 'Evil Spirit.' As times passes, the Yeehats never return to the valley where Thornton's camp has been, believing that it is the Evil Spirit's home. The Yeehats also call Buck the 'Ghost Dog,' leading a pack of wolves and spawning an age of fear and terror against wandering hunters and Yeehat warriors.

Dolly: A strong husky purchased in Dyea, Alaska by Francois and Perrault. Dolly is badly hurt after an attack of wild dogs, and she later goes rabid herself, furiously

attacking the other sled dogs including Buck, until her skull is forever smashed by Francois, as he struggles to stop her madness.



Objects/Places

Santa Clara Valley: A region of California located about forty miles south of San Francisco. The largest urban area in the Santa Clara Valley is modern day San Jose. In this region, Judge Miller owns a sizeable estate that includes horses, vineyards, and gardens. It is here that Buck spends the first four years of his life.

Klondike Gold Rush: Begun in 1897 amidst a general economic depression in the Pacific Northwest with high rates of unemployment; huge rush of gold-seeking people from the West Coast moving northward into Alaska and Canada's Yukon Territory to seek gold in Canada's Klondike River. Although the Klondike Gold Rush energized this region until it ended abruptly in 1899, many of the miners' hopes were in vain as they returned home empty-handed, like write Jack London himself. Seattle, Dawson City, Skaguay, and Dyea were a few of the cities that prospered from this sudden, but short-lived, influx of people between the years 1897-1899.

San Francisco: A large city located in northeastern California. Buck is brought to San Francisco by train after Manuel kidnaps him from Judge Miller's house. From San Francisco, he is transported yet again to Seattle, Washington to be sold as a sled dog.

Seattle: Called the 'Gateway to Alaska and the Orient,' Seattle plays a very important role during the Klondike Gold Rush. Located in northwestern Washington, this coastal city is the last stop for many travelers before they enter Alaska, whether it is by train or by boat. Traveling miners bought supplies in Seattle, newly discovered gold capital flowed into the city from the north, and lumber from the rich forests around the city was shipped into Alaska to build new settlements for the miners there. Seattle continued to prosper even when the Gold Rush ended and the influx of people slowed down. Perrault and Francois purchase Buck when he is brought to Seattle after a long train ride. From Seattle, the men travel by boat to Dyea, Alaska.

Narwhal: A ship that carries Perrault, Francois, Buck, and the newly purchased sled dogs from Seattle, Washington to Dyea, Alaska.

Alaska: Originally under Russian control, the Territory of Alaska was sold to the United States of America in 1867. Unlike the Klondike Gold Rush, this land located in the northwest corner of the North American continent was largely undeveloped and unused. However, the sudden influx of people to the region in 1897 spurred on a series of reforms by the American government. Although many gold claims were staked in the nearby Yukon Territory of Canada, miners had to pass through Alaska in order to reach the gold fields, spurring on the growth of such settlements as Skaguay, Dyea, and Circle City along the way. The Chilkoot Pass and the White Pass, which Buck travels many times, lead from Alaska to the lake regions of the Yukon Territory. Alaska officially became the 49th state to join the Union in 1959, over half a century after the Gold Rush ended.



Queen Charlotte Sound: A body of water between Seattle, Washington and along the western coast of British Columbia, located in the Pacific Ocean. The ship Narwhal passes through the Queen Charlotte Sound on its way to Dyea, Alaska.

Dyea, Alaska: A booming town in Alaska built on the banks of the Taiya River located ten miles north of Skaguay. These two towns had always competed for popularity, although the construction of a railroad in Skaguay ultimately causes Dyea to be less favored. The Dyea or Chilkoot Pass, running parallel to the White Pass out of Skaguay, transports miners to the lakes region bordering the sought after Klondike River. Buck first arrives at Dyea, Alaska as his sled pulling adventure begins. Today, Dyea is an unpopulated ghost town, with hardly any trace it had ever existed, although one can still hike along the dangerous Chilkoot Pass.

Chilkoot Trail: The Chilkoot Trail or Chilkoot Pass, also called the Dyea Pass, was a dangerous route leading from Dyea, Alaska, to the Yukon Territory's lakes region that led to the coveted Klondike River. The Chilkoot Trail is much more treacherous than the White Pass, as Buck himself experiences with Perrault and Francois, contributing no doubt to the eventual abandonment of Dyea as a point of entry for the Yukon Territory. Modern day visitors can still hike along the Chilkoot Pass, however.

Dawson City, Canada: Located at the mouth of the Klondike River where it meets the Yukon River, Dawson City was named after George Dawson, who explored the region with the Canadian Geological Survey in 1887; nicknamed the 'Paris of the North' due to the bustling activity here that centered greatly upon the mining industry, because of its proximity to the Klondike River. Miners during the Klondike Gold Rush relied on Dawson City as a source of supplies and transportation. Buck pulls the sled many times to Dawson City from locations in Alaska.

Thirty Mile River: The Thirty Mile River (which is the Yukon River) begins where the Chilkoot Pass ends, leading directly to Dawson City, where the Yukon River forms a junction with the gold-rich Klondike River. Buck experiences great difficulty crossing through this region with Perrault and Francois.

Rink Rapids: A rough section of waters in the Yukon River. It is at a small settlement here where Francois and Perrault buy the huskies Teek and Koon.

Skaguay, Alaska: Today known as Skagway, a popular city for miners to gain entry to the Yukon Territory's Klondike region by braving the White Pass, running parallel to the more treacherous Chilkoot Pass to the north. Francois and Perrault leave Buck in Skaguay so that he can haul mail, and later on Buck is sold away here to the abusive American trio. After departing with them, it is the last time he visits this coastal city. The creation of a railroad through Skaguay at the turn of the century brought hordes of people, causing its popularity to quickly rise.

Cassiar Bar: Location of a small settlement in the Yukon Territory directly on the Yukon River. Buck's sled team rests here after traveling for many miles with the Scotch half-breed, hauling heavy loads of mail.



Circle City: A riverside settlement located in northeastern Alaska about two hundred miles way from Dawson City, further up along the Yukon River; named after early settlers who thought Circle City was in the Arctic Circle. Today the small settlement is known simply as Circle, Alaska. During the Klondike Gold Rush, hordes of settlers left Circle City to go further south into the Yukon Territory near Dawson City, where the gold discoveries were most concentrated. Buck defends John Thornton when he is attacked in a saloon at Circle City.

Forty Mile Creek: A dangerous river in the Yukon Territory where John Thornton nearly drowns. Buck comes to the rescue, however, and they are both pulled ashore by John Thornton's partners, Pete and Hans.

Stewart River: A river located in the unsettled regions of the Yukon Territory south of Dawson City, flowing eastward parallel to the Klondike River. The Stewart River branches off of the Yukon River. Thornton follows the Stewart River in search of gold, riding along the river in a raft until it ends, after which he and his companions set off on foot.

Yukon Territory: First explored in 1846 by the Hudson's Bay Company, the Yukon Territory of Canada is located east of Alaska, West of the Northwest Territories, and north of British Columbia; from the Loucheux word 'Yukunah,' meaning 'great river,' because the Yukon River is so large. Originally controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company, the territory was acquired by Canada in 1870, at first as part of the Northwest Territories. The Klondike Gold Rush, centering upon the Klondike River in this region, brought thousands of new settlers and business investors to the Yukon Territory. In 1898, due to this sudden influx of people, the Yukon was made into a separate territory, with Dawson City serving as its capital. Although parts of the Yukon Territory are settled, much of it remains untamed and wild, as Buck soon realizes during his travels.

Hudson's Bay Company: A fur-trading company based in central Canada, established in 1670, still in existence as a corporation in Canada today. A Hudson's Bay Company expedition led by John Bell explored the Yukon in 1845, after which trading posts were established throughout the region to make way for a new wave of business, exporting furs to customers in the east. In 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to surrender its holdings to Canada which included the Yukon and much of central Canada. John Thornton later discovers an old rifle from the days of the Hudson's Bay Company in a dilapidated old cabin when he is searching for gold deep in the Yukon Territory.



Quotes

Quote 1: "[It was] because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost." Chapter 1, pg. 1

Quote 2: "Old longings nomadic lap,/Chafing at custom's chain;/Again from its brumal sleep/Wakens the ferine strain." Chapter 1, pg. 1

Quote 3: "More tormentors, Buck decided, for they were evil-looking creatures, ragged and unkempt; and he stormed and raged at them through the bars. They only laughed and poked sticks at him, which he promptly assailed with his teeth till he realized that that was what they wanted." Chapter 1, pg. 8

Quote 4: "He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his afterlife he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law...The facts of life took on a fiercer aspect; and while he faced that aspect uncowed, he faced it with all the latent cunning of his nature aroused." Chapter 1, pg. 13

Quote 5: "Here was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety. All was confusion and action, and every moment life and limb were in peril. There was imperative need to be constantly alert; for these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They were savages, all of them, who knew no law but the law of club and fang." Chapter 2, pg. 18

Quote 6: "He never had enough, and suffered from perpetual hunger pangs. Yet the other dogs, because they weighed less and were born to the life, received only a pound only of the fish and managed to keep in good condition." Chapter 2, pg. 28

Quote 7: "[Buck's changes] marked...the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was all well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whoso took such things into account was a fool, and insofar as he observed them he would fail to prosper." Chapter 2, pg. 29

Quote 8: "In this manner had fought forgotten ancestors. They quickened the old life within him, the old tricks which they had stamped into the heredity of the breed were his tricks...And when, on the still cold nights, he pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolflike, it was his ancestors, dead and dust, pointing nose at star and howling down through the centuries and through him." Chapter 2, pg. 31



Quote 9: "The dominant primordial beast was strong in Buck, and under the fierce condition of trail life it grew and grew. Yet it was a secret growth. His newborn cunning gave him poise and control...and in the bitter hatred between him and Spitz he betrayed no impatience, shunned all offensive acts." Chapter 3, pg. 32

Quote 10: "This was a great relief, and Buck caused even the weazened face of Perrault to twist itself into a grin one morning, when Francois forgot the moccasins and Buck lay on his back, his four feet waving appealingly in the air, and refused to budge without them. Later his feet grew hard to the trail, and the worn-out footgear was thrown away." Chapter 3, pg. 40

Quote 11: "Buck wanted [to fight]...because it was his nature, because he had been gripped tight by that nameless, incomprehensible pride of the trail and trace -- that pride which holds dogs in the toil to the last gasp, which lures them to die joyfully in the harness, and breaks their hearts if they are cut out of the harness." Chapter 3, pg. 42

Quote 12: "This was the pride that bore up Spitz and made him thrash the sled-dogs who blundered and shirked in the traces or hid away at the harness-up time in the morning. Likewise it was this pride that made him fear Buck as possible lead dog. And this was Buck's pride, too. He openly threatened the other's leadership." Chapter 3, pg. 42-43

Quote 13: "It was an old song, old as the breed itself [and it was] vested with the woe of unnumbered generations, this plaint by which Buck was so strangely stirred. When he moaned and sobbed, it was with the pain of living that was of old the pain of his wild fathers...And that he should be stirred by it marked the completeness with which he harked back through the ages of fire and roof to the raw beginnings of life in the howling ages." Chapter 3, pg. 45

Quote 14: "All that stirring of old instincts which at stated periods drives men out from the sounding cities to forest and plain to kill things by chemically propelled leaden bullets, the blood lust, the joy to kill -- all this was Buck's, only it was infinitely more intimate. He was ranging at the head of the pack, running the wild thing down, the living meat, to kill with his own teeth and wash his muzzle to the eyes in warm blood." Chapter 3, pg. 48

Quote 15: "Despite the pain and helplessness, Spitz struggled madly to keep up. He saw the silent circle, with gleaming eyes, lolling tongues, and silvery breaths drifting upward, closing in upon him as he had seen similar circles close in upon beaten antagonists in the past. Only this time he was the one who was beaten." Chapter 3, pg. 52

Quote 16: "They cursed [Buck], and his fathers and mothers before him, and all his seed to come after him down to the generation, and every hair on his body and drop of blood in his veins; and [Buck] answered curse with snarl and kept out of their reach...advertising plainly that when his desire was met, he would come in and be good." Chapter 4, pg. 56



Quote 17: "Far more potent were the memories of his heredity that gave things he had never seen before a seeming familiarity; the instincts (which were but the memories of his ancestors become habits) which had lapsed in later days, and still later, in him, quickened and became alive again." Chapter 4, pg. 61

Quote 18: "[Dave] pleaded with his eyes to remain there...[the men] talked of how a dog could break its heart through being denied the work that killed it, and recalled instances they had known, where dogs, too old for the toil, or injured, had died because they were cut out of the traces. Also, they held it a mercy, since Dave was to die anyway, that he should die in the traces, heart-easy and content." Chapter 4, pg. 66

Quote 19: "The wonderful patience of the trail which comes to men who toil hard and suffer sore, and remain sweet of speech and kindly, did not come to these two men and the woman. They had no inkling of such a patience. They were stiff and in pain; their muscles ached, their bones ached, their very hearts ached; and because of this they became sharp of speech." Chapter 5, pg. 80

Quote 20: "His muscles had wasted away to knotty strings, and the flesh pads had disappeared, so that each rib and every bone in his frame were outlined cleanly through the loose hide that was wrinkled in folds of emptiness. It was heartbreaking, only Buck's heart was unbreakable. The man in the red sweater had proved that." Chapter 5, pg. 83

Quote 21: "The sap was rising in the pines. The willows and aspens were bursting out in young buds. Shrubs and vines were putting on fresh garbs of green. Crickets sang in the nights, and in the days all manners of creeping, crawling things rustled forth in the sun. Partridges and woodpeckers were booming and knocking in the forest. Squirrels were chattering, birds singing." Chapter 5, pg. 85

Quote 22: "He felt strangely numb. As though from a great distance, he was aware that he was being beaten. The last sensations of pain left him. He no longer felt anything, though very faintly he could hear the impact of the club upon his body. But it was no longer his body, it seemed so far away." Chapter 5, pg. 88

Quote 23: "Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time...With the Judge's sons, hunting and tramping, it had been a working partnership; with the Judge's grandsons, a sort of pompous guardianship; and with the Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness, it had taken John Thornton to arouse." Chapter 6, pg. 92-93

Quote 24: "[Buck] sat by John Thornton's fire, a broad-breasted dog, white-fanged and long furred; but behind him were the shades of all manner of dogs, half-wolves and wild wolves, urgent and prompting, tasting the savor of the meat he ate, thirsting for the water he drank...lying down to sleep with him when he lay down, and dreaming with him and beyond him and becoming themselves the stuff of his dreams." Chapter 6, pg. 96-97

Quote 25: "Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call...he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and



to plunge into the forest...But as often as he gained the soft unbroken earth and the green shade, the love for John Thornton drew him back to the fire again. Thornton alone held him. The rest of mankind was as nothing." Chapter 6, pg. 97

Quote 26: "He had caught the contagion of the excitement, and he felt that in some way he must do a great thing for John Thornton. Murmurs of admiration at his splendid appearance went up. He was in perfect condition, without an ounce of superfluous flesh...His furry coat shone with the sheen of silk...Men felt [his] muscles and proclaimed them hard as iron." Chapter 6, pg. 107

Quote 27: "[The] cheer began to grow and grow, which burst into a roar as he passed the firewood and halted at command. Every man was tearing himself loose, even Matthewson. Hats and mittens were flying into the air. Men were shaking hands, it did not matter with whom, and bubbling over in a general incoherent babel." Chapter 6, pg. 110

Quote 28: "Sometimes he pursued the call into the forest, looking for it as though it were a tangible thing, barking softly or defiantly...Irresistible impulses seized him. he would be lying in camp, dozing lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head would lift and his ears cock up, intent and listening, and he would spring on his feet and dash away, and on and on, for hours, through the forest aisles." Chapter 7, pg. 117

Quote 29: "But especially he loved to run in the dim twilight of the summer midnights, listening to the subdued and sleepy murmurs of the forest, reading signs and sounds as a man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called -- called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come." Chapter 7, pg. 118

Quote 30: "The blood-longing became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived, unaided, alone, by virtue of his own strength and prowess, surviving triumphantly in a hostile environment where only the strong survived." Chapter 7, pg. 122

Quote 31: "Again Buck knew [the sounds] as things heard in that other world which persisted in his memory. He walked to the center of the open space and listened. It was the call, the many-noted call, sounding more luringly and compelling than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey. John Thornton was dead. The last tie was broken. Man and the claims of man no longer bound him." Chapter 7, pg. 134

Quote 32: "When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack." Chapter 7, pg. 137

Topic Tracking: Emotion

Emotion 1: Buck feels calm and at ease while residing at Judge Miller's place. He is happy inside, because he is not abused at all by the Judge or his family. Buck is given the freedom to run around on his own without a leash, and because of this he lives a worry-free existence, content with the life he is leading.

Emotion 2: After being stolen away by Manuel, Buck feels pain for the first time. Upset at these new surroundings and unconsciously releasing a deep growl, a man pulls Buck's leash tightly and hurts him. Buck becomes very angry when he is then tossed like luggage into the train's baggage car, as he tries to understand what exactly is happening to him. Since he has led such a carefree existence, all of these sensations and feelings within are totally unknown to him.

Emotion 3: Enraged, Buck is filled with an anger that he has never before felt in his life, and he haphazardly attacks the man in the red sweater in spite of the beating he receives in return. Buck feels intense pain as a result, as the club smashes his body, his nose, and then cruelly smashes his genitals. As a result, Buck's anger goes away when he gives in to the man and admits that he has lost the fight.

Emotion 4: Curly is ruthlessly torn apart by the other sled dogs, and Buck feels very sad that such a friendly dog as her suffers such a tragic fate. Buck also hates Spitz from this moment, because he did not offer assistance to Curly, and he even actually seemed to laugh as she was being slain. This brave dog also becomes more confident in his own ability to survive, vowing not to ever let his guard down as Curly had done.

Emotion 5: Over time, the primal impulses surge stronger within Buck. When he lived in California, Buck did not have a chance to express himself fully, to howl or hunt or even associate with other wild dogs. Now all of this has changed, and Buck quickly adapts to these new surrounding, feeling increasingly like he belongs here rather than back in California. These primal impulses, long since dormant, begin to fill Buck's blood once more.

Emotion 6: Buck feels intense jealousy and hatred towards Spitz, feelings which he has never experienced before. He hates the dog because of the coldness with which he treated Curly's death, and Buck is filled with jealousy to have the sled leadership position for himself. For now, the position still belongs to Spitz.

Emotion 7: As Francois showers Buck with a just kindness, caring for his frozen feet and watching over him, the dog feels a growing sense of affection towards this man. He is eager to please, and in return Francois places the highest faith in Buck's intelligence and strength.

Emotion 8: The wildness of Buck's wolfish ancestors continues to consume his spirit. At night in Dawson City, Buck goes out into the streets and howls at the moon with the other dogs. He does not miss California, for it is here that he finally progresses in



knowledge and worldly experience, growing into a powerful, wild dog, much in contrast to the naive, sheltered existence he had lived in the Southland.

Emotion 9: When Perrault and Francois finally agree to allow Buck to be the sled team's leader, he is overjoyed that this long desired position is his at long last. He has had to be very patient, fighting Spitz to the death for it, but his hard work certainly has paid off. Buck understands more and more that here in the wild only the strong survive, and the weaker creatures, like Spitz, simply die out and disappear.

Emotion 10: An intense sense of yearning fills Buck's entire body, as he daydreams about his ancestral heritage as a wild wolf, consumed by impulses to hunt and be free. However, he remains trapped performing these menial labors for the men, hauling mail back and forth from Dawson City. Buck is restless and he craves new experiences that will allow him to further explore this primal side of himself that is the call of the wild.

Emotion 11: Unlike the feelings of intense hurt Buck had felt after witnessing Curly's death long ago, he now readily accepts Dave's death as a fact of life, because he is not strong enough to survive. Survival has become a reality of life, and those who are not strong enough merely die. Buck feels casual acceptance now, rather than being emotionally distraught about it. Rather than worrying about others, he worries instead about himself.

Emotion 12: Buck grows increasingly weary of the mistreatment he suffers at the hands of the American trio. They do not appreciate the work that the sled dogs do for them, starving them, working them for long hours, and beating them when they insist on resting because they are so tired. Rather than allowing himself to be beaten down, Buck is now resilient and does not complain, nor does he try to lash out against Hal. Instead he merely follows orders to the best of his ability, clinging on tightly to his innate ability to survive.

Emotion 13: Because John Thornton is so kind to Buck and saved his life from Hal's cruel hands, the dog falls in love with this man. He is also filled with a persistent fear that he, too, will disappear like the other people in his life have before such as Perrault, Francois, and the Scotch half-breed. Buck's love for John burns stronger than anything he has ever felt in his entire life. At one point the man jokingly tells Buck to jump off of a cliff, and the dog immediately prepares to leap off until Thornton holds him back. Buck's love and loyalty to John Thornton is all-consuming.

Emotion 14: Buck eventually becomes the victim of conflicting forces raging within him. First and foremost there is his intense love for John Thornton, but also there is a growing restlessness, as his primal impulses encourage him to wander off into the forest, to hunt and howl like the wild beast that he is. For the time being, Thornton's power is stronger than the voice of the wild, and Buck chooses to stay with this man.

Emotion 15: When he wins sixteen hundred dollars for John Thornton after pulling a thousand pound sled, Buck feels great pride within himself because this makes Thornton very happy. Although he doesn't quite understand that a gamble has occurred,



all he knows is that John wanted him to accomplish this task and he succeeded. Afterwards, Buck bites John's hand to show his love, and John hugs him, swearing affectionately at the dog.

Emotion 16: While Thornton is busy mining, Buck begins to wander out more into the forest, exploring and hunting helpless animals. The dog always returns eventually to Thornton, however, as on one occasion when a new wolf friend he makes wants him to stay in the woods with him, Buck nevertheless feels drawn back to Thornton's campsite. His burning love for this man persists in being stronger than the call of the wild.

Emotion 17: Buck is furious when he discovers that the Yeehats have murdered John Thornton and his companions while he was away hunting a moose. In response, the wild dog tears out the throats of several Yeehats without warning, chasing the others away, after which he mourns deeply for the loss of his best friend. With Thornton dead, only the call of the wild remains for Buck to follow now.



Topic Tracking: Greed

Greed 1: Men to the north of Santa Clara Valley are filled with greed, as they crave instant riches during the Klondike Gold Rush. Quite unlike the cruel life faced by animals in the wild, the world of humans is not necessarily such a quest for survival, and instead is filled with luxuries. This greed in the Yukon Territory is soon going to bring trouble to Buck when he is sold as a sled dog and forced to perform hard labor.

Greed 2: As a result of Manuel's gambling problems and his greed for money, Buck is unjustly sold into servitude for a stranger at the railroad station not too far from Judge Miller's estate. Greed continues to be a wicked force afflicting humans only, for Buck is freed from such cravings for material wealth.

Greed 3: Spitz becomes greedy for food and tries to steal more than his fair share. As a result, he is whipped for this disrespect by Francois. Quite unlike the materialistic greed of the humans who crave gold and riches, this dog is greedy for the basic component in his ongoing survival: food. Although he takes more than is fair share, this greed becomes more a matter of necessity instead of being a matter of luxury as in man's materialism

Greed 4: Once again, the greed experienced by the dogs is very different from the materialistic greed experienced by the miners in the Yukon. Instead, Buck is greedy to have Spitz's position as leader of the sled team, knowing that he will have to kill Spitz to achieve this goal. This greed is not a mere luxury as with the humans, for it is a simple matter of survival of the fittest. Buck will either triumph if he is strong, or he will fail if he's too weak.

Greed 5: Buck chases a rabbit for a long time before it is abruptly ripped from his grasp and hungrily devoured by a greedy Spitz right in front of him. As a result of Spitz's selfishness, Buck launches into an aggressive attack to avenge this crime and punish Spitz for being such a cruel bully. Buck's greed to have the sled team leadership position for himself also inspires. However, unlike human greed, for these animals greed is a matter of basic survival as they argue about such essential things as strength, power, and food.

Greed 6: The humans don't care about anyone else but themselves because they just want more and more from the dogs, draining them of every last bit of energy. When Buck's sled team is too tired to be any great use, they are merely sold away for some money to three inexperienced Americans. Greed thrives throughout Alaska and the Yukon, for it is greed that drives everybody to the region with lofty visions of discovering large quantities of gold.

Greed 7: Mercedes, Hal, and Charles are so greedy that they have brought many unnecessary belongings to Skaguay including a tent, a wardrobe of clothes, and dishes. They finally throw these items away after realizing what a burden it is for the dogs to pull. Driven by visions of striking it rich quick in the Klondike River, they buy many more



dogs than are necessary because of this greed once again, even though there isn't enough food for that many dogs to consume during the trip to Dawson City.

Greed 8: Mercedes is filled with greed and selfishness when she insists on riding in the sled pulled by the exhausted and malnourished dogs simply because her feet are hurting her from walking so much. She shows no concern for the welfare of the other dogs, and later on her added weight to the sled contributes to the trail collapsing beneath her, causing the remaining dogs, Hal, Charles, and Mercedes to all drown.

Greed 9: John Thornton takes advantage of Buck's affection for him by asking the strong dog to win a bet for him by pulling a sled weighing one thousand pounds. Rather than refusing the bet and sparing Buck the hardship of pulling such a great weight, Thornton accepts the offer, eager to win the sixteen hundred dollars that Matthewson has bet against him. Buck succeeds, however, and Thornton becomes a wealthy man.

Greed 10: Although he has already won a very large sum of money because of Buck, John Thornton decides to go off to try and discover even more wealth. Greed consumes him, as he embarks on a quest with Hans, Pete, and the sled dogs to discover a legendary gold mine in the uncharted wilds of the Yukon Territory. Buck does not realize where they're going, although he is excited to be exploring new lands that he has not traveled through before, and this also provides an opportunity for him to further discover the hidden wildness in himself.

Greed 11: When Thornton does finally discover a huge reserve of gold in a stream and proceeds to collect this gold together, he begins to neglect Buck more and more, prompting the faithful dog to go off on long walks through the forest, hunting wild animals and birds. Buck never forgets Thornton, however, and always returns to the campsite after he is gone for a little while just to check up on this man whom he loves. Unlike Thornton, who is consumed by a burning greed for gold, Buck remains kind-hearted and virtuous.

Greed 12: After Thornton's murder at the hands of the Yeehats, his gold becomes worthless once again since there is no man to be greedy and lust after it. Instead, it leaks haphazardly out of rotting bags, swallowed up again by the stream and the wild undergrowth that springs up around it. In the end, Thornton's greed led to his eventual death, because he was driven on a vain quest for gold just like the three Americans who died with their dreams of infinite wealth unrealized as well. The wild swallows up humanity and human desires, as all luxuries fall away and life becomes again what it was in younger days, where the strong survive and the weak die out. Buck embraces this idea, as he transitions away from the human world of greed into the wild world of survival.



Topic Tracking: Hunger

Hunger 1: After being locked away in a wooden crate for two days and two nights without food or water, Buck experiences intense hunger pangs for the first time in his life, which had up until this point been worry-free. The man in the red sweater delivers a severe beating, causing Buck to give up the struggle in favor of some food which this same man fearlessly hand feeds into the dog's mouth; he swallows hungrily. Life is about day to day survival from this moment on.

Hunger 2: The hunger burning inside of the other sled dogs inspires them to steal food away from Buck, who chooses to eat his meal more slowly than them. Buck slowly begins to understand this wild world, which centers upon the basic needs of survival, such as relieving the body's hunger for more food.

Hunger 3: Buck increasingly craves to eat meat, just as his wolfish ancestors had done. Hunger for him had not been such a big deal in the Santa Clara Valley, but now he begins to get more in touch with his primal roots. He understands that an aspect of being wild is to always be hungry, craving more food to scavenge or hunt down.

Hunger 4: Another group of dogs, starving and wild, attack Buck's sled team. They steal much of their food supply and attack the sled dogs themselves because they are mad with hunger. Perrault and Francois manage to eventually chase them away, however, although this experience is yet another testament to how survival in the wild is rooted very much upon hunger and finding food that one needs in order to survive.

Hunger 5: Buck tastes warm blood for the first time when he chases a rabbit for awhile across the snow, and this experience awakens strong feelings within his body. He hungers to taste that blood again, chasing after the fearful creature, and relishing the very act of hunting prey. Buck thus behaves more alike his wolf ancestors, who occupied a world where survival of the strongest and the fittest was law.

Hunger 6: Spitz dies an appropriate death, eaten hungrily by the other sled dogs whom he had once bullied so mercilessly. Buck first hated Spitz when he refused to aid poor Curly when she was being attacked by the sled dogs herself, and now he suffers the same fate, with Buck refusing to come to his aid. Hunger drives the other dogs upon him, and his broken and beaten body is quickly devoured by their gaping mouths.

Hunger 7: Hal brings too many dogs along for the trip to Dawson City, and he has not brought along enough food. Hunger consumes the dogs, as they soon begin to starve to death. Mercedes worsens the situation by secretly stealing what food they have and feeding extra portions to the dogs because she is trying to help them.

Hunger 8: John Thornton cures Buck's malnutrition after saving him from Hal's cruelty. He nurses Buck back to health, much to the dog's tender delight. Buck remains tough in dealing with other men and other dogs beside those that belong to Thornton, recalling that he has to prove his toughness to avoid being defeated by the other animals since



life is a matter of basic survival, "Eat or be eaten." Either Buck would eat what is around him to survive, or else the other dogs would eat him, as they did to Spitz.

Hunger 9: While he is being fed meat by Thornton, Buck does not merely swallow it down, but instead he tastes the juices in the meat, savoring its flavor and drinking deeply into the water that accompanies his meal. Buck becomes more primal in his increasing love of fresh meat, rather than the fish or dried dog food he had been fed in times past. Buck's hunger remains a central force in determining what he will do.

Hunger 10: Thornton finally discovers a rich supply of gold deep in the Yukon Territory, and Buck relies increasingly upon his primal instincts by going on long trips alone into the woods. There, he hunts all sorts of wild creatures including fish, birds, rabbits, and even a black bear. He grows more skilled at hunting, relishing the work that he does, happy to satisfy the burning hunger for blood and meat that is in his stomach.

Hunger 11: Several Yeehat warriors are easily slain by an enraged Buck, their throats ripped out and gored apart. Buck is proud that he has successfully hunted the most cunning prey of all, humans. This is the final stage he undergoes before fully embracing the call of the wild and rejoining his wolf brothers in the forest. The wise and experienced dog named Buck returns there to his forest home at long last, rediscovering a whole new way of life that had been forgotten and dormant for generations in his canine family.



Chapter 1 - Into the Primitive

Buck is a kind-hearted dog who lives with Judge Miller and his children at their home, located in northern California's Santa Clara Valley. His life is carefree, rolling around in the sunny lawn that stretched endlessly around the large house, connected to the main road by large driveways. The house is always buzzing with activity from servants, gardeners, guests, and stable hands who tended to the horses that also inhabited the property; these people had cottages on the property as well, and further out there stretch long lines of orchards, pastures for grazing the animals, and areas filled with long snaky grapevine and low-lying berry patches. One part of the space has a small reservoir used for drinking water, and it is here that the Judge's children play during hot summer days.

Other dogs live there with four year-old Buck, but he is the Judge's favorite out of them all; for these other dogs either stay indoors, or they are kept outdoors in the kennel. Buck, however, is able to wander everywhere on the property unhindered and unbothered by anyone else. He has free reign. Buck's time at the Judge's house is spent playing and not having to worry about anything. He knows neither anger nor hunger nor pain. He plays often with the younger members of the Judge's family, carrying his grandchildren upon his back and walking beside the Judge's daughters when they would walk across the spacious property, reflecting in the peace that it inspires. Buck's father, a St. Bernard, was best friends with the Judge, so naturally after the father dies Buck is given the royal treatment. His mother was a Scotch shepherd dog. Buck is called a "sated aristocrat" because of the privileges he gets from the Judge.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 1

However, in spite of this appearance of complete happiness, trouble is brewing on the horizon "because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost" Chapter 1, pg. 1. The Klondike Gold Rush has begun far away to the north in Alaska, and this will soon threaten Buck even though he is thousands of miles away. The miners traveling northward need sled dogs to explore the snowy reaches of the Klondike, since it is too difficult to travel through these areas on foot, and a horse's hooves would push right through that deep snow.

Topic Tracking: Greed 1

For the time being, Buck lives without any worries, enjoying his freedom. He is innocent just like the very children who are his best friends, wishing only to have fun and play. Buck has a lot of changes ahead of him, suggested by the short poem "Old longings nomadic lap,/Chafing at custom's chain;/Again from its brumal sleep/Wakens the ferine strain" Chapter 1, pg. 1. Buck's primal roots nevertheless yearn to wander and be



nomadic again, even though he may not realize this at all yet; this desire to be wild and away from man will make him "chafe at custom's chain." Although Buck is content with his life at the Judge's house, he isn't really allowed to be himself at all. Instead, he often acts like one of the children more than he behaves like a dog, playfully dancing around and looking for attention from other people.

The wildness within Buck is first awakened when he experiences pain for the very first time in his life. One evening in the fall of the year 1897, the Judge's gardener, Manuel, leads Buck off of the Judge's property all the way to a nearby train station. The Judge and his children are either not home or they were occupied by other things, so they don't notice this wretched dognapper. Manuel has a lot of gambling debt and decides to unjustly sell Buck, meeting a man at the train station and handing him Buck's leash in return for some money. Buck is confused at what is going on, but upon being delivered into the hands of this strange man he releases an involuntary growl. The man responds by squeezing the rope tightly around his neck, closing his breathing passages and muffling his growl into a choking yelp. The rope is pulled tighter around his neck, and he is thrown by Manuel and the other man into the baggage car of the train that has just arrived at the station. Like an innocent child, Buck does not know how to react to this pain and abuse he has just experienced, stunned that he has been treated in such a way after living for so many years unmolested in the Judge's kind company.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 2

Topic Tracking: Greed 2

The train begins to move, and soon after Buck begins to grow restless again, thrashing around in the baggage car and lashing out again to bite this man who has tied him up, slashing his hand open widely before he can again squeeze the rope tighter on his neck so that he won't be able to breathe. A baggage handler hears the noise, asking what is going on, and the man hides his bleeding hand. He makes up a fake story that he is going to San Francisco to see a special doctor who can cure Buck's vicious behavior, pretending that he and Buck are the best of friends. Later, as the train arrives in this city, Buck is brought to a small shed behind a saloon, where the man complains to a conniving saloonkeeper about the price he is getting to sell Buck, fifty dollars, commenting that he had in fact paid one hundred dollars originally to buy Buck from Manuel. The saloonkeeper comforts him, and asks for assistance in tossing Buck into a closed wooden crate, removing the dog's collar. Buck puts up some resistance but is little match for the two men, who succeed in locking him into the crate. He is now the saloonkeeper's property, for the other man has sold him away again, angry at having been bitten by the enraged creature.

Buck wonders what he has done to deserve this treatment, pondering where Judge Miller is, and why these men have stuck him into a wooden crate. He wonders what he did to deserve this sort of cruel treatment. The next day there were more men who came to see him now, "More tormentors, Buck decided, for they were evil-looking creatures, ragged and unkempt; and he stormed and raged at them through the bars. They only laughed and poked sticks at him, which he promptly assailed with his teeth till he realized that that was what they wanted" Chapter 1, pg. 8. These people are not kind



like the Judge or the children whom he had played with only a short while before. Buck had never been tormented or mistreated before, so this is a very confusing experience for him to endure, as these men poke him with sticks because they enjoy watching Buck grow angry and upset. Soon after this Buck is carried in the crate for many, many miles, by a horse-drawn wagon, then on a ferry, then finally by train again. He does not eat or drink anything for two days. He feels more and more sickly as time goes on, weakened from malnutrition. Finally, the journey in the crate ends when his train arrives in Seattle.

Buck is a sweaty, bloodshot mess of a creature when his crate is removed from the train and a man begins to chop the crate open with a hatchet, although Buck snarls furiously, clawing and biting at each hole the man makes into the crate. Although everyone else runs away from the area around the crate upon hearing this commotion, the man is unimpressed and continues to chop away. Finally, when a hole large enough is made for Buck to climb out, this man in the red sweater prepares to defend himself with a thick club. Buck emerges and violently lunges out at the man, releasing all of his pent-up fury and anger, although the man stops him short by smashing his head with the club, stunning the dog. Buck is confused because, again, he had never been hit before by a club; again and again he tried to attack the man, but he is deflected each time by the club. Finally, Buck begins to give up, bleeding from his entire face, staggering around, and yet the man moves in closer and smashes him again on the nose, just to teach Buck a lesson, but Buck leaps up again in rage, but the man smashes him this time in the jaw. Buck rises again, attacking a final time before the man smashes him in his genitals with the club, knocking the wind out of him.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 3

The man in the red sweater reads aloud a letter the saloonkeeper had sent with Buck, stating that his name is "Buck." The man says to Buck that he had better not cause any more trouble, or else he'll hit him again, petting him gently on the head now that the dog has been beaten senseless. He then brings food and water, knowing how hungry he must be, and Buck eats the meat right out of that same hand that has just made him feel such great pain. As he eats, Buck reflects about what has happened, "He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his afterlife he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law...The facts of life took on a fiercer aspect; and while he faced that aspect uncowed, he faced it with all the latent cunning of his nature aroused" Chapter 1, pg. 13. Buck is moving further away from his innocent, naive, carefree life that he lived while at Judge Miller's house, and now he is instead becoming much more distrusting, much more guarded, and much more vicious like the very dog that he is. Buck does not trust this man with the club, but he does at least respect him because of the superior power that the man holds over him.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 1

The place that Buck is in was a market of sorts, where many other dogs were brought in crates, and they too undergo the same brutal beating by the man in the red sweater that



he had himself endured. These dogs are led away, and people come to bargain with the man in the red sweater about prices for purchasing the dogs. Many of these dogs are sold there, and Buck is left alone for awhile until at last it is his turn to be purchased, after being noticed by a French Canadian man named Perrault, who agrees to pay three hundred dollars for Buck. Perrault notices that there is something special about Buck, stating that he is "one in the thousand," purchasing another dog named Curly and then he boards a boat named the Narwhal, sailing northward across Queen Charlotte Sound from Seattle to get to Alaska. On the boat Perrault's friend Francois takes Buck and Curly below the deck. There, Buck learns to respect Perrault and Francois because they at least treat him fairly, and they don't abuse him for no reason. One day on the boat Buck notices an example of this, when another dog named Spitz tries to steal his food. Francois lashes out against the thief with his whip, punishing Spitz for his selfishness. Buck thus sees some justice on that day.

Topic Tracking: Greed 3

There is also another quiet dog named Dave who accompanies them as well, but Dave just really wants to stay by himself and not be bothered by anyone. The boat continues to travel with these four dogs and their two French Canadian masters, arriving at last in Alaska. The dogs are leashed up by Francois, and he walks them down the ramp. Buck pauses at the bottom, stunned to be walking for the first time on cold, white snow. There have been a lot of changes ahead for Buck in where he is located, and who his company is. Now there are no children to play with, and he will soon be put to work with these other dogs. Buck is learning a lot about himself, even though these experiences are evoking violent emotions within him and are stealing away much of his playfulness. Instead, Buck is now finally starting to grow and to become reconnected to his primal, wild canine roots.



Chapter 2 - The Law of Club and Fang

The boat lands at Dyea, Alaska, and already this next day brings another lesson to Buck, who is still dazed at how much his life has changed in such a short period of time. He begins to realize the enormity of what has happened, "Here was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety. All was confusion and action, and every moment life and limb were in peril. There was imperative need to be constantly alert; for these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They were savages, all of them, who knew no law but the law of club and fang" Chapter 2, pg. 18. Rather than respecting each other, these dogs know only to defend themselves against each other by violence, or to feel the beat of a human's club or whip when they do not behave properly. These dogs are tamed by feeling violence, and if they were too weak to survive these incidents, then they were killed. The sled dogs are resting outside in the snow after waking up, and a violent incident occurs.

Buck watches one day as Curly playfully approached one of the other sled dogs, a large husky, and in reaction the dog lashes out violently with its teeth, ripping open Curly's skull. The other dogs fly in for the kill, surrounding the poor dog in a whirlwind of teeth and claws, craving blood and death. Buck stares on in horror as it takes far too long for Perrault and Francois to get into the middle of the mix and beat these dogs away, revealing Curly's torn and bloody carcass gleaming against the white snow. Spitz merely watches this incident occur from afar and appears to be laughing for some reason, letting his tongue hang out in a mocking manner, causing Buck to feel the utmost hatred towards him from that point on. Buck is disgusted that Curly was just trying to be friendly and she was attacked for this, whereas Spitz seems to find the whole situation to be funny. Spitz is a much more experienced sled dog than Buck, so perhaps he is more accustomed to seeing these types of situations from occurring, but it is all new for Buck.

Soon after this, Buck is placed into a harness right in front of another dog named Dave. The long line of dogs continues, and Spitz is at the front of the line, leading them along the path. Francois rides at the end in the sled, directing the dogs through the Alaskan snow, and Perrault walks ahead of the sled using his snowshoes, packing down the snow and testing the path to make sure that it's safe. When Buck is too slow or made a wrong move, the more experienced Dave gently bites him to urge him along on the proper course. These dogs form a team, and if any one on the team did not cooperate, then the entire team would suffer as a result, because their harnesses are all joined together. As the days pass, Francois comments to Perrault how quickly Buck learns how to be a sled dog, and this man readily agrees.. Soon after, Perrault buys two more dogs named Billee and Joe to replace the fallen Curly. Perrault works as a messenger for the Canadian government, and having two more dogs on the team will insure that he can complete his route more quickly as well. Billee is good-natured as Curly had been, which Spitz takes advantage of by attacking him, but Joe often comes to the rescue and scares Spitz away.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 4



From Dyea, Alaska the dog team must make its way along the Chilkoot Trail that will lead them to Dawson City, Canada, located in the Yukon Territory at the crossing of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers. It is here that the Klondike Gold Rush first began. Another husky dog named Sol-leks is added to their team as well, appearing to be very experienced with scars and only one eye to see out of. His name means "the Angry One." Buck observes that Sol-leks is very antisocial like Dave and just wants to get his job done, although he also learns by a bad experience that Sol-leks does not like to be approached on his blind side. When poor Buck neared him on the side of his body where the eye is missing, Sol-leks lashes out without warning, tearing a deep gash into his shoulder. That is the last time Buck makes such a mistake, nor does he fall prey to the same gang murder that faced Curly not too long before. Buck is determined to survive. He is next confused at how he can sleep comfortably in the icy weather where they are traveling. First he tries to enter Francois and Perrault's tent but is thrown out, then he wanders around for awhile before being confronted again by the mean sled dogs that killed Curly. He automatically snarls at them, however, refusing to show any weakness so that they will not harm him. They back down, and Buck continues to search for a place to sleep.

Finally, he turns back to where his other companions were: Dave, Sol-leks, Joe, Billee, Spitz, and the rest of his team. Upon arriving, none of these dogs are to be seen, and Buck searches frantically for them before falling down into a hollow part of the snow where Billee is lying down, and Buck falls right on top of him. Realizing that the sled dogs dig a hole under the snow to stay warm and sleep there, Buck happily follows this example and has a good night's sleep; his body heat contained within the little snow cave, and he does not freeze during the night. The next day he awakens, rising out through an extra layer of snow that had fallen during the night before, and Francois again marvels at what an intelligent dog he is. Perrault readily agrees, happy to have a dog like Buck on his sled team. The next day's run ran places Buck in front of Dave again and behind Sol-leks, with the hope that these two experienced sled dogs would mentor Buck so that he, too, could become skilled just like them. Spitz is still the leader of the pack, at the front of the dog sled team, guiding the way through the snow.

There are now a total of nine dogs on the sled team, including Buck, and with the team established, the journey continues across many landmarks along the Chilkoot Trail. Buck sleeps beneath the snow again the next day. Perrault continues to walk ahead of the dog sled team, testing the snow to be sure that it is safe to walk on, packing it down with his snowshoes, while Francois drives the sled, instructing the dogs with his whip when to "mush" or move, or when to stop upon the command "ho." The days pass in this monotonous manner, and Buck adjusts gradually to his new life, forgetting the playful dog he once was while at Judge Miller's house. One problem for Buck is that he is always hungry, even though he receives more food than the other dogs, "He never had enough, and suffered from perpetual hunger pangs. Yet the other dogs, because they weighed less and were born to the life, received only a pound only of the fish and managed to keep in good condition" Chapter 2, pg. 28. Buck often loses his food because he doesn't eat fast enough, and the other dogs steal it away from him.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 2



Over time, Buck learns again to eat more quickly. By observing another dog named Pike as he steals a huge hunk of meat when Perrault wasn't paying attention, Buck decides to try the same move. Perrault is outraged upon discovering the meat was missing, although he did not suspect Buck at all and instead punishes Dub for the deed, since he is the dog team's scapegoat whenever something goes wrong. Pleased that he has outsmarted his master, Buck gains confidence and starts to feel as if he is a part of this sled dog culture. He must learn and progress, or else he shall suffer the same fate that befell Curly because of her good natured demeanor. Buck takes on a cold demeanor towards the other dogs, much like Dave and Sol-leks, showing little emotion for fear of letting down his guard, and it is this attitude that keep him from being overcome by the other dogs. He just minds his own business, and that way he can't get on the other dogs' bad side. When they growl at him, he growls back to stand his ground and to warn them that he won't be so easily dominated.

Furthermore, Buck's changes "marked...the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was all well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whoso took such things into account was a fool, and insofar as he observed them he would fail to prosper" Chapter 2, pg. 29. When Buck was in the South near Santa Clara Valley at Judge Miller's house, life was ruled by reason and morality; Miller was himself a justice of the peace, using reason to punish wrongdoers by the power of mercy. Now that he is far up North life is very different; life is more primal, untamed, and closer to his canine roots. In some ways, life is more inhuman as well, since love and fellowship, such high qualities of human civilization, have no meaning here. Life is a matter of pure survival. There is no time for fellowship or love, since anyone who thinks about such things will quickly die for being so naive. Buck becomes more canine, nearly wolf-like increasingly and less human.

Buck survives through this harshness, however, controlled increasingly by his inner instincts that gave him the will to survive. He refuses to be beaten by the sled dogs or humans alike. As time goes on, his body grows muscular and thick, no longer flabby or soft. His hair grows coarse, and his appetite grows very flexible, eating whatever is within reach. The dainty steaks of his days at the Judge's house have little meaning here. Buck learns also to bite the ice out of his toes using his tongue so that they do not become frozen, and he becomes an expert at digging hollows under the snow to sleep in. Buck recalls slowly the primal urge of hunting that he had never experienced for himself, chasing down prey in a wild pack of other dogs, until the prey is killed. The first step towards this was stealing the meat from Perrault, and this hunger for meat continues to grow stronger and stronger within Buck's canine blood.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 3

These feelings surge into his body gradually, and "In this manner had fought forgotten ancestors. They quickened the old life within him, the old tricks which they had stamped into the heredity of the breed were his tricks...And when, on the still cold nights, he pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolflike, it was his ancestors, dead and



dust, pointing nose at star and howling down through the centuries and through him" Chapter 2, pg. 31. Buck experiences a remarkable transformation during this time, as he moves away from the human, domesticated roots from which he emerged and becomes a wolf again internally, relearning old impulses that had long since been dead and undeveloped within him. Rather than degenerating in human terms, Buck becomes himself more and more, and through this struggle to survive, Buck reaches a greater understanding of himself. In many ways, this difficult journey with the sled dogs across the Arctic wilderness is an inner journey for Buck to rediscover his primal self.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 5



Chapter 3 - The Dominant Primordial Beast

Buck continues to become closer to his primal, canine roots, as "The dominant primordial beast was strong in Buck, and under the fierce condition of trail life it grew and grew. Yet it was a secret growth. His newborn cunning gave him poise and control...and in the bitter hatred between him and Spitz he betrayed no impatience, shunned all offensive acts" Chapter 3, pg. 32. Ever since the death of Curly, Buck has hated Spitz because he laughed when she was being mauled to death by the other sled dogs, offering no assistance at all. Buck is also jealous that Spitz leads the sled dog team, because he wants to be the sled dog leader himself. Tensions between the two dogs continue to increase as Perrault and Francois lead the sled dog team along the Chilkoot Trail towards Dawson City in Canada's Yukon Territory.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 6

Spitz even goes out of his way to bully Buck, snarling at him in passing. On one occasion, Buck had dug a nice bed for himself underneath the shelter of an overhanging rock, and then went off to find some dinner. When he returns to this cozy spot after eating, Spitz is sleeping in his bed. Buck flies into an angry rage, surprising Spitz because Buck had never directly attacked him in such a way before. Francois hears all of the commotion and rushes to the spot to watch the fight, encouraging Buck to fight back because he knows how much of a bully that Spitz is. The two dogs prepare to launch into a vicious fight when they are suddenly disrupted by another struggle: dozens of wild, starving husky dogs invade their camp at that moment, and sounds of Perrault smashing his club against these monstrous dogs draws their attention, as he attempts to save their food supplies from being eaten. Perrault continues to club these dogs' backs, but the onslaught only continues because there are nearly one hundred dogs, and only one club for Perrault.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 4

Hearing the commotion, the other sled dogs emerge from their snow beds or from eating their own suppers, and they are suddenly attacked by the gang of huskies. Buck is badly bitten by three huskies even as he fights back violently to save his life, as are Dave, Billee, Joe, old Sol-leks, Pike, and Dub. Joe bites aggressively, crushing one husky's leg bone with his mouth, while Buck tastes warm blood fill his throat after he severs the jugular vein of one husky, surprisingly enjoying the sweet taste as it drips into his teeth and he swallows deeply, spurring him onwards to fight even more viciously. The taste of blood energizes him, further awakening those primal impulses to kill that had been silent for so long. Meanwhile, Spitz uses this moment as an opportunity to continue his attack against Buck, trying to bite Buck's own throat in spite of the danger facing the sled dog team. Buck shakes Spitz away, and again Spitz tries to charge at him to knock him down, easy prey for the starving husky dogs to eat. Buck deflects this attack and continues to run away from the fighting towards safety in the nearby forest.



The aftermath of this incident is somewhat grim. All of the sled dogs are badly injured, some with cuts on their bodies, others with an eye missing such as Joe, or a shredded ear such as Billee. The newest sled dog, Dolly, has a ripped up throat as well. When they return to camp the next day, the sled dogs learn that half of their food supply has been eaten by the invaders, much to the upset of Francois and Perrault. The dogs have even eaten a pair of Perrault's shoes, starving as they were. The worst is over, and the sled dogs must prepare for another four hundred miles before they arrive at Dawson City. Francois worries that some of the sled dogs might have rabies because they have been bitten by these invading dogs, but Perrault doubts that is a possibility and decides to continue the journey that very day. The trail becomes very dangerous, moving along the Thirty Mile River where the snow is slippery, making it difficult to make any progress. Perrault leads the way, testing the path to make sure that it is safe.

In some parts, they actually have to walk on the frozen river, where the Buck falls down into the water with the sled at one point, becoming very cold after being pulled out. He survives this incident, however, and proceeds along with the rest of the team. Later, the sled team is trapped on the river with broken ice in front of them and behind them. The only solution is for Perrault to climb a cliff above, cast down a rope, and hoist each dog one by one across the broken ice to safety on the other side. This dangerous operation succeeds without any problems, and the long journey continues. After passing through this dangerous area near the river, Perrault leads them to a series of lakes in the following days, pushing the dogs to their very limits because they are tired, cold, and there is not enough food now either. Francois makes four tiny moccasin shoes for Buck as well, since his feet were not adjusted to this cold weather, and Francois also massages Buck's feet every night until they become more calloused and resistant to these harsh conditions.

The tiny shoes keep Buck warm as well, and "This was a great relief, and Buck caused even the weazened face of Perrault to twist itself into a grin one morning, when Francois forgot the moccasins and Buck lay on his back, his four feet waving appealingly in the air, and refused to budge without them. Later his feet grew hard to the trail, and the worn-out footgear was thrown away" Chapter 3, pg. 40. Francois likes Buck a lot and really goes above and beyond to help Buck out, more than he does for any of the other sled dogs. He thinks that Buck is more intelligent than the other dogs as well, and he was applauding Buck when he first confronted Spitz in a fight a short while before, rather than trying to protect the older and more experienced Spitz. Soon after this time, another problem afflicts the dog team: Dolly, whose throat had been badly torn open by the invading huskies, goes mad from rabies. She begins howling uncontrollably one day and attacks Buck without warning, chasing him around until Francois smashes an ax down upon her head, putting an end to her life. Once again, Francois rescues Buck from danger.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 7

After fleeing away from Dolly however, Buck rests near the sled, exhausted from such a workout, and Spitz again provokes Buck to fight, snarling and biting him without warning. Yet again Francois intervenes, wounding the misbehaving Spitz with many lashings.



from his whip, because Buck did nothing to deserve that kind of attack. Perrault comments that Spitz is a "devil" and will one day kill Buck, but Francois defends Buck eagerly, insisting that he is "two devils" predicting that Buck will one day defeat Spitz in battle for good. In the following days, Spitz becomes increasingly jealous of Buck because he isn't afraid of him like the other dogs, and he feels threatened by Buck's presence. As the leader of the pack, Spitz feels that all of the other dogs must obey and fear him. Yet Buck remains defiant and is so bold as to actually fight back when Spitz attacks him. The tension continues to grow between these two dogs, and even though Francois intervened at their last fight, he was only delaying the inevitable final showdown that would occur between the two dogs.

Topic Tracking: Greed 4

Buck wanted to fight Spitz to the death very badly, and he tried with all of his energy to restrain himself and be patient, biding his time. This is again the primal territorial urge surging within him, "Buck wanted [to fight]...because it was his nature, because he had been gripped tight by that nameless, incomprehensible pride of the trail and trace -- that pride which holds dogs in the toil to the last gasp, which lures them to die joyfully in the harness, and breaks their hearts if they are cut out of the harness" Chapter 3, pg. 42. These dogs are driven by a pride to succeed and not give up in spite of all obstacles. This energy has seized Buck and keeps him alive, even though he was not used to being a sled dog at all. Now he measures up in strength and skill to any of these other dogs that has been pulling sleds for their entire life. Buck learns to adapt to his changing environment, and it is this ability that insures his survival even in the worst situation.

Indeed, the same drive to never give up or be beaten infects the other dogs as well, for "This was the pride that bore up Spitz and made him thrash the sled-dogs who blundered and shirked in the traces or hid away at the harness-up time in the morning. Likewise it was this pride that made him fear Buck as possible lead dog. And this was Buck's pride, too. He openly threatened the other's leadership" Chapter 3, pg. 42-43. Spitz is filled with pride, and it is this pride that causes him to overstep his boundaries at certain times, because he is so full of himself. Spitz is overconfident, and because he is the leader of the pack he automatically thinks that gives him the authority to bully all of the other dogs. Buck refuses to accept this, however, and he wants to have Spitz's job. In order to accomplish this goal, however, he must first somehow get rid of Spitz. This final showdown does come nearer and nearer with each passing day. Buck did not directly engage Spitz, but instead he was sneaky about it, never making a move until Francois' back was turned, so that he would not violate this man's trust. The other dogs become more bold and begin to lose respect for Spitz, questioning his authority. Buck enjoys watching these moments, knowing how much it must bother Spitz to be losing his control over the sled dogs.

The other dogs argue and fight with each other more, and they do not function as a tight team under Spitz's leadership as they once did. Francois knows that Buck and Spitz are destined to have a fight to the death, and he tries to watch them both carefully to prevent this from happening, although he is often distracted by the other dogs and their own bickering. They finally arrive at Dawson City, alive and well. Buck sees that the men



and dogs in Dawson City are all working, pulling cargo in the streets. He also meets some other Southland dogs like himself, dogs who come from the South, but most of the dogs are native huskies, and each night they gather together at every intervals and howl at the moon. Observing this, "It was an old song, old as the breed itself [and it was] vested with the woe of unnumbered generations, this plaint by which Buck was so strangely stirred. When he moaned and sobbed, it was with the pain of living that was of old the pain of his wild fathers...And that he should be stirred by it marked the completeness with which he harked back through the ages of fire and roof to the raw beginnings of life in the howling ages" Chapter 3, pg. 45. Howling with these native huskies is a very spiritual experience for Buck, and he feels closer to his primal roots and to his wolf ancestors. The life he had once lived at Judge Miller's place in the Santa Clara Valley of California is so foreign to the life that he lives now and to the dog that he has become after overcoming so many obstacles.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 8

The sled team stays with Francois and Perrault for seven days in Dawson City before it is time to hit the road again. Replenished with supplies, they turn back towards Dyea, Alaska again as Perrault has certain messages to deliver along this route for the Canadian government. They take a different trail now, which was easier to follow than the Chilkoot Trail because it is well-traveled, and the snow was already packed down. The Canadian police have also hidden food along the road for them, just in case they run out. Feeling refreshed, the sled team begins this new journey although disunity continues to spread, because the dogs no longer respect Spitz's authority to be the lead sled dog. Pike is so bold as to steal half of a fish from Spitz at dinner one night, and Buck protects Pike from being attacked by Spitz, and on another occasion Dub and Joe starts a fight with Spitz, although Spitz ends up being whipped for fighting because Francois apparently assumes that he had been the one to start it. Only passive but obedient Dave and Sol-leks refuse to participate in these activities, since they merely perform powerfully when pulling the sled. At all other moments, they are antisocial and keep away from the other dogs.

Francois tries to maintain discipline amongst the sled dogs by whipping them, but the discipline continues to break down more and more. He also knows that Buck is to blame for all this commotion, but he is never able to catch Buck red-handed while encouraging this silent rebellion against Spitz's leadership. One day, Dub initiates a chase to capture a snowshoe rabbit, followed by all of the other sled dogs; a nearby crew of fifty Canadian police sled dogs also joins them, and the pursuit goes on with Buck taking on as the leader for this pack of dogs. Buck is filled with excitement, and "All that stirring of old instincts which at stated periods drives men out from the sounding cities to forest and plain to kill things by chemically propelled leaden bullets, the blood lust, the joy to kill -- all this was Buck's, only it was infinitely more intimate. He was ranging at the head of the pack, running the wild thing down, the living meat, to kill with his own teeth and wash his muzzle to the eyes in warm blood" Chapter 3, pg. 48. As he had when fighting the invading pack of huskies, Buck craves the taste of blood again, energized by the chase and the thought of killing a creature and crunching its bones between his teeth.



He is becoming increasingly wolf-like and less like the happy, naive dog that had once carried children on his back in California's Santa Clara Valley.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 5

While so looking forward to tasting this prey in his mouth, Spitz abruptly runs ahead from behind Buck, dashing upon the rabbit and sinking his own teeth into its neck before Buck's eyes. Spitz hopes to provoke Buck again by stealing this object that Buck had craved so very much. Spitz proves that he is still the leader of the pack, because it is he that wins this prize even though it is through sneakiness and deception, since Buck had no idea that he was going to run ahead of him. The rabbit dies there and then, releasing one horrifying scream before its body goes limp. Buck flies into a silent rage, seething with anger at this glory that Spitz has stolen from him, hurling his body against the older husky. The two dogs roll around in the snow, biting fiercely and mercilessly, and the other sled dogs form a circle around this fight after the dead rabbit's remains have been devoured. At long last the time has arrived for the final showdown between Buck and Spitz, and the other dogs watch expectantly to see what the outcome will be. Spitz fights patiently and strategically, as does Buck, waiting for a moment of weakness before making a move. Buck tries to bite Spitz's throat several times, but he is deflected each time; as a result Buck begins to fake moves, pretending he is going for the neck and then diving at the last minute for Spitz's shoulder or legs.

Topic Tracking: Greed 5

Spitz is winning, however, and Buck's body becomes gnashed and slashed by Spitz's defensive moves. Buck nearly loses his balance at one point, and the circle of dogs prepares to move in and finish him off, as had happened long ago to poor Curly. However, Buck stays strong and maintains his balance. Buck attacks suddenly with a renewed energy, faking now that he will attack Spitz's shoulder and the diving to bite his legs, successfully, breaking Spitz's leg and leaving him handicapped. Buck continues the onslaught and "Despite the pain and helplessness, Spitz struggled madly to keep up. He saw the silent circle, with gleaming eyes, lolling tongues, and silvery breaths drifting upward, closing in upon him as he had seen similar circles close in upon beaten antagonists in the past. Only this time he was the one who was beaten" Chapter 3, pg. 52. With a maimed leg, there is no way for Spitz to win this battle now, and he knows that Buck has defeated him. Spitz continues to fight back desperately and violently, but to no avail; Buck rushes in against him, ramming his body with his shoulder, knocking poor Spitz down to the ground. Buck rushes out of the circle of dogs as they rush in to eat the fallen Spitz hungrily, rejoicing in this victory he has found at long last after so many months of patient waiting. His old enemy is defeated at long last.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 6



Chapter 4 - Who Has Won to Mastership

The following morning, Francois and Perrault are surprised to discover that Spitz is missing from the sled team, but what has happened to him is no great surprise after seeing the many battle scars covering Buck's body. Both men agree, however, that Spitz was a bully and a trouble maker, declaring that he got exactly what he deserved. Praising Buck for winning this long, drawn out rivalry, Francois prepares to place Sol-leks in Spitz's harness at the front of the sled team, thinking him to be the best fit to take over the leadership of the dogs because he is so experienced. However, Buck flies into a fury, snapping and growling at Sol-leks until the half-blind dog returns to his old position at the back of the line; Buck stands at the front of the line instead, waiting expectantly for the harness to be placed on him. Frustrated, Francois drags Buck back to the end of the line and grabs Sol-leks once again, leading him to the front of the line. Buck again growls, rushing forward and chasing Sol-leks away, standing at the front of the line. Francois angrily whips out a large club to punish Buck for this insubordination, yet Buck defiantly dashes out of his reach, growling.

Francois throws down the club, wishing only to harness him in his usual place in front of Dave, but Buck refuses to go near him, since he wants to be the leader of the pack now. Francois then chases Buck, with the help of Perrault, but the dog is too swift for them, even when they hurl clubs at him. As the two men did this, "They cursed [Buck], and his fathers and mothers before him, and all his seed to come after him down to the generation, and every hair on his body and drop of blood in his veins; and [Buck] answered curse with snarl and kept out of their reach...advertising plainly that when his desire was met, he would come in and be good" Chapter 4, pg. 56. The men continue like this for over an hour before Francois sits down, throwing up his arms in submission and gestures for Buck to go up to the front of the line, which Buck agrees to do after Francois drops the club he is still holding in his hand. Gleeful that he has won the struggle, Buck playfully runs to the front of the line to take his place finally as leader of the sled team. This is a job he has coveted since Spitz held the position, and now it is finally his!

Topic Tracking: Emotion 9

Buck is an excellent lead dog, better than even Spitz had been. The sled team now runs faster than ever, and until the disorder that had reigned under Spitz, now Buck unites the dogs again to pull together, acting as one great machine. Any dog that slacks off and does not pull his weight is punished by Buck until he learns to cooperate, such as Pike, the laziest dog in the pack. Now he, too, begins to work with a new sense of efficiency. Buck sits on top of the antisocial Joe, suffocating him, until the dog surrenders himself to Buck's will and begs for mercy. Soon after this, Francois bought two more huskies for the sled team, named Teek and Koona at a place called Rink Rapids, whom Buck quickly trains to be excellent sled dogs. Even though he is less experienced than Spitz had been, Perrault and Francois marvel at how naturally this Southland dog behaves in the harness and as a team leader. In just two weeks they finally make it to Skaguay in Alaska all the way from their earlier location in Canada,



averaging forty miles for each day. This accomplishment was a result of Buck's amazing leadership. The dogs rested for three days while Perrault and Francois delivered their important messages from the Canadian government (since Perrault is a courier after all). Then the two men receive new orders from the Canadian government, and with a final hug Francois bids farewell to his beloved Buck.

A nameless Scotch half-breed man takes over the sled team with his friends, traveling in a caravan of dogsleds back to Dawson City in the Yukon Territory of Canada once again, pulling heavy loads of mail destined for the miners digging away at Dawson City during this Klondike Gold Rush, which is still ongoing. The work is much harder now, and the dogs are all put to their limits; rather than carrying small parcels for a few important individuals as they did with Francois and Perrault, now the dogs lug hundreds and hundreds of paper letters and packages, weighing down the sled considerably and probably causing it to dig deeper into the snow as well. Buck still serves as the sled team leader, but he dislikes the nature of this work considerably because of its monotony. There is none of the spontaneous adventure or freedom he experienced while pulling for Perrault and Francois; instead, there is merely the name routine day after day, and the same route to follow as he hauls mail back and forth between Dawson City and Skaguay, Alaska.

Each day the cooks wake up, cook breakfast, and the camp is picked up before they would continue on the day's journey. The dogs pull for the day until around the same time each evening as night falls, they pitch camp, as the men cut down some branches for firewood and bedding material, and finally the dogs are fed large helpings of fish after such a long, hard day. It is the one reward that they all look forward to, and then the dogs could mingle for a little while before bedtime. Buck often sits by the fire with the men as well, remembering the events of his life such as the time with Judge Miller, but he focuses more on the less happy moments such as the death of Curly, and his own murder of Spitz. The old primal urges continue to throb and pulse within him, growing in strength and intensity, "Far more potent were the memories of his heredity that gave things he had never seen before a seeming familiarity; the instincts (which were but the memories of his ancestors become habits) which had lapsed in later days, and still later, in him, quickened and became alive again" Chapter 4, pg. 61. Buck becomes more and more like a wild wolf, less and less like a domesticated dog. This same wildness gave him the strength to kill Spitz, and this wildness causes him to endure to this arduous routine now. His life in Santa Clara Valley is merely a dream to him now, another life that some other dog has lived.

In gazing deep into the fire's flames, Buck would daydream sometimes as well and even begin to feel as if he had returned to more primitive times. The Scotch half-breed man would sit by the fire near him, but Buck would envision that he was someone else, a prehistoric caveman with hairy arms and legs, with a hunched over back, like a monkey. For clothes he would have only an animal's worn skin, and in his hands Buck would suddenly envision that this Scotch half-breed carries a primitive weapon made of a stick and sharpened stone, talking in a deep, guttural voice quite unlike the English language that Buck has grown so accustomed to hear. This dog grows closer and closer in his understanding of the primal urges of his ancestors, and he recognizes the primitive



tendencies and primitive history of the living things that are around him, even in the very men who are supposed to be the founders of civilized society themselves. Buck would dream also that great beasts lingered out in the darkness beyond the fire, waiting for him to hunt them and do battle, as he had done with Spitz before this. Suddenly one of the men would stir Buck awake from his pleasant dream, "Hey, you Buck, wake up!" and he would then lose this vision for awhile.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 10

Finally the dogs make it into Dawson City again from Skaguay, Alaska, and although the dogs should have rested for at least a week after this, the men insist on turning back again to Skaguay after only two days, bearing more mail with them from the miners working there. The weather becomes worse, snowing terribly with cold weather, but the men treat the dogs with respect. Each night they feed the dogs first before they even eat, massaging the dogs' feet to avoid frostbite. Life continues in this way for awhile, but the dogs begin to get very weary because between their time with Francois since winter's beginning and now with these new men, the dogs had run over eighteen hundred miles! Naturally, they are bound to become a little grumpy because they haven't had any long vacation from all of this toiling at all yet. Buck stays strong, but some of the other dogs begin to lose faith, such as Joe, Billee, and even half-blind Sol-leks now who is usually somewhat approachable. However, old, faithful Dave is the first to become fatally sick along the way, who had once mentored Buck when he first became a sled dog. No one knows what was wrong with him, but he always whines at odd moments, although there is no sign of any outside injury.

Finally, when the sled teams arrive at Cassiar Bar, Dave can hardly walk. The Scotch half-breed takes Dave out of his harness so that he can run free for awhile, but Dave is upset at this special treatment, insisting that he stay at his old spot in the harness. The men ignore his pleas, eager to get going again, and Dave mournfully collapses for awhile into the snow behind them. Later, he rises up again and catches up to the sleds and, when his old sled team pauses so that one of the men can light his pipe, Dave bites through the leather harness connecting the sled to the dogs. When the man asks the dogs to mush again, they pull on without the sled, much to his astonishment. Then, as "[Dave] pleaded with his eyes to remain there...[the men] talked of how a dog could break its heart through being denied the work that killed it, and recalled instances they had known, where dogs, too old for the toil, or injured, had died because they were cut out of the traces. Also, they held it a mercy, since Dave was to die anyway, that he should die in the traces, heart-easy and content" Chapter 4, pg. 66. The driver finally agrees and harnesses Dave into his old place again, much to Dave's delight.

Dave begins to pull with the other dogs again, even when he falls down and is dragged, or when the sled accidentally runs over his leg once because he cannot keep up. Dave puts in every last bit of energy, doing what he loves and what he has done for his entire life. However, he makes it through the day and when camp is pitched, he goes to sleep. In the morning, Dave can hardly move, however, struggling to walk to his old spot at the harness again, but he falls down into the snow and cannot even stand up. The driver harnesses up all the other dogs, mushing them ahead beyond sight of Dave, who is left



howling in the snow for them not to leave him there, begging to join them in the harness so that he will not be a failure, without any purpose. Pulling the sled had been his purpose in life; without it, there is no life left to him. The sled driver stops his sled and then returns to the spot where Dave is laying. From afar, the dogs can hear his revolver shot echo out across the cold snow. Dave's suffering is thus put to an end, and he does not howl any longer. The driver comes back to his sled, and the journey goes on rather nonchalantly as if nothing had happened at all, although every dog on the team knows that Dave won't be coming back to join them again. His life has been all used up, and their lives must now continue on without him.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 11



Chapter 5 - The Toil of Trace and Trail

This time it takes Buck's sled team about thirty days to travel from Dawson City to Skaguay, Alaska, bearing yet another load of mail from the miners of the Klondike Gold Rush. The dogs are all exhausted, drained of drive and energy after such a strenuous haul. Pike is now limping from pain, as are Sol-leks and Dub as well. Yet the important thing is that the trip is over, and as they half-heartedly pull their sled down the final stretch through downtown Skaguay, the sled driver promises them all that they will get a long rest now as a means to encourage them all. Hoping for a rest himself, this man and others are met with dismay upon arriving, since there is a message from their employer that they are to sell this sled team, buy a new set of fresh dogs, and return straightaway with a new delivery of mail bound for Dawson City. With this occurrence, Buck is again left alone with his other teammates, as had happened not so long before when Francois and Perrault, too, had left their faithful canines behind. The dogs served a purpose, and when that purpose was ended, they were merely passed along to serve somebody else.

Topic Tracking: Greed 6

In this case, the Americans Hal, who is only around nineteen years old and a middle aged man named Charles who buy Buck and the other dogs. Unlike Perrault, Francois, or the Scotch half-breed, these men were not from the North and knew little about the way of life up here, yet they are traveling to Dawson City to participate in the Gold Rush there. They even brought along with them a dainty woman named Mercedes, who was Charles' wife and Hal's older sister. When the dogs are brought back to their camp, Buck sees how sloppy these guys really are, packing up the tent very messily and putting the dishes away without even bothering to wash them. This is a new sight compared to the order he has lived under before, when everything seemed to operate so smoothly and with businesslike efficiency. Now things would be a bit different. As they're picking up the camp some men come out of a tent nearby and start flirting with Mercedes, warning her that the tent may make the sled too heavy. Yet the woman insists that she needs the tent to stay warm, even though the winter is over and it's springtime by now. Charles insists that the sled's load is fine, harnessing the dogs and whipping the air with the command to "Mush!"

However, the sled is too heavy to move and the dogs don't go anywhere. One of the men from a nearby tent says again that the load is too heavy and, additionally, the dogs need to rest for awhile. Charles insists that the dogs are just lazy and begins to whip them mercilessly, much to the men's disgust. Mercedes has faith in her husband, believing that he knows what he's doing, and Hal says offhandedly that the dogs don't need a rest. The whippings continue, the dogs pull harder and harder, but still the sled does not move. Mercedes begs Charles to stop whipping the dogs and runs out, hugging Buck's neck and crying for him to pull harder. Charles then continues to whip the dogs again, until one of the experienced men nearby calls out some more advice, that the sled is frozen to the ground and they should break it out of the snow in order to get it to move. This done, the overloaded sled finally begins to move, as they travel once more down towards the main street in Skaguay the dogs had just arrived at a few days before.



Turning the corner at a swift speed, however, the overloaded sled topples over along with the man who was driving it, Hal.

The man cries out for the dogs to stop, but Buck and the other dogs are angry at this cruel treatment, continuing on down Main Street and spilling all of the flipped sled's contents out onto the ground as they move, tripping Hal up in the traces. Knocked to the ground, Hal is then run over by the runaway dogsled. Finally, some people from town catch the sled before it goes too far and help to gather their scattered possessions once again. These people also give wise advice to these newcomers, to carry less cargo on the sled and to buy some more dogs, if they ever want to successfully arrive at Dawson City. The townspeople laughed gleefully when they saw all the heavy canned goods they were planning to take with them, advising these to be thrown away along with the tent, blankets, dishware, and even many of Mercedes womanly clothes. Jokingly, they ask Mercedes, Hal, and Charles if they think that they're traveling on a train, because they are so ill-prepared for the dangerous journey that lies ahead.

Then they buy six new sled dogs, although these dogs are quite broken and unwilling to pull their weight, much to the disgust of Buck and his veteran sled team. The total amount of dogs is then brought to fourteen, causing Charles and Hal to swell with pride because they have so many. Yet this is another mistake because nobody has so many dogs since there is not enough room on a sled for that much food as would be needed to feed fourteen dogs. They learn this lesson the hard way, however. Buck leads the sled team now for the fifth journey from the Alaskan coast across the snowy wild lands to Dawson City, aggravated by the fact that he is walking on the same trail again. This monotony really annoys him, but he has no other choice but to comply. Their inexperience continues to curse the trail, taking long periods of time to pick up the camp in the morning and to pitch camp in the evening hours. Hal then begins to overfeed the dogs, thinking that this would give them more strength when all they needed was a good rest from such a tedious schedule. On top of this, Mercedes, pitying the dogs, would steal even more food secretly and feed this to them as well.

Topic Tracking: Greed 7

They only go on for so long at this rate and, when Hal realizes one day that the dog food is half gone already and they are only one quarter of the way to Dawson City, he reduces everyone's ration and increases the amount of time that the dogs pull each day, in an attempt to arrive at their destination even faster. Hal pushes the dogs to their very limits with this last move, and their health declines terribly from exhaustion and malnutrition. Dub is the next dog to die, shot by Hal after his limping shoulder became too much of a burden and too much of a liability for the rest of the sled team, making him worthless to these gold-hungry Americans. Next the six newest dogs to join the team starve to death one by one, until they are all dead, leaving only Buck along with four from his original team, and the two huskies, Teek and Koona, that Francois and Perrault bought before their departure months before.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 7



Much of their increasing frustration was vented out by complaining and arguing with each other, as Hal, Charles, and Mercedes would often battle it out about silly things, "The wonderful patience of the trail which comes to men who toil hard and suffer sore, and remain sweet of speech and kindly, did not come to these two men and the woman. They had no inkling of such a patience. They were stiff and in pain; their muscles ached, their bones ached, their very hearts ached; and because of this they became sharp of speech" Chapter 5, pg. 80. The arguments often occurred about silly things, as Mercedes took sides either with her husband or her brother, wasting precious time that could be spent breaking down or pitching the camp. The dogs would sit restlessly hearing all of this noise, unused to such a motley crew of sled drivers. Mercedes also loses her compassion for the dogs, because she is so busy worrying about herself now, and she goes so far as to insist on riding in the sled, pulled by the dogs, since her feet are so tired of walking. This is to the objection of both men, but she remains stubborn and the woman wins out in the end.

When they arrive at the Five Finger Lakes, the dog food runs out entirely, but fortunately Hal finds an old Indian to trade his gun for some old animal hide, which the dogs devour hungrily. Although it isn't the most nutritious meal they've eaten, the dogs are grateful to put something into their empty stomach; the stringy hide gives them stomach aches, sapping their energy even further however. Buck begins to lose his strength now, too, for "His muscles had wasted away to knotty strings, and the flesh pads had disappeared, so that each rib and every bone in his frame were outlined cleanly through the loose hide that was wrinkled in folds of emptiness. It was heartbreaking, only Buck's heart was unbreakable. The man in the red sweater had proved that" Chapter 5, pg. 83. Physically Buck becomes drained and sickly, even though his mind remains intact and calm. These people are simply expecting far too much from him and the other dogs, because they are so inexperienced and so prideful about themselves. Rather than making the dogs' work easier, Mercedes insists still on riding in the sled, and the men allow her to do this, knowing how much of a strain that it is adding to the dogs' work.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 12

The other dogs are wasting away into bones and skin as well, staggering and limping along the trail. Hal merely whips or clubs the dogs into moving again, refusing to give them any time to rest at all. He only cares about himself and the gold that may await them in Dawson City. Soon after this, kind-hearted Billee falls to the ground from exhaustion, and Hal calmly smashes his skull with an axe because his gun was traded away to the Indian for the animal hide. As Billee's corpse is cut out of his harness, the other dogs know that this death is approaching them all as well, if things continue as they have been. There is no way they will be able to make it to Dawson City this time. On the following day the same fate meets the husky named Koono, and this dog too is cut out of the harness and tossed away like a piece of garbage. Now only five dogs remain, including Buck himself, even though they had originally started out with fourteen.

In the midst of such great suffering, sickness, and death, all around the sled team nature was coming to life again with the onset of spring. The weather grows warmer, the



animals awoken from a long winter of hibernation, and the snow begins to melt, "The sap was rising in the pines. The willows and aspens were bursting out in young buds. Shrubs and vines were putting on fresh garbs of green. Crickets sang in the nights, and in the days all manners of creeping, crawling things rustled forth in the sun. Partridges and woodpeckers were booming and knocking in the forest. Squirrels were chattering, birds singing" Chapter 5, pg. 85. Unfortunately, these three humans could not enjoy the beauty around them because of their selfishness and their own poor planning and inexperience. At the same time, the snow begins to melt, causing the trail to become dangerously unstable, especially in areas where it crosses lakes or rivers. Paying little regard to the threat of this, the trio mashes the sled team one day into the camp where John Thornton is resting. There Charles, Hal, and Mercedes sit for awhile and recuperate from their journey, talking with him.

As the melting snow around them should clearly indicate, John Thornton utters the warning aloud that it is not safe for them to continue on the trail because the snow is not stable. Hal is defiant, insisting that he has led the team successfully that far and they would continue to Dawson City as planned, without any interruption. As if to prove the point, Hal rushes up quickly upon stating this, gathering together Charles and Mercedes again, and urges Buck to mush. Yet he remains sprawled out on the ground, weary and drained of all energy. Angry, Hal proceeds to whip Buck, but still he remains laying down. The other dogs obey, however, rising up reluctantly in fear of being harmed, including Sol-leks, Joe, Pike, and Teek. Hal then picks up a club and begins to beat Buck for his lack of motivation. Remembering the other dogs who had given up from sickness, Buck feels now that he will join Dave, Billee, and Dub because of the impending doom that Hal's whip brings.

Again and again his body is lashed, but still he refuses to rise up again, "He felt strangely numb. As though from a great distance, he was aware that he was being beaten. The last sensations of pain left him. He no longer felt anything, though very faintly he could hear the impact of the club upon his body. But it was no longer his body, it seemed so far away" Chapter 5, pg. 88. Buck is dying, something that had never happened before, and he feels his body slowly begin to fade away around him. However, John Thornton suddenly rushes in to save the day, throwing Hal down to the ground, wrestling with him. Mercedes screams aloud, while Charles stares on nonchalantly because he is so tired. Hal rises again, insisting that Buck is his dog only and he can do anything he wants with it, even as John warns against this. Hal whips out his hunting knife, but John smashes it away from him with an axe and cuts Buck out of the harness. Dragging the poor dog to safety, Hal gives up the fight and leaves Buck for dead. Placing Pike in Buck's leadership spot, Hal drives the sled forward, with Mercedes still sitting in the sled and Charles following behind.

Unconcerned about them, Thornton inspects Buck's beaten body carefully, pleased to find that he has no broken bones at all. Glancing up, he watches the sled continue ahead along the trail until suddenly the sled with dogs and all disappears into the ground, accompanied by Mercedes' screaming voice. Charles tries to turn around before he, too, falls beneath the ice, leaving only a wide watery hole behind. Exactly as Thornton had warned, this spring weather has left the trail unsafe with melting snow.



Hal's pride has ended up drowning him, Charles, and the remaining sled dogs. Only Buck remains as the sole survivor, saved by John Thornton, who now looks into Buck's eyes lovingly. Gratefully for what this man has done, Buck licks his hand gently. For now it looks as if Buck is going to be safe from harm or suffering, and he is surely going to get a well-deserved rest after pulling a sled for the entire winter without any real break at all. All of his canine companions are gone, and Buck alone remains as their champion, for he has outlived them all.

Topic Tracking: Greed 8



Chapter 6 - For the Love of a Man

As the weeks pass by after this time, Buck begins to slowly recover what was lost during the harsh winter. His muscles were built up again, his wounds healed, and he appeased his starving stomach. A long rest was all that he needed, and this is what he finally gets, thanks to John Thornton. In total Buck has traveled for three thousand miles nearly nonstop, so it is quite a miracle that he has survived such a marathon for this long, clearly revealing that he is a survivor after overcoming so many obstacles ever since the days he grew up in Santa Clara Valley with Judge Miller and was brought to the North. Thornton also has two other dogs named Skeet and Nig, the former of which regularly licks Buck's wounds and nurtures him in a motherly sort of way. Nig is also very friendly and playful towards Buck as well, although he keeps more of a distance from him, respecting his space. Life becomes better than it ever has been for Buck, and all of this is caused by Thornton.

Buck begins to experience real emotions now that he has never experienced before in his entire life. In the past, he respected his masters and obeyed them, but now "Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time...With the Judge's sons, hunting and tramping, it had been a working partnership; with the Judge's grandsons, a sort of pompous guardianship; and with the Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness, it had taken John Thornton to arouse" Chapter 6, pg. 92-93. Not only does John become his caretaker, nursing the dog back to health, but it was this man who saved Buck from the same death that befell Sol-leks, Joe, and the others when the ice broke beneath their sled. John and Buck act playful towards each other, since John's way of showing his affection was to hold Buck's head in both of his hands and placing his head on top, shaking it while swearing aloud at him. In return, Buck often grabs Thornton's hand in his mouth, biting down nearly to the point of breaking his skin, and then releasing him. Buck understood John's affectionate swear words as meaning he loved him, and John interprets Buck's biting of his hand in the same way. Their relationship continues to grow stronger, as dog and master become inseparable creatures, watching over each other, since they are the best of friends.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 13

Buck becomes very watchful as well, sitting sometimes at a distance and staying alert for any assistance John might need from him. The dog is also very afraid that John Thornton will disappear as did all of his other masters such as Perrault or Francois. Additionally, this man means more to him than anyone else he has known in his entire life, so it would be devastating for the poor dog to lose him now, too. Buck respects and loves John only out of every other human or animal in the entire world, but when he deals with other men or animals the dog is just as ruthless and self-serving as he has always been. If a group of men have food near their fire, Buck does not hesitate to steal it for himself; if another dog questions his supremacy or gets in his way, Buck fights violently until they give in to him. Although this is not a problem with Nig or Skeet, there are still other dogs he comes across who wish to intimidate him. No dog wins these



battles with Buck, however, for he has learned a lot during this time out in the North by fighting Spitz, wild dogs, other sled dogs, and mail dogs. As he understood it, "Kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law," since he has had such a rough time in the past, and this is the way that his primal, internal nature tells him to behave, no longer ignored now.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 8

The energy and the impulse of his wolfish ancestors courses through Buck's blood, and it is this call of the wild that Buck hears so plainly and loudly, ringing out into his ear across time and space. More than a memory or a single feeling, it is as if he has grown up, becoming wholly himself; while at Judge Miller's house he was a child, a puppy, but these rough wilds of Alaska and Canada have taught him about the age old fight to survive. Indeed, "[Buck] sat by John Thornton's fire, a broad-breasted dog, white-fanged and long furred; but behind him were the shades of all manner of dogs, half-wolves and wild wolves, urgent and prompting, tasting the savor of the meat he ate, thirsting for the water he drank...lying down to sleep with him when he lay down, and dreaming with him and beyond him and becoming themselves the stuff of his dreams" Chapter 6, pg. 96-97. Buck's body pulses in tune to something wild and uncivilized, although it is his love for John Thornton that holds him there with this man.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 9

There are many times when these wild impulses push Buck away from the safety of their campfire, and he wanders off into the forest, answering some secret call that screamed out to him, "Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call...he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest...But as often as he gained the soft unbroken earth and the green shade, the love for John Thornton drew him back to the fire again. Thornton alone held him. The rest of mankind was as nothing" Chapter 6, pg. 97. His true love for this man is stronger than the call of the wild, however, and every time he returns to the camp once again, rather than running out further into the forest. Indeed, he owes his life to this man who saved him from Hal's cruelty, defending him from the man's relentless club; only some dramatic event such as Thornton's death can possibly set Buck free from his affections for him, because it is so strong within him.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 14

Eventually, John Thornton's partners Hans and Pete arrive with a raft to transport them the rest of the way down the melted river to Dawson City. They respect Buck's loyalty to Thornton and leave the great dog alone. Thornton's love for Buck grows greater and greater as well, as he realizes how much Buck cares about him. On one occasion while the men are encamped near the edge of a cliff, John spontaneously says to Buck "Jump," at which the dog without giving a second thought bounds to the edge of the cliff, preparing to leap off of it. Thornton grabs hold of him, holding him back with help from Hans and Pete, marveling at the trust and loyalty Buck has given to him. He would leap to his death for this man without any hesitation! John learns to appreciate this loyalty



more fully as time goes on. Buck shows his love by becoming very defensive of John Thornton too, such as when they are in Circle City later on during the year, and John tries to stop an argument between two men but gets hit himself. Buck launches himself into a monstrous attack, going immediately for the assailant's throat with a great roar. The struggle goes on for several minutes before a crowd of people finally pries Buck's teeth off of the man's neck. After a short meeting the men declare that Buck acted appropriately and he is not a threat to society, and he is allowed to go free. Buck becomes famous after this incident, as people praise his loyalty for Thornton and also the strength of his muscles.

On another occasion, Buck saves Thornton's life when he is boating in the Forty Mile Creek and falls overboard. With Hans and Pete standing ashore nearby, they are powerless to stop him, and it is Buck who leaps out into the raging water to save this man he loves. Thornton grabs Buck's tail while still trying to stay afloat, and Buck turns back towards the shore, swimming with all of his might although the current merely pushes him further downstream. Thornton grabs a passing rock instead, urging Buck to return to the shore without him because it isn't safe. Buck hesitates and then obeys, turning back to shore where Hans and Pete pull him to safety. The rescue attempt continues when the men now tie a rope around Buck's body and, after one failed attempt, Buck swims out to Thornton successfully, and he dives out quickly from the rock, wrapping both hands around Buck's body amidst the raging current. Hans then pulls the rope tightly against a tree, causing the current to push Buck and John further downstream, but the angle of the rope causes them to merely make a semicircle and land ashore a bit downstream, thanks to that rope. A waterlogged John first checks Buck for injuries and, upon discovering that the dog has three broken ribs, he declares that they will camp there until Buck is completely healed, which the men do.

John, Hans, and Pete accompanied by the dogs Skeet, Nig, and Buck return to Dawson City in the wintertime, where Buck proves his unconditional love and loyalty for John once again. John Thornton is in a bar with his partners and Buck, when one man named Matthewson is bragging about how strong his dog is at pulling the sled. John Thornton, invigorated by all of this talk, declares that Buck can pull one thousand pounds for one hundred yards all by himself. Interested, Matthewson becomes serious, betting John one thousand dollars that Buck cannot accomplish this task and adding that he has a sled loaded with half a ton of flour outside of the tavern at that very moment. When he calls John's bluff, John becomes very nervous but hesitantly borrows money from a friend that he can contribute to match Matthewson's wager. The men then rush outside in suspense to where the laden sled is parked along with Buck so that his strength can be put to the test. Matthewson offers another six hundred dollars to the betting pile, to increase the stakes even more. Thornton is extremely nervous, and he wonders if Buck can actually accomplish such a great task as this.

Buck himself is quite confused about what exactly is going on with all of this excitement, although he feels confident that he will do whatever John Thornton asks of him, "He had caught the contagion of the excitement, and he felt that in some way he must do a great thing for John Thornton. Murmurs of admiration at his splendid appearance went up. He was in perfect condition, without an ounce of superfluous flesh...His furry coat shone



with the sheen of silk...Men felt [his] muscles and proclaimed them hard as iron" Chapter 6, pg. 107. Impressed by the dog's healthy body, one man offers to buy Buck from Thornton before the test of strength even occurs, but the man immediately refuses to sell. Everybody backs away while Buck is harnessed to the sled, and Thornton kneels down to talk quietly into the dog's ear, embracing him and finally saying, "As you love me, Buck. As you love me," to give some encouragement. A lot of money is at stake, and it would be a terrible disaster for Thornton to lose this wager. In return, Buck bites Thornton's hand tightly in his teeth, returning this same message of love in his own way.

Topic Tracking: Greed 9

Thornton steps away then, urging Buck to begin pulling the one thousand pound sled through the snow, screaming aloud "Mush!" The crowd is in suspense, wondering how things will go for the dog. After a few moments of just pulling with no reaction from the sled, and one foot slipping up on the ground, Buck actually begins to move the sled forward very slowly, inch by inch! Once the sled moves forward along the snow, it picks up in speed until Buck finally clears the one hundred yard stretch without any further difficulty. All of the people watching go wild with surprise and pleasure that Buck has done such an impossible feat, "[The] cheer began to grow and grow, which burst into a roar as he passed the firewood and halted at command. Every man was tearing himself loose, even Matthewson. Hats and mittens were flying into the air. Men were shaking hands, it did not matter with whom, and bubbling over in a general incoherent babel" Chapter 6, pg. 110. Thornton embraces Buck once again after this ordeal is over in the midst of the cheering, and Buck once again bites his hand in return, sending messages of intense love back and forth between man and beast.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 15

Although they do not speak in words, they have built up an understanding during these many months that they have been together since John saved the poor dog from certain death at the hands of Hal. For this favor, Buck has come to his aid him many times over by rescuing him from the river after John fell overboard, by attacking the man who hit John back in the spring, and now by preserving Thornton's integrity and financial state. If Buck had failed to pull the sled, John would have been in a lot of debt, but instead Thornton has won this unconditional loyalty from Buck for as long as he is alive. After the sled pull, one man offers to buy Buck for twelve hundred dollars. Once again, Thornton refuses to sell this beloved dog with the words, "You can go to hell." Unlike all of the other men who have walked out of Buck's life, John Thornton is clearly here to stay, giving Buck a consistency that he has not had before since he was sold away so many times in the past. As a result, the love that Buck feels for John has energized him far more than any other force he has known, for it is even stronger than the call of the wild.



Chapter 7 - The Sounding of the Call

When Buck wins sixteen hundred dollars for his beloved friend John Thornton after pulling the dog sled laden with one thousand pounds of flour, the pace of life changes. John doesn't have to worry about money for awhile now, but he still decides to use this money to fund an expedition for gold. Accompanied by Hans and Pete, as well as the two dogs Skeet and Nig, Thornton travels deeper into Canada, in the east of Dawson City. There are rumors of a long-lost hidden gold mine, and the man decides to go searching for it, always ready for another adventure. Wandering up the Yukon River in Canada further north from where the Klondike Gold Rush began, the men follow the Stewart River until it ends. Then they leave the river and took off into the forest to search for this legendary gold mine. Buck is very excited because he had never experienced such an adventure as this, where there is no monotonous journey to repeat again and again; instead, this is all new land in Canada's Yukon Territory that he has never explored before.

Topic Tracking: Greed 10

Along the trail Thornton randomly stops, dig holes into the ground, and pan sediment from nearby streams, all in search of this fabled supply of gold. At first they find nothing, but they enjoy the mystery nevertheless, hunting for meals along the way since they have not brought a supply of food with them to lighten the load. As summer comes, they still wander through unknown mountains, on through the autumn and winter months. Eventually they journey onto an ancient path that doesn't go anywhere, to their great dismay, and soon after this they find a dilapidated cabin in the woods containing an old rifle from the Hudson's Bay Company decades before. Then as spring arrives again, they reach a stream that glitters in gold like "yellow butter" in the sunshine. Excited, the men decide that they shall stay here and collect all of this gold for themselves rather than journeying on any further. While the men labor with this, panning for gold, filling up bags with the dust and nuggets, Buck begins to grow restless because they have stopped traveling. Thornton pays less attention to him and more to this process of retrieving the gold.

Topic Tracking: Greed 11

Buck has visions of the hunched over hairy man near the campfire that he had once seen so long ago when he was pulling mail for the Scotch half-breed except now the visions are more frequent, real, and persistent. Buck observes this primal man that only he can see, noticing that he is afraid of the dark and sleeps fitfully at night without a lot of comfort. Buck sees man as the primal beast he is, rather than the creature that has taught him to obey all of his life. Nevertheless, his love for John Thornton remains strong and unwavering. The call of the wild, pulling him deeper into his primal self, becomes stronger, "Sometimes he pursued the call into the forest, looking for it as though it were a tangible thing, barking softly or defiantly...Irresistible impulses seized him. he would be lying in camp, dozing lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head would lift and his ears cock up, intent and listening, and he would spring on his



feet and dash away, and on and on, for hours, though the forest aisles" Chapter 7, pg. 117. Buck hears this call, thinking that it is something in the forest, although it is instead a voice within himself that urges him to go into the forest, returning to the predatory life of his wolfish ancestors.

One night while Buck is sleeping, he hears the old howling at the moon that he remembers from long ago when he first arrived at Dawson City with Perrault and Francois. As he did then, Buck now rises up from the camp, bounding out into the forest, as would often happen for him, "But especially he loved to run in the dim twilight of the summer midnights, listening to the subdued and sleepy murmurs of the forest, reading signs and sounds as a man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called -- called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come" Chapter 7, pg. 118. Yet the howling is not a mere sleepy murmur, and it energizes him down to the bone, racing through the forest until he comes upon this wild wolf. At first the wolf flees quickly, snarling his teeth while running,, but Buck still pursues him, circling around in an attempt to corner the wolf. Frightened, the wolf continues to dash away for awhile, until eventually, tired of the chase and realizing that Buck is not an enemy, he sniffs noses with the mighty dog. For awhile Buck and the wolf run together, playfully enjoying each other's company, until finally when they stop to drink at a stream Buck remembers John Thornton suddenly. This burning love remains stronger than the call to be wild, and he runs back to the camp suddenly, in spite of the wolf's great whining and pleading for him to stay.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 16

Upon returning to camp, Buck is greeted by Thornton's affectionate swears and a deep caress of his beautiful fur. He stayed there for two days again, watching Thornton alertly, but after these two days are over he becomes very restless again, as the call of the wild stirs inside of him yet again. Dashing into the forest, he seeks the wild wolf he had befriended, but there is no trace of this animal at all. Instead, Buck practices his hunting skills, feasting off of salmon in a nearby stream that he captures for himself, and he even kills a black bear. The call of the wild burns inside of him, "The blood-longing became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived, unaided, alone, by virtue of his own strength and prowess, surviving triumphantly in a hostile environment where only the strong survived" Chapter 7, pg. 122. Buck behaves more and more like the wolf he met in the woods, hunting and killing prey. His body starts to resemble a wolf, aside from the white patch running down his chest and the brown fur over his nose. Buck's body becomes very strong and wild with wolfish impulses, his muscles are like "steel springs." Buck truly finds himself here in the woods, rediscovering the wildness within him that was forgotten for many generations. Thornton, too, marvels at the transformation Buck undergoes during this time, stating that there is no other dog like Buck.

Buck continues to hunt more formidable foes in the woods, ranging from snakes, beavers, and birds, eating every animal that he kills himself. He enjoys chasing squirrels until they are trapped, and then releasing them, terrified. Yet this life begins to lose its satisfaction for Buck, and he craves to hunt a stronger, more formidable prey. Soon after



this a moose herd walks through the forest, and Buck targets the strongest, tallest moose, bearing a huge set of antlers, whom he will hunt down. Without warning, he dives in, snapping at the great moose's legs, tearing into them and wounding the poor animal, although he continues to lead the herd onwards. Buck follows the animal persistently, diving in over the next couple of days without warning, weakening its legs, tearing the animal down. This is a difficult task for Buck, since he must avoid being trampled by the great hooves, but he is quick at barking, running circles around the beast and then biting without warning. Buck's wild patience is compared to that of a snake in its coils, pausing before the deadly bite, or a spider sitting silently in its woven web. So too does Buck wait patiently for the proper moments to attack.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 10

The days roll by still, and the moose gets more and more tired; knowing that he is losing the battle, the other members of the herd stray away from the bull moose to avoid being attacked by Buck as well. Buck playfully continues to follow along, knowing that the moose will soon be his. He enjoys watching this gradual decline, as the moose's steps become shorter and shorter, weaker and less confident. Finally, after four days of movement, Buck grows tired of the chase and drags the moose to the ground, finishing him off and devouring his meat hungrily. Proud of this enormous achievement, Buck takes time to savor every last bite. Although the animal was much, much larger than a dog like Buck, he still succeeded in successfully hunting it to the death, remaining by his fallen prey for one day and one entire night. Then he happily begins running back towards the camp with a full stomach and a well-rested body, eager to see John Thornton again after such a great adventure of his own. The call of the wild may hold Buck for a little while, but his love for this human is still stronger than anything else. Just as Thornton refuses to sell Buck away or abandon him, so too does Buck refuse to abandon Thornton.

As he approaches the camp, however, Buck senses that something is wrong. The forest feels different, and he hears the birds talking about this in the trees. Dashing ahead faster, Buck notices that all of the animals near the camp are now hiding for some reason, as the dog first notices the dead body of Nig on the trail, with an arrow sticking out of his back. Further along there is another dying dog, still thrashing around in pain, indicating that the attackers are still nearby. Next he finds Hans facedown on the ground with his back "feathered in arrows like a porcupine." Buck is overcome with intense, penetrating rage, and upon entering the campsite itself he sees a group of happy Yeehats dancing around. Buck lunges in without warning, tearing out the throat of the Yeehat chief first, and then diving after another man nearby. The battle that ensues next results in many Yeehat deaths, since the men are so desperate to kill this beast that they accidentally begin shooting arrows at each other, helping Buck in his task of revenge, as he becomes "a live hurricane of fury." The surviving Yeehats soon flee, calling Buck the "Evil Spirit" because he seems so invincible and unstoppable, greater than any mere dog or wolf.

Topic Tracking: Emotion 17



After the Yeehats flee, Buck returns to the camp to survey the remaining damage, discovering the dead body of Pete still in his bed where he was surprised awake, and then at a nearby pool of water Skeet's dead body lay. The water is murky beneath, but Buck knows that in its depths lies the body of John Thornton, since he was scented Thornton's trail leading into the pool while there is no scent leading out. His beloved human friend is now dead, murdered in this Yeehat attack! Buck grows depressed during that entire day because this man is now gone from his life. He now has no master to command him or guide him along, and he is all alone. The call of the wild reaches out again, reminding him that he has hunted humans now, recalling all of the Yeehat deaths he caused. Buck grows increasingly proud of this accomplishment, marveling at how easy these humans were to kill and vowing that he will never fear humans again unless if they have arrows or clubs that can harm him. He continues to sit in the wreckage of the camp, however, lamenting the deaths of his friends and wondering what he can possibly do next.

Topic Tracking: Hunger 11

Suddenly the faint sound of howls catches his ear and Buck begins to stir out of his depression, "Again Buck knew [the sounds] as things heard in that other world which persisted in his memory. He walked to the center of the open space and listened. It was the call, the many-noted call, sounding more luringly and compelling than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey. John Thornton was dead. The last tie was broken. Man and the claims of man no longer bound him" Chapter 7, pg. 134. Buck realizes that the love for Thornton that had always called him back to the camp is now no longer an obstacle, because Thornton is dead. Instead, Buck can embrace the call of the wild now, without ever having to return to any humans at all. For the first time in his life, Buck can live out his own identity and pursue his own dreams and impulses, without having to worry about pulling a sled or staying at the mercy of humans for rest or for food, as had happened so many times in the past. Through this human tragedy, Buck finds freedom for himself.

Buck dashes off into the forest again, leaving the camp behind him, arriving at a clearing where he sees the wolf pack approaching him. Sitting still, he waits until they begin to surround him and one wolf leaps forward to attack. Buck lashes out quickly, breaking the wolf's neck between his jaws. Other wolves tried to attack afterwards, but Buck slashes each of their throats as well, as a warning that he will not be defeated. The rest of the wolves then attack all at once, pushing Buck backwards into a corner against a rock, but still Buck fights back without relenting. The wolf pack becomes tired of this and, discouraged that the dog is such a formidable foe since they have not seen a creature such as this before, and they merely stare at him quietly. At last one wolf comes forward, whining to Buck, for it is the same wolf that he befriended once before in the forest, but he had turned back to the camp because of Thornton. Now there is no Thornton to worry about, and Buck will stay, for the wolf touches noses with him; another wolf comes forward to do the same, and suddenly the pack begins one long stream of howls at the moon. Buck has practiced this many times, but now the howl comes naturally to him, as he embraces his inner nature. Then the wolves leap off into



the forest, joined by an eager Buck, having found a place where he truly belongs. After so many years and so many trials to undergo, Buck has come home.

As the legends go for this region of Canada and according to the Yeehat stories, the wolves in this region have a patch of brown on their noses and a white patch down their stomachs, suggesting that these are Buck's offspring. He is called the "Ghost Dog" himself, running at the head of the wolf pack now, since he has always craved leadership from the time he overthrew Spitz to become the sled leader himself. The Yeehats are afraid of Buck, because he is always killing their men and stealing their food. Hunters, too, disappear in this region of the woods without any trace except for odd paw prints that are too large to belong to any common wolf. The valley where Thornton's camp had been remains a taboo place for the Yeehats, since it is there that they first encountered the Evil Spirit, and it remains empty except for during the summers. At this time, the Ghost Dog occasionally returns alone to the stream where Thornton's gold is falling out of rotting bags, howling sadly and regretfully perhaps out of nostalgia for this lost friendship. He revels in this wildness and does not seek at all to return to the world of humans.

Topic Tracking: Greed 12

In the winter time, this creature is joined by many wolves, since "When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack" Chapter 7, pg. 137. After journeying for years from his birthplace in the Santa Clara Valley, Buck has proven that he is a survivor, answering the one true voice within him that drives him back into the forest where his ancestors had once lived before ever encountering humans. Buck returns to this younger world, discovering again what the humans in his life could neither feel nor possibly understand, which is the song of the pack, the song of the wild. He finally learns to embrace these inner impulses which had been suppressed by man's harness and man's club for so very long. The prophesy at the story's start is thus made true, "Old longings nomadic leap,/Chafing at custom's chain;/Again from its brumal sleep/Wakens the ferine strain." Shaking man's servile chains from his shoulders, Buck rejects the cruelty that human civilization has brought to him. He chooses instead to follow the ferine, or wild, call pulsing deep within his spirit. In doing so, Buck reenters this untamed, younger world that is the call of the wild, and all else is forgotten.