

The Call of the Wild

by Jack London

A Teaching Guide

by Margaret Whisnant

with Objective Tests, Answer Keys, and Thinking and Writing Prompts



***Objective Tests
Thinking and Writing Prompts
with
Answer Keys***

for
The Call of the Wild
By Jack London

A Teaching Guide
by Margaret Whisnant

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1 Into the Primitive



Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

- _____ 1. Trouble began brewing for Buck and other dogs like him when, in the fall of 1897, men began rushing into the Klondike where gold had been discovered.
- _____ 2. The main characteristics men needed in the dogs they planned to use in the frozen Northland were obedience and loyalty to their masters.
- _____ 3. Judge Miller's place in Santa Clara Valley where Buck was born was a large estate with a big house, stables, pastures, orchards, servants and other dogs.
- _____ 4. Being neither house-dog nor kennel-dog Buck could wander the whole realm of Judge Miller's property.
- _____ 5. Buck was king over all the creatures of Judge Miller's place, but he rarely came into contact with the Judge or any of his family.
- _____ 6. The offspring of a St. Bernard and a Scotch shepherd, Buck kept his one hundred forty pounds in good condition by hunting and other outdoor delights.
- _____ 7. During his four years on Judge Miller's property, Buck lived the life of an aristocrat, and he had a fine pride in himself.
- _____ 8. Buck loved the water, which to him was a tonic and a health preserver.
- _____ 9. Manuel, one of the gardener's helpers, stole Buck one night while the Judge was away and sold him for gambling money.
- _____ 10. The vile treatment Buck endured from the stranger who controlled the rope around his neck made the dog angrier than he had ever been in all his life.

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2 The Law of Club and Fang



Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. On his first day on the Dyea beach, Buck found that the men and dogs were all savages who (A) were thieves and murderers with no consciences, (B) knew no law but the law of club and fang, (C) wouldn't hesitate to kill a dog showing fear.
- _____ 2. The husky dog that Curly made advances to in her friendly way (A) leaped at her and ripped her face open from eye to jaw, (B) snarled and barked viciously, attracting the attention of the rest of the dogs on the beach, (C) cowered, because she was twice his size.
- _____ 3. Curly was attacked and savagely killed by thirty or forty huskies that surrounded her when (A) she had her opponent on the ground with her teeth in his throat, (B) the dog she was fighting with knocked her off her feet, (C) she tried to run from the animal that was attacking her.
- _____ 4. Curly's death taught Buck that (A) each fight was to the death, and running from it guaranteed a quick end, (B) the pack always ridded itself of its weakest members with no mercy, (C) there was no fair play, and once you were down, that was the end of you.
- _____ 5. Buck felt a bitter and deathless hatred for Spitz when he saw the dog (A) run out his scarlet tongue in a way he had of laughing after the dog fight that ended Curly's life, (B) continue to rip at Curly's lifeless body after the fight was over and François had driven the other dogs away, (C) render the last snarling bite that ended Curly's life.

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The Dominant Primordial Beast



the dominant primordial beast
dry his garments
pride
starving huskies
government courier
broke through the ice

Dawson
make up for lost time
the Thirty Mile River
a fight to the death
the Yukon Trail
the sled-dogs

Buck
his sleeping nest
Perrault
catch and kill live food
a long pole
his imagination

Spitz
Buck's feet
François
a revolt
howled
went mad

From the list above, choose the name, word, or phrase that fits each of the clues below and write it in the blank. **All** answers will be **used at least once**. **Some** answers will be **used more than once**.

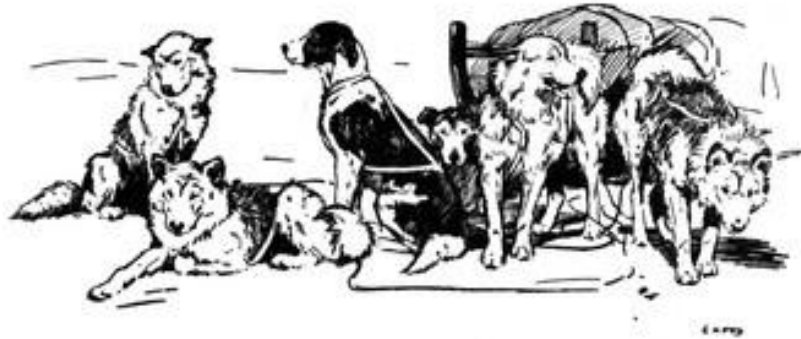
- _____ 1. Once the sled did this, and at another time it happened to some of the sled-dogs.
- _____ 2. It defied the frost and it was in the eddies and the quiet places here the ice held and allowed the sled to pass.
- _____ 3. François killed Dolly with an axe when she unexpectedly did this one morning as they were harnessing up.
- _____ 4. Buck fought with Spitz when the dog tried to take this away from him.
- _____ 5. Buck caused this person to grin by lying on his back with his four feet in the air and refusing to budge without his moccasins.

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Who Has Won to Mastership



Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Were François and Perrault furious when they realized that Buck had killed Spitz?
- _____ 2. Did François describe Buck as two devils?
- _____ 3. Did Buck calmly stand by as François harnessed Sol-leks into the lead-dog position?
- _____ 4. When they tried to harness him in his old place in front of Dave, did Buck run from François and Perrault for the better part of an hour?
- _____ 5. Did Buck allow himself be harnessed only after François threw down his club and he was granted the lead-dog position?
- _____ 6. Did Buck show that he was superior to Spitz as a lead-dog and also excel in giving the law and making the rest of the team live up to it?
- _____ 7. Under Buck's leadership, did the team recover its old-time solidarity?
- _____ 8. Seeing how Buck broke in the two native huskies that were added to the team, did both François and Perrault agree that he was worth one thousand dollars?
- _____ 9. Did the temperature fall to fifty below zero and remain there the whole trip from Dawson to Skaguay?
- _____ 10. In their fourteen-day record run, had the dogs averaged forty miles a day when they entered Skaguay?
- _____ 11. Until the town was invaded by three or four western bad men, were Buck and his teammates the subjects of a worshipful crowd of dog-busters and mushers?
- _____ 12. When Buck was ordered by the government into the hands of a Scotch half-breed, was François happy to see the dog go?
- _____ 13. Were Buck and his companions the only dog-team that started back over the weary trail to Dawson?

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Whole Book Test

Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. The event that began the trouble for Buck and other dogs like him was (A) the offer of free land in the North to any person who was willing to build a dwelling and live there for five years, (B) the discovery of gold in the Klondike, (C) the demand for work animals in the gold fields in the rugged mountains of California.
- _____ 2. Buck was born and lived the first four years of his life (A) as an aristocrat on a large estate in Santa Clara Valley, (B) as a working animal and family pet on a California cattle ranch, (C) with a family in San Francisco as the children's guardian and pet.
- _____ 3. Buck was (A) a hundred forty pound offspring of a St. Bernard and a Scotch shepherd, (B) a large wolf-hound who ruled over all the other dogs in the city, (C) a pure bred shepherd built for running and herding.
- _____ 4. Buck was stolen from his owner (A) by a man who had tried unsuccessfully to buy him, (B) and sold for gambling money, (C) and sold to a cattle baron who intended to take him to Texas.
- _____ 5. During his journey by train to Seattle, Buck (A) was consumed with grief over the loss of his family and his way of life, (B) was treated kindly by his captors and had no warning of what lay ahead, (C) turned into a raging fiend full of wrath so that his former owner wouldn't have recognized him.
- _____ 6. The man in the red sweater broke Buck into obedience by (A) a system of firm commands and rewards for the proper responses, (B) beating him with a club, (C) a gruff, commanding voice and a quick whip.

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Something to Think About. . .

Something to Write About. . .

(Chapter by Chapter)



Chapter 1

Buck was stolen away from the Judge's estate by one of the gardener's helpers to be sold for gambling money.

- Do you think the Judge or any member of his family cared enough for Buck to search for him? Is it probable that the truth about Buck's disappearance was ever discovered? Explain your answers.
 - *Predict the most likely future for Manuel, the man who kidnapped Buck. Use information from the story to build your case.
 - What evidence can you find in the story to prove that the kidnapping, buying, and shipping of large dogs to the Northland was a well-organized system.
 - Explain how the man at the flag station, the saloon-keeper, the men on the train, and the man in the red sweater tormented and changed Buck. In your opinion, which one was worse than all the rest? Explain why you chose this person. What was the most important lesson that Buck learned from his terrible journey?
-

Chapter 2

In his new life, Buck had to learn to work as part of a team. For his own survival, he learned quickly.

- Explain how Buck's existence as member of a team was a sharp contrast to his days on the Judge's estate.
 - François believed that Buck's progress was the result of his skills as a teacher. Do you agree with him or was Buck learning from another source?
 - Considering the conditions under which they lived and worked, why was it important for men and dogs to work as a team? How were they dependant upon each other?
 - In your own life, what situations require teamwork? Explain why certain things can't be accomplished by an individual.
-

Chapter 3

If Buck had not witnessed Curly's death and learned an important lesson, do you think he might have also met the same fate before his days as a sled-dog began? Why or why not?

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Something to Think About. . .

Something to Write About. . .

(Whole Book)

Both the 1848 discovery of gold in California and the 1897 find in the Alaskan Klondike that was the setting for Buck's story led hundreds of people to pursue dreams of great riches. For a few, the dreams became real; others found bitter disappointment. Like John Thornton, some met their deaths.

- Explain how the rush for gold changed people into something more wild than civilized.
 - What are the modern get-rich-quick opportunities that draw people into both wealth and ruin? How are today's enticements much like those that drew people into California and the frozen North? How are modern schemes different? Even today, do people sometimes lose their contact with civilized behavior and sacrifice their lives in their search for fortune?
 - Predict where and why you think the next rush for wealth will begin. Tell what it will be like and what chances there will be for success.
-

Buck's story was first introduced to the public in ***The Saturday Evening Post*** where it was published as a serial from June 20 to July 18, 1903. The magazine agreed to use London's story only if he cut it by five thousand words and then named his price. London made the requested changes and asked for three cents a word. He was paid seven hundred and fifty dollars. Twenty-two days later Macmillan bought ***The Call of the Wild*** from London for two thousand dollars. He made no more money from his masterpiece, which has never been out of print for over a hundred years.

- As in 1903, people continue to enjoy serialized stories. What are some modern equivalents of the magazine installments in the summer of 1903? Do they all come in the form of books? Why do you think ***continuing*** stories appeal to us?
 - What resources for wealth do modern authors have that Jack London couldn't begin to imagine? If ***The Call of the Wild*** were a current creation, how much money do you think the author could expect to earn for his work?
-

American poet Carl Sandburg said of ***The Call of the Wild***. . . *(It) is the greatest dog story ever written. . .*

- Do you agree with Mr. Sandburg, or do you have a different opinion and like another dog story much better? Explain your position.
 - Upon its initial publication, ***The Call of the Wild*** was criticized for its graphic descriptions of brutality. Do you agree with the critics? Why or why not?
-

About Your Teaching Guide

Objective Tests

The objective tests have multiple functions. In addition to their obvious application, they also serve as tools that can *improve **comprehension skills** by providing practice in understanding plot structure and recognizing important story elements.*

Rationale:

Focus on the Plot. . .

Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot of a novel, and consequently **comprehend** the story. They are in tune with cause and effect, behavior and consequence, sequence—the heartbeat of the narrative.

This “plot rhythm” forms the framework for the objective tests. The chain of events that tell the story have been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of sequential questions, none of which require **interpretation**. They are intended to **draw student attention to the fact that something happened**, not to what the incident means. That comes later.

In addition to their testing function, teachers may use the pages to strengthen their students’ ability to **Summarize**: With only the questions as a guide, have students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven or fewer. When they work with twenty or more questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Report the News: Ask your students to write a newspaper article based on the events identified in a set of questions and the *who, what, when, where, why* elements. Some information needed to complete this assignment may be located in previous chapters.

Twist the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, etc.—to demonstrate how changing a single (or several) events would (or would not) change the story. This process can be used to help students become proficient in distinguishing major plot movers from minor story details.

The Characters. . .

Too often, when they are asked to describe a story character’s personality, the only answer many students can muster is “nice.” This portion of the Novel Teaching Pack, coupled with related activities from ***Something to Think About, Something to Write About***, is a well of opportunities for those teachers who wish to eradicate “nice” from their students’ vocabularies!

Questions that identify a character’s personality and/or motivation are purposely and carefully included with the plot movers. Again, the questions do not require **interpretation**. They simply establish that someone did something, said something, or behaved in a certain way—knowledge that is invaluable when character analysis is required.

Implied Meaning and Story Clues. . .

The objective tests include items that establish the existence of story components carrying **implied meaning**. **Story clues** that tantalize the reader with hints of future events also appear as question. At this point in the novel study, as before, **interpretation** is not the goal. **Awareness** of the **facts** is the target.

Developing/Improving Listening Skills. . .

Listening skills are rightfully included on every list of state competency requirements. Rather than always requiring students to answer test questions on a printed page, why not surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally and meeting competency goals at the same time?

Discussion Guide Capability. . .

The objective tests are helpful discussion guides. Use individual items on these pages to draw student attention to sequence, cause and effect, story clues (foreshadowing), character traits, recognizing and interpreting implied meanings, etc. These “thinking out loud” sessions are an **important building block** for the next learning phase.

Something to Think About. . .

Something to Write About. . .

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers.

Rationale:

Guidelines. . .

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the ***Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)***. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack's primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

Organization. . .

Chapter-specific activities are grouped and presented according to their corresponding sets of **Objective Test** page(s). Having led students through the basics for each chapter (or selected section), teachers may shop in this section for activities to optimize student understanding and interest. Armed with a firm grasp of each successive chapter, students are more likely to anticipate, embrace, and enjoy the next section. By repeating the process, students are also mastering concepts and intricacies connected to the **whole** novel.

The **Whole Book Activities**, as their name indicates, require a grasp of the theme(s), characters, implications, etc. as they apply to the full novel. These pages are a teacher's smorgasbord of culminating possibilities.

Levels of Difficulty. . .

A variety of **difficulty levels** are included in this section to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

Activities in this section challenge students to . . .	
<i>create drawings, diagrams, photos, maps,</i>	<i>make predictions</i>
<i>form opinions and theories</i>	<i>understand point of view</i>
<i>cite "evidence" from the story to support their</i>	<i>imagine</i>
<i>explanations and opinions</i>	<i>categorize</i>
<i>connect personal experience to story situations</i>	<i>engage in research and data gathering</i>
<i>become familiar with and identify literary elements</i>	<i>recognize and perceive story theme(s)</i>
<i>analyze story characters and events</i>	

Note: Inclusion of specific types of activities will vary with each novel title.

Options, options, and more options. . .

Something to Think About, Something to Write About give teachers pick-and-choose options for	
<i>individualizing assignments</i>	<i>homework</i>
<i>group work</i>	<i>short-term and long-term projects</i>
<i>whole class activities</i>	<i>differentiating assignments for two or more classes</i>
<i>capitalizing on student interest</i>	

Final Note

The Novel Teaching Packs are designed for use as supplementary material that supports a total reading program. It is my goal to provide busy teachers with a classroom-ready, practical resource loaded with motivational and learning opportunities for their students. It is my hope that your purchase will prove to be a hard-working instructional component for years to come. Thanks for choosing one of my products for your classroom.



Margaret Whisnant, Author