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ANIMAL CHARACTERIZATION IN JACK LONDON'S NOVELS THE CALL OF THE WILD AND WHITE FANG

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Abstract: *This study examines the artistic characterization of animals in Jack London's novels The Call of the Wild and White Fang. The analysis focuses on Buck and White Fang as developing animal protagonists whose behavior is shaped by instinct, environment, experience, and the treatment they receive from humans. Although the two novels follow opposite narrative directions, both show that animal characters in London's fiction are not passive elements of the natural background. Buck gradually moves from domestic life toward the wilderness, whereas White Fang moves from the wild into human society. Through these contrasting trajectories, London explores adaptation, survival, freedom, trust, cruelty, and the relationship between inherited instinct and acquired behavior.*

Keywords: *Jack London, The Call of the Wild, White Fang, animal character, characterization, instinct, adaptation, environment, survival.*

Animal characters occupy a central position in Jack London's fiction. His dogs and wolves do not merely accompany human characters or decorate descriptions of nature. They observe their surroundings, react to danger, learn from experience, form emotional attachments, and modify their behavior in response to changing circumstances. This feature is especially clear in The Call of the Wild and White Fang, where the animal protagonists themselves become central figures in the narrative.

In The Call of the Wild, Buck begins his life in the comfortable environment of Judge Miller's estate in California. His removal from this familiar world and transportation to the Klondike create the first major turning point in his development. The northern environment requires qualities that were previously unnecessary: physical endurance, caution, observation, and the ability to understand hierarchy. Buck's transformation is gradual. Experience teaches him when to resist, when to wait, and how to interpret both animal and human behavior.

The way humans treat Buck is one of the strongest influences on his development. Cruelty produces caution and defensive aggression, while his relationship with John Thornton reveals his ability to form a deep attachment to a human being. This contrast is important because London does not present civilization and wilderness as simple opposites. Buck becomes increasingly responsive to the call of the wild, yet his capacity for loyalty and affection remains part of his character.

White Fang develops in the opposite direction. He begins his life in the wilderness and gradually enters the human world. Hunger, danger, competition, and harsh treatment make him suspicious and aggressive. Later, a different kind of human relationship allows trust to



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emerge. Weedon Scott's kindness does not erase White Fang's instinctive nature; rather, it allows qualities suppressed by fear and violence to re-emerge.

The contrast between Buck and White Fang is therefore central to London's characterization. Buck moves from civilization toward the wilderness, whereas White Fang moves from the wilderness toward domestic life. Their trajectories are opposite, but the mechanism of character development is similar. In both cases, environment, experience, instinct, and human relationships interact continuously. Their identities are not fixed; they are formed and re-formed through adaptation.

This method also allows London to represent animal consciousness without fully humanizing the animals. Buck and White Fang remember, anticipate, fear, trust, and learn, but they remain non-human characters with their own behavioral logic. For this reason, their literary value is not limited to symbolism. They function as autonomous narrative subjects through whom London explores survival, freedom, hierarchy, dependence, and emotional attachment.

CONCLUSION

In *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*, Jack London creates animal characters with complex and changing personalities. Buck and White Fang are active participants in the narrative whose development is closely connected with environment and experience. The opposite directions of their journeys make it possible to examine the relationship between wilderness and civilization from two perspectives. Their stories show that adaptation is not only a matter of physical survival but also a psychological and behavioral process. Through these characters, London demonstrates that animal characterization can become a powerful means of exploring freedom, trust, cruelty, loyalty, and the consequences of human behavior toward living creatures.

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