

<<《野性的呼唤》解读>>

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前言

Jack London, an illegitimate child born in San Francisco in 1876 and reared in poverty across the bay in Oakland, California, had become the highest-paid, most widely read, and best-known writer in America by the time he was thirty-seven years old. In part, London achieved such tremendous popularity because he was the quintessential American adventurer, a westerner living in a country that culturally thrived on and was identified with exploration of unknown territory. He lived an adventurous life and then used events from his own life as fodder for his profession as a writer. At the early age of fifteen, he bought a small boat and embarked on an illegal and dangerous career as an "oyster pirate," raiding the most lucrative oyster beds in San Francisco Bay. Then he joined the other side of the law in an equally hazardous job, helping the California Fish Patrol capture commercial fishermen plying their trade illegally in the bay. At seventeen, he signed on as an able-bodied seaman for a perilous seven-month seal-hunting expedition in the Pacific Ocean, a journey that took him to Hawaii, Siberian Russia, and Japan, where he and the rest of the crew almost lost their lives in a treacherous typhoon. In 1894, at eighteen, he hoboed across the country, on foot and in boxcars, as part of a social protest by a group of unemployed men who called themselves "Kelly's Army." Passing through Erie County, Ohio, on this trek, he was arrested for vagrancy and served time in a penitentiary. After his release, he made his way up the east coast and then returned to California across Canada by coal car and down from Vancouver by ship, earning his way by stoking coal. Two years later, in 1897, at the age of twenty-one, he set sail for Juneau, Alaska, to join the great rush for gold in the Yukon, a journey that required climbs over jagged, icy peaks and down treacherous rapids just to reach the gold fields. After enduring a bitter subarctic winter there digging for instant wealth, in late spring, while suffering from scurvy, he rafted down the Yukon River on his way back home to California. These adventures, especially his Yukon experience, narrated to the public in his writings, made him an international hero whose escapades were often newspaper headlines. The publication that first brought Jack London worldwide fame and continues to be his best-known work is a short novel whose main character is a Yukon sled dog named Buck. That work, begun in December 1902 and published in 1903, was entitled *Call of the Wild*. London had earlier written a short story entitled "Battard," in which a demonic dog kills his equally demonic owner. London originally saw the story of the noble, sympathetic Buck as his apology for having written "Battard." He planned it as a 4,000-word short story for a magazine. But the project soon overtook him, as he described it. In the two months it took him to write it, it grew to a 27,000-word novel. The result was an indisputable classic. The success of this novel, which appeared serially in the *Saturday Evening Post* and was published as a book by the Macmillan Company, has been nothing short of phenomenal. On July 1, 1903, the day of its publication, 10,000 copies were sold. Within the first forty-three years of its publication, 6 million copies were sold in the United States alone. Furthermore, the book was even more widely read and acclaimed in countries outside the United States. At the end of the twentieth century, it has been translated into some ninety foreign languages. The novel has sold better and has gone through more printings in France and Germany than in the United States, is one of the most popular American books read in China and Japan, and is the most widely read American book in Russia. The total sales throughout the world, counted in the tens of millions, have made it an international best-seller of all time.

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内容概要

London ' s adventure tale The Call of the Wild explores the complex relationships between man and nature , and animals ' struggle with their own nature in man ' s world.

In this interdisciplinary study , a rich collection of primary documents point out the many issues that make this story as poignant and pertinent today as when it was written nearly a century ago.

Compiled here for the first time is documentation from sources as varied as century-old newspaper accounts, legislative materials , advertisements , poetry , journals , and other startling firsthand accounts. The story ' s historical setting , the Yukon Gold Rush , is brought vividly into focus for readers, with firsthand accounts of the unimaginable hardships faced by the prospectors in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold Fields.

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作者简介

CLAUDIA DURST JOHNSON is Professor Emeritus at the University of Alabama , where she served as chair of the English Department for twelve years。

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<< 《野性的呼唤》解读 >>

书籍目录

Preface
 1. Literary Analysis : Adventure and Myth
 2. The Alaskan Panhandle and the Yukon Territory FROM :
 Fur Seals of Alaska. Hearings before the United States Committee on Ways and Means (1904) H. M. Robinson , The Great Fur Land ; or , Sketches of Life in the Hudson ' s Bay Territory (1879) Robert W. Service , " The Cremation of Sam McGee , " in The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses (1907)
 3. The Yukon Gold Rush FROM : M.H.E. Hayne and H. West Taylor , The Pioneers of the Klondyke (1897) " Stream of Gold from Klondyke , " San Francisco Call (July 18 , 1897) " More Want to Go , " Oakland Times (July 30 , 1897) Steamer Advertisement , San Francisco Call (July 18 , 1897) Advertisement for Equipment in A. E. Ironmonger Sola , Klondyke : Truth and Facts of the New E1 Dorado (1897) Advertisement for a Guide in A. E. Ironmonger Sola , Klondyke : Truth and Facts of the New E1 Dorado (1897) L. A. Coolidge , Klondike and the Yukon Country (1897) Joseph Ladue , Klondyke Facts. Being a Complete Guide to the Gold Regions of the Great Canadian Northwest Territories and Alaska (1897) William B. Haskell , Two Years in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold-Fields (1898) A. C. Harris , Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields (1897) Josiah Edward Spurt , Through the Yukon Gold Diggings (1900) A. E. Ironmonger Sola , Klondyke : Truth and Facts of the New E1 Dorado (1897) L. A. Coolidge , Klondike and the Yukon Country (1897) Josiah Edward Spurt , Through the Yukon Gold Diggings (1900) Joseph Ladue , Klondyke Facts (1897) A. E. Ironmonger Sola , Klondyke : Truth and Facts of the New E1 Dorado (1897) Joseph Ladue , Klondyke Facts (1897) W. D. Lighthall , " The Too-Much-Gold River , " in Joseph Ladue , Klondyke Facts (1897) Robert W. Service , " The Spell of the Yukon " and " The Heart of the Sourdough , " in The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses (1907) Hugh Wells , " There Is a Land , " and Anonymous , " This Is the Grave , " Carved into Trees on the Way to the Yukon (1897)
 4. The Sled Dog FROM : Robert Leighton , Dogs and All About Them (1910) Edward Jesse , Anecdotes of Dogs (1878) Egerton Young , My Dogs in the Northland (1902) Edward Jesse , Anecdotes of Dogs (1878) Egerton Young , My Dogs in the Northland (1902) Robert Leighton , Dogs and All About Them (1910) H. M. Robinson , The Great Fur Land ; or , Sketches of Life in the Hudson ' s Bay Territory (1879) Robert Leighton , The New Book of the Dog (1907) Egerton Young , My Dogs in the Northland (1902) Egerton Young , My Dogs in the Northland (1902) William B. Haskell , Two Years in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold-Fields (1898) " Nome Dogs Battle Blizzard , " San Francisco Chronicle (Monday , February 2 , 1925)
 5. Humans ' Relationship with Animals : The Issue of Cruelty FROM : The First Book of Moses Called Genesis in the King James Version of the Bible H. M. Robinson , The Great Fur Land ; or , Sketches of Life in the Hudson ' s Bay Territory (1879) Arthur Treadwell Walden , A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon (1928) William B. Haskell , Two Years in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold-Fields (1898) Egerton Young , My Dogs in the Northland (1902) Anna Sewell , Black Beauty (1894) "Our Mission , " PETA Web Site
 6. The Wolf : Symbol , Myth , and Issue FROM : "Wolves , " in The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts (1887) H. Perry Robinson , Of Distinguished Animals (1911) Nathaniel Reed , " Letter to Edward A. Garmatz , Chairman , Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries , House of Representatives , 1972 , " in Predatory Mammals and Endangered Species. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation (1972) Araby Colton , " Letter to Wolf Defenders , " in Predatory Mammals and Endangered Species (1972) " Statement of Hon. Ron Marlenee , U.S. Representative from Montana , " in Endangered Species Act Reauthorization. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment (1987) " Testimony of Frank Dunkle , Director of Fish and Wildlife Service , " in Endangered Species Act Reauthorization (1987) Index

章节摘录

AN ALLEGORY OF MAN The Call of the Wild is not only a story of a dog's adventurous transformation; it is also a story in which a dog's life reflects truths about the human condition. In this sense, the novel bears some resemblance to the literary form known as the beast fable, which gives human characteristics to an animal in order to illustrate or satirize human society and human nature. The familiar story of the race between the tortoise and the hare, for example, illustrates the folly of human arrogance and the value of human persistence. The other dogs are largely one-dimensional fable types who can be described with adjectives usually given to humans. Dave is old and wants to be left alone. Joe is testy and mean-tempered. Buck, on the other hand, is a more complex humanized animal than those found in fables. Even the first sentence states that if he could read, he would know that dogs were being kidnapped for service in the Yukon. Throughout, in human fashion, he observes and draws conclusions. At first he has moral scruples, and he always seems to understand human language. John Thornton says to Buck, "God! you can all but speak!" (43). On an individual level, Buck seems to parallel Jack London himself. Like Buck, London was born and grew up in northern California. After leaving home, he traveled deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness, as Buck does, observing the depths to which human beings can sink in their treatment of each other and the savagery of nature itself. As a young man, London began to experience the violence and hardship caused by nature and man in the jobs he took on for survival: working on ranches, farms, and canneries in California, where living and working conditions were abominable. He got his glimpse of human hardship in the sweat-shops operating around San Francisco. His search for adventure brought him into contact with the violence of nature during a seal-hunting expedition in Hawaii, where he was also shocked by what man had done to man.

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