

# Jack London's call of the wild. controversial themes in the novel

Literature



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Faces getting ripped open, people falling into an icy river, and a fight between two of the toughest dogs on the land; These unfortunate events seem to have nothing in common but they are all events in *Call of the Wild*, by Jack London. In that novel, Buck, a dog from the Southland finds many tools for survival up north in Alaska, and in his journey to be wild and free, there are some themes that he encounters which are wrong and outdated. Some of Jack London's most controversial themes can be proven wrong such as the fact that women are inferior to men, materialism will destroy your life, and that some people are born superior to others.

Back when Jack London wrote *Call of the Wild*, women weren't equal to men, but now, women have reached equality with men in every aspect of life. First of all, Curly, one of the only girl dog got her face "ripped open from eye to jaw" (15) because she is too curious. Jack London thinks that all women are curious and that it is a fatal trait to have. In the novel, he seems to be punishing all women by making Curly's face get ripped open. But it is not true because curiosity makes people ask more questions and helps you learn more. Furthermore, in another case, Jack London makes the woman being the setback of the group: "Mercedes nursed. . . the grievance of sex." (62). Mercedes keeps on complaining about the hard work of the journey and crying that life is too hard for her. Women are able to survive in the wild as well as men and they aren't the weaker sex. Some women can be better than men in many fields. They are as strong as men and they aren't a pain to have around. Finally, Jack London makes a series of unlucky and unfortunate events happen to women like when "Dolly, who had never been conspicuous for anything, went suddenly mad" (31). One might think that it is a

coincidence that Dolly suddenly gets rabies, however, Jack London chooses to make her get rabies just because she is a girl. And it is not just this occasion when she makes an unlucky event happen to a woman, he also repeats this when Mercedes falls into the icy river. He is trying to show that women aren't as good as men in everything, and that they are unlucky and unfortunate to have. But women are a great group of people and they have made incredible contributions to the world. Nowadays, women are equal to men in every way, but a similar issue which affects modern life more is the impact of materialism.

Jack London's idea of materialism is that it will destroy one's life, however, there is nothing wrong with being materialistic. To start, Hal, Charles, and Mercedes didn't die because they were materialistic, they died because they were stubborn and didn't listen to anybody when he says, " It's my dog. . . Get out of my way, or I'll fix you. I'm going to Dawson" (68). They weren't necessarily materialistic, they just liked to abuse their dogs. They also reluctantly agreed to the advice that was given to them before their departure but refuses to listen to John Thornton, causing their death. It is their attitude and stubbornness which killed them, not materialism. In addition, Jack London keeps on stressing that experience is the best way to learn, however, " Spending time with the wife and kids on a camping getaway costs money, but it's the kind of spending that is worthwhile and fulfilling" (money. usnews. com). One needs money to have a memorable experience. If one wants to go on a camping getaway, they would need money for tents, reservations, sleeping bag, and food. Without the trait of materialism, one would be sleeping on a rock without a tent or a sleeping

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bag in the middle of nowhere. It is materialism which makes one enjoy an experience and it is materialism that makes a memorable experience possible. Lastly, materialism creates a better world to support ourselves: “. . . materialism could enhance our well-being and help create the conditions in which we can all thrive whilst living within our planetary means” (gaiafoundation. org). Materialism enhances our lives and creates the right conditions to work, play and learn. It helps everyone thrive, even the poorest kids in Africa, by assuring them that they could grow up to be a rich man. And even the middle class of America benefits from materialism, because without basic goods bought with money, it would be impossible to survive. Without those basic goods, such as food, water, and clothing, our lives would be a complete mess. Materialism will not destroy one's life, and is necessary to enjoy life so there is nothing wrong with it.

Some people seem to be superior to others, however, they all work their way up there and nobody is born superior. Buck, the main character in the novel seems to be superior to everyone when “. . . he showed himself the superior even to Spitz. . .” (43). However, he wasn't born like that. When Buck first arrives at the Arctic, he is just a normal sled dog, and he feared Spitz. As they journeyed together, Buck slowly rose up to be a leader and challenged Spitz to his position. Buck wasn't born superior, he just slowly rose up to the rank and defeated Spitz in a fight. Also, scientific evidence is required to prove that something is real, however, “. . . there is simply no reputable scientific evidence that anyone is born [superior]” (onenewsnow. com). If something is true, there must be some sort of scientific or mathematical evidence to prove it, however, in this case, there is nothing to prove it. There

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might be some made up evidence on a non-reliable website, but that evidence is not reputable. It is pretty simple to prove that nobody is born superior to another person because there is no evidence supporting it. In conclusion, throughout history, people have fought wars for equality and justice, and that “[nobody] could be superior or worth more than another.” Many of those people believe that “. . . all people should have the same rights and the same responsibilities as one another” (philosophytalk. org). Throughout history, people have been saying that everyone is born equal, and now, our rights and responsibilities are protected by the constitution and the UN. But it is the people’s choice on how they use their rights, responsibilities, and their lives. They could work their way up from equal to superior, or they could work their way down from equal to less than equal. It is the people’s choice on how to spend their lives: they could be successful people or live in poverty. Everyone is born equal, but they choose how to use their lives, which results in many different groups of people.

Controversial themes such as women are not as good as men, materialism is horrible, and some people are born better than others are wrong and outdated. The lessons and philosophies in Call of the Wild are not always correct, and readers shouldn’t always believe everything they read. An author could write a book to express their ideas, but it is the reader’s job to compare it to the truth. Many of Jack London’s ideas can be proven wrong, but some are still correct. Some philosophies could guide people’s lives, as a lesson to tell a person not to do something, or as a statement telling people to live life that way.