

American Literature.

Jack London

Lecture



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

- **Jack London**
(1876 - 1916)
- Category: American Literature

Born: January 12, 1876
San Francisco, California,
United States

Died: November 22, 1916
Santa Rosa, California, United
States



London's Childhood

- Born in 1876 on the Barbary Coast of San Francisco
- Raised by mother, Flora Wellman, and stepfather, John London
- Childhood marked by poverty & unhappiness



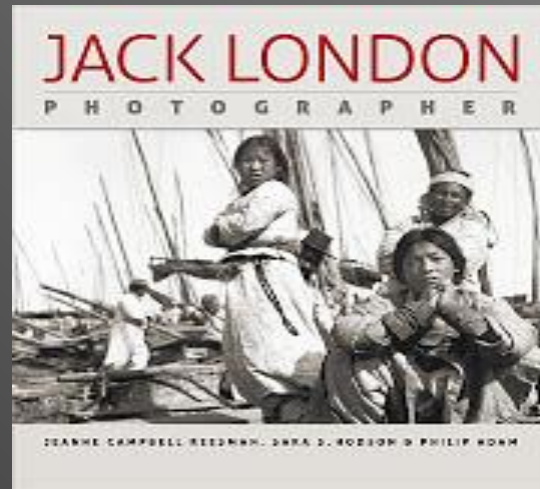
London at age 8 with dog Rollo

ChildhoodReference
sites:

[http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/
jack.html](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/jack.html)

<http://www.jacklondon.com/>

- **Became an avid reader at age 10 when an Oakland librarian encouraged him to escape his life of poverty through reading.**
- **Bought his first sailboat at age 12—loved to sail**





Youth—Adventure/Responsibility

- Dropped out of school at age 14 & had series of low-paying jobs:

Seaman delivered papers

sweatshop worked in cannery

freight train hobo cleaned local saloon

- Loved to listen to stories about the California Gold Rush of 1849

Forming Ideas/Attitudes

- **Experiences that shaped London's life and attitudes:**
 - oyster pirate
 - seal hunter in the North Pacific
 - 1894—arrested & jailed in Niagara Falls for vagrancy
 - adopted socialistic views
- **Educated self by reading in public library**
- **Attended University of California at Berkeley**
- **Left school after 1 year to seek his fortune in gold fields**

Adventure

- Traveled to Klondike Gold Rush in 1897
- Spent one winter at Split-Up Island, near the Stewart River
- Did not find gold; had a wealth of **experiences** he would later use to write stories and books
- Returned home to support himself and his family by publishing his writing



- **Bess Maddern—London's first wife**
- **Becky and Joan London—London's daughters**

<http://sps.berkeley.edu/London/Images/>



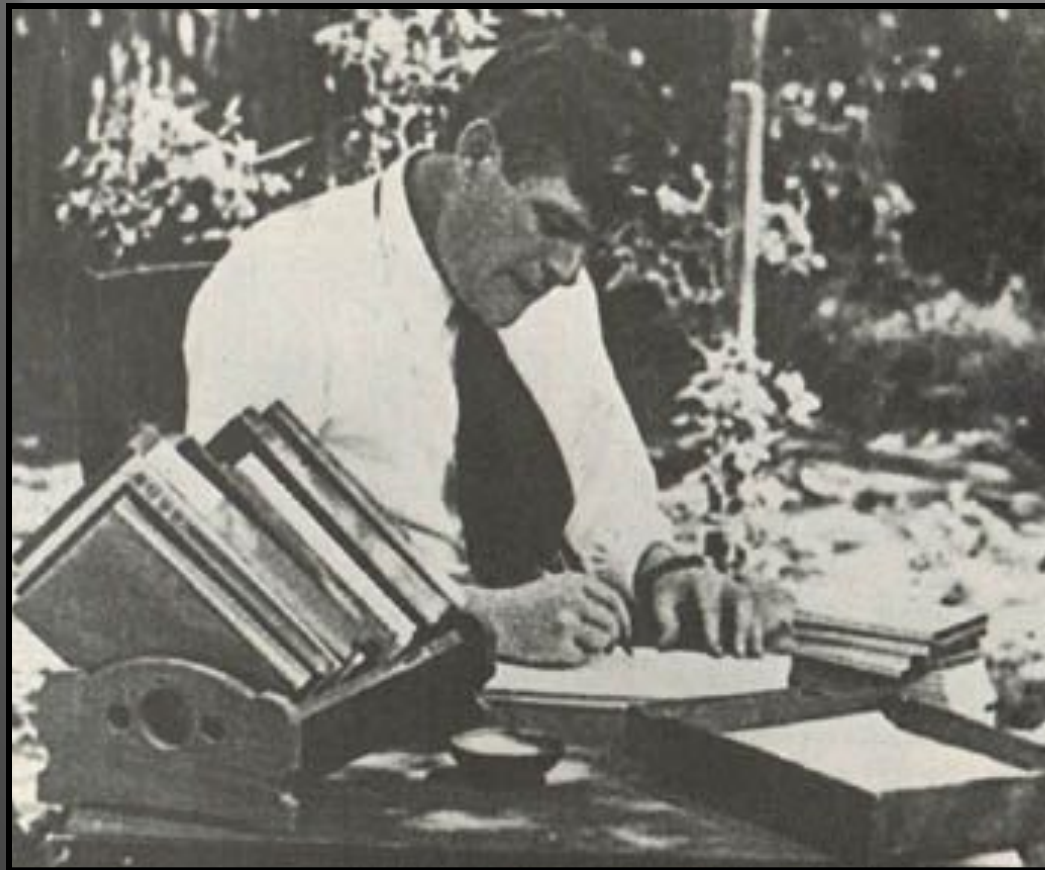
Charmian London
Jack London's second wife

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/Images>

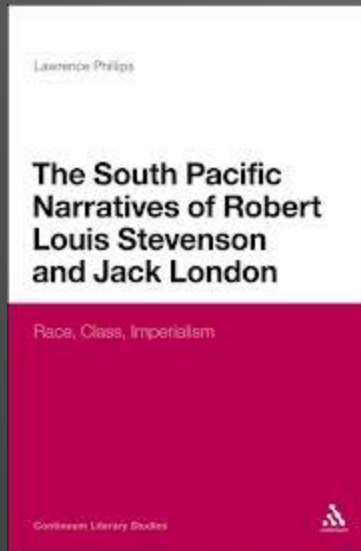
London—the Author

- **Began avidly writing in 1897**
- **He commonly spent 15 hours a day writing**
- **Daily quota of 1000 written words a day**
- **Became recognized as a talented & successful writer**

**Jack London wrote 50 books and
1,000 articles between 1899 and
1916.**



**“The greatest story London ever told
was the story he lived.”**



**Alfred Kazin
Literary critic**

“By 1916, London was the highest-paid writer in the country and the most widely read American author in the world.”



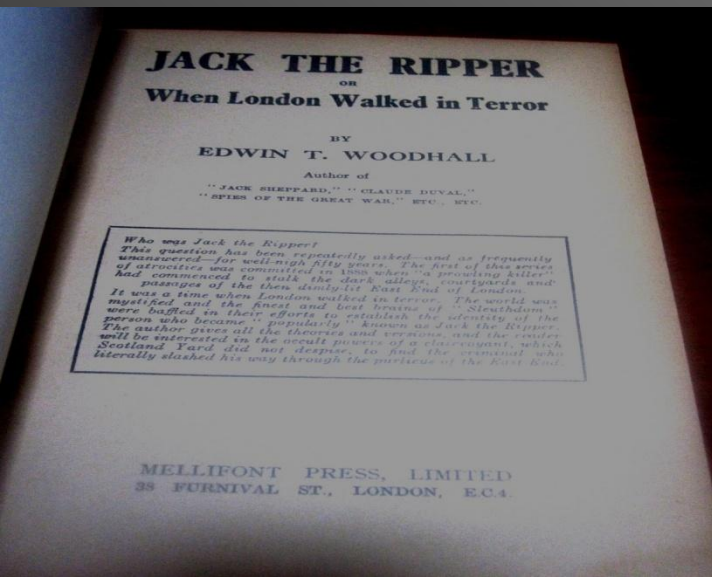
“His literary works like *The Road*, written in 1907, inspired later writers like John Steinbeck and Jack Kerouac.”

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London>

- **Jack London died on November 22, 1916.**
- **A memorial for he and his second wife, Charmian Kittredge, is located at Glen Ellen.**



“One of the reasons
Jack London’s popularity as an author
remains
so high in the world today
is because his life was as interesting
as his works.”



[tp://www.geocities.com/NapaValley/7996/](http://www.geocities.com/NapaValley/7996/)

Thoughts about life..

from
Jack London
journals...



<http://www.geocities.com/NapaValley/7996>

<http://www.parks.sonoma.net/JLStory.html>

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/>

***"Not one ignoble
thought or act
is demanded
of any or all
men and women
than to make fair
the world."***

***The call is for service,
and such is the
wholesomeness of it.
He who serves all
best serves himself.”
Jack London***

– Jack London's "Credo"

- "I would rather be ashes than dust!
I would rather that my spark should burn
out in a brilliant blaze
than it should be stifled by dry rot.
I would rather be a superb meteor,
every atom of me in magnificent glow,
than a sleepy and permanent planet.
The proper function of man is to live,
not to exist.
I shall not waste my days in trying to
prolong them.
I shall use my time"



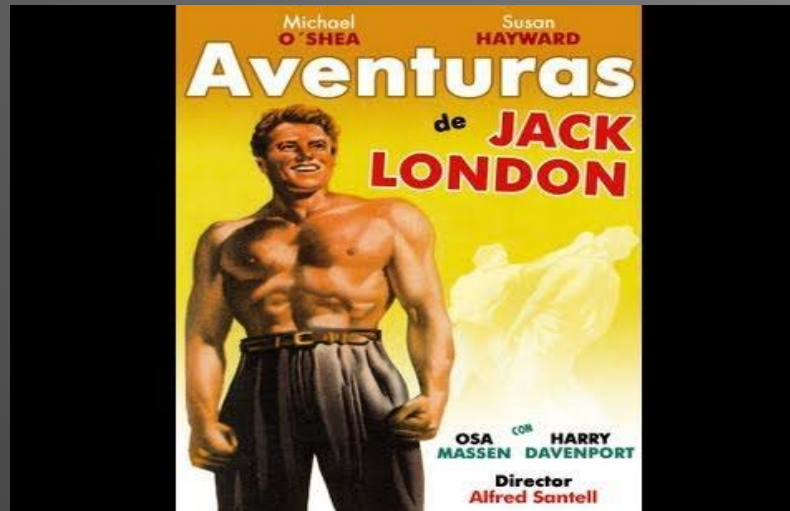
Jack London

—Photograph by Genthe

“No writer, unless it were Mark Twain, ever had a more romantic life than Jack London.”

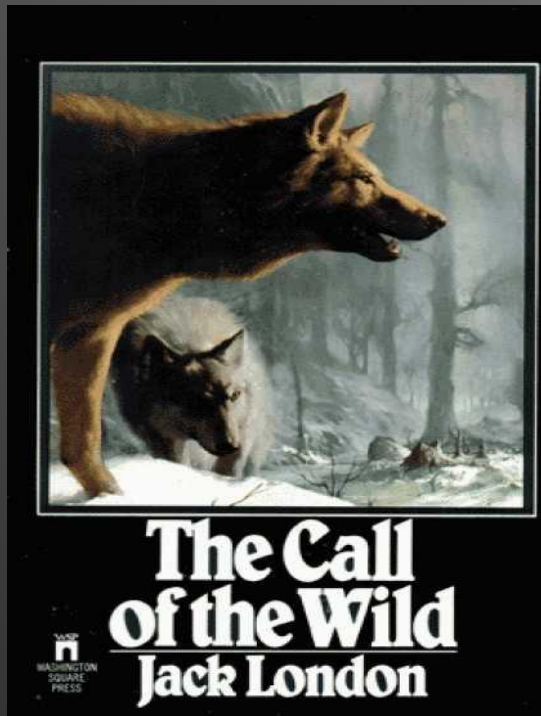
Ernest J. Hopkins

<http://www.parks.sonoma.net/JLStory.html>



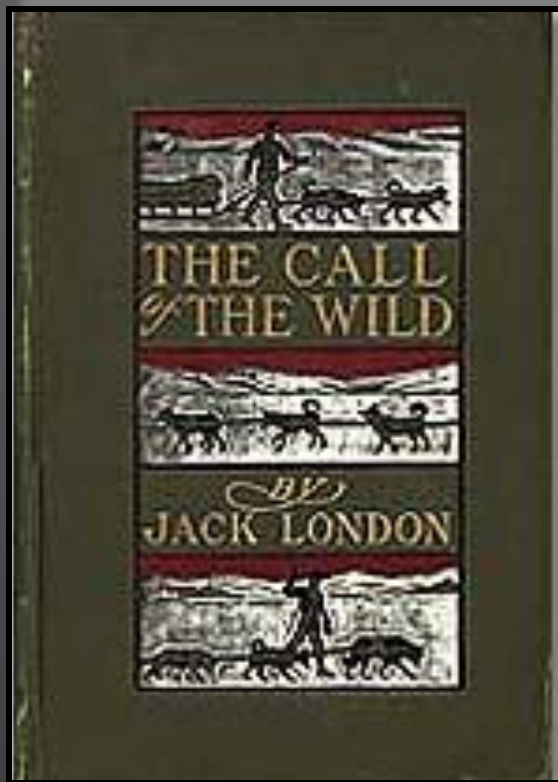
London was described “as a “born teller of tales who wrote as he lived—in a hurry.”

Howard Lachtman



“The fact that his gift for writing was ever realized came to be used as an example of someone achieving “The American Dream.””

Call of the Wild



<http://www.homestead.com/wolf29/wolves.html>





Title: *The Call of the Wild*

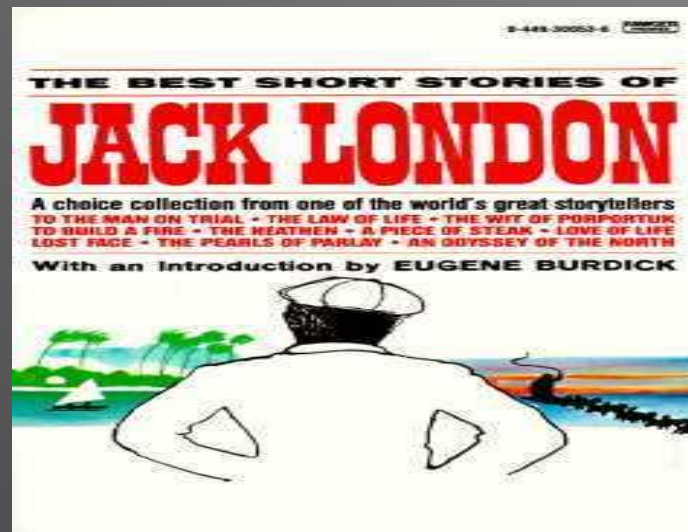
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Setting: Late 1800's,
Klondike gold rush

“In his story the Klondike became ‘not only a real country, but a territory of the mind’ where his characters lived or died because of what they had in them.

(Lachtman, 1984)

He was paid three cents per word for the story, which he had shortened by 5,000 words.



“*The Call of the Wild* is the greatest dog story ever written and is at the same time a study of one of the most curious and profound motives that play hide-and-seek in the human soul.”

Carl Sandburg

From the time *The Call of the Wild* caught the imagination of the world in 1903, until his death by a stroke and heart attack in 1916,



**his 51 books, hundreds of short stories,
essays and other writings had more
newspaper coverage than any other writer.**



**“I have everything to
make me glad I am alive.
I am filled with dreams
and mysteries.”**

Jack London

<http://www.parks.sonoma.net/JLPark.html>

LIFE STORIES

- 3/23/1913
- Jack London's Cash Flow

On this day in 1913 Jack London wrote a letter to six famous writers of the day -- a list which included Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells -- to ask them what rates they were paid for their "stuff." London was a prolific, best-selling author but he was on the decline and in need of \$100,000 a year to keep his projects, his philanthropy, and his personality going.



LIFE STORIES

- 7/25/1897
- Jack London to the Top, and Over

When Jack London returned to Oakland from the Klondike he had \$4.50 in gold dust in his pocket, and the memories, stories and journals that would, within five years, springboard him into literary history. Within fifteen years, he would be the highest-paid and best-known writer in the world; within twenty, whether intentionally by burn-out or accidentally by drug overdose, he would be dead.



Jack London State Historic Park



- "The grapes on a score of rolling hills are red with autumn flame. Across Sonoma Mountain wisps of sea fog are stealing. The afternoon sun smoulders in the drowsy sky. I have everything to make me glad I am alive. I am filled with dreams and mysteries. I am all sun and air and sparkle. I am vitalized, organic."

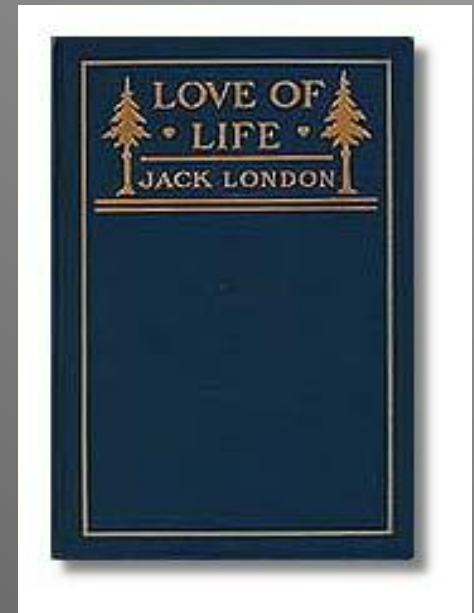
- Jack London

Books by Jack London(1)

- **1900 The Son of the Wolf**
- **1901 The God of His Fathers**
- **1902 Children of the Frost**
- **1902 The Cruise of the Dazzler**
- **1902 A Daughter of the Snows**
- **1903 The Kempton-Wace Letters**
- **1903 The Call of the Wild**
- **1903 The People of the Abyss**
- **1904 The Faith of Men**
- **1904 The Sea Wolf**
- **1905 War of the Classes**
- **1905 The Game**

Books by Jack London(2)

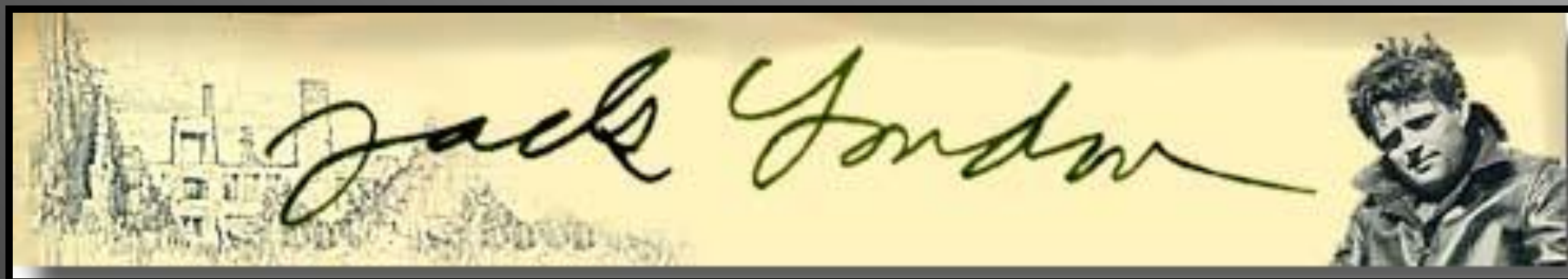
- 1905 Tales of the Fish Patrol
- 1906 Moon-Face and Other Stories
- 1906 White Fang
- 1907 Before Adam
- 1907 Love of Life and Other Stories
- 1908 The Iron Heel
- 1909 Martin Eden
- 1910 Lost Face
- 1910 Revolution and Other Essays
- 1910 Burning Daylight
- 1911 When God Laughs and Other Stories
- 1911 South Sea Tales
- 1912 The House of Pride and Other Stories
- 1912 A Son of the Sun
- 1912 Smoke Bellew



Books by Jack London(3)



- 1913 **The Night-Born**
- 1913 **The Abysmal Brute**
- 1913 **John Barleycorn**
- 1913 **The Valley of the Moon**
- 1914 **The Strength of the Strong**
- 1914 **The Mutiny of the Elsinore**
- 1915 **The Scarlet Plague**
- 1915 **The Star Rover**
- 1916 **The Little Lady of the Big House**
- 1916 **The Turtles of Tasman**
- 1917 **The Human Drift**
- 1917 **Jerry of the Islands**
- 1917 **Michael Brother of Jerry**
- 1918 **The Red One**
- 1919 **On the Makaloa Mat**
- 1920 **Hearts of Three**
- 1922 **Dutch Courage and Other Stories**



Jack London sites:

<http://www.geocities.com/~jacklondons/index.html>

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian/issuesall/issues98/feb98/jack.html>

<http://dcps.dade.k12.fl.us/technology/reading/wild/COW/worksheet.htm>

<http://ofcn.org/cyber.serv/resource/bookshelf/callw10/>

http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/Organizations/jl_society.html

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/>