

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



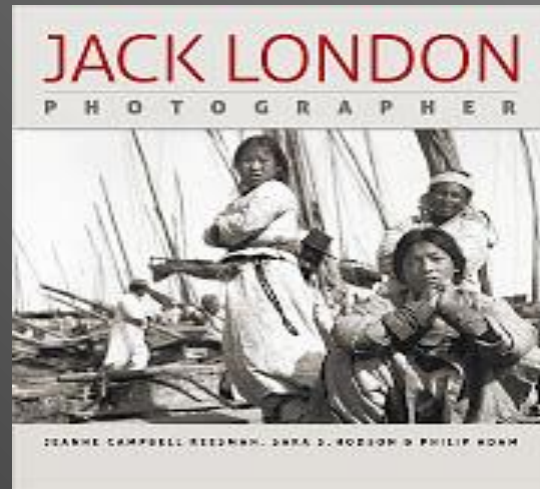
London at age 8 with dog Rollo

**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://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/
Images/](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/Images/)



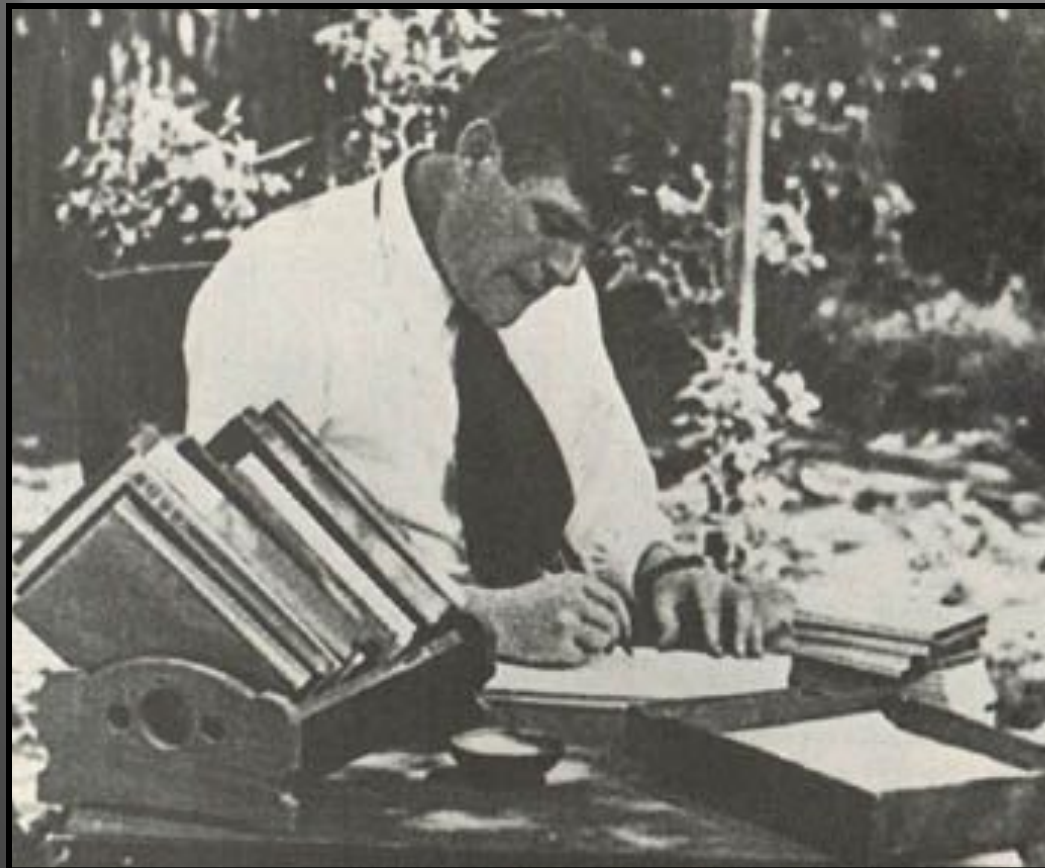
Charmian London
Jack London's second wife

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

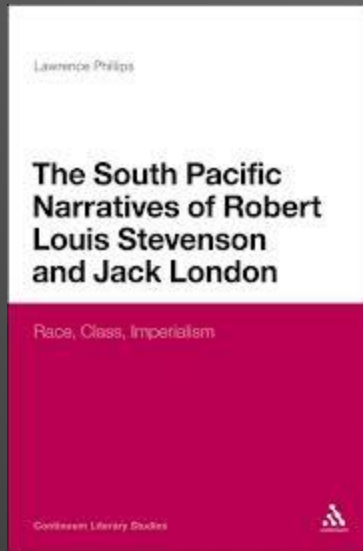
London—the Author

- 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.”



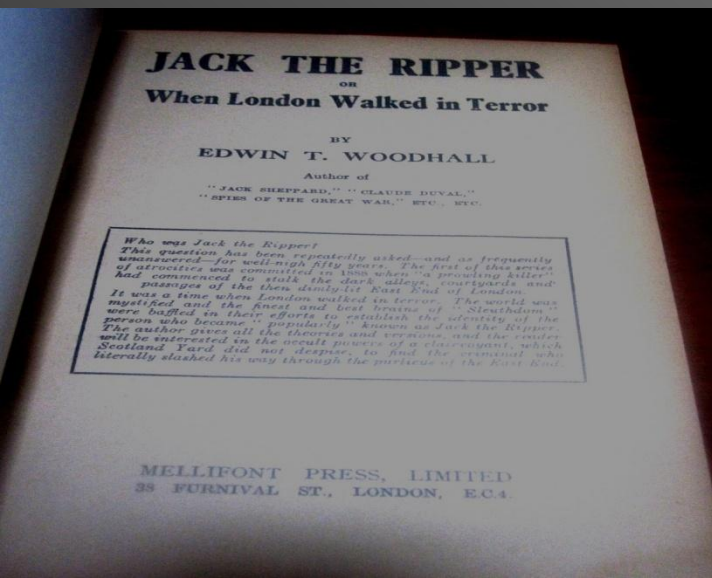
“His literary works like *The Road*, written in 1907,
inspired later writers like
John Steinbeck and Jack
Kerouac.”

<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.”**



<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"



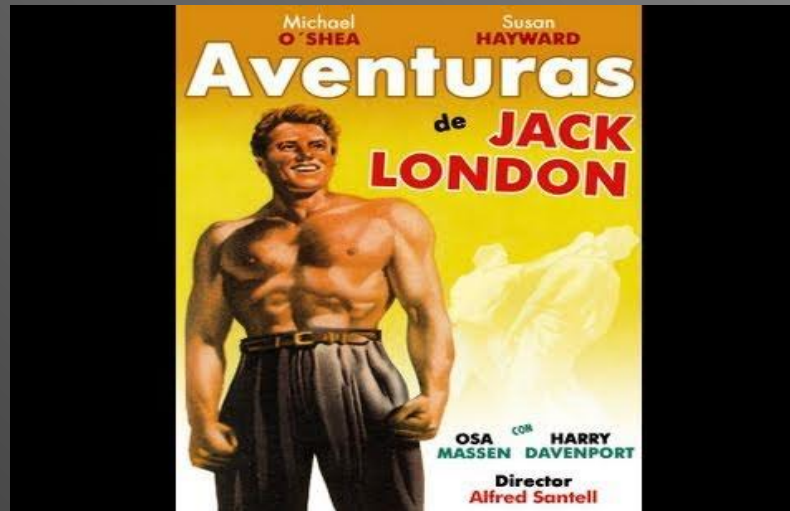
Jack London

—Photograph by Genthe

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

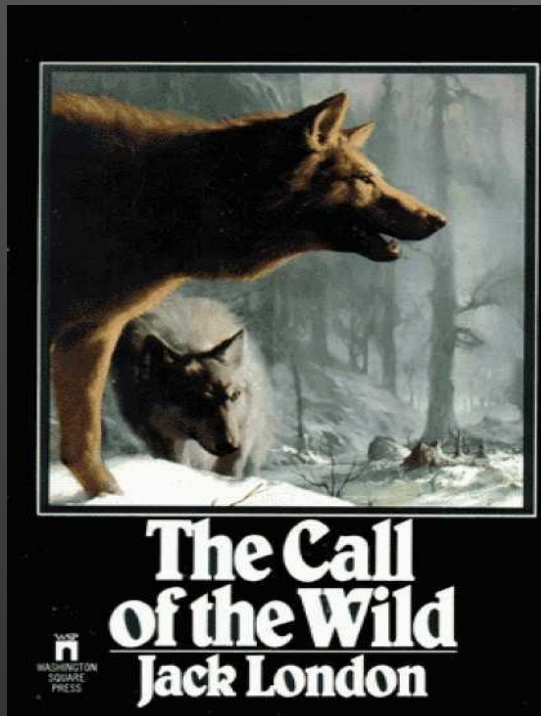
Ernest J. Hopkins

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



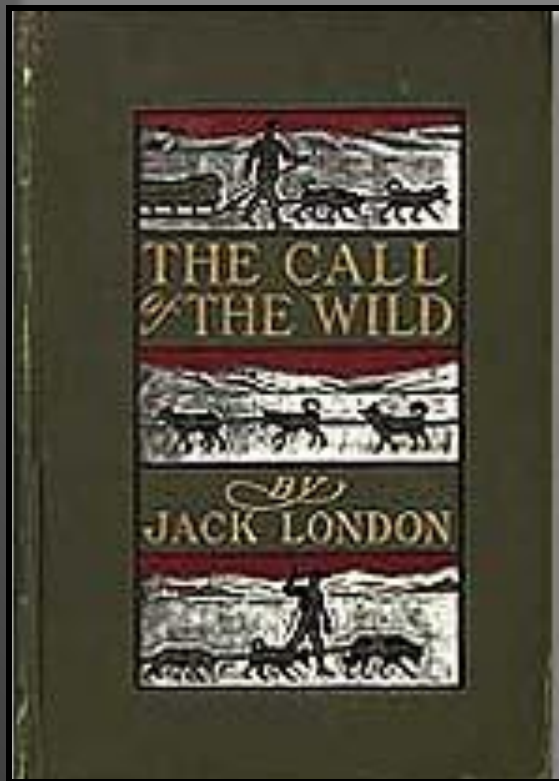
London was described “as a “born teller of tales
who wrote as he lived—in a hurry.”

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*

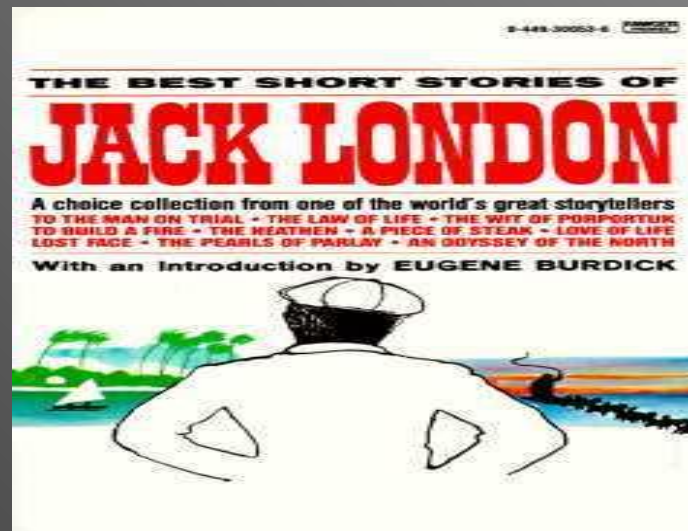
Genre: Realistic Fiction

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."

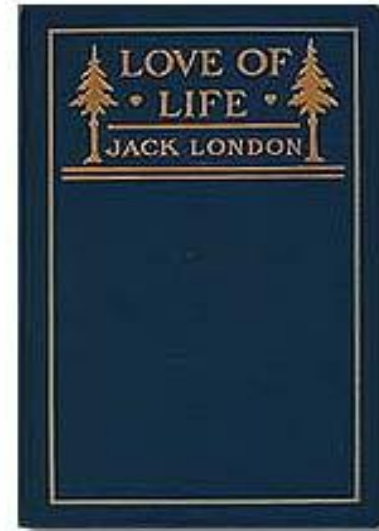
- Jack London

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)

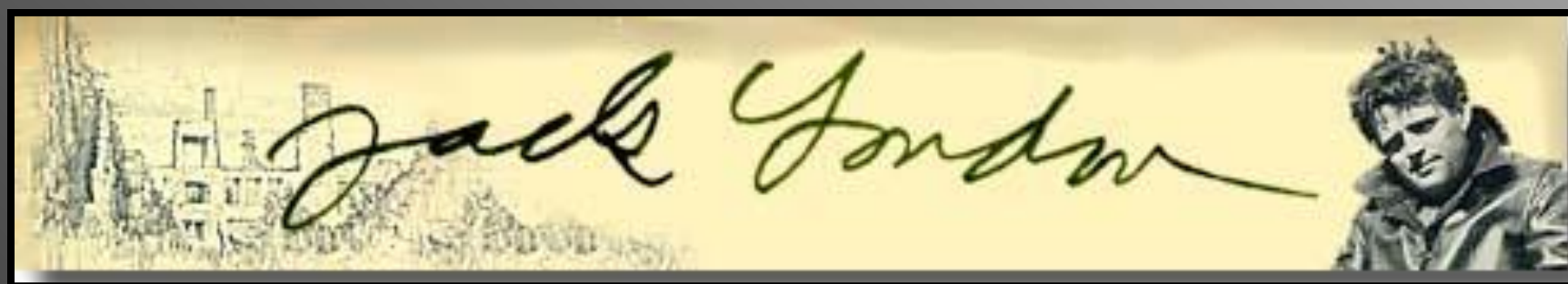
- 1905 Tales of the Fish Patrol
- 1906 Moon-Face and Other Stories
- 1906 White Fang
- 1907 Before Adam
- 1907 Love of Life and Other Stories
- 1908 The Iron Heel
- 1909 Martin Eden
- 1910 Lost Face
- 1910 Revolution and Other Essays
- 1910 Burning Daylight
- 1911 When God Laughs and Other Stories
- 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/>