

Jack London (1876-1916)

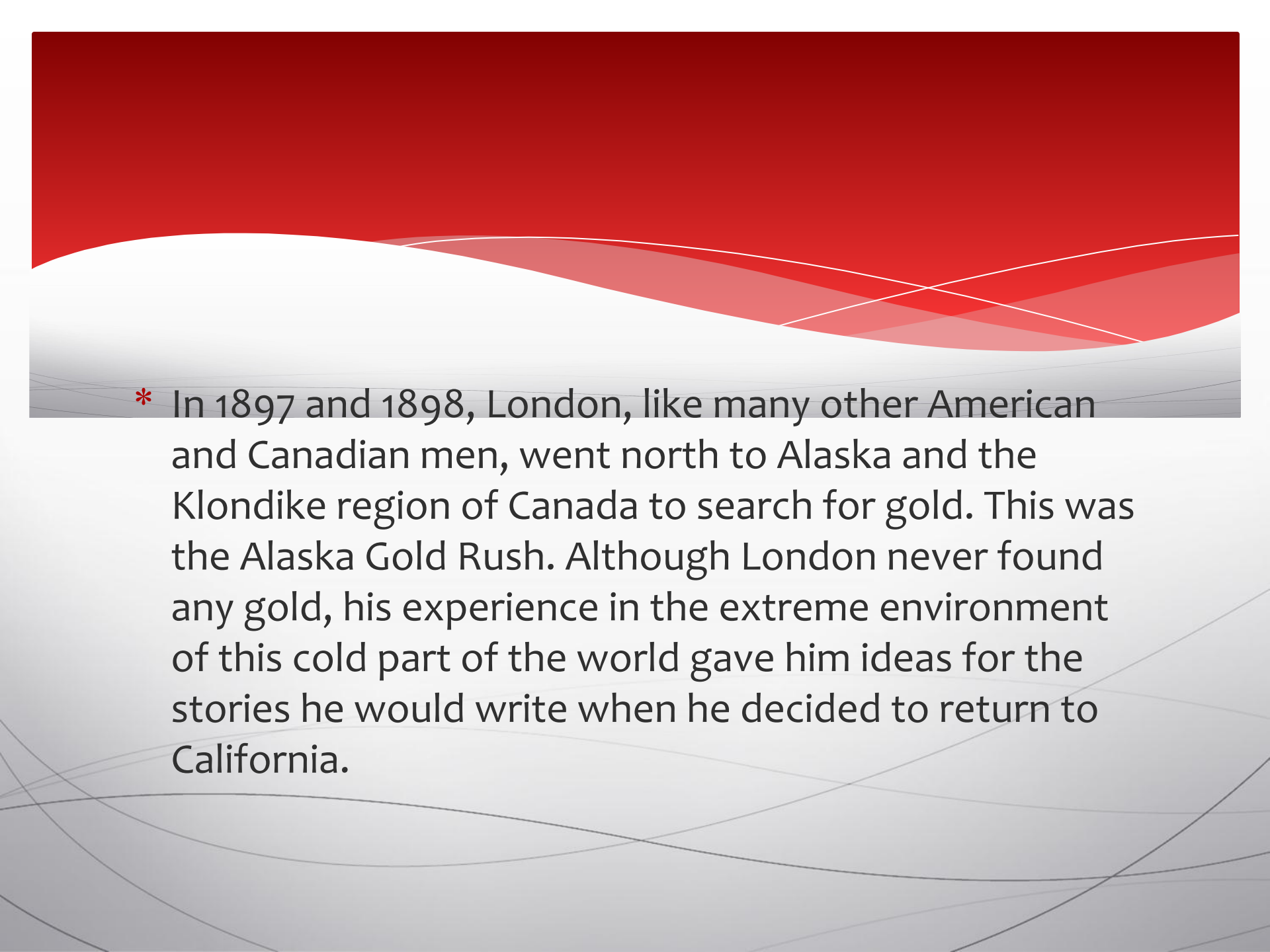
The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.

Jack London was a man of adventure, a man of action and only he could have truly conceived such a dynamic and challenging credo as this. And only he, with his great physical strength, his intense intellect, and his turbulent spirit, could have successfully lived up to it. He died when he was only forty, but he accomplished more in this short lifetime than most men could in several lifetimes.



Early life

- * Jack London's full name was John Griffith London, and he was born in San Francisco. After completing grammar school, London worked at various jobs to help support his family. He briefly enrolled in a university and took English classes, for he loved to read and write. However, he was not happy with this formal education and he soon dropped out.



* In 1897 and 1898, London, like many other American and Canadian men, went north to Alaska and the Klondike region of Canada to search for gold. This was the Alaska Gold Rush. Although London never found any gold, his experience in the extreme environment of this cold part of the world gave him ideas for the stories he would write when he decided to return to California.

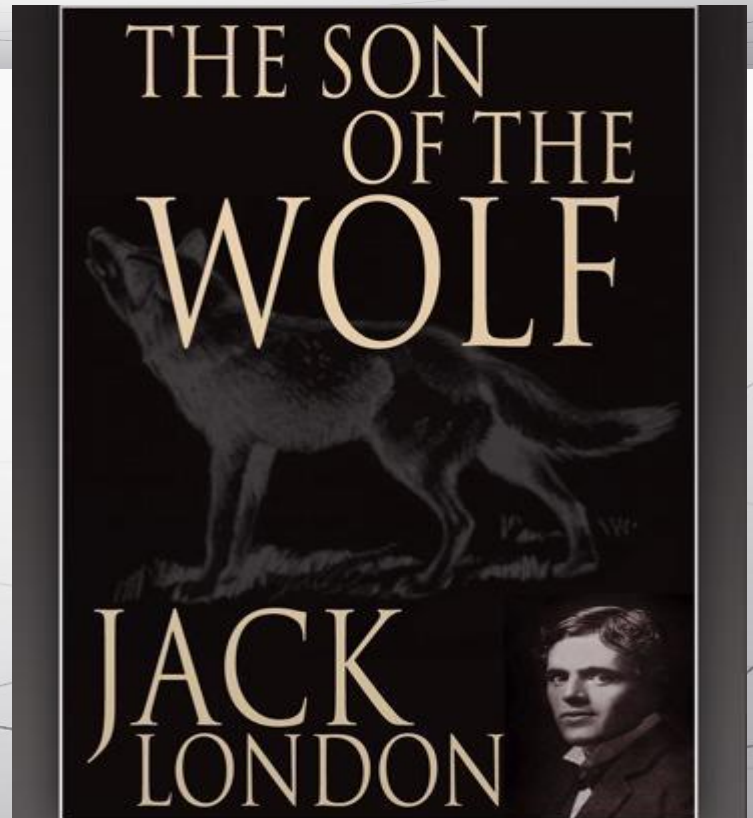
Ideas for the stories

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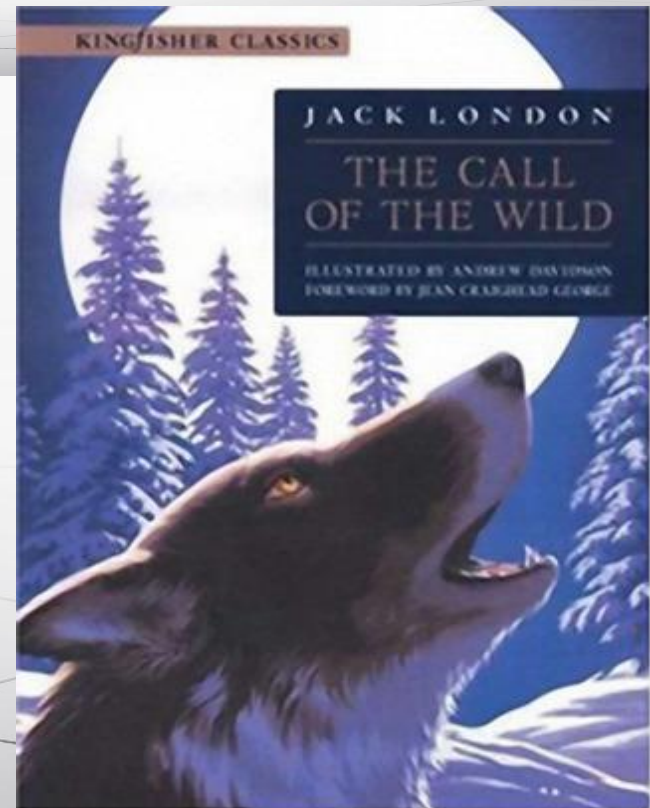
The Son of the Wolf.

- * Upon his return to the San Francisco area, he began to write about his experiences. After winning a writing contest, he succeeded in selling some of his stories and in 1900, he published a collection of his short stories, **The Son of the Wolf**.



Naturalistic style

- * London wrote in a Naturalistic style, in which a story's actions and events are caused mainly by man's internal biological needs, or by the external forces of nature and the environment. Many of his stories, including his masterpiece *The Call of the Wild* (1903), deal with civilized man getting back in touch with his deep, animal instincts.



The most important books

- * Among London's most important books **were People of the Abyss** (1903), written about the poor people of London, England; **The Sea Wolf** (1904), a novel based on the author's experiences as a seal hunter; **John Barleycorn** (1913), an autobiographical novel about his struggle against alcoholism; and **The Star Rover** (1915), a collection of related stories dealing with reincarnation.

Other works by Jack London include:

- i. The House of Pride and Other Tales of Hawaii (1912),
- ii. Smoke Bellew (1912),
- iii. A Son of the Son (1912),
- iv. The Night-Born and Other Stories (1913),
- v. The Abysmal Brute (1913),
- vi. John Barleycorn (1913),
- vii. The Valley of the Moon (1913),
- viii. The Scarlet Plague (1915),
- ix. The Star Rover (1915),
- x. The Acorn Planter: A California Forest Play (1916),
- xi. The Little Lady of the Big House (1916), and
- xii. The Turtles of Tasman (1916).

Popularity

- * London wrote more than 50 books and enjoyed enormous international popularity as an author. His exciting, often violent and brutal writing style attracted readers from all over the world and his stories and novels were translated into many different languages. Despite his success, however, alcohol and two broken marriages added to his growing unhappiness. In 1916, at the age of only 40, Jack London committed suicide.

Timeline

1876	John Griffith London is born in San Francisco on January 12, to Flora Wellman
1876	Flora Wellman marries John London
1895	Returns to attend high school at age 19
1897	Spends winter in the Yukon during the gold rush
1899	Begins publishing short stories in Overland Monthly magazine
1900-1916	Writes 50 plus books using a regimen of 1000 words per day
1906-1907	Builds the sailing ship, Snark, for his world cruise
1910-1913	Begins construction of Wolf House
1913 August 22	Wolf House burns
1915-1916	Spends several months in Hawaii with wife
1916	Dies at the age of 40