

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Selections from Jack London's "The Other Animals" (Papeete, Tahiti, 3/08)

<http://edsitement.neh.gov>

... I have been guilty of writing two animal – two books about dogs. The writing of these two stories, on my part, was in truth a protest against the “humanizing” of animals, of which it seemed to me several “animal writers” had been profoundly guilty. Time and again, and many times, in my narratives, I wrote, speaking of my dog-heroes: “He did not think these things; he merely did them,” etc. And I did this repeatedly, to the clogging of my narrative and in violation of my artistic canons; and I did it in order to hammer into the average human understanding that these dog-heroes of mine were not directed by abstract reasoning, but by instinct, sensation, and emotion, and by simple reasoning. Also, I endeavored to make my stories in line with the facts of evolution; I hewed them to the mark set by scientific research, and awoke, one day, to find myself bundled neck and crop into the camp of the nature-fakers.

President Roosevelt was responsible for this, and he tried and condemned me on two counts. (1) I was guilty of having a big, fighting bull-dog whip a wolf-dog. (2) I was guilty of allowing a lynx to kill a wolf-dog in a pitched battle. Regarding the second count, President Roosevelt was wrong in his field observations taken while reading my book. He must have read it hastily, for in my story I had the wolf-dog kill the lynx. . . . But what gets me is how difference of opinion regarding the relative fighting merits of a bull-dog and a wolf-dog makes me a nature-faker and President Roosevelt a . . . triumphant scientist.

Then entered John Burroughs to clinch President Roosevelt’s judgments. . . . And first of all let Mr. Burroughs’s position be stated, and stated in his words.

“Why impute reason to an animal if its behavior can be explained on the theory of instinct?” Remember these words, for they will be referred to later. “A goodly number of persons seem to have persuaded themselves that animals do reason.” “But instinct suffices for the animals . . . they get along very well without reason.” “Darwin tried hard to convince himself that animals do at times reason in a rudimentary way; but Darwin was also a much greater naturalist than psychologist. . . .” tantamount, on Mr. Burroughs’s part, to a flat denial that animals reason even in a rudimentary way.

... But let us see. Let us test Mr. Burroughs’s test of reason and instinct. When I was a small boy I had a dog named Rollo. According to Mr. Burroughs, Rollo was an automaton, responding to external stimuli mechanically as directed by his instincts. . . . Rollo and I did a great deal of rough romping. He chased me and I chased him . . . In the course of the play many variations arose. I would make believe to sit down and cry. All repentance and anxiety, he would wag his tail and lick my face, whereupon I would give him the laugh. He hated to be laughed at, and promptly he would spring for me with good-natured, menacing jaws, and the wild romp would go on. I had scored a point. Then he hit upon a trick. Pursuing him into the woodshed, I would find him in a far

corner, pretending to sulk . . . But at first he fooled me. I thought I had somehow hurt his feelings and I came and knelt before him, petting him and speaking lovingly. Promptly, in a wild outburst, he was up and away, tumbling me over on the floor as he dashed out in a mad scurry around the yard. He had scored a point.

. . . When a dog exhibits choice, direction, control, and reason; when it is shown that certain mental processes in that dog's brain are precisely duplicated in the brain of man; and when Mr. Burroughs convincingly proves that every action of the dog is mechanical and automatic – then, by precisely the same arguments, can it be proved that the similar actions of man are mechanical and automatic. No, Mr. Burroughs . . . you must not deny your relatives, the other animals. Their history is your history, and if you kick them to the bottom of the abyss, to the bottom of the abyss you go yourself. By them you stand or fall. What you repudiate in them you repudiate in yourself – a pretty spectacle, truly, of an exalted animal striving to disown the stuff of life out of which it is made, striving by use of the very reason that was developed by evolution to deny the processes of evolution that developed it. This may be good egotism, but it is not good science.

# Selections for Comparison

---

## 1. From Chapter 1 of *Black Beauty*, by Anna Sewell, 1877:

“His neck is broke,” said my mother.

“And serve him right, too,” said one of the colts.

I thought the same, but my mother did not join with us.

“Well, no,” she said, “you must not say that; but though I am an old horse, and have seen and heard a great deal, I never yet could make out why men are so fond of this sport; they often hurt themselves, often spoil good horses, and tear up the fields, and all for a hare or a fox, or a stag, that they could get more easily some other way; but we are only horses, and don’t know.”

## 2. From “A-Hunting of the Deer,” *In the Wilderness*, by Charles Dudley Warner, 1888

(NOTE: In his article “Real and Sham Natural History,” Burroughs praised Warner as “the father of the animal story as we have it today.”):

But suddenly she started, head erect, eyes dilated, a tremor in her limbs. She took a step; she turned her head to the south; she listened intently. There was a sound – a distant, prolonged note, bell-toned, pervading the woods, shaking the air in smooth vibrations. It was repeated. The doe had no doubt now. She shook like the sensitive mimosa when a footstep approaches. It was the baying of a hound! It was far off – at the foot of the mountain. Time enough to fly; time enough to put miles between her and the hound, before he should come upon her fresh trail; time enough to escape away through the dense forest, and hide in the recesses of Panther Gorge; yes, time enough. But there was the fawn. The cry of the hound was repeated, more distinct this time. The mother instinctively bounded away a few paces. The fawn started up with an anxious bleat: the doe turned; she came back; she couldn’t leave it. She bent over it, and licked it, and seemed to say, “Come, my child: we are pursued: we must go.” She walked away towards the west, and the little thing skipped after her. It was slow going for the slender legs, over the fallen logs, and through the rasping bushes. The doe bounded in advance, and waited: the fawn scrambled after her, slipping and tumbling along, very groggy yet on its legs, and whining a good deal because its mother kept always moving away from it. The fawn evidently did not hear the hound: the little innocent would even have looked sweetly at the dog, and tried to make friends with it, if the brute had been rushing upon him. By all the means at her command the doe urged her young one on; but it was slow work. She might have been a mile away while they were making a few rods. Whenever the fawn caught up, he was quite content to frisk about. He wanted more breakfast, for one thing; and his mother wouldn’t stand still. She moved on continually; and his weak legs were tangled in the roots of the narrow deer-path.

### 3. From the author's introduction to *Beautiful Joe: An Autobiography* by Margaret Marshall Saunders (a.k.a. Marshall Saunders), 1893:

Beautiful Joe is a real dog, and "Beautiful Joe" is his real name. He belonged during the first part of his life to a cruel master, who mutilated him in the manner described in the story. He was rescued from him, and is now living in a happy home with pleasant surroundings, and enjoys a wide local celebrity.

The character of Laura is drawn from life, and to the smallest detail is truthfully depicted. The Morris family has its counterparts in real life, and nearly all of the incidents of the story are founded on fact. – THE AUTHOR.

#### **Some additional information from the Introduction by Hezekiah Butterworth, one of the committee of readers of the prize stories offered to the Humane Society:**

The wonderfully successful book, entitled "Black Beauty," came like a living voice out of the animal kingdom. But it spake for the horse, and made other books necessary; it led the way. After the ready welcome that it received, and the good it has accomplished and is doing, it follows naturally that some one should be inspired to write a book to interpret the life of a dog to the humane feeling of the world. Such a story we have in "Beautiful Joe."

The story speaks not for the dog alone, but for the whole animal kingdom. Through it we enter the animal world, and are made to see as animals see, and to feel as animals feel. The sympathetic sight of the author, in this interpretation, is ethically the strong feature of the book.

#### **From Chapter XII ("Malta the Cat"):**

The dog, big as he was, did not dare attack her. He walked around and around, like a great clumsy elephant, and she turned her small body as he turned his, and kept up a dreadful hissing and spitting. Suddenly I saw a Spitz dog hurrying down the street. He was going to help the mastiff, and Malta would be badly hurt. I had barked and no one had come to let me out, so I sprang through the window.

Just then there was a change. Malta had seen the second dog, and she knew she must get rid of the mastiff. With an agile bound she sprang on his back, dug her sharp claws in, till he put his tail between his legs and ran up the street, howling with pain. She rode a little way, then sprang off, and ran up the lane to the stable.

I was very angry and wanted to fight something so I pitched into the Spitz dog. He was a snarly, cross-grained creature, no friend to Jim and me, and he would have been only too glad of a chance to help kill Malta.

I gave him one of the worst beatings he ever had. I don't suppose it was quite right for me to do it, for Miss Laura says dogs should never fight; but he had worried Malta before, and he had no business to do it. She belonged to our family. Jim and I never worried his cat. I had been longing to give him a shaking for some time, and now I felt for his throat through his thick hair and dragged him all around the street. Then I let him go, and he was a civil dog ever afterward

#### 4. From "Mowgli's Brothers," *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, 1894:

It was seven o'clock of a very warm evening in the Seonee hills when Father Wolf woke up from his day's rest, scratched himself, yawned, and spread out his paws one after the other to get rid of the sleepy feeling in their tips. Mother Wolf lay with her big gray nose dropped across her four tumbling, squealing cubs, and the moon shone into the mouth of the cave where they all lived. "Augrh!" said Father Wolf. "It is time to hunt again." He was going to spring down hill when a little shadow with a bushy tail crossed the threshold and whined: "Good luck go with you, O Chief of the Wolves. And good luck and strong white teeth go with noble children that they may never forget the hungry in this world."

#### 5. From the author's introduction to *Wild Animals I Have Known* by Ernest Seton Thompson, 1898

(NOTE: In his article "Real and Sham Natural History," Burroughs devotes much space to criticizing Seton Thompson, nicknaming his book, *Wild Animals Only I Have Known*.):

THESE STORIES are true. Although I have left the strict line of historical truth in many places, the animals in this book were all real characters. They lived the lives I have depicted, and showed the stamp of heroism and personality more strongly by far than it has been in the power of my pen to tell.

. . . I believe that natural history has lost much by the vague general treatment that is so common. What satisfaction would be derived from a ten-page sketch of the habits and customs of Man? How much more profitable it would be to devote that space to the life of some one great man. This is the principle I have endeavored to apply to my animals. The real personality of the individual, and his view of life are my theme, rather than the ways of the race in general, as viewed by a casual and hostile human eye.

. . . Redruff really lived in the Don Valley north of Toronto, and many of my companions will remember him. He was killed in 1883, between the Sugar Loaf and Castle Frank, by a creature whose name I have withheld, as it is the species, rather than the individual, that I wish to expose.

#### From Chapter IV ("Redruff, The Story of the Don Valley Partridge"):

One day late in the Acorn Moon, that is, about mid-October, as the grouse family were basking with full crops near a great pine log on the sunlit edge of the beaver-meadow, they heard the far-away bang of a gun, and Redruff, acting on some impulse from within, leaped on the log, strutted up and down a couple of times, then, yielding to the elation of the bright, clear, bracing air, he whirred his wings in loud defiance. Then, giving fuller vent to this expression of vigor, just as a colt frisks to show how well he feels, he whirred yet more loudly, until, unwittingly, he found himself drumming, and tickled with the discovery of his new power, thumped the air again and again till he filled the near woods with the loud tattoo of the fully grown cock-partridge. His brother and sister heard and looked on with admiration and surprise, so did his mother, but from that time she began to be a little afraid of him.

**6. From *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (pp. 71-72) by Charles G. D. Roberts, 1900**

(NOTE: In his article “Real and Sham Natural History,” Burroughs says about Roberts’ book *Kindred of the Wild*, “One finds much to be admired and commended and but little to take exception to.”):

Along in the summer, Kroof began to lead the cub wider afield. The longer journeys vexed the little animal at first, and tired him; so that sometimes he would throw himself down on his back, with pinky-white soles of protest in the air, and refuse to go a step farther. But in spite of the appeal of his quizzical little black snout, big ears, and twinkling eyes, old Kroof would box him sternly til he was glad enough to jump up and renew the march. With the exercise he got a little leaner, but much harder, and soon came to delight in the widest wandering. Nothing could tire him, and at the end of the journey he would chase rabbits, or weasels, or other elusive creatures, till convicted of futility by his mother’s sarcastic comments.

**7. From *Secrets of the Woods* by William Long, 1901**

(NOTE: In his article “Real and Sham Natural History,” Burroughs attacks Long and his book *School of the Woods* at length, saying at one point, “It is Mr. Long’s book more than any others that justifies the phrase Sham Natural History.”):

A dog knows when you are afraid of him; when you are hostile; when friendly. So does a bear. Lose your nerve, and the horse you are riding goes to pieces instantly. Bubble over with suppressed excitement, and the deer yonder, stepping daintily down the bank to your canoe in the water grasses, will stamp and snort and bound away without ever knowing what startled him. But be quiet, friendly, peace-possessed in the same place, and the deer, even after discovering you, will draw near and show his curiosity in twenty pretty ways ere he trots away, looking back over his shoulder for your last message. Then be generous—show him the flash of a looking-glass, the flutter of a bright handkerchief, a tin whistle, or any other little kickshaw that the remembrance of a boy’s pocket may suggest—and the chances are that he will come back again, finding curiosity so richly rewarded.

**8. From Chapter III (“The Dominant Primordial Beast”), *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London, 1903:**

In a flash Buck knew it. The time had come. It was to the death. As they circled about, snarling, ears laid back, keenly watchful for the advantage, the scene came to Buck with a sense of familiarity. He seemed to remember it all – the white woods, and earth, and moonlight, and the thrill of battle.

. . . Buck took to rushing, as though for the throat, when, suddenly drawing back his head and curving in from the side, he would drive his shoulder at the shoulder of Spitz, as a ram by which to overthrow him. But instead, Buck’s shoulder was slashed down each time as Spitz leaped lightly away.

Spitz was untouched, while Buck was streaming with blood and panting hard. The fight was growing desperate. And all the while the silent and wolfish circle waited to finish off whichever dog went down. As Buck grew winded, Spitz took to rushing, and he kept him

staggering for footing. Once Buck went over, and the whole circle of sixty dogs started up; but he recovered himself, almost in mid air, and the circle sank down again and waited.

But Buck possessed a quality that made for greatness – imagination. He fought by instinct, but he could fight by head as well. He rushed, as though attempting the old shoulder trick, but at the last instant swept low to the snow and in. His teeth closed on Spitz's left fore leg. There was a crunch of breaking bone, and the white dog faced him on three legs. Thrice he tried to knock him over, then repeated the trick and broke the right fore leg.

***The Call of the Wild*: Is Jack London a Nature Faker? –**  
[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



<http://edsitement.neh.gov>

# Chart for Comparison of Animal Stories

**DIRECTIONS:** Fill in the chart based on the excerpts provided. Think about how *The Call of the Wild* compares to the other works.

#	Excerpt from the work of:	Fiction, Non-Fiction, or Can't Tell ?	1st or 3rd Person?	Humanized animal(s)?	Textual Evidence of the Author's Approach to the Animal Point of View
1	Anna Sewell				
2	Charles Dudley Warner				
3	Margaret Saunders				
4	Rudyard Kipling				
5	Ernest Seton Thompson				
6	Charles G.D. Roberts				
7	William J. Long				
8	Jack London				



# Buck in Chapter 1

---

But Buck was neither house dog nor kennel dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge's daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king – king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included.

. . . he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat; he had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become because of their insular situation. But he had saved himself by not becoming a mere pampered house dog. Hunting and kindred outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles; and to him, as to the cold-tubbing races, the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver.

Buck had accepted the rope with quiet dignity. To be sure, it was an unwonted performance but he had learned to trust in men he knew, and to give them credit for a wisdom that outreached his own. But when the ends of the rope were placed in the stranger's hands, he growled menacingly. He had merely intimated his displeasure, in his pride believing that to intimate was to command. But to his surprise the rope tightened around his neck, shutting off his breath. In a quick rage he sprang at the man . . .

. . . he was dimly aware that his tongue was hurting and that he was being jolted along in some kind of a conveyance. The hoarse shriek of a locomotive whistling a crossing told him where he was. He had traveled too often with the Judge not to know the sensation of riding in a baggage car. He opened his eyes, and into them came the unbridled anger of a kidnapped king. The man sprang for his throat, but Buck was too quick for him. His jaws closed on the hand, nor did they relax till his senses were choked out of him . . .

There he lay for the remainder of the weary night, nursing his wrath and wounded pride. He could not understand what it all meant. What did they want with him, these strange men? Why were they keeping him pent up in this narrow crate? He did not know why, but he felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending calamity. Several times during the night he sprang to his feet when the shed door rattled open, expecting to see the Judge, or the boys at least. But each time it was the bulging face of the saloon-keeper that peered in at him by the sickly light of a tallow candle. And each time the joyful bark that trembled in Buck's throat was twisted into a savage growl.

They growled and barked like detestable dogs, mewed, and flapped their arms and crowed. It was all very silly, he knew; but therefore the more outrage to his dignity, and his anger waxed and waxed.

He did not mind the hunger so much, but the lack of water caused him severe suffering and fanned his wrath to fever-pitch.

He was glad for one thing: the rope was off his neck. That had given them an unfair advantage; but now that it was off, he would show them. They would never get another rope around his neck. Upon that he was resolved.

After a particularly fierce blow he crawled to his feet, too dazed to rush. He staggered limply about, the blood flowing from nose and mouth and ears, his beautiful coat sprayed and flecked with bloody slaver. Then the man advanced and deliberately dealt him a frightful blow on the nose. All the pain he had endured was nothing compared with the exquisite agony of this. With a roar that was almost lion-like in its ferocity, he again hurled himself at the man.

He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his afterlife he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law, and he met the introduction halfway.

Again and again, as he looked at each brutal performance, the lesson was driven home to Buck: a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be obeyed, though not necessarily conciliated. Of this last Buck was never guilty, though he did see beaten dogs that fawned upon the man, and wagged their tails, and licked his hand. Also he saw one dog, that would neither conciliate nor obey, finally killed in the struggle for mastery.

Buck wondered where they went, for they never came back; but the fear of the future was strong upon him, and he was glad each time when he was not selected.

Buck saw money pass between them, and was not surprised when Curly, a good-natured Newfoundland, and he were led away by the little weazened man.

He speedily learned that Perrault and Francois were fair men, calm and impartial in administering justice, and too wise in the way of dogs to be fooled by dogs.

That was fair of Francois, he decided, and the half-breed began his rise in Buck's estimation.

. . . it was apparent to Buck that the weather was steadily growing colder. At last, one morning, the propeller was quiet, and the Narwhal was pervaded with an atmosphere of excitement. He felt it, as did the other dogs, and knew that a change was at hand.

At the first step upon the cold surface, Buck's feet sank into a white mushy something very like mud. He sprang back with a snort. More of this white stuff was falling through the air. He shook himself, but more of it fell upon him. He sniffed it curiously, then licked some up on his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next instant was gone. This puzzled him. He tried it again, with the same results. The onlookers laughed uproariously, and he felt ashamed, he knew not why, for it was his first snow.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



<http://edsitement.neh.gov>

# Hypotheses for Explaining London's Portrayal of Buck in *Call of the Wild*

Does one hypothesis below match your thinking about *The Call of the Wild* ? If so, circle it. If not, develop your own hypothesis. Use the chart to compile evidence from the text to support your ideas.

1. Buck's thought processes are more human than dog-like, but that only makes his adventures more exciting because readers can relate to what he's going through.
2. London was "a nature faker." The book crosses the line between fact and fiction, deceiving the reader for the author's purposes. The lack of truth makes the book less believable and less suspenseful. Buck's human reasoning ability gives him an unfair – and unrealistic – advantage.
3. Though London's dog-heroes "are simply human beings disguised as animals (who) think, feel, plan, suffer as we do . . . in other respects they follow closely the facts of natural history and the reader is not deceived."
4. London's dog stories were "a protest against the 'humanizing' of animals, of which . . . several "animal writers" had been profoundly guilty." London's "dog-heroes . . . were not directed by abstract reasoning, but by instinct, sensation, and emotion, and by simple reasoning."
5. Buck was a "super dog" but one that could exist. He is like those few special humans who can surmount difficult odds and thrive because of their super-human qualities.

If you did not circle a hypothesis above, write your own here:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Text Support:	Page #