

Jack London

White Fang

Выполнила:
студентка 3 курса ФРГФ группы
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Фомичёва Ксения



John Griffith London (born **John Griffith Chaney**; January 12, 1876 – November 22, 1916) was an American novelist, journalist, and social activist. A pioneer in the world of commercial magazine fiction, he was one of the first writers to become a worldwide celebrity and earn a large fortune from writing. He was also an innovator in the genre that would later become known as [science fiction](#).

His most famous works include *[The Call of the Wild](#)* and *[White Fang](#)*, both set in the [Klondike Gold Rush](#), as well as the short stories "[To Build a Fire](#)", "[An Odyssey of the North](#)", and "[Love of Life](#)". He also wrote about the South Pacific in stories such as "[The Pearls of Parlay](#)" and "[The Heathen](#)". London was part of the radical literary group "The Crowd" in San Francisco and a passionate advocate of unionization, [socialism](#), and the rights of workers. He wrote several powerful works dealing with these topics, such as his [dystopian novel](#) *[The Iron Heel](#)*, his non-fiction exposé *[The People of the Abyss](#)*, and *[The War of the Classes](#)*.

WHITE FANG



JACK LONDON

White Fang

White Fang is a novel by American author [Jack London](#) (1876–1916) — and the name of the book's eponymous character, a wild [wolf](#)[dog](#). First serialized in *Outing* magazine, it was published in 1906. The story takes place in [Yukon Territory](#) and the [Northwest Territories](#), Canada, during the 1890s [Klondike Gold Rush](#) and details White Fang's journey to domestication. It is a companion novel (and a thematic mirror) to London's best-known work, *The Call of the Wild*, which is about a kidnapped, domesticated dog embracing his wild ancestry to survive and thrive in the wild.

Much of *White Fang* is written from the viewpoint of the titular canine character, enabling London to explore how animals view their world and how they view humans. *White Fang* examines the violent world of wild animals and the equally violent world of humans. The book also explores complex themes including [morality](#) and [redemption](#).

As early as 1925, the story was adapted to film, and it has since seen several more cinematic adaptations, including a [1991 film](#) starring [Ethan Hawke](#) and a 2018 Netflix original.

Plot summary

The story begins before the **wolf-dog hybrid** is born, with two men and their **sled dog** team on a journey to deliver Lord Alfred's coffin to a remote town named Fort McGurry in the higher area of the **Yukon Territory**, Canada. The men, Bill and Henry, are stalked by a large pack of starving wolves over the course of several days. Finally, after all of their dogs and Bill have been eaten, four more teams find Henry trying to escape from the wolves; the wolf pack scatters when they hear the large group of people coming.

The story then follows the pack, which has been robbed of its last prey. When the pack finally brings down a moose, the **famine** is ended; they eventually split up, and the story now follows a she-wolf and her mate, One Eye. The she-wolf gives birth to a **litter** of five cubs by the **Mackenzie River**, and all but one die from hunger. One Eye is killed by a **lynx** while trying to rob her den for food for the she-wolf and her cub; his mate later discovers his remains near the lynx's den. The surviving cub and the she-wolf are left to fend for themselves. Shortly afterward, the she-wolf kills all the lynx's kittens to feed her cub, prompting the lynx to track her down, and a vicious fight breaks out. The she-wolf eventually kills the lynx but suffers severe injury; the lynx carcass is devoured over a period of seven days as the she-wolf recovers from her injuries.

The cub comes across five **Native Americans** one day, and the she-wolf comes to his rescue. One man, Grey Beaver, recognizes the she-wolf as Kiche, his brother's wolfdog, who left during a famine. Grey Beaver's brother is dead and so he takes Kiche and her cub and **christens** the cub White Fang. White Fang has a harsh life in the Indian camp; the current puppy pack, seeing him as a wolf, immediately attacks him. The Indians save him, but the pups never accept him, and the leader, Lip-lip, singles him out for persecution. White Fang grows to become a savage, callous, morose, solitary, and deadly fighter, "the enemy of his kind".

It is at this time that White Fang is separated from his mother who is sold off to another Indian Camp by Three Eagles. He realizes how hard life in the wild is when he runs away from camp and earns the respect of Grey Beaver when he saves his son Mit-Sah from a group of boys seeking revenge. When a famine occurs, he runs away into the woods and encounters his mother Kiche, only for her to chase him away for she has a new litter of cubs. He also encounters Lip-lip whom he fights and kills before returning to the camp.

When White Fang is five years old, he is taken to **Fort Yukon** so that Grey Beaver can trade with the gold-hunters. There, when Grey Beaver is drunk, White Fang is bought by an evil **dog-fighter** named Beauty Smith. White Fang defeats all opponents pitted against him, including several wolves and a lynx, until a **bulldog** called Cherokee is brought in to fight him. Cherokee has the upper hand in the fight when he grips the skin and fur of White Fang's neck and begins to throttle him. White Fang nearly suffocates but is rescued when a rich, young gold hunter, Weedon Scott, stops the fight and forcefully buys White Fang from Beauty Smith.

Scott attempts to tame White Fang, and after a long, patient effort, he succeeds. When Scott attempts to return to California alone, White Fang pursues him, and Scott decides to take the dog with him back home. In Sierra Vista, White Fang must adjust to the laws of the estate. At the end of the book, an escaped convict, Jim Hall, tries to kill Scott's father, Judge Scott, for sentencing him to prison for a crime he didn't commit, not knowing that Hall was "railroaded". White Fang kills Hall and is nearly killed himself but survives. As a result, the women of Scott's estate name him "The Blessed Wolf". The story ends with White Fang relaxing in the sun with the puppies he has fathered with the sheep-dog Collie.

Main characters

- **White Fang**, the novel's protagonist. A wolfdog who was born wild but becomes more dog-like after Grey Beaver domesticates him.
- **Grey Beaver**, a Native American chief who is White Fang's first master.
- **Beauty Smith**, the main antagonist of the novel and White Fang's second master.
- **Weedon Scott**, a wealthy gold hunter who is White Fang's third master and the first one to truly show affection towards him.
- **Kiche**, White Fang's mother; she is known as the "she-wolf" at the beginning of the novel.
- **Lip-lip**, a canine pup who also lives in the Native American village.
- **One-Eye**, White Fang's father, who was killed by a lynx.
- **Jim Hall**, an escaped convict.

Major themes

Critics have identified many underlying themes in the novel. Tom Feller describes the story as "an allegory of humanity's progression from nature to civilization." He also expresses that "the [story's] implication is that the metamorphosis of both the individual and society will require violence at some point." Paul Deane states that "[in the novel,] society demands a conformity that undermines individualism." London himself took influence from [Herbert Spencer](#)'s words: "survival of the fittest", as well as [Friedrich Nietzsche](#)'s idea of a "superman" (or "superdog", in this instance) and of "the worship of power".

Background

The novel is partly an autobiographical [allegory](#) based on London's conversion from teenage hoodlum to married, middle-class writer. In writing it, he was influenced by the ideas of [Herbert Spencer](#), [Karl Marx](#), and [Friedrich Nietzsche](#). Conditions in the US also influenced the story.

Publication history

Since the novel has been published it has been translated into over 89 different languages and released as a three-volume [Braille](#) edition.

Reception

Upon its release, *White Fang* was an immediate success worldwide, and became especially popular among younger readers. Robert Greenwood called *White Fang* "one of London's most interesting and ambitious works." Virginia Crane claims that the novel is "generally regarded as artistically inferior to its companion piece [*The Call of the Wild*], but [that it] helped establish London as a popular American literary figure."

Shortly after the book's publication, London became a target in what would later be called the [nature fakers controversy](#), a literary debate highlighting the conflict between science and sentiment in popular nature writing. President [Theodore Roosevelt](#), who first spoke out against the "sham naturalists" in 1907, specifically named London as one of the so-called "nature fakers". Citing an example from *White Fang*, Roosevelt referred to the fight between the bulldog and the wolfdog "the very sublimity of absurdity." London only responded to the criticism after the controversy had ended. He wrote in a 1908 essay entitled "The Other Animals":

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.

Adaptations

The novel has been adapted into motion pictures and sequels, animated specials, as well as audiobook format. A TV series, *White Fang*, was filmed in [Arrowtown](#), New Zealand, in 1993.

Films

- *White Fang* (1973)
- *Challenge to White Fang* (1974)
- *White Fang to the Rescue* (1974)
- *Zanna Bianca e il grande Kid* (1977)
- *White Fang* (1946)
- *The Story of White Fang* (1982), *Shiroi Kiba Monogatari*, Japanese anime film produced by Studio DEEN
- *White Fang* (1991)
- *White Fang 2: Myth of the White Wolf* (1994)
- *White Fang* (2018)

TV series

- *The Legend of White Fang* (1992)
- *White Fang* (1993)