

# White Fang



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JACK LONDON

Jack London was born out of wedlock in 1876 to Flora Wellman Chaney. Young Jack took his stepfather's surname, London, when Flora married later that year. London spent his youth traveling around California with his family, where he developed a taste for adventure. He worked in a cannery, hunted for oysters in San Francisco bay, traveled across the U.S., and sailed around the Pacific, all before graduating from high school at age 19. London attended the University of California Berkeley for one semester, before dropping out to seek out his fortune in the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897. London lasted a year in the Yukon, and returned to California with a wealth of material for his stories, among them [The Call of the Wild](#), his most famous work, and *White Fang*, its companion. London also was an advocate of the rights of workers, unionization, and socialism, and wrote a number of novels on those topics. During his adventures, London picked up many diseases that left him in deep pain and also contributed to his growing alcoholism. Nonetheless, he continued publishing his writing in periodicals, thrilling his readers with adventure stories until his death in 1916. He died by an overdose of morphine, which he was taking to ward off the pain of his diseases, and there is some debate about whether his death was accidental, or a suicide.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

London culled much of his inspiration for stories like *White Fang* directly from his experiences in the Klondike during the Gold Rush of 1897. London, like many hopeful prospectors, traveled to the Klondike in search of riches and adventure. However, greater socioeconomic factors were at work in this massive movement of nearly 100,000 people north. Economic depression from the Panic of 1893 drove many people to quit their jobs or sell their homes to take up gold mining. About 30,000 made it to the Klondike, and only about 4,000 struck gold. Life in Yukon was plagued by murders, suicides, disease, and starvation. London himself had to turn back when he contracted scurvy. Such low odds of success, or survival, strengthened London's belief in environmental determinism, which in turn influenced stories, such as *White Fang*.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Originally intended as a companion piece to [The Call of the Wild](#), London's *White Fang*, acts as a literary foil to this famous work. While [The Call of the Wild](#) portrays the transformation of a

domesticated dog into a wild wolf, *White Fang* shows this process in reverse: a wild and bitter wolf becomes a tame and loyal creature. These stories were very much informed by evolutionary theories in Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species*, such as "survival of the fittest," natural selection, and adaptation. In *White Fang* especially, London engages with "environmental determinism," a Darwinian-inspired belief that the environment heavily influences the course of one's growth and development. We see this in *White Fang*, whose character changes in response to the social and biological circumstances of his environment.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *White Fang*
- **When Written:** 1906
- **Where Written:** California
- **When Published:** 1906
- **Literary Period:** Naturalism
- **Genre:** Adventure novel
- **Setting:** The late 1890s in the Canadian Klondike and then Weedon Scott's estate in Sierra Vista, California.
- **Climax:** White Fang's attack on Jim Hall.
- **Point of View:** Anonymous narrator, third-person omniscient, predominantly from the perspective of White Fang.

### EXTRA CREDIT

**A Paradoxical Socialist:** London was deeply influenced by Socialist and Marxist theories and his working class background. In 1894, he joined Coxey's Army on a march to Washington D.C. to protest poor economic conditions and unemployment. In 1905 he toured the U.S. on a Socialist lecture tour. However, even though a member of the Socialist party until 1916, London struggled to reconcile his success with his working class identity.

**Wolf House:** In 1910, London designed his canine-named mansion, "Wolf House," to last "a thousand years." Ironically, it was destroyed by fire in 1913.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Against a desolate and frigid wilderness, a pack of sled dogs toil on an icy trail, towing a sled that carries a coffin containing the remains of an aristocratic adventurer, struck down by the Wild. As darkness falls, the sled's mushers, Bill and Henry, grow

anxious. They are running low on ammunition and a hungry pack of wolves is following them closely. Bill also suspects that a wolf is stealing food from their camp.

Every morning Bill and Henry discover another one of their dogs missing, presumably eaten by the wolf pack. One night, a mysterious she-wolf reveals her self in the firelight. Bill and Henry conclude that she has been roaming on the fringes of the camp and luring their dogs into the wild.

The two mushers and their three remaining dogs continue on the trail, but are attacked by the wolf pack. Bill attempts to shoot down the wolves to save his dogs, but misses and is devoured by the pack. With two hounds left, Henry struggles to fend off the wolves' advances. He builds a fire around himself, but the wolves circle dangerously close. They nearly eat him, but a group of travelers saves Henry before he's consumed.

Meanwhile, the wild wolf pack, starved from famine, splits into smaller groups to scavenge for food. The she-wolf and a gray wolf, One Eye, pair up, becoming mates. They settle in a secluded cave, where the she-wolf gives birth to a litter of pups. All the pups die, save one—White Fang, who grows strong and fierce, learning to hunt and fight on his own and alongside his mother. Together, they take down a ferocious Lynx.

One day, White Fang and the she-wolf come to an Indian camp, where the she-wolf's former master, Gray Beaver, captures them. (Gray Beaver raised the she-wolf, who is actually named Kiche, before she ran away to the wild.) Gray Beaver eventually sells Kiche, but keeps White Fang. The pups of the camp, led by Lip-lip, terrorize White Fang, making him a bitter outcast.

White Fang escapes from Gray Beaver once, returning to the wild. But he's overcome by so much loneliness that he returns to his master, who teaches him to work in the sled and encourages his ferocious behavior. White Fang's nature becomes so brutal that he kills Lip-lip when they encounter each other alone in the forest.

Gray Beaver takes White Fang to Fort Yukon, where he trades animal skins and takes to drinking. One night, drunk, he sells White Fang to Beauty Smith, a monstrous man who transforms White Fang into a vicious and victorious fighting dog. In the ring, White Fang encounters a bulldog, which nearly kills him with a severe bite to the throat. A man named Weedon Scott saves White Fang, taking the canine into his care.

Scott gradually befriends White Fang, who sheds his mistrust of man and becomes devoted to his new master. When Scott is about to leave the Yukon for good, White Fang breaks out of the cabin where he's being held and rushes to Scott's side at the docks. The gesture convinces Scott to take White Fang to his family home in Sierra Vista, California. In the Southland, Scott's family and his sheepdog, Collie, distrust White Fang's wild ways. But White Fang grows into a tamer animal by learning the laws of man and society. He learns not to hunt chickens and not to bristle at human touch, or laughter. White

Fang proves himself to be a loving and devoted dog when he uses his bark to alert the Scott family that Weedon has been in a horse riding accident. White proves his loyalty again when he attacks and kills Jim Hall, a convict, who breaks into Scott's home to seek revenge on Scott's father, Judge Scott. Though badly injured, White Fang miraculously survives, gaining enough strength to see the litter of pups that Collie has borne him. Surrounded by his pups and his human family, White Fang becomes a beloved and "Blessed Wolf."



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**White Fang** – One-quarter dog and three parts wolf, White Fang is a strong and resilient canine who is bred in the wild, raised by Indians, and becomes a ferocious fighting dog under the care of the cruel Beauty Smith. Under the care of Weedon Scott, White Fang learns the laws of man and transforms into a loyal and loving dog.

**Gray Beaver** – White Fang's first owner. A wise Indian, experienced in the ways of animals and nature, he takes White Fang and White Fang's mother, Kiche, into his care. He teaches White Fang how to behave in the camp and run a sled. Though he shows no affection towards White Fang, they share a mutual respect for one another.

**Kiche, the she-wolf** – White Fang's mother. Half wolf, half dog, Kiche is also the red she-wolf, who lures members of Bill and Henry's sled dog team into the forest. Raised by Indians, Kiche escapes to the wild, where she mates with One Eye and gives birth to White Fang. A fierce fighter and hunter, she teaches White Fang how to survive in the Northland.

### MINOR CHARACTERS

**Weedon Scott** – White Fang's final owner. He rescues White Fang from the bulldog's lethal grip and from Beauty Smith's abusive care. Scott wins White Fang's trust and takes him to the Southland, where he trains White Fang to respect the laws of man and civilization.

**Beauty Smith** – An ugly, cruel, and mean-spirited cook, Beauty uses alcohol to con Gray Beaver into selling White Fang. Beauty trains White Fang to be a ferocious fighting dog. White Fang considers him to be a "mad god."

**Bill** – An impulsive and ill-tempered musher, he works with his sled partner, Henry, to convey the remains of Lord Alfred to McGurry. He is disturbed by the gradual disappearance of his dogs. The wolf pack attacks and devours him when he attempts to assault them with his gun.

**Henry** – Bill's sledding partner. He is skeptical of Bill's theory that a wolf lurks among the sled dogs, but takes the disappearance of each dog in stride. Less impulsive than his

partner, he manages to escape the wolf pack's attack, but leaves the incident deeply shaken.

**Collie** – The Scott family's sheep dog. She distrusts White Fang, at first, but gains confidence in him, as he becomes a tame and protective guard dog. She becomes his mate and gives birth to White Fang's first litter of pups.

**One Eye** – White Fang's father. A fierce and experienced gray wolf, he cunningly gains the affections of Kiche, with whom he mates and fathers a litter of pups.

**Lip-lip** – White Fang's rival. As the leader of the pups at the Indian camp, Lip-lip terrorizes and bullies White Fang, making him an outcast among the other dogs. Later in the novel, weakened by famine, he's killed by White Fang when they encounter each other in the wild.

**Cherokee, the bulldog** – A squat and slow creature, he is actually White Fang's most lethal adversary in the fighting ring. He nearly kills White Fang when he bites him at his throat and refuses to let go.

**Tim Keenan** – the bulldog's owner.

**The Lynx** – A ferocious and vengeful feline who kills One Eye and attacks Kiche and White Fang in their cave.

**Matt** – Scott's musher. When Scott is away, Matt feeds and takes care of White Fang.

**Judge Scott** – Weedon Scott's father. He doubts whether White Fang can become a tame dog, but gains faith in him after White Fang saves his life from Jim Hall.

**Jim Hall** – A criminal, who escapes from prison to exact vengeance on the man who sentenced him to jail, Judge Scott. White Fang attacks him, saving Judge Scott from Hall's evil scheme.

**Mit-sah** – Gray Beaver's son and a sled runner, who favors Lip-lip over White Fang.

**Kloo-kooch** – Gray Beaver's wife.

**One Ear** – A sled dog lured into the wild by the she-wolf, Kiche.

**Alice** – Weedon Scott's wife.

**The surgeon** – Called to White Fang's aide after he attacks Jim Hall, but concludes that White Fang's odds for survival are low.

**Frog** – The strongest sled dog on Bill and Henry's team, Frog is the second dog eaten by the wolf pack.

**Fatty** – The first sled dog on Bill and Henry's team eaten by the wild wolf pack.

**Spanker** – The third sled dog eaten by the wolf pack.

**The young leader** – One of the she-wolf's suitors. One Eye kills him.

**The ambitious three year old** – Another one of the she-wolf's suitors. One Eye kills him.

**Baseek** – An old dog who attempts to intimidate White Fang

into giving up his meat.

**Major** – The dog that White Fang kills when he is first taken into Scott's care.

**Dick** – One of Scott's hound dogs in Sierra Vista.

**Lord Alfred** – The man whose remains are conveyed in the oblong box that Bill and Henry's sled dog team carries.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

White Fang's Wild Northland is a harsh and merciless place, where every living being struggles to survive. London illustrates this struggle by showing Bill and Henry's sled dog team mushing across the still and frozen Klondike. Against this cold and desolate expanse, they are the only signs of life. Even so, their sled tows a **coffin**, an ominous reminder that death could strike at any moment in this perilous place. The image shows the reader that life in the wild maintains a vulnerable existence. The reoccurrence of devastating famines throughout the novel further highlights the uncertainty of life, as well as its fragility.

Since the line between life and death is very thin, White Fang, from an early age, learns that nature's law is simple—"eat, or be eaten." Like his ancestors, he knows this through hunting. He must kill his prey, or risk being eaten, himself, by a bigger, more calculating predator. Because life exists in such a precarious state, man and beast alike must actively struggle to survive. Gray Beaver and his Indian clan must migrate when food runs short in one area and becomes abundant in another. Similarly, both Kiche and White Fang return to the wild when famine hits the Indian camp.

Yet, the struggle for life is most powerfully felt in the battles between rivals. Kiche fights the Lynx to the death in order to save herself and White Fang from its murderous rage, while White Fang struggles to hang on to life against the bulldog's lethal grip. Though death is an ever-present threat, the yearning for life is inborn and strong. White Fang's existence is marked by an intense will to live. As a pup, he longs for the sunshine's life-giving rays. When attacked by the bulldog, White Fang fights for as long as he can. Finally, after his near fatal fight with Jim Hall, White Fang's miraculous recovery shows that his tenacious will to live overcomes all obstacles to life, making him a true survivor. London values this will to live, and glorifies it throughout the novel.



## DOMESTIC YEARNINGS V. NATURAL INSTINCT

Throughout the novel, White Fang struggles to reconcile his feral instincts with the expectations of the domestic world, highlighting the conflict between nature and society. Part wolf and raised in the wild, White Fang's natural instincts to fight and hunt are at odds with man's ways. For instance, White Fang bristles at being petted, or tied down with a leather thong by his human masters. Through these measures, humans expect and demand obedience and respect from their dog, but White Fang, being a wild animal, perceives such behaviors and devices as threats to his survival.

White Fang often misreads human behavior, as well. When he sees Scott embrace his mother, White Fang interprets the hug as a "hostile act," and nearly attacks the woman. White Fang similarly misunderstands human laws of hunting. When he lays out all the chickens he has killed before Scott's front door, he thinks that he is honoring his master with food, but really he has committed a grave crime by hunting a domesticated animal. Even though White Fang's nature conflicts with society's rules, there is a certain aspect of White Fang's character that inclines him towards deeply respecting mankind. White Fang not only considers humans to be gods, he is capable of expressing loyalty, faithfulness, and obedience towards man, especially Scott. It is these traits, which make White Fang long for the "security" and "companionship" of man. When White Fang escapes from Gray Beaver, he is overcome by an intense loneliness, compelling him to return to the Indian camp and give himself over to man's care. White Fang's internal struggle between his wild nature and his yearnings for companionship highlights the conflict between nature and civilization, but also shows that they are not mutually exclusive worlds. White Fang's movement from one realm into the other demonstrates the permeability of these borders, while his transformation into a domesticated animal with wolfish instincts shows him to be a hybrid animal of both environments. Through White Fang's transformation, London shows the natural and human worlds to be opposed, but also linked.



## NATURE V. NURTURE

In *White Fang*, London prods a question at the core of "environmental determinism"—does nature determine our course, or does our environment play a greater role? Is nature, or nurture more decisive? London appears to come down on the side of nurture by suggesting that White Fang's character is a kind of "clay," shaped and molded by the circumstances he encounters and the people he meets. As White Fang's environment shifts his demeanor changes. In the Northland, White Fang must follow his instincts to hunt, fight, and kill in order to defend himself against threats and survive in the wild. But in the safe and sunny Southland, his ferociousness is allowed to dissipate, as his life becomes less

dedicated to work and fighting and more dedicated to the guardianship of Scott and his family. White Fang's character also undergoes dramatic shifts under the care of his various masters. Beauty Smith accentuates White Fang's naturally fierce nature by turning him into a hateful and vicious fighting dog. Yet Scott, through love and respect, converts White Fang into a loyal and loving guardian. With every change, White Fang transforms. Therefore, London suggests that the way one is nurtured indelibly shapes his/ her nature.



## MASTERY

Though White Fang is born a free and wild wolf, he gives up his independence for the security and companionship that man's mastery over animals and matter provides. For White Fang, however, his subservience to man is a normal configuration of the natural code he lives by: "obey the strong, oppress the weak." He participates in this social order by giving himself over to the care of strong human lords, like Gray Beaver, whom he regards as powerful and superior gods, and persecuting the animals that are weaker than him, like the puppies at the Indian camp. In this way, London suggests that the tendency towards mastery is a condition common to nature and civilization.

Over the course of his life, White Fang has three masters: Gray Beaver, Beauty Smith, and Weedon Scott. Though White Fang obeys most humans out of awe, each human owner commands his authority over White Fang in a different manner. Gray Beaver masters White Fang through the disciplinary power of the club, but also by providing him with food, shelter, companionship, and work. A feeling of mutual respect characterizes their relationship. Beauty Smith controls White Fang through violence. He clubs White Fang into submission and pits him against other fighting dogs, causing his most ferocious and bitter characteristics to come out. Their relationship is marked by antagonism and bitterness. Weedon Scott casts violence aside, gaining White Fang's trust and confidence through care and respect. Their companionship is one of loyalty and love. By portraying three different forms of mastery, London shows that the mastery of man over canine is characterized by violence and obedience, but also tempered by love and faithfulness.



## DOMESTICATION

From bitter and hateful beast to man's best friend, White Fang undergoes a process of domestication. He is born a wild wolf, becomes a morose and aloof pariah in the Indian camp, is trained as a vicious fighting dog under Beauty Smith, and finally transforms into a loving and loyal companion dog to Weedon Scott. Yet, White Fang becomes domesticated because he's **trained**, rather than **tamed**. Gray Beaver and Beauty tame White Fang to obey them with their clubs, but he still maintains his naturally fierce

demeanor. Under the "tutelage" of Scott, however, White Fang's character actually changes and adapts to society's ways. From Scott's stern warnings with his voice and the cuff of his hand, White Fang learns not to attack other humans, and to never hunt farm animals. At the same time, Scott's patience and confidence in White Fang also teaches him to be a dutiful canine that embraces his owner's laughter and barks at the sign of trouble.

Above all, White Fang's unswerving devotion to his master marks him as a domesticated creature. That White Fang nearly sacrifices his life to defend Judge Scott against the maniacal Jim Hall demonstrates this transition. In this instance, White Fang exercises his natural instincts not to hunt or fend for himself, but in order to defend and service his human owners. Because White Fang selflessly fights for his human family, he shows himself to be a loyal and devoted canine. Fathering a litter of pups with Collie, a domesticated animal, also confirms his place in the domestic sphere. Although Scott trains White Fang well, his natural instincts are still present. London gives White Fang various names, a "tame wolf," a "Blessed wolf," and "the sleeping wolf," all of which suggest that White Fang's inner beast, though trained, lies dormant. In this way, London reminds us that within every domesticated dog there lies a trace of the wild.



### MATING AND PARENTHOOD

Parenthood begins and ends *White Fang*. The she-wolf, Kiche, and One Eye mate to become the parents of White Fang, while White Fang becomes a father in his own right when he has a litter of pups with Collie. **Pups** signal birth and new life, but mating and parenthood in *White Fang* are also closely associated with ferocity and violence. One Eye kills his rivals to mate with Kiche, while Kiche, out of an inborn distrust of the father of her pups, snarls at One Eye to protect her pups. She later attacks White Fang to defend her new litter. Meanwhile, One Eye must hunt and kill game to feed his family, but meets a violent end at the paws of the lynx, who feeds on him in order to defend her own kittens. Kiche makes a similarly violent sacrifice for the sake of her pups. She kills the lynx's kittens to feed White Fang. This act comes with a violent consequence. The lynx attacks White Fang and his mother. They, in turn, kill the mother lynx, highlighting that the price of new life can come at a violent cost to the parent and child, alike. But such violent parenthood is justified in London's Northland, because it is used to defend the next generation's survival.

Parenthood in the domesticated world of California is different. Collie snarls at White Fang after she gives birth to pups just as Kiche does after White Fang is born, but White Fang proves such fears of his wildness unwarranted when he plays with and nuzzles with his pups. Parenthood in California centers around love rather than survival. In having pups, White Fang cements

his lineage in the domesticated world. In treating his pups with love, he ensures that his own pups won't experience the kind of cruelty and alienation from other dogs that made him wild. White Fang's loving actions begin the process of passing down the tradition of domesticity to his pups.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### THE OBLONG BOX/ COFFIN

The "long and narrow oblong box" that Bill and Henry tow across the Klondike is the coffin that carries the remains of Lord Alfred, an aristocrat who died on the trail. His coffin symbolizes death, highlighting the fragility of life in the Northland.



### LIGHT

As a pup, White Fang first encounters light at the entrance of the cave, where he is born. He perceives light as a permeable wall by which his father, One Eye, enters and exits the cave. Though White Fang is forbidden to cross the threshold, he crawls towards the light, growing like a flower under its rays. Light, in this way, symbolizes the inborn yearning of all creatures towards growth and development.



### WATER

White Fang nearly drowns while swimming in a stream, so water comes to signify death and the unknown.



### THE LAW OF MEAT

Meat symbolizes life and hunger. From an early age, White Fang recognizes the role of meat in life: it sustains life by relieving the potentially fatal pangs of hunger and famine. To eat is to live, and so the "aim of meat [is] life." Under the "law of meat," all animals are potential prey, or sources of meat and life.



### THE PORCUPINE

The porcupine represents chance and opportunity. When One Eye hunts in the wild he sees a Lynx attempting to poach a porcupine. The lynx pounces, piercing himself on the spiny creature's quills. One Eye takes advantage of the chance encounter and opportunity, waiting until the porcupine dies of exhaustion to make his move.



## THE HAWK

As a pup, White Fang observes a hawk swoop down and kill a mother ptarmigan, (a small chicken-like bird that resides in the arctic). White Fang learns that hunting is a perilous venture, but also a rewarding one. The hawk thus stands as a symbol of masterful hunting and an active example of natural law: "eat, or be eaten."



## THE YELLOW WEASEL

The weasel is another symbol of death and nature's law. The weasel almost kills the young White Fang by biting into his jugular, a major blood artery, that if severed would result in instant death. Under the weasel's grip, White Fang nearly dies, but his mother rescues him by consuming the stealthy creature. The weasel tries to eat, but is ultimately eaten. White Fang's near death experience with the weasel also foreshadows his second near death experience with the bulldog, whose bite is similarly nearly lethal.



## FIRE

White Fang is impressed by man's ability to make fire. As a man-made source of light and warmth, it represents man's "mastery over matter," both live and lifeless things. As such, as it stands a symbol of man's god-like power and his lordship over living things, including canines, like White Fang.



## LAUGHTER

As a pup, the Indians laugh at White Fang for showing signs of weakness, or stupidity, like yelping, or burning his nose on the fire. Beauty Smith also laughs at White Fang maniacally to incite his anger. Thus laughter represents shame, humiliation, even evil. But under Scott's care, White Fang learns to accept and embrace human laughter, even to laugh at himself.



## WHITE FANG AND THE WILD

The wild symbolizes the fear of the unknown. An unpredictable and perilous place, domesticated dogs often cringe in fear from the wilderness. They similarly cower from White Fang, who is closely associated with the Wild.



## THE CALL

**The call** is a wild force that beckons White Fang and Kiche to return to nature. Because they ultimately disregard the call, it represents a tempting, but

unheeded urging to return to the wild. Instead, White Fang and Kiche heed the call of man and the authority and companionship it represents.



## THE CLUB

The club is a symbol of violence, discipline, and obedience. Throughout the novel, humans use the violent power of the club to make their animals submissive and obedient. Gray Beaver clubs White Fang when he's a pup, so that he will obey him. Beauty Smith also forces White Fang's submission by clubbing him. Through the club, London shows how violence and obedience can go hand-in-hand.



## MAN'S HAND

All of White Fang's owners use their **hands** to strike White Fang in order to correct his behavior. White Fang comes to regard man's hand as an instrument of hurt, punishment, danger, cunning, and mastery. He is distrustful of man's touch. But Scott uses his hands to show affection and love towards White Fang, so White Fang ends up putting his trust in man's hands.



## THE STICK AND LEATHER THONG

The stick and leather thong represent dogs' bondage to their human masters. Throughout the novel, humans use the stick and leather thong to prevent their animals from escaping into the wild. Bill and Henry bind their dogs when they fear that they might be lured into the forest. Gray Beaver constrains Kiche so that she won't run away, or attack other dogs. In this way, the stick and leather thong not only physically restrain these canines, but also suppresses their urge to return to nature. Under the stick and thong, dogs are forced to remain by the side of man.



## THE CHAIN

Used to constrain White Fang, like **the stick and leather thong**, **the chain** is a symbol of man's mastery and ownership over canines.



## BARKS, GROWLS, AND HOWLS

White Fang expresses his feelings through **barks**, **growls**, and **howls**. Though White Fang often snarls at his humans and animals adversaries, he develops a low and steady growl to show affection towards Scott and his family. White Fang howls when he mourns over something, like the empty Indian camp, or Scott's departure from the Klondike. Finally, White Fang barks when his master is in danger and needs help.



## THE NORTHLAND

**The Northland** refers to the Canadian Klondike and the cold and harsh conditions of life in this region. It is associated with nature's merciless ways and the wilderness.



## THE SOUTHLAND

**The Southland** refers to California and the warm and comfortable conditions of life in this region. It is associated with civilization, domesticity, and the laws of man and society.



## PUPS

Pups symbolize parenthood and new life.

starting from: a place entirely unfriendly to mankind or any kind of "domestication," where survival and brute force are the only laws.

☞ It is not the way of the Wild to like movement. Life is an offense to it, for life is movement; and the Wild aims always to destroy movement.

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 1

### Explanation and Analysis

The other key point that London establishes in the first paragraphs of the novel is the contrast between life and nature. In contrast to idyllic visions of animals in harmony with their environment, London portrays all life as being *at war* with its environment. The natural world is a harsh, dangerous place—it's just not designed for survival. Animals and human beings, therefore, must try their hardest to stake out a place for themselves in the dangerous natural world. There's a constant struggle between beings and the elements: the cold, the wind, and the snow seem to be trying their hardest to destroy life. In such a way, the novel shows how one animal, White Fang, struggles against nature to make a place for himself and become a happy, peaceful dog.

☞ [The she-wolf] looked at [Bill and Henry] in a strangely wistful way, after the manner of a dog; but in its wistfulness there was none of the dog affection.

**Related Characters:** Bill, Henry, Kiche, the she-wolf

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 12

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, we're introduced to the "she-wolf" (later Kiche), the wolf that has been menacing Bill and Henry's cargo and leading some of the sled dogs off into the wilderness. Bill and Henry can tell immediately that the she-wolf is dog-like, but is certainly not a dog: although it shares some of its DNA with dogs, it hasn't been domesticated at all—it's a completely wild, instinctual animal.

The passage poses an important contrast between domesticated and wild animals. White Fang, who's partly



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Dover Publications edition of *White Fang* published in 1991.

### Part 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. There was a hint in it of laughter. It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted, Northland Wild.

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 1

### Explanation and Analysis

The novel begins at the ends of the earth (the same harsh setting as *The Call of the Wild*, the companion novel to *White Fang*). The dogs are pulling a cargo through a snowy, desolate landscape, which London describes as the Northland Wild.

Why does London begin his novel in such a frightening, desolate place? London intended his novel to be an allegory for the evolution from primitivism to civilization (or even a metaphor for his own ascension from a rough young hoodlum to a well-off adult writer). By beginning his novel in the Northland Wild, then, he makes it clear where he's

dog and partly wolf, is both. The she-wolf, then, is a symbol of the divide between nature and civilization--she's so close to being a "civilized" dog," and yet so far away.

## Part 1, Chapter 3 Quotes

☝☝ [Henry] discovered an appreciation of his own body which he had never felt before. He watched his moving muscles and was interested in the cunning mechanism of his fingers.... It fascinated him, and he grew suddenly fond of this subtle flesh of his that worked so beautifully and smoothly and delicately.

**Related Characters:** Henry

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 17-18

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Henry is surrounded by death: he's stranded in the wilderness, and many of the sled dogs have been eaten by wolves. Fearing for own life, Henry builds a fire and tries to fend off the dangerous wolves. As he tries to defend himself, Henry becomes acutely aware of his own body--it's exhilarating for him to struggle for life and appreciate the wonderful physicality of his own body and existence.

The passage illustrates the paradox that we only become fully aware of our lives in the instants during which we try to defend ourselves from death. That's why adventures are so fun, even when they're dangerous: they alert us to the value of our own lives, and allow us to savor our bodies' power.

## Part 2, Chapter 2 Quotes

☝☝ In [the she-wolf's] instinct, which was the experience of all the mothers of wolves, there lurked a memory of fathers that had eaten their newborn progeny. It manifested itself as a fear strong within her, that made her prevent One Eye from more closely inspecting the cubs he had fathered.

**Related Characters:** Kiche, the she-wolf, One Eye

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 31

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the importance of instinct is clear. The she-wolf has mothered a brood of pups with One Eye. One Eye, the she-wolf senses (due to thousands of years of instinct

that extend far beyond her own personal experience, and into a kind of "collective memory"), may be thinking about eating his own children for food. She then defends her pups from their own father, perhaps saving their lives.

London doesn't pass moral judgment on anything that happens in the passage--he takes a harsh, Darwinian view of survival, recognizing that the she-wolf's actions are "good" insofar as they ensure a new generation of wolves.

## Part 2, Chapter 3 Quotes

☝☝ The life that was so swiftly expanding within [White Fang] urged him continually toward the wall of light.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 37

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage has often been interpreted as a reflection of White Fang's boundless capacity to grow, thrive, and savor life. White Fang is still a young pup, recently born, but he has a great excitement about the future. Here, he runs toward what he perceives as a "wall of light" (really, the entrance to his cave) in an effort to explore the unknown.

The passage helps us understand how London chooses a protagonist for his adventure story. White Fang is just another wolf, of course, but he's also a particularly curious, lively wolf--the embodiment of the life-force itself. As such, he's a perfect hero for a story of danger and adventure: we admire and respect his ambition and curiosity, and even identify with it.

## Part 2, Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ But there were forces at work in the cub, the greatest of which was growth. Instinct and law demanded of him obedience. But growth demanded disobedience. His mother and fear impelled him to keep away from the white wall. Growth is life, and life is forever destined to make for life.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 40

### Explanation and Analysis

Life, at its most elemental, is a struggle between desire and fear, growth and self-control. White Fang is an interesting character in the novel because, as a young wolf, he feels a boundless sense of excitement--a desire to explore the big, unknowable universe. And yet White Fang's mother makes sure that he also exercises some caution: the fact is, the world is a dangerous place, and White Fang will die if he tries to explore it too recklessly before he's ready.

The passage is important, then, because it establishes the two primary forces at work in White Fang's life: fear and growth. Only when White Fang learns to respect both of these forces will grow into a "mature" wolf.

## Part 2, Chapter 5 Quotes

☛☛ The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eaters and the eaten. The law was: EAT OR BE EATEN.

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 50

### Explanation and Analysis

London sketches out the laws of a world that's both exhilarating and horrifying. There is no morality, no right or wrong, in the wild: just the law of "kill or be killed," or rather, "eat or be eaten." (This is an obvious echo of *The Call of the Wild*'s "law of club and fang.") As he grows up, White Fang gradually learns the laws of the universe--everything else is just a distraction from the reality of meat.

At this point in the novel, White Fang isn't a very complicated character: he's just a wolf trying to get enough food to survive. And yet we can sense that there's a little more to even White Fang's life than just "eat or be eaten." If White Fang's mother hadn't defended him from his potentially-cannibalistic father, he might not be alive today--the universe hinges on affection and love, not just food.

## Part 3, Chapter 1 Quotes

☛☛ Every instinct of [White Fang's] nature would have impelled him to dash wildly away [from the Indians], had there not suddenly and for the first time arisen in him another and counter instinct. A great awe descended upon him. He was beaten down to movelessness by an overwhelming sense of his own weakness and littleness. Here was mastery and power, something far and away beyond him.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 51

### Explanation and Analysis

London makes an interesting point here. White Fang sees a group of humans approaching, but instead of running away--as every natural instinct in his body is telling him to do--he stays and stares. White Fang is awestruck by the presence of the humans; it's as if he feels a natural inclination to be loyal to these figures.

The passage reinforces the idea that sometimes, nature wants animals to join forces, even if they're not the same species. Furthermore, there may be a feeling of something like "religious awe" even in entirely wild animals (at least as London portrays it here). Here, White Fang feels a powerful instinct to submit to man's power, regarding the people he sees as something like gods. Presumably it's because other wolves felt such a feeling that human beings were able to domesticate the dog millennia ago.

## Part 3, Chapter 2 Quotes

☛☛ For behind any wish of [man's] was power to enforce that wish, power that hurt, power that expressed itself in clouts and clubs, in flying stones and stinging lashes of whips.

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 59

### Explanation and Analysis

Again, London suggests that wolves (or at least dogs) must be subservient to men because of the natural order of life. White Fang is just a young wolf (and part dog), meaning he hasn't really learned how to be wild yet. Moreover, White

Fang wouldn't be able to defend himself against most humans' weapons, even if he were a mature wolf.

The natural law of the universe, it's suggested, is force and mastery. All power stems from the ability to wield force quickly and skillfully. White Fang has to learn to submit to his human masters because they have clubs and he has none--it's that simple. Over the course of the novel, White Fang will learn how to obey many different kinds of masters--and yet at all times, it's implied that White Fang needs to obey a master.

☞ He [White Fang] belonged to [men]. His actions were theirs to command. His body was theirs to maul, to stamp upon, to tolerate. Such was the lesson that was quickly borne in upon him. It came hard – counter to much that was strong and dominant in his own nature; and while he disliked it – unknown to himself he was learning to like it. It was a placing of his destiny in another's hands, a shifting of the responsibilities of existence. This in itself was a compensation, for it is always easier to lean upon another than to stand alone.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 59-60

### Explanation and Analysis

Over time, White Fang gradually learns to be obedient to his human masters because they beat him into submission. at first, White Fang struggles with the concept of loyalty--he's a wolf, meaning that he's instinctively going to look out for himself and obey nobody else. And yet, pretty quickly, White Fang discovers that he *likes* having a master: because he's partly wolf and partly dog, he has the ability to be either wild *or* domestic. Furthermore, London suggests, it's easier to lean on someone else rather than trying to do everything oneself. Men might beat or abuse White Fang, but as long as they provide him with food and shelter, there's something comforting about relying on them instead of relying on his own wits and skill alone.

London may intend White Fang to be a symbol for humanity itself. White Fang has the capability to be violent and independent, and yet he chooses to be a part of "society"--thus sacrificing some of his freedom for a new measure of security.

☞ There was something calling to him [White Fang] out there in the open. His mother heard it, too. But she heard also that other and louder call, the call of the fire and of man--the call which it has been given alone of all animals to the wolf to answer.

**Related Characters:** White Fang, Kiche, the she-wolf

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 62

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, we see White Fang torn between the two halves of his nature: his wild, independent half, and his subservient, domestic half. White Fang could easily run away from his human owners and live in the wild for the rest of his life. Or he could stay behind and live with his masters. In the end, he and his mother choose to live with humans, perhaps because they're given warmth and food there, and perhaps because they've had loyalty beaten into them. London presents this choice as the conflict of two different "calls": the "call of the wild" (the title of London's other most famous novel) and the "call of man."

The passage shows a kind of "social contract" in the animals' lives: they have a free choice between wildness and civilization. In the end, they choose civilization perhaps because it's just better; their quality of life is simply higher. White Fang sacrifices some of his freedom (i.e., he has an owner), but in return he gets a warm fire and plenty of food. And yet there's still a question of whether or not White Fang's choice is truly free--he's loyal to his masters, but perhaps that's because he's been hurt so many times.

☞ There was a difference between White Fang and them. Perhaps they sensed his wild-wood breed, and instinctively felt for him the enmity that the domestic dog feels for the wolf.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 65

### Explanation and Analysis

Here London presents another natural law of animals: different is bad. The dogs that live with Gray Beaver, White Fang's current owner, hate White Fang because they can

sense that he's a wild animal, and so fundamentally separate from them. Because he's different, White Fang is bullied and attacked by the other dogs, and as a result, White Fang learns to defend himself from an early age.

The "herd mentality" on display in this passage will be important to the rest of the novel. The dogs in this chapter are a model of civilization: they do everything together, often making their decisions simply because everyone else is going along.

### Part 3, Chapter 4 Quotes

☛ [White Fang's] development was in the direction of power. In order to face the constant danger of hurt and even of destruction, his predatory and protective faculties were unduly developed. He became quicker of movement than the other dogs, swifter of foot, craftier, deadlier, more lithe, more lean with ironlike muscle and sinew, more enduring, more cruel, more ferocious, and more intelligent. He had to become all these things, else he would not have held his own nor survive the hostile environment in which he found himself.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 68

#### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, we learn that White Fang's bullying and persecution are ultimately working in his favor. The end result is that White Fang is forced to adapt to his environment and become a stronger, tougher animal. He learns to run faster and defend himself from bullies of all kinds. Such skills make him the most powerful of all the dogs--and they begin to fear him.

The passage could function as a subtle bit of self-praise from Jack London, who grew up in a tough, working-class environment, but quickly learned to take care of himself, not unlike White Fang. The passage is also a great example of how London's "protagonists" are often those who are fundamentally tougher, more skilled, and better at survival than others--he's a Darwinian at heart.

### Part 4, Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ White Fang's feel of Beauty Smith was bad. From the man's distorted body and twisted mind, in occult ways, like mists rising from malarial marshes, came emanations of the unhealth within. Not by reasoning, not by the five senses alone, but by other and remoter and uncharted senses, came the feeling to White Fang that the man was ominous with evil, pregnant with hurtfulness, and therefore a thing bad, and wisely to be hated.

**Related Characters:** White Fang, Beauty Smith

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 93

#### Explanation and Analysis

White Fang becomes aware of a man who lives in town named Beauty Smith. Smith is ugly and deformed, and it's both for this reason and because of some natural instinct regarding character that White Fang distrusts him. Because Beauty's body is ugly, White Fang senses that he must be a cruel, evil person--and White Fang uses a kind of "sixth sense," too, in judging Beauty as fundamentally "bad." Not because of Smith's body, but because of intangible things like his body language and his voice, White Fang regards him as dangerous. As with many dogs, White Fang is a keen observer of human beings--he sizes them up and makes judgments about their personalities in a way that most human beings could never do.

☛ [Beauty Smith] had come into the world with a twisted body and brute intelligence. This had constituted the clay of him, and it had not been kindly molded by the world.

**Related Characters:** Beauty Smith

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 96

#### Explanation and Analysis

Beauty Smith, no less than anyone else in the novel, is the product of both nature and nurture. Naturally, he's been dealt a certain hand in life: because of his DNA, he's an ugly, misshapen man. But Smith has also had a hard time *in* life: he's been treated badly by other people, and suffered as a result.

London makes it clear that all life is the product of both nature and nurture, not one or the other. Whether we're

talking about a wolf or a human being, life consists of a constant interaction between oneself and one's environment (nurture), during which certain inborn traits may be advantageous (nature). Furthermore, the struggle for survival isn't limited to creatures of the wild Northland--the way any adult human has turned out is the result of his or her struggle to adapt and overcome obstacles.

### Part 4, Chapter 3 Quotes

☛☛ [Men] were molding the clay of him into a more ferocious thing than had been intended by Nature. Nevertheless, Nature had given him plasticity. Where many another animal would have died or had its spirit broken, he adjusted himself and lived, and at not expense of the spirit.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 99

#### Explanation and Analysis

White Fang comes into the captivity of Beauty Smith, a cruel, greedy man who mistreats White Fang in horrible ways. Smith tries to make White Fang mean and dangerous--and Fang responds accordingly.

London notes that White Fang has been given a certain set of skills and instincts--what we would call his DNA. One of these skills is his ability to adapt to different circumstances--what London calls "plasticity." White Fang is, in many ways, the embodiment of the life force itself: instead of giving up when he comes upon difficult circumstances, he responds accordingly, adapting to his environment. It's because White Fang is so flexible and strong that he survives Beauty Smith's tough ownership.

### Part 4, Chapter 4 Quotes

☛☛ The basic life that was in [White Fang] took charge of him. The will to exist of his body surged over him. He was dominated by this mere flesh-love of life.

**Related Characters:** White Fang

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 104

#### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, White Fang is in a pit-fight with a bulldog. White Fang is intimidated by the bulldog, an especially dangerous opponent. He manages to bite the bulldog, at the same instant that the bulldog grips White Fang by the throat. White Fang is locked in a life-or-death battle, and he has no intention of giving up. Instead of releasing his grip and submitting to the bulldog, White Fang continues to bite.

It's pure survival instinct that compels White Fang in this scene. He's always been a lively, adventurous animal, but here, he's focused on one thing: living. In times of crisis, the animals in a London's book show their true colors: their strength, their desire to live, or their weakness.

☛☛ You cowards! You beasts!

**Related Characters:** Weedon Scott (speaker), Beauty Smith

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 107

#### Explanation and Analysis

Just when it seems that White Fang is about to die in the fight with the bulldog, a man intervenes. His name is Weedon Scott, and as we'll see, he'll become White Fang's final owner. Here, though, Scott acts as a kind of *deus ex machina* device, saving White Fang when there's no other way out. Scott is an almost divine character--he gives White Fang another chance at life.

The passage reinforces the idea that life *isn't* just about living or dying. There are times when people intervene to help out others, even when it's not exactly in their own self-interest to do so. Scott is impelled to help White Fang because he despises the environment of dog-fighting: he hates that humans get pleasure out of seeing weaker animals trying to kill each other.

### Part 4, Chapter 5 Quotes

☛☛ [White Fang] did not want to bite the hand, and he endured the peril of it until his instinct surged up in him, mastering him with its insatiable yearning for life.

**Related Characters:** White Fang, Weedon Scott

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 113

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, White Fang bites the hand that saved his life. Weedon Scott is a sympathetic man who doesn't want to do White Fang any harm. And yet White Fang doesn't realize that his new owner is better than Beauty Smith: Scott isn't going to hurt him or torture him. Because White Fang has been raised and nurtured to be brutal to all strangers, he bites Scott's hand—even though in his mind, he doesn't "want" to.

The passage shows the interplay between instinct and training; nature and nurture. One could argue that White Fang was bred and trained to be brutal—before he was with Smith, he wasn't nearly so dangerous. And yet one could also argue that White Fang's time with Beauty Smith merely *brought out* instincts in White Fang that had been suppressed previously. In any case, it's clear that White Fang is the product of his environment, as much as his parents.

☝ I agree with you, Mr. Scott. That dog's too intelligent to kill.

**Related Characters:** Matt (speaker), Weedon Scott, White Fang

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 114

### Explanation and Analysis

For the second time in the novel, Scott saves White Fang from death. Scott's fellow workers were going to shoot White Fang for fighting another dog and for biting Scott's hand. But Scott—much to everybody's surprise—doesn't want White Fang dead. On the contrary, he recognizes that White Fang is a talented, strong dog—and therefore, they'd be stupid to kill him.

When Scott saved White Fang from the dogfighting arena, he did so out of sympathy. In that situation, the choice was relatively easy: White Fang was a victim. But here, the situation is more complicated, and Scott makes a choice about what to do with White Fang based not just on what White Fang is, but on what White Fang could be. Scott and those with him recognize White Fang's fundamental strengths – his intelligence, for instance – and believe that they can mold those traits and mold White Fang more

generally into a valuable dog and companion.

## Part 4, Chapter 6 Quotes

☝ [Scott's] voice was soft and soothing. In spite of the menacing hand, the voice inspired confidence. And in spite of the assuring voice, the hand inspired distrust. White Fang was torn by conflicting feelings, impulses. It seemed he would fly to pieces, so terrible was the control he was exerting, holding together by an unwonted indecision the counter-forces that struggled within him for mastery.

**Related Characters:** Weedon Scott, White Fang

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 116

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, White Fang faces an incredible crisis. Internally, he's presented with a dilemma. Weedon Scott has taken him home and offered him some comfort. Previously, Scott has saved White Fang's life, not once but twice. And yet White Fang has long been trained to be brutal and savage to those who get close to him.

In short, White Fang faces a conflict between gentleness and aggression: should he accept his new master, or fight him? In times of crisis, animals in the novel always show their true colors. Here, we're left to see which side of White Fang is truly stronger, his friendly side or his aggressive side.

☝ It was the beginning of the end for White Fang—the ending of the old life and the reign of hate. A new and incomprehensibly fairer life was dawning. It required much thinking and endless patience on the part of Weedon Scott to accomplish this. And on the part of White Fang it required nothing less than a revolution. He had to ignore the urges and promptings of instinct and reason, defy experience, give the lie to life itself.

**Related Characters:** White Fang, Weedon Scott

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 117

**Explanation and Analysis**

White Fang's domesticity has won out, and he has just accepted the friendship of his new master, Weedon Scott. White Fang has undergone a total revolution: previously, he was trained to be brutal and savage, but now, he's decided to be calm and peaceful, accepting that his new master is gentler than Beauty Smith or the harsh realities of the Northland.

London conveys the full extent of White Fang's "revolution." The animal has had to suppress some of the most basic instincts in his body--instincts to fight and bite. The process is not unlike the process by which humans founded civilization. Instead of constantly fighting to survive, some human beings learned to share with and support each other. Doing so was tough, because humans had to suppress some of their violent, selfish instincts (instincts which live on in all of us).

●● [White Fang] obeyed his natural impulses until they ran counter to some law... But most potent in his education were the cuff of his master's hand, the censure of the master's voice. It was the compass by which he steered and learned to chart the manners of a new land and life.

**Related Characters:** Weedon Scott, White Fang

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 136

**Explanation and Analysis**

White Fang has now been moved to live with Weedon Scott's family. White Fang is still a somewhat wild animal, with wild instincts, and yet he learns quickly to be calm and docile. White Fang changes his behavior, not just because a master beats him into submission (although Scott does "cuff" him when he's disobedient), but because Scott treats him with love and encourages him to learn.

The passage could easily be interpreted as a metaphor for the development of society. After the "epiphany" of accepting cooperation and peace, our ancestors had to gradually transition to a civilization in which cooperation and peace were the norms, not exceptions. By the same token, White Fang gradually learns how to be civilized and domesticated--to accept the mastery of a human in exchange for consistent food, shelter, and love.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## PART 1, CHAPTER 1

Against a still and dark forest in the frozen and desolate **Northland**, two men mush a sled towards McGurry, carrying a "long and narrow, **oblong box**." Within the coffin are the remains of a man "beaten down" by the Wild. The two men, Bill and Henry, struggle against the cold, but drive their sled dogs onward through the snow as the sunlight fades.

A howl rises in the air, alerting Bill and Henry to the wolf pack that trails them. They round up their dogs and make camp, secluding themselves in a cluster of spruce trees. Bill notices that a piece of fish has gone missing. He has six dogs, but only fed five. Bill believes that he saw a wolf carry off some fish, but Henry thinks he's just seeing things.

Bill and Henry muse over the death of the man in the **oblong box**, an aristocratic type, Lord Alfred, who had no business venturing into the Northland. The men and their dogs grow anxious as the night darkens, the wolves' howls intensify, and their eyes, like "live coals," gleam in the forest's blackness. The dogs circle nervously around the fire, while Bill regrets only having three cartridges of ammunition left for his gun.

Bill and Henry go to sleep, but Bill is restless, perplexed by why the dogs didn't attack the wolf who stole the fish. In the middle of the night, he counts seven dogs again. In the morning, Bill counts only five dogs. Fatty has gone missing, likely eaten by the wolves. Bill is not surprised, concluding that "there was somethin' wrong with Fatty, anyway."

## PART 1, CHAPTER 2

Bill and Henry eat breakfast and set out. As darkness falls the wolves' "hunting-cries" increase, making Bill, Henry, and their dogs nervous. A sharp cry rises from the pack as Bill emerges with a club and part of a dried salmon in hand. According to Bill, a wolf, looking very much like a dog, tried to steal it. Bill and Henry suspect that it is a tame wolf.

*Bill and Henry's movement against the still and cold Northland highlights the thin contrast between life and death in the wild. The coffin is a reminder that death is a constant threat and highlights the fragility of life in the wilderness.*



*The pack of wolves that follow Bill and Henry embody the threatening nature of the wild. That a wolf might be in their midst intensifies this threatening aspect, but also suggests that this wolf is also attracted to man, his dogs, and his food.*



*Lord Alfred's death emphasizes the merciless nature of the wild. It will kill those, like Lord Alfred, who are unfit to survive in its midst. The threat of nature intensifies as darkness falls, as "civilization" must face what it cannot see. That Bill only has a few bullets highlights man's few defenses against nature's wrath.*



*Fatty's disappearance and death underlines a central tenet of life in the wild: those who are not fit to live in the Northland will not survive. Bill's comment suggests that Fatty is a defective creature. Therefore his death is not surprising.*



*The "tame wolf" that reappears at Bill and Henry's camp to steal fish shows both wild and domestic tendencies. It looks like a dog and eats like a dog, but runs with a wild wolf pack. Because this creature is both tame and feral it hovers between the domestic and wild worlds.*



The next morning Bill and Henry discover that Frog, the strongest of the dogs, has gone missing, likely eaten by the wolves. That night, as a precaution, Bill ties each dog to a **stick** in the ground with a **leather thong** so that they cannot chew through the harness and escape.

Meanwhile, One Ear strains against the leather thong, whining and lunging towards something in the darkness. In the firelight the men see a "doglike animal," a she-wolf. Henry realizes that she is the cause of Fatty and Frog's disappearance.

From the she-wolf's doglike behavior, Bill and Henry conclude that she has not only run with the wolves, but also eaten from "the hand of man." Bill nods off to sleep.

The next morning Spanker's gone. A few hundred yards on the trail, Henry discovers the last trace of Spanker—the stick to which he had been tied. The wolves, desperate for food, ate every inch of the dog, including his leather ties. Bill, disgruntled by the loss of another sled dog, grows anxious over the wolf pack's pursuit of them.

That evening, the she-wolf comes to the campsite. Bill and Henry observe the dog's peculiar gait, its wistful, yet ferocious aspect, and the unusual coloring of its coat, a "faint reddish hue." She stares at them hungrily and wistfully. Disturbed by her ravenous gaze, Bill attempts to shoot the she-wolf, but she jumps aside before he can even take aim.

With three dogs left, Bill and Henry make camp early and tie the dogs down. The wolves grow bolder, coming closer and closer to the campsite during the night. Bill likens them to land-sharks, following a ship, waiting for their human prey.

## PART 1, CHAPTER 3

The day begins favorably. No dogs are lost during the night, but an accident occurs on the trail. The sled overturns, forcing Bill and Henry to unharness the dogs from the sled. One Ear breaks into a run towards the she-wolf, who greets him with a coy and playful smile. Yet One Ear retreats from the she-wolf, when the wolf pack ambushes him.

*Frog's disappearance is another sign of the wild's lethal nature. Bill and Henry's attempt to thwart nature's call by tying their dogs down with a stick and leather thong. This action underlines their mastery over the dogs.*



*Despite Bill and Henry's attempts to master their dogs, the call of the wild remains strong for some, like One Ear. The she-wolf that he lunges at represents the lure of nature.*



*Exhibiting doglike and wolfish behavior, the she-wolf embodies the struggle between domestic leanings and feral yearnings.*



*Spanker's death and disappearance illustrates the ravenous nature of the wolves and their will to survive. They are so starved that they will do anything to survive, including eating the leather ties that bind their canine brethren.*



*The she-wolf's visit to the campsite highlights her curiosity with man. Her wistful look suggests that she longs for man's friendship. Yet her hungry gaze reveals her feral nature. While man's kinship intrigues her, she also regards man as prey.*



*Bill's comparison of the wolves to "land-sharks" emphasizes their predatory nature. Like sharks following a ship, the wolves trail Bill and Henry's team, waiting for the right opportunity to strike.*



*The she-wolf illustrates the struggle between domestic yearnings and natural instincts. Her friendliness towards Bill and Henry's dogs shows her curiosity with the domestic world, but she ultimately preys on their dogs, luring them into the clutches of the wild wolf pack.*



Bill grabs his gun and goes into the thicket to defend One Ear. Henry watches from a distance, the underbrush obscuring his view. Then Henry hears three shots, "a great outcry of snarls and yelps," and then silence. The wolves have eaten Bill and One Ear.

Troubled by these deaths, Henry sits and broods for a while. Stirring himself, he rises up and pulls the sled along with the two remaining dogs. He makes camp, lighting a **fire** to keep the hungry wolves at bay. He doses off, but awakens to see the she-wolf before him. Fearing for his life, he becomes acutely aware of the lifeblood running within him and spends the night throwing hot brands at the wolves.

The next night is like the one before. Henry doses off, the she-wolf awakens him, but this time, he drives a searing hot brand into her mouth, burning her flesh and hair. Henry ties a burning pine-knot to his hand to keep himself from falling asleep, yet he drifts off to sleep, dreaming of wolf howls.

Real wolf cries awaken him. The wolves are upon him. Henry builds a circle of **fire** around himself to fend them off. As the fire dies and his stamina wanes, he resigns himself to being eaten by the wolves. He doses off, but wakes up hearing men's voices. A group of travelers has rescued him.

## PART 2, CHAPTER 1

We learn that it is the she-wolf who led the pack onto Bill and Henry's trail and it is she who saves Henry from being eaten. She leads the pack away from Henry and the dying flames.

A young gray wolf, one of the pack's leaders, and a gaunt, old wolf, One Eye, run on either side of the she-wolf, jostling for her affections, but the ongoing famine prevents them from fighting to mate with her. The pack runs for days on end in search of food, until they come upon a bull moose. They attack the creature, kill it, and gorge themselves with the **meat** from its carcass. Finally fed, the pack pairs off into males and females.

*The wolf pack's hunger drives them to eat Bill and One Ear. Even with a gun, Bill cannot protect himself from their intense will to feed, and therefore, survive. The wolves, here, master man.*



*Henry's fear for his life and acute awareness of his body highlights the intensity of his struggle to live. The fire gives him protection against the wolves, but also highlights the fragility of his life. Just as his flesh tingles with a fiery sensation from the flames, the wolves could just as easily consume it.*



*Henry's attack on the she-wolf illustrates his intense struggle to live. He is not only willing to strike and burn an animal, but he also singes his own hands to stay awake, so that he may survive against the wolves that prowl around him and haunt his dreams.*



*The fire protects Henry from the hungry wolves, but only barely. Because the fire is a thin barrier between the wolves and Henry's life, Henry struggles to keep his will to survive alive. It is only when more travelers—when civilized men—arrive, that Henry is saved from the wolves of the wild.*



*The she-wolf's demonstrates conflict between domestic and feral tendencies. She preys upon man, but also saves him from death.*



*The dogs forego mating in order to hunt. Survival in the wild requires that feeding take priority over pleasure or procreation. Once wolves have fed, then they can find their mates. However, hunting and mating both require a degree of violence. The moose must die so that the wolves can both feed and mate.*



One Eye, the young leader, and an ambitious three-year-old remain to fight for the she-wolf's affections. One Eye and the young leader team up to eliminate the three-year-old from the competition. Then One Eye turns on the young leader, killing him. The she-wolf observes the fighting with glee and invites One Eye to frolic with her in the woods. They become mates.

*Mating is an avenue by which animals perpetuate their own lineage, as well as life itself. In the wild, mating, and therefore life-making, is fierce. That One Eye kills his rivals in order to mate with the she-wolf shows that mating is a violent struggle and a vicious competition to survive.*



One Eye and the she-wolf romp through the forest, until they reach an Indian campsite. Its sights and smells incite the she-wolf with a wistful longing to enter the camp, but she grows restless and goes in search of something in the forest. There, the she-wolf and One Eye rob the Indian's rabbit snares, eating the game hungrily.

*The she-wolf's domestic yearnings surface when she wistfully regards the Indian camp, suggesting that she longs for, perhaps even remembers, this world. That the she-wolf robs the traps also shows that she has in some way learned to navigate the human world.*



## PART 2, CHAPTER 2

The she-wolf and One Eye linger about the camp, until a gunshot scares them off. The she-wolf finds what she is looking for—a cave in the forest. While the she-wolf rests in the lair, One Eye grows restless with hunger and ventures outside.

*The she-wolf's search for a cave in the forest shows the resurfacing of her feral instincts. By pursuing the cave, she obeys her instincts and nature's call.*



When One Eye returns to the cave, he discovers that his mate has given birth to a litter of pups. He approaches them, but the she-wolf, fearing that One Eye will eat her pups, snarls at him. One Eye obeys the she-wolf's warning, following his fatherly instincts by going out to hunt on the trail.

*Instinct governs the violent actions of mother and father alike. The she-wolf defends her pups because she instinctually distrusts One Eye, while One Eye obeys the mandates of fatherhood by going out to hunt and kill.*



On the trail, One Eye notices a meaty **porcupine**, but passes it over in favor of an easier target, a ptarmigan, or chicken-like bird. Carrying the bird back with him to the cave, he notices the porcupine and the lynx in a tense faceoff. The lynx pounces, piercing itself on the spiny creature's quills and running away. One Eye waits until the injured porcupine dies of exhaustion, picks it up with his teeth, and takes it to the cave for his mate and cubs to eat.

*The faceoff between the lynx and porcupine highlights the intense struggle between creatures for survival and life. One Eye capitalizes on this struggle to perpetuate his own survival and that of his family. Thus survival is not only marked by struggle and competition, but also chance and opportunity.*



## PART 2, CHAPTER 3

Among the she-wolf's litter, the gray cub (White Fang), shows himself to be the strongest and fiercest of the **pups**. With his eyes not yet opened, he senses and smells the world around him, crawling towards the **light** at the entrance of the cave.

*Embedded in White Fang's senses, the reader starts to see the world from White Fang's point of view. His instinct to crawl towards the light represents his natural inclination towards life, growth, and survival.*



The she-wolf rebukes the gray cub for crawling towards the **light**. From her sharp nudges and swift strokes, he feels pain and learns to avoid hurt.

Yet, the gray cub's fascination with the **light** at the edge of the cave increases everyday. He perceives it as a wall of light. The wall perplexes him because, unlike the others wall of the cave, his father can move through the wall, in and out of the lair.

Famine strikes the she-wolf's lair. One Eye desperately hunts for **meat**, but all the cubs, save the gray cub, die of hunger.

One Eye no longer returns to the cave, so the she-wolf ventures out of the cave to investigate. She finds his remains on the trail, as well as signs of a struggle with the lynx. One Eye dies because he rashly attacks the lynx on his own. Her wrath is merciless because she has a "litter of hungry kittens at her back."

## PART 2, CHAPTER 4

The cub, out of fear of his mother and the unknown, keeps away from the mouth of the cave. Yet, as the cub grows, his fear dissipates and "the rush of life" increases, causing him to crawl towards the wall of **light**.

The cub crosses the threshold of the cave, but tumbles down a slope. The light dazzles him, striking him with fear and wonder as he explores this new world. But the cub gains courage, uncovering and eating a brood of ptarmigan chicks. The chick's mother furiously attacks the cub, but a **hawk** swoops down and carries the mother ptarmigan away.

The cub then comes upon a stream. Thinking that water is a solid surface, he falls in and nearly drowns, but washes ashore.

*The she-wolf's rough rebukes signal that the yearning for life is natural, but also can be painful and dangerous. The she-wolf protects him by making him understand pain.*



*White Fang's interest in the wall of light represents his fascination with life itself. His observations of his father's comings and goings support his growth and development into a survivor.*



*The deaths of White Fang's siblings signal that life in the wild is under constant threat. White Fang's lone survival shows that death is the norm, while survival is the exception. It also signals White Fang's own inherent strength.*



*One Eye's death at the hands of the mother lynx stresses the dangerous nature of life in the wild and the violent nature of parenthood. Both One Eye and the lynx are willing to commit violence for the sake and survival of their offspring.*



*The cub's struggle for life is balanced by fear and curiosity. His growth requires a fear of the unknown, but also an intense will to explore, hence his yearning towards the light.*



*On his first outing, White Fang learns his place in the food chain. Some animals, like the ptarmigan, are sources of meat, while others, like the hawk, are predatory figures. This balance is indispensable to the struggle for life and survival.*



*White Fang learns that not all things are as they appear and that life is fraught with unknowns.*



Emerging from the water, the cub encounters a yellow mother **weasel**. It attacks him at the throat, nearly killing him, but the she-wolf rescues the cub in the nick of time and kills the weasel.

*Because the weasel nearly kills White Fang with its lethal grip, it is a symbol for life's struggle against death. The weasel's attack also foreshadows White Fang's battle with the bulldog later in the novel.*



## PART 2, CHAPTER 5

After two days, the cub ventures out of the cave and kills the **weasel's** pup. His ambition to hunt grows, as do his hunting skills. He hunts for play, but a famine forces him to take his hunting more seriously. He ambitiously waits in a clearing, daring the **hawk** to swoop down for a fight, but it keeps circling in the sky above.

*The young White Fang is surrounded by the prospect of death. Hunger threatens to take his life, as does the hawk that circles in the air above him. Surrounded by death, White Fang must fight for his life by hunting and being a bold and courageous animal.*



The famine is broken when the she-wolf brings home a lynx kitten for the cub to eat. But this **meat** does not come without a cost. The lynx appears in the entrance of the cave and attacks the she-wolf.

*Violence marks parenthood and the struggle for survival. The she-wolf kills so that her pup can eat, while the lynx intends to murder to avenge her kitten's death.*



The cub comes to his mother's aid, biting into the lynx's leg. Together, they kill the lynx and devour her. The cub learns **the law of meat**: "EAT OR BE EATEN." Having become a skilled hunter and killer, he feels "very much alive."

*The struggle for survival is underwritten by a simple rule: "eat, or be eaten." To eat is to live; to live is to eat. To strive for life, White Fang and his mother must kill and eat the lynx.*



## PART 3, CHAPTER 1

Recovered from the attack, the cub ventures out of the cave and sees man for the first time. A group of Indians is silently sitting in a clearing. Counter to his instincts, he does not run away, but regards the men with "awe."

*White Fang's wild instincts tell him to run from man, but the fact that he is spellbound by the sight of the men suggests that he also has an inherent attraction to them and their natural mastery. This attraction may come from the fact that he inherits at least some domesticity from his half-wolf mother.*



An Indian approaches him, lowering his **hand** to touch the cub's head. The cub cannot decide whether "to yield," or "to fight," so he bares his teeth and bites the man's hand, revealing his white fangs. The man gives him a few clouts to the head, causing the cub to ki-yi, or yelp. The Indians laugh at his wailing, but the cub's cry summons the she-wolf to his aid.

*White Fang's uncertainty "to fight," or "yield" to man expresses the conflict between domestic yearnings and natural instincts. Instinct tells him to fight, but respect orders him to yield. White Fang's natural response shows that instinct still reigns, yet the Indians show natural mastery over him.*



The she-wolf defensively stands over her pup, but wilts into submission at the sound of her name, "Kiche!" The Indian, who calls her name, Gray Beaver, recognizes the she-wolf as his brother's dog, a half wolf, half dog, who ran away to the wild during a famine a year before. He claims her and her cub, whom he names White Fang, as his own by tying them down with **a stick and leather thong**.

Gray Beaver rubs White Fang's tummy, causing him to submit to his master's touch. At first afraid, he enjoys the affection and feeling of "fearless companionship."

The other dogs attempt to attack White Fang and his mother, but the Indian men drive them away with their yells and their **clubs**. This show of power impresses White Fang, causing him to regard men as "gods."

Gray Beaver takes White Fang and Kiche to the Indian camp, where White Fang meets Lip-lip, a fierce fighting puppy, who snarls and nips at the newcomer. They are enemies from the start.

White Fang watches Gray Beaver make **fire** for the first time. Amazed, White Fang approaches it, but burns his nose and tongue on the flames. The Indians' **laughter** at his yelps of pain humiliates him. Yet he still regards their mastery over life and lifeless things, such as fire, to be "gods."

## PART 3, CHAPTER 2

White Fang's "allegiance" to man strengthens as he runs about the Indian camp, learning to live under the mastery of humans. He obeys their **calls** and their **clubs**, gradually giving himself over "body and soul" to man's authority.

Lip-lip bullies White Fang to no end, curtailing White Fang's puppyish aspect and compelling him to develop a cunning and mischievous character.

*By calling the she-wolf's name Gray Beaver demonstrates man's mastery over dog; he seems to remind the she-wolf of her former domesticity. He then further emphasizes his mastery both by tying Kiche and White Fang down and by giving White Fang a name. Yet Kiche's history shows that the line between man's world and the natural environment is thin and flexible.*



*Gray Beaver reinforces his mastery by showing affection and companionship towards White Fang. White Fang's enjoyment of this gesture shows that he is amenable to man's mastery.*



*The club is a symbol of man's violent authority. That White Fang regards men as "gods" underlines the devotional and worshipful quality of his reverence for man, as well as his awe for anything that is powerful—which men, with their clubs, are.*



*White Fang's rivalry with Lip-lip represents a struggle for not just life, but also dominance, power, and mastery over other animals.*



*From the fire, White Fang quickly learns that life can be painful and humiliating, but he also feels man's power over matter and life. This reaffirms White Fang's belief that men are gods to be adored.*



*Man's clubs and calls coax White Fang's obedience, but he also shows a natural dispensation towards obedience because he gives himself over "body and soul."*



*Lip-lip's bullying takes away White Fang's playfulness, setting him towards developing a sly, bitter character.*



One day White Fang and Kiche stray to the edge of the forest, where they hear the wild's **call**. But the call of man is stronger, so Kiche returns to camp, leading her pup away from the wilderness.

*White Fang and Kiche are torn between nature and civilization. Kiche chooses the safety of camp over the insecurity of the wild.*



Gray Beaver sells Kiche off to another Indian to pay off a debt. In terror at losing his mother, White Fang jumps into the water to pursue Kiche, as she's taken aboard a canoe. Gray Beaver, in his canoe, overtakes the pup, using his **hand** to lift White Fang out of the water and give him the worst beating he has ever experienced. White Fang shows his teeth, biting Gray Beaver's foot. But White Fang submits to his master's subsequent blows, learning never to bite, nor stray from his master.

*Through a violent beating, Gray Beaver asserts his mastery over White Fang. In spite of this violence, White Fang still shows his wild instincts to fight and bite. But Gray Beaver's violence—his greater power—overcomes White Fang's urge to defend himself. Instead, violence teaches him to be submissive and obey his master.*



### PART 3, CHAPTER 3

Lip-lip's terror over White Fang worsens, as he goads the other dogs into bullying White Fang. Lip-lip's persecution causes White Fang to become an outcast and his savageness increases. He learns to fight ruthlessly, attacking lone puppies, without warning.

*White Fang becomes a fierce and savage fighting dog because the circumstances of his environment force him to be that way. Lip-lip's bullying accentuates White Fang's fierceness and cruelty.*



The entire camp turns on White Fang, except Gray Beaver. But White Fang does not care, because he has learned to obey strong creatures, like Gray Beaver, and oppress weak creatures, like the Indian puppies.

*Under Gray Beaver's care, White Fang learns to follow a natural code of mastery: "oppress the weak and obey the strong."*



### PART 3, CHAPTER 4

The Indians break camp in the fall to go off hunting, but White Fang deliberately stays behind, hiding in the forest. He takes pleasure in his freedom. But that night an intense feeling of loneliness strikes him as memories of the camp spill into his mind. He goes to the abandoned camp and mournfully howls over its emptiness. Longing for the "protection and companionship of man," White Fang breaks into a run at morning's light, following the river to find his master.

*White Fang follows his natural instincts when he escapes to the woods. In the forest, White Fang is torn between the freedom that nature offers him and the safety and security that man provides him. When White Fang chooses to pursue his master, he also chooses to listen to his domestic yearnings for companionship. Man's call overpowers nature's call.*



White Fang runs for forty hours straight, neither eating, nor resting. His body is giving out, but his mind's endurance pushes him forward, even as it begins to snow.

*White Fang's determination to be reunited with man is so single-minded that he foregoes his natural instincts to feed and rest.*



By nightfall, White Fang finds the Indian camp. Expecting a beating, he humbly crawls towards Gray Beaver. He surrenders himself "body and soul" to his master. Instead of punishing White Fang, Gray Beaver offers him a piece of tallow as a peace offering. White Fang accepts and sits by his master at the fireside, content in the knowledge that he is safe and secure under man's companionship.

*White Fang's self abasement shows his conscious and willing decision to give himself over to man's care. In doing so, he surrenders his individual freedom, but gains safety, security, and companionship. He commits himself to man's service, so man's mastery is confirmed.*



## PART 3, CHAPTER 5

In December, Gray Beaver takes his family to the town of Mackenzie. White Fang is harnessed to Mit-sah's sled. All the dogs come to hate the sled's leader, Lip-lip, because they are forced to chase after him. With Lip-lip's influence diminished, they leave White Fang alone. White Fang could have become their leader, but remains a solitary and tyrannical figure, attacking his fellow dogs at the smallest offense.

*The sled's power dynamics shape White Fang's character. Because the pack has treated him ruthlessly in the past, he is loath to take up leadership over them. Instead, he would rather oppress them with the very traits and tactics that they used against him under Lip-lip's persecution.*



White Fang favors the companionship of man over his fellow dogs. Even so, Gray Beaver and White Fang maintain a relationship of mutual respect, but little affection.

*Though White Fang cherishes man's companionship, Gray Beaver commands only White Fang's obedience and respect, but not his love.*



White Fang bites a boy who attempts to club him, but Gray Beaver defends White Fang, even though biting a human is a serious offense. Gray Beaver defends White Fang again when he attacks a group of boys who were bullying Mit-sah. From these experiences, White Fang learns to defend his master and his property.

*Gray Beaver's defense of White Fang teaches him that his master's law is preeminent above all others. White Fang's willingness to defend his master here forebodes his later efforts to defend Judge Weeden.*



## PART 3, CHAPTER 6

In the spring, White Fang is a year old, physically full grown, and can hold his own against the camp's older dogs. An elderly hound, Baseek tries to intimidate White Fang into surrendering a prime piece of moose **meat**. White Fang almost relinquishes it, but defends his right to eat by attacking Baseek.

*White Fang's defense of his meat highlights the struggle for survival. When faced with competition, he does not give away his meat, but fights for it. His prowess at fighting shows that he has become a fierce survivalist. That he does so against an older dog shows how he is growing, in stature and strength.*



Later in the summer, White Fang encounters his mother, Kiche, tending to a new litter of **pups**. Not recognizing her son, she attacks him. White Fang realizes that he has no place in her world, so she loses meaning to him.

*Kiche's motherhood is marked by violence—her desire to defend her pups is everything to her. In doing so, she severs ties with her son. White Fang now has no further connecting to any animal from his wild past.*



As time goes on, White Fang's environment continues to mold his character, like a piece of clay. He is shaped into a savage creature. The other dogs learn to not quarrel with him, while Gray Beaver prizes White Fang's ferocity even more.

In the third year of White Fang's life, a famine strikes the Indian camp, so White Fang escapes to the forest, where he kills small animals and even a grown wolf with ease. In the forest, he encounters Kiche again, but only one of her pups remains alive.

White Fang also encounters Lip-lip in the woods. While White Fang has thrived in the wild, Lip-lip has "eked out a miserable existence." Though not hungry, White Fang attacks his rival, killing him. A few days later, White Fang comes upon the Indian camp teeming with life. The famine has passed.

## PART 4, CHAPTER 1

With Lip-lip gone, Mit-sah makes White Fang the leader of the sled pack. The other dogs become jealous of White Fang and grow to hate him, attacking him whenever they make camp. White Fang attacks and hates them in turn, harboring "bitterness" and "malice" in his heart towards all dogs.

When White Fang is nearly five, Gray Beaver takes him to Fort Yukon. Along the way, he attacks every unsuspecting dog he encounters, becoming a lean, keen, and mean fighting dog.

At Fort Yukon, Gray Beaver catches wind of the gold rush and settles there to trade furs with the miners. White Fang sees white men for the first time and considers them to be "a race of superior gods," more powerful than his Indian masters.

*London uses simile and metaphor to describe White Fang's transformation. White Fang's character is like "clay" that is shaped and molded by its environment.*



*Though belonging to man, White Fang escapes to the wild to survive. His great strength is now on full display. He could master the wild should he choose. The survival of only one of Kiche's pups emphasizes the struggle to survive against famine.*



*It is in White Fang's nature to kill and eat, but he does not kill Lip-lip because he has to. He does it because he wants to. White Fang is victorious over Lip-lip because he thrives in the wild, while the wilderness makes Lip-lip weak and vulnerable.*



*White Fang changes because his circumstances change. Because his master places him in a position of leadership, he garners the hatred of his subordinates, rather than their respect. Because they hate him, he, in turn, develops a hateful, oppressive personality.*



*The harsh conditions on the trail develop and perfect White Fang's body, intelligence, and naturally ferocious nature, but also make him mean. His experiences have taught him that such meanness and cruelty are all that will keep him alive.*



*White Fang's regard of white men as "superior" and powerful gods, underlines not only his awe of them, but also his impressionability. White Fang's sense, here, may also mirror London's own (racist) belief in the superiority of white men.*



Yet White Fang lays waste on the white men's dogs, fighting and killing these weak and ill-adapted animals with ease. Molded into a "ferocious" and "unloving" beast, he has become the "enemy of his kind."

*Unlike the dogs he kills, White Fang is fit to survive and thrive in the wild. His killings also demonstrate his hateful and vicious character. His wrathful nature has been conditioned by his merciless upbringing. He holds no love for dogs, which, because of his wildness, never held any love for him.*



## PART 4, CHAPTER 2

At Fort Yukon there lives an ugly, mad, and cruel man by the name of Beauty Smith. Nature was not kind to him in looks, or in life. White Fang instinctually distrusts this "monstrosity."

*Beauty Smith's monstrous demeanor and appearance is a result of inborn mutations and the harsh hand that life has dealt him.*



Beauty Smith wants to buy White Fang, but Gray Beaver refuses to sell him. Beauty circumvents Gray Beaver's refusal by offering him some whiskey. Gray Beaver becomes so addicted to liquor that he drinks his money away. Broke, he is forced to sell White Fang to Beauty Smith.

*Beauty Smith subverts Gray Beaver's mastery over White Fang by conning Gray Beaver into becoming an alcoholic. This cunning scheme shows the evil and manipulative quality of Beauty Smith's character.*



Gray Beaver ties a **leather thong** around White Fang's neck and hands him over to Beauty Smith, who beats White Fang severely with his **club** and ties him to a **stick** in the ground.

*The club, stick, and leather thong symbolize the shift in White Fang's ownership to Beauty, as well as Beauty's assertion of total power over White Fang.*



White Fang feels like he still belongs to Gray Beaver, so he escapes from Beauty and returns to his former owner. Gray Beaver takes him back to Beauty Smith, who beats him. This happens several times, until Gray Beaver stands by to watch Beauty lash White Fang with a whip. Thoroughly beaten, White Fang follows at Beauty's heels back to the fort. He regards his new owner as a "mad god."

*Beauty uses violence and bondage to control White Fang, but it does entirely subdue his loyalty to Gray Beaver. Only Gray Beaver's inaction is enough to signal to White Fang that he must obey his new owner. White Fang's nickname for Beauty, "mad god", underlines both Beauty's cruelty and his power.*



## PART 4, CHAPTER 3

Beauty Smith chains White Fang in a pen and torments him with his maniacal **laughter**, inciting the dog's anger and hatred.

*Beauty Smith's derisive treatment of White Fang accentuates White Fang's ferocious characteristics. One again, he is shaped by his environment.*



Under his abusive care, White Fang transforms into professional fighting dog. While men wager on White Fang's fights, Beauty takes pleasure in watching the carnage. Beauty pits a succession of dogs against White Fang, but wins every battle, using his hatred of Beauty Smith to motivate his ferocious fighting and survive in the ring.

White Fang gains a reputation as "The Fighting Wolf." No animals can beat him in the ring, so the men secure a female lynx for him to fight against. They are initially equally matched, but White Fang vanquishes her, like the others. He waits for his next battle against a Tim Keenan's bulldog.

## PART 4, CHAPTER 4

The bulldog, Cherokee, and White Fang are released into the ring, but regard each other nervously and with confusion. Neither one is sure how to attack his opponent. The bulldog's thick skin seems immune to White Fang's bite, while White Fang's swiftness perplexes the slow-moving bulldog. After a time as White Fang gets tired, the bulldog finally closes in on White Fang and is able to grasp White Fang's throat in his mouth. The yearning to live overpowers White Fang, but no matter what he does to shake off the bulldog, he cannot escape his assailant's tight and deadly grip.

Seeing White Fang's eyes glaze over, Beauty Smith goes into the ring and begins kicking the animal, while the onlookers hiss and jeer. White Fang is about to give up his struggle to live, when a man named Weedon Scott, and his musher, Matt, arrive.

Horrified by the scene, Scott punches Beauty in the face and yells at the crowd, calling them "beasts" and "cowards." Scott attempts to pry White Fang and the bulldog apart, but finds that it is nearly impossible. He enlists the help of Matt and the bulldog's owner, Tim Keenan. They pull the dogs apart. White Fang is at death's door, but still lives and breathes.

Though Beauty resists selling White Fang, Scott intimidates him into forfeiting his ownership rights and buys the dog for one hundred and fifty dollars.

*Beauty Smith's dog fighting ring showcases his evil character. Money and bloodlust motivate his schemes. Meanwhile, White Fang's vicious fighting is conditioned by Beauty's training and motivated by an intense will to survive.*



*White Fang's new name underlines the increased ferocity of his character. Yet while he acts with the ferocity of a wolf, he does not have the freedom of a true wolf, as he fights for the entertainment of men.*



*White Fang's faceoff against the bulldog underlines the intensity of the struggle to live. Their fight is long and slow, more a struggle than the quick attacks White Fang is used to. Though White Fang is exhausted, the bulldog's fatal grip causes White Fang to struggle for his life vigorously. Note that White Fang once before was attacked by an animal biting his neck when the yellow weasel attacked him as a baby.*



*Beauty's actions highlight the cruel nature of his ownership over White Fang. When White Fang can no longer perform, he only brutalizes him further.*



*Scott calls Beauty and the other men coward's and beasts because they enjoy brutalizing those animals that are less powerful than them. The difficulty with which Scott pries White Fang and the bulldog apart emphasizes death's severe and deadly grip upon White Fang and his hard fought struggle to survive. Just as White Fang's mother saved him from the yellow weasel, Scott saves him here—a sign that White Fang's relationship with Scott will be one of love.*



*Beauty can lord over dogs but not over other men, further illustrating both his cowardice and the weakness inherent in bullying—there is always someone stronger.*



## PART 4, CHAPTER 5

Scott and Matt watch a **chained** White Fang "bristling" and "snarling" at their sled dogs. Scott believes it is "hopeless" to train White Fang, but Matt maintains that White Fang is a tamed creature. To show his point Matt, raises his **club** with one hand to distract White Fang. While White Fang keeps a steady eye on the weapon, Matt unchains him with the other. White Fang is astonished by his freedom.

Matt brings out a piece of **meat** for White Fang. Scott's dog, Major, leaps for it, but White Fang strikes him down, killing the dog and injuring Matt's leg in the skirmish.

The incident shows Scott that White Fang is still untamed, so he takes out his revolver and prepares to shoot the dog. But Matt defends White Fang, asserting that White Fang was justified in safeguarding his **meat** against Major's advance.

Scott approaches White Fang, talking to him in a smooth and gentle voice. But White Fang grows suspicious when Scott lowers his **hand** over his head. Fearing hurt and punishment, White Fang snarls and crouches, until his "insatiable yearning for life" overcomes him and he bites Weedon Scott's hand.

Matt gets his **rifle** to shoot White Fang, but Scott defends the dog, saying that "it served [him] right." Matt and Scott notice White Fang hiding behind the cabin away from the firearm's deadly range. They both conclude that White Fang is "too intelligent to kill."

## PART 4, CHAPTER 6

A day later, Scott approaches White Fang, who expects a punishment for having bitten this "god." Even though White Fang growls lowly, Scott speaks to him in a soft and gentle voice and tosses him a piece of **meat**. Scott offers White Fang another piece of meat, but will not let go of it, until White Fang eats it from his **hand**. Cautiously, White Fang gradually eats the meat from Scott's hand.

*White Fang has been "tamed" in the sense that he has been taught to obey any power greater than his own—men with clubs. White Fang's astonishment about being let off his leash indicates the degree to which his previous masters owned him but did not ever give him their trust or love.*



*Though White Fang has been trained to obey man, his life has also trained him to hate and oppress other dogs. He knows to obey the strong but thinks also that he should oppress the weak.*



*Scott doesn't understand White Fang, thinking his actions are plain "wildness." Matt understands the laws of nature, though, that White Fang lives by nature's law: "eat, or be eaten."*



*Note how Scott's approach with his hand mirrors a similar approach from Gray Beaver when White Fang was a pup. But now White Fang has seen too much cruelty from his owners to allow himself to be mastered. After so much time with Beauty, giving in to Scott seems likely to result in pain. So he fights.*



*Unlike Beauty Smith, or Gray Beaver, Scott does not reprimand White Fang with violence, but with mercy. While Matt is ready to kill White Fang, Scott spares him.*



*Scott shows kindness towards White Fang by feeding him by hand and talking to him in a gentle voice. This is the first time that White Fang has experienced human kindness, so he growls in distrust. Scott gains White Fang's trust not by violent force, but through a gesture of kindness.*



Scott reaches out his **hand** to pet White Fang. Battling with his natural instincts, White Fang bristles and snarls at his master's touch, but reluctantly assents to being caressed, gradually enjoying his master's show of affection.

*Man's touch causes conflict in White Fang between his natural instincts and domestic yearnings. That he comes to enjoy his master's touch shows his evolution towards domestication.*



Under Scott's care, White Fang's fondness for his master slowly transforms into love. He regards him as "love-master." His adoration grows so great that he guards Scott's cabin against intruders and learns to run in the traces of Matt's sled.

*White Fang demonstrates his adoration and love for Scott by dutifully working for him as a guard dog and a sled dog. Scott's title, "love-master," emphasizes White Fang's devotion to him.*



In the late spring, Scott leaves on a trip, without warning White Fang. He worries over his master's disappearance. The days come and go, but Scott does not return.

*White Fang's worry over Scott shows his deep love and devotion to his new master. This show of love displays his domestication.*



Scott reads a letter in Circle City from Matt, telling him that White Fang is suffering away from his master's care. Scott returns and White Fang greets him warmly, snuggling with his master for the first time, and rapidly recovering.

*White Fang's love and devotion for Scott is so great that he becomes sick for his master when he goes away. Scott is equally devoted to White Fang— he returns when his dog is in need.*



One night Matt and Scott hear a cry and snarl from outside. They discover that White Fang has taken down an intruder. It is Beauty Smith. He came with a **club** and **chain** to steal White Fang.

*By striking down his old master, White Fang affirms the mastery of his new one. It also seems to symbolize White Fang's escape from the law of the club and chain into a relationship of care and mutual trust with Scott.*



## PART 5, CHAPTER 1

White Fang senses change in the air. Matt believes that White Fang has caught on to Scott's plan to leave the Klondike. Scott insists that he can't take a "wolf" with him to California and entrusts him to Matt's care.

*Scott believes he can't take White Fang to California, because White Fang is too wild for society. That Scott calls White Fang a "wolf," and not a dog, emphasizes his feral nature.*



When White Fang sees his master's bags packed, he howls throughout the night, just as he did over the empty Indian camp. The next morning, Scott loads his bags onto the sled, says goodbye to White Fang, and locks him up in the cabin so that White Fang won't follow him on the "long trail."

*White Fang's howl represents his deep attachment to his master. Just as White Fang howled because he missed man's companionship at the Indian camp, he howls now because he will miss Scott.*



Scott is about to board the steamboat when White Fang appears on deck. Scott notices that there are cuts on his muzzle. Matt realizes that White Fang broke through the cabin's window to follow his master. Scott tells Matt he needn't write to him about White Fang, because he's taking the wolf with him to California.

*White Fang shows his deep devotion to Scott by breaking out of the cabin, despite the pain it must have caused him. No barrier can hold back his love for his master. With this show of devotion he convinces Scott that he will listen to his master in California—that because of his devotion he can be domesticated.*



## PART 5, CHAPTER 2

Scott and White Fang arrive in San Francisco. The "towering buildings" and rush of cable cars, automobiles, and carriages overwhelm White Fang, filling him with awe and fear over man's "mastery over matter". The city is nightmarish, so White Fang clings to Scott's side.

*To a wild half-wolf the city represents a degree of power over nature that is awe- and fear-inspiring. White Fang, in his fear, clings closely to Scott just as he used to cling to his mother.*



White Fang is separated from Scott briefly when he's loaded into a train's baggage car. Tossed among the luggage, he feels deserted by his master. When Scott arrives to claim him, they are no longer in the city, but in the country, Sierra Vista. White Fang marvels at this "transformation" regarding it as miraculous work of the "gods."

*That White Fang grows anxious over being separated from Scott shows his deep devotion to his master. White Fang's sense of the "transformation" of the land implies his complete lack of understanding of train travel as well as his reverence for mankind.*



At the train station, a man and a woman greet Scott. The woman wraps her arms around Scott, but White Fang regards this as a "hostile act" and nearly attacks the woman, who turns out to be Scott's mother. Scott holds White Fang down and promises that he will "learn soon enough." The "man-gods" load themselves and Scott's luggage into the carriage and White Fang follows.

*White Fang's background makes him unable to recognize friendly gestures. Any closeness to him or his master strikes him as a threat. Scott's assurance that White Fang will "learn," indicates his faith that he, and experience, will domesticate White Fang.*



Trailing Scott's carriage, White Fang arrives at the Scott family estate. Suddenly, an aggressive female sheep dog, Collie, blocks White Fang's path because she distrusts wolves. But White Fang withholds his wrath because "the law of his kind" forbids him from attacking females. After several attempts to bypass her, he knocks her down so that he can follow Scott's carriage.

*Collie's aggression against White Fang highlights her domestic lineage. As the offspring of sheepdogs reared by man, she displays an instinctual distrust of wild creatures, like White Fang. White Fang's refusal to attack Collie indicates a certain kind of nobility in his wildness, yet at the same time he knocks her down, refusing to submit to her.*



Arriving to greet Scott's carriage at the house, White Fang is knocked down by a deer-hound, Dick. Incensed, White Fang, prepares to attack, but Collie intervenes, knocking White Fang off his feet again. Calling off the dogs, Scott leads White Fang into house. White Fang remains close to his master's side, while Collie regards him with suspicion.

*Dick's attack on White Fang shows the conflict between wild and domestic animals. Dick and Collie fight because they fear wild intruders, while White Fang fights to preserve his life. Despite the domestic animals' distrust, Scott's mastery protects White Fang from harm, and all the dogs obey their masters. In this case, the human masters issue orders that protect the dogs, in contract to the men who ordered the dogs to fight for their own enjoyment.*



## PART 5, CHAPTER 3

White Fang gradually adapts to life at the Scott house, learning to respect Scott's family, instead of attacking them. The other dogs, like Dick, learn to tolerate White Fang's presence, but Collie still snarls at this wild creature with distrust. "The cuff" of Scott's **hand**, and the **call** of his voice trains and teaches White Fang to adapt to domestic life.

*While the domestic dogs tolerate White Fang's wild presence, Scott trains White Fang to adapt to the domestic world. Scott's "hand" alludes to his use of punishment to train White Fang—yet that punishment is mild compared to the strike of the club. Scott's call represents his use of his voice to instruct White Fang in man's ways.*



White Fang quickly learns that the laws of hunting and foraging in the **Southland** are different from those of the **Northland**. Used to hunting wild things, he follows his natural instinct to kill and eat when he encounters a stray chicken. Later that day, a stable groom catches White Fang eating another chicken. He whips him, but White Fang attacks the groom. Collie intervenes before White Fang can kill the groom. Scott concludes that he can't teach White Fang to leave chickens alone until he "[catches] him in the act."

*White Fang's natural instinct to hunt runs counter to the Southland's laws, which forbid the killing of domestic animals. The groom punishes White Fang for this offense, but White Fang fights back because the wild has trained him to fight for his meat and for his life. Collie's intervention reinforces the domestic law. Scott realizes that he can only train White Fang by doing so in direct response to the unwanted act.*



Two nights later, White Fang raids the chicken house, killing fifty chickens. The next morning, Scott finds the carcasses laid out on his front stoop. White Fang takes pride in his kill, showing no "shame nor guilt" for killing the chickens. But Scott scolds him with "godlike wrath," holding White Fang's nose down to the chickens, while speaking harshly to him and cuffing him "soundly."

*White Fang's instinct to hunt makes him kill the chickens, but his devotion to his master makes him lay those chickens at Scott's door. His wild and domestic instincts are both still at play in him, and he thinks he is doing a good thing. Scott responds directly and firmly, using both words and physical punishment to train White Fang.*



From this punishment, White Fang learns to stay away from chickens, but Judge Scott holds that "you can never cure a chicken-killer." To prove his father wrong, Scott locks White Fang up in the chicken coop and wagers his father that for every chicken White Fang kills, he will give him a dollar gold coin. For every ten minutes that White Fang spends in the yard without harming a chicken, Judge Scott will have to say, "White Fang, you are smarter than I thought."

*Judge Scott does not believe that the wild can be trained out of an animal. Scott's bet signals that he believes that White Fang's devotion to him will overcome White Fang's natural instinct to hunt. The aspect of the bet that dictates what Judge Scott will have to say if he loses connects the idea of being trained with intelligence..*



White Fang spends hours in the chicken yard, but doesn't touch a chicken. Scott wins the wager, so Judge Scott solemnly says to White Fang, sixteen times, "White Fang, you are smarter than I thought."

*Scott's training and mastery over White Fang teaches him to withstand the chicken coop's temptations. The Judge's praise highlights White Fang's adaptability and intelligence.*



Man's "multiplicity of laws" confuses White Fang, but he steadily learns man's ways. He learns that he can hunt jackrabbits, but not chickens. He learns not to attack children, who throw stones at him, because Scott will defend him. And finally, he learns to fight at his master's command. One day the men at the saloon sic their dogs on White Fang. Scott gives White Fang his blessing to attack the dogs. White Fang kills all three. From then on, no man or dog messes with the "Fighting Wolf."

*While the laws of the wild are black and white—"eat, or be eaten"—the laws of man are nuanced and varied. He must learn, ultimately, not to follow his instincts and to trust in his master—to trust that his master will protect him and allow him, when it is appropriate, to protect himself. White Fang is once again called a wolf, but this time as a kind of nickname. He still has his strength and ferocity, but unleashes it only at the order of Scott.*



## PART 5, CHAPTER 4

The months go by. Although White Fang misses the **Northland**, he prospers under the sunshine and abundance of the **Southland** and Scott's kindness, "flourishing like a flower planted in good soil." He knows the law of man and gets along with all the other dogs, except Collie, who remains suspicious of him.

*The comparison of White Fang's development in the Southland to a flower flourishing in good soil once again highlights how environment affects character.*



White Fang learns to **laugh** by romping and roughhousing with his master. After each tussle, **Scott** embraces White Fang and they laugh at each other good-naturedly.

*Through Scott's affection, White Fang learns to laugh. Laughter was once derisive to White Fang, but now it symbolizes love and humor.*



White Fang also learns how to **bark**. While riding in the pasture one day, Scott's horse stumbles over a jackrabbit and breaks Scott's leg. Scott instructs White Fang to "go home." White Fang returns to the house, where he alerts Scott's wife, Alice, to her husband's trouble by barking at her.

*White Fang's bark is a signal of his domestication. As a wolf, he never barks, but only howls. A howl is a call of the wild; a bark is means of communication to humans. That White Fang uses his voice to bark to save Scott shows his transformation into a domesticated dog, who uses his skills to serve his master.*



White Fang's second winter in the **Southland** arrives. He notices a change in Collie. She is more playful and gentle. One day, when he is about to go out with Scott on a horse ride, Collie nips him playfully, inviting him to run with her, instead. After a moment's indecision, he follows his instincts and follows her.

*White Fang's decision to run with Collie over Scott is one moment where Scott's mastery over White Fang lapses. At this instance, a more powerful instinct—to mate, make love, and perpetuate life—overcomes White Fang's loyalty to his master.*



## PART 5, CHAPTER 5

Around this time, the newspapers report that a convict, Jim Hall, has escaped from San Quentin jail. He is a "human beast", who was "ill-made in the making" and ill-treated by society and the prison guards.

*Like Beauty Smith, Jim Hall is a man who is made beast-like both by his own nature and his environment. Already "ill-made," prison makes him a brute.*



At Sierra Vista, the Scott family reads the newspapers with "anxiety," because Judge Scott sent Jim Hall to jail. Jim Hall was innocent of the crime, but Judge Scott, unwittingly pulled into a police conspiracy, sentenced Jim Hall to fifty years in prison. Convinced that Judge Hall was part of the ploy, Jim Hall vowed that he would take vengeance on the Judge and his family.

*Judge Scott's inadvertent sentencing of an innocent Jim Hall highlights how Jim Hall's life has been subjected to unfavorable circumstances. Initially, Jim Hall is an innocent man, but now it becomes clear that corrupt people used his "ill-made" ugliness to frame him, thus corrupting him into a vengeful human being. In this way, Jim Hall is much like White Fang was before he met Scott.*



Every night, Alice secretly lets White Fang sleep in the house and then lets him back out before the family wakes in the morning. One night, White Fang senses a stranger in the house. Just as the stranger is about to climb up the stairs to Scott's bedroom, White Fang pounces. The household awakens to the sounds of struggle. Two gunshots fire. Scott flicks on the light and sees Jim Hall dead on the floor with his throat torn open. White Fang is next to him, barely alive.

*White Fang proves himself to be a loyal and devoted domesticated dog when he takes down Jim Hall. Instead of using his fighting instincts to hunt, or fend for himself, White Fang fights to protect and defend his human family. Because of his selfless act, he confirms himself as the canine protector of Scott's house, even as he willingly sacrifices himself to do so.*



The Scott family calls a surgeon to save White Fang. The surgeon pronounces that his chances for survival are one in one thousand, but White Fang, out of an inborn strength, clings to life, heals, and survives.

*Though White Fang's chances of survival are low, his tenacious strength and will to survive triumphs against the odds.*



While White Fang recovers, he dreams about his life, from the time he was a pup, hunting in the woods during famine, to the time he arrives with Scott in San Francisco.

*White Fang's dream reflects his transformation from a wild wolf, which must hunt and scavenge, to a domestic dog, loyal to and loved by man.*



White Fang's bandages are removed. The Scott family dubs him the "Blessed Wolf." Weakly, he walks outside to the stables, where he is astonished to find Collie laying with a dozen **pups**. Collie snarls at him, but Scott brings one of the puppies to White Fang, who licks the puppy's face. The "gods" of the Scott family applaud, while the litter of pups playfully mauls their father.

*White Fang's new title, the "Blessed Wolf," alludes to his feral past, but also confirms his sacred role as protector and companion within the Scott household. Note how Collie snarls at White Fang just as White Fang's mother snarled at his father when White Fang was a pup. Back then, White Fang's father channeled his fatherly instincts into hunting. But here, White Fang shows that he has learned the lessons of domesticity and love, by showing affection to and playing with his pups. By not only fathering pups with Collie but by treating them with love, he establishes his lineage among the world of domestic dogs, and ensures that his own pups will grow up within that world of love and companionship.*





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