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**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
PHILOLOGY GROUP IV “E”**

***QUALIFICATION  
WORK***

***Theme: “Jack London”***

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**Introduction**

The future of Our Motherland, the next day of our population, the honor of our country throughout the world depend on first of all developing, growing, and their way of being perfect human in this life. We should never forget this keen truth.

*I. Karimov*

Education provides creative inspiration for the spirituality of the people of Uzbekistan .It helps us discover the best abilities of the up and coming generation while continuously improving the skills of professionals. Education helps elucidate and pass down the wisdom and experiences of the older generation to the younger. Young people with their budding talents and thirst for knowledge begin to understand spirituality through education.<sup>1</sup>

In present day Uzbekistan education has become one of the major concerns of the government. In his speech our President I. Karimov said, that government should provide "... assurance of an equal opportunity to general secondary education, to the free choice of occupation and adequate training". He added: "We well have to face the need to develop a new, democratic concept of education which integrates national, historical, intellectual, cultural, traditions, experiences of the Uzbeks and other nationalities living in the territory of the Republic, forming a cohesive system of up bringing and education".

In this modern system of education learning foreign languages is not on the last place. Uzbekistan is in need of highly qualified specialists in the field of foreign languages. Uzbek Republic is integrating into the international world community in such spheres as economy, policy, diplomacy, education trade,

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<sup>1</sup> I.A. Karimov. Uzbekistan the road of independence and progress. Tashkent. p.64.

technologies, art and science. I. Karimov in his speech states: “State sovereignty along with membership in the United Nations and other international organizations has given Uzbekistan an opportunity to conduct independent foreign policy, search for ways to join the international community and prioritize the goals of international relations.

It goes without saying that world-wide international communication is the most integral function in the process of development of any nation.

But in order cross-cultural exchange to grow in a rapid way it’s rather apparent that first of all non-native learners have to be aware of foreign nations Language together with its culture, history, art and the other very significant humanitarian cognitions one of which is Literature of any foreign nation. In our case it is the literature of English nation which is fairly rich with outstanding and powerful authors, masters of strong ideas and wide outlook, and the greatest owners of the world popular handwritten masterpieces.

**The subject** of my qualification work is profoundly concerning Jack London an American author who was a pioneer in the then-burgeoning world of commercial magazine fiction; he was one of the first Americans to make a lucrative career exclusively from writing.

**The aim** of my research work pursues the interest to have the educators to be able to analyze the works of London and to compare them with the works of native writers determining all the possible differences from the various critical and psychological viewpoints.

**The task** of my qualification work is to open the London’s ideas for learners in a profound cognition showing the life struggle with the eyes of the powerful author.

**The actuality** is to display London’s works in the most extended world perception and not adopting its primitiveness with its usual people.

**The novelty** is London's thinking regarding race had changed dramatically as he educated himself and as he traveled throughout the world. London's nonfiction tells us exactly where he stood on the issue of race at different periods of his life. One does not have to interpret the dialogue of fictional characters to make this determination.

**The theoretical value** is given as London's preference and passion for fact or experiential based writing, it follows that, not only does the nonfiction provide a broader basis on which to assess him as a writer, but also that the nonfiction provides a different and more personal perspective of him as an individual. Therefore, the reading of this body of work provides both a more rigorous framework for interpreting his art and craft and a basis for understanding his psyche.

**The practical value** The nonfiction can be classified into six broad categories. The first of these is literary works consisting of articles and letters about writers and the art and craft of writing; book reviews; and book introductions. The second category relates to political writings largely, but not exclusively, about socialism. The third category focuses on social reform issues such as divorce, child labor, euthanasia, etc. The fourth category is made up of essays relating personal experiences mostly based on his travels. The fifth category is comprised of London's war correspondence and other war related works. The sixth, and last category, consists of sports reporting and other writing about sports including boxing, hunting, football, horseback riding and surfing. Generally, works in the literary, political, social reform and war correspondence categories are less commercial in their orientation than the travel and sports related works and the conviction and passion with which they were written are more evident.

**Structurally** this qualification paper is considering that the nonfiction of Jack London not only traces the development of London's politics but also some of his basic values and philosophy.

Accordingly the introduction part challenges our vivid interest and sincere passion for Jack London's skillful creativeness that have us in curiosity that further piqued by the fact that the complete nonfiction had not been previously collected and its extent was the subject of widely varying speculation.

Chapter I deals with private life of London, his family interest development, feelings and worries about the atmosphere surrounding him and its affection for him.

Chapter 2 is busy with London's streaming work on short stories and full works as well, in which one can feel the power and strength of London's sufferings for the lives of lower class people.

It gives thinking that perhaps not without reason, that the works of this author reflected episodes from his own interesting and adventurous life. Who was this famous artist who had opened to us the world of beautiful and courageous people? How widespread is his popularity in the United States? Under what circumstances did he compose his masterpieces? It seemed that the destiny of the works by this famous writer had not been an easy one, both in his motherland and in our country—it changed with historical events and with the development of aesthetic thought.

There have been a score of books as well as articles and chapters in textbooks about him, but not a definitive biography of the author. Meanwhile, many of the facts of his life remain unknown. For example, it is not known who London's father was, and the circumstances of his death remain controversial, as well as the extent of his connections with the Russian revolutionary movement.

It must have been the merge of my two interests, as a reader and a professional that inspired my search for the unknown works and photographs of this author and caused a thrilling desire for discoveries for myself as well as for those who treasure London's creations.

Carefully comparing the bibliography of Jack London's works that were published in the United States with Russian translations of them, there appeared to be a lot within a half-century period. There is established the existence of some stories and articles that were unknown to the reader. What a challenge it was to find the originals! Even in those rare cases when it would happen to find this or that magazine, the issue that, according to this information included the original (untranslated) story or an article by London, and would be missing from the archives. It was only in the Scientific Library of Moscow State University that it was found in one magazine published in New York in 1907, which had an anonymous article "Is Jack London a Plagiarist?" It was not even a full article, but a brief note of rebuff to a journalist, accusing the writer of borrowing someone else's plot for his story. Still it was something. There, in the catalogs, I discovered a magazine with London's essays about his four-horse trip through California and Oregon. Still it was a surprise: the precious American magazine was missing from the shelf. This magazine, as found out later, had been checked out by students to study in order to pass the reading requirement in English. Finding out that they possessed this unique edition (these essays of London have not been translated) alarmed the librarians and they immediately started the search for the student who had checked out the priceless journal a long time ago. Since then, they have been included in the catalog of especially valuable books that are placed on reserve. My bachelor's thesis was devoted to the imagery of such novels as *Martin Eden* and *The Iron Heel*, and the topic for my doctoral dissertation dealt with ideological and artistic peculiarities of works by Jack London, the novelist.

London's views often smack of racism. Indeed, his "laws" of the Klondike may be equated with statements of racial supremacy. Earl Wilcox's 1973 article discusses this issue. Apparently, London's racism only solidified with time. In 1917, Oliver Madox Hueffer wrote: When I last saw him *The Valley of the Moon* was, or was to be, for I forget if it was actually published, the greatest of his works - a judgment in which I do not agree with him. It was, fundamentally,

an appeal to the Anglo-Saxon not to allow himself to be pushed out of the most fertile valleys of the Pacific by the lesser breeds without the law. Characteristically, it suggested no way in which this ideal was to be attained.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to "The Wife of a King," "In a Far Country" illustrates the kind of social obedience that demands the strict formulation of the law. Carter Weatherbee, a clerk "with no romance in his nature - the bondage of commerce had crushed all that . . .", and Percy Cuthfert, a bored blue-blood with "an abnormal development of sentimentality", find themselves with Jacques Baptiste and others on a difficult journey. These "two shirks and chronic grumblers" shrewdly undercut social rules by obeying them only nominally. For example, they circumvent every chore, from being "the first to turn in at night" to cutting "the water at each stroke and allow[ing] the boat's momentum to float up the blade". Even the weakened, 90-pound Sloper "could walk them into the earth in a day's journey". Finally, the party comes to a point at which it must rigidly formulate the law, for it can no longer collectively sustain Carter and Percy's actions. They do so, and the two "shirks" choose to remain behind the party at a cabin with food "for three times the men who were fated to live upon it" ; the group allows them, in other words, their goal. However, because Carter and Percy are without a sense of code, they ultimately kill each other in fear that the other will cheat with the food supply.

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<sup>2</sup> Wilcox, Earl. "'The Kipling of the Klondike': Naturalism in London's Early Klondike Fiction." Jack London Newsletter 6 (1973): 1-12.

## **Chapter I**

### **Jack London - his life and books**

"I would rather be ashes than dust!

I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze

than it should be stifled by dry rot.

I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow,

than a sleepy and permanent planet.

The proper function of man is to live, not to exist.

I shall not waste my days in  
trying to prolong them. I shall  
use my time

**1.1 An Overview** Considered by many to be America's finest author, Jack London, (1876 - 1916) whose name at birth was John Griffith Chaney, was born "south of the slot"—an area south of Market Street and its cable lines in San Francisco, California, on January 12, 1876. The California Historical Society has placed a plaque, attached to a former Wells Fargo Building at Third and Brannan Streets, at what was formerly 615 Third Street, a home destroyed by the famous April 18, 1906 fire that accompanied the great quake. This plaque states that it "marks the birthplace of the noted author Jack London . . ." The plaque marks the location of the home of the Slocums, friends of Flora, Jack's mother, where it has been said she was living after her reported suicide attempt and release from Dr. Ruttle's (which was on Mission Street). Jack's birth certificate does not indicate where he was born, so although we cannot verify this as the actual birthplace of Jack London, at the time, most children were born at home, so this is feasible.

John Griffith London also was an American author, journalist, and social activist. He was a pioneer in the then-burgeoning world of commercial magazine fiction and was one of the first fiction writers to obtain worldwide celebrity and a large fortune from his fiction alone. He is best remembered as the author of *White Fang* and *Call of the Wild*, set in the Klondike Gold Rush, as well as the short stories "To Build a Fire", "An Odyssey of the North", and "Love of Life". He also wrote of the South Pacific in such stories as "The Pearls of Parlay" and "The Heathen", and *The Sea Wolf*, of the San Francisco Bay area. London was a passionate advocate of unionization, socialism, and the rights of workers and wrote several powerful works dealing with these topics such as his dystopian novel, *The Iron Heel* and his non-fiction exposé, *The People of the Abyss*. It is

believed that he is the illegitimate son of William Chaney, an itinerant astrologer and journalist, who deserted Jack's mother, Flora, a spiritualist, before he was born. Flora married John London, a Civil War veteran who had recently moved to San Francisco, eight months after Jack was born. Jack did not learn the true circumstances of his birth until he was in his early twenties. Much of his youth was spent in Oakland, California, on the waterfront.

Jack London fought his way up out of the factories and waterfront dives of West Oakland to become the highest paid, most popular novelist and short story writer of his day. He wrote passionately and prolifically about the great questions of life and death, the struggle to survive with dignity and integrity, and he wove these elemental ideas into stories of high adventure based on his own firsthand experiences at sea, or in Alaska, or in the fields and factories of California. As a result, his writing appealed not to the few, but to millions of people all around the world.

Along with his books and stories, however, Jack London was widely known for his personal exploits. He was a celebrity, a colorful and controversial personality who was often in the news. Generally fun-loving and playful, he could also be combative, and was quick to side with the underdog against injustice or oppression of any kind. He was a fiery and eloquent public speaker, and much sought after as a lecturer on socialism and other economic and political topics. Despite his avowed socialism, most people considered him a living symbol of rugged individualism, a man whose fabulous success was due not to special favor of any kind, but to a combination of unusual mental ability and immense vitality. Strikingly handsome, full of laughter, restless and courageous to a fault, always eager for adventure on land or sea, he was one of the most attractive and romantic figures of his time.

Jack London ascribed his literary success largely to hard work - to "dig," as he put it. He tried never to miss his early morning 1,000-word writing stint, and between 1900 and 1916 he completed over fifty books, including both fiction

and non-fiction, hundreds of short stories, and numerous articles on a wide range of topics. Several of the books and many of the short stories are classics of their kind, well thought of in critical terms and still popular around the world. Today, almost countless editions of London's writings are available and some of them have been translated into as many as seventy different languages.

In addition to his daily writing stint and his commitments as a lecturer, London also carried on voluminous correspondence (he received some 10,000 letters per year), read proofs of his work as it went to press, negotiated with his various agents and publishers, and conducted other business such as overseeing construction of his custom-built sailing ship, the *Snark* (1906 - 1907), construction of Wolf House (1910 - 1913), and the operation of his beloved Beauty Ranch, which became a primary preoccupation after about 1911. Along with all this, he had to continually generate new ideas for books and stories and do the research so necessary to his writing. Somehow, he managed to do all these things and still find time to go swimming, horseback riding, or sailing on San Francisco Bay. He also spent 27 months cruising the South Pacific in the *Snark*, put in two tours of duty as an overseas war correspondent, traveled widely for pleasure, entertained a continual stream of guests whenever he was at home in Glen Ellen, and did his fair share of barroom socializing and debating. In order to fit all this living into the narrow confines of one lifetime, he often tried to make do with no more than four or five hours of sleep at night.

London was first attracted to the Sonoma Valley by its magnificent natural landscape, a unique combination of high hills, fields and streams, and a beautiful mixed forest of oaks, madrones, California buckeyes, Douglas Fir, and redwood trees. "When I first came here, tired of cities and people, I settled down on a little farm ... 130 acres of the most beautiful, primitive land to be found in California." He didn't care that the farm was badly run-down. Instead, he reveled in its deep canyons and forests, its year-round springs and streams. "All I wanted," he said later, "was a quiet place in the country to write and loaf in and get out of Nature that something which we all need, only the most of us don't

know it." Soon, however, he was busy buying farm equipment and livestock for his "mountain ranch." He also began work on a new barn and started planning a fine new house. "This is to be no summer-residence proposition," he wrote to his publisher in June 1905, "but a home all the year round. I am anchoring good and solid, and anchoring for keeps ..."<sup>3</sup>

**Jack had little formal schooling** Initially, he attended school only through the 8th grade, although he was an avid reader, educating himself at public libraries, especially the Oakland Public Library under the tutelage of Ina Coolbrith, who later became the first poet laureate of California. In later years (mid-1890s), Jack returned to high school in Oakland and graduated. He eventually gained admittance to U.C. Berkeley, but stayed only for six months, finding it to be “not alive enough” and a “passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence”.

Jack’s extensive life experiences included: being a laborer, factory worker, oyster pirate on the San Francisco Bay, member of the California Fish Patrol, sailor, railroad hobo, and gold prospector (in the Klondike from 1897-1898). In his teens, he joined Coxey’s Army in its famous march on Washington, D.C., and was later arrested for vagrancy in Erie County, New York. As a journalist, Jack covered the Russo-Japanese War for the Hearst newspapers in 1904, and in 1914, he covered the Mexican Revolution for *Collier’s*.

It was during his cross-country travels that he became acquainted with socialism, which for many years, became his “holy grail”. He became known as the “Boy Socialist of Oakland” because of his passionate street corner oratory. In fact, he unsuccessfully ran for mayor of Oakland several times as the socialist party candidate.

**In 1900, Jack married** his math tutor and friend, Bess Maddern. It was a Victorian marriage typical of the time, based on “good breeding”, not love. With Bess, he had two daughters — Joan and Bess (“Becky”). Following his

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<sup>3</sup> Kingman, Russ, *A Pictorial Life of Jack London* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1979)

separation from Bess in 1903, he married his secretary, Charmian Kittredge, whom he considered his “Mate Woman” and with whom he found true love. Together, they played, traveled, wrote and enjoyed life. Their one child, Joy, only lived for thirty-eight hours. In 1907, with his second wife, Charmian, Jack sailed the Pacific to the South Seas in the *Snark*, which became the basis for his book, *The Cruise of the Snark*. With Charmian at his side, he also developed his “Beauty Ranch” on 1,400 acres of land in Glen Ellen, California.

**By his death at age forty on November 22, 1916**, Jack had been plagued for years by a vast number of health problems, including stomach disturbances, ravaging uremia, and failing kidneys. His death certificate states that he died of uremic poisoning.

Jack was among the most publicized figures of his day. In his lectures, he endorsed socialism and women’s suffrage. He was also one of the first celebrities used to endorse commercial products, such as grape juice and men’s suits. Young Jack London’s exceptional brightness and his optimistic, buoyant personality eventually combined to transform his many experiences into a working philosophy of service and survival. He became the personification for his readers of many of the virtues and ideals of a turn-of-the-century Western American man and was the country’s first successful working class writer.

**Jack London . . . The Writer** Once Jack had resolved himself to succeed as an author, his diligent habits and innate skills catapulted him far beyond most of his literary peers in both perspective and content. By following a strict writing regimen of 1,000 words a day, he was able to produce a huge quantity of high quality work over a period of eighteen years.

Jack had become the best-selling, highest paid and most popular American author of his time. He was prolific: fifty-one of his books and hundreds of his articles had been published. He had written thousands of letters. Many additional works have been published posthumously. His most notable books include *The Call of the Wild* (originally entitled “The Sleeping Wolf”) which

was published in 1903, *The Iron Heel*, *White Fang*, *The Sea-Wolf* (originally entitled “*Mercy of the Sea*”), *The People of the Abyss* (a sociological treatise about the slums of London, England), *John Barleycorn*, *Martin Eden*, and *The Star Rover*. His short story, “*To Build A Fire*”, is considered to be an all-time classic. His writings have been translated in several dozen languages and to this day continue to be widely read throughout the world. This American literary genius brilliantly and compassionately portrayed his life and times, as well as the never-ending struggles of man and nature. Millions of avid readers have been thrilled by his stories of adventure. Authors and social advocates have been inspired by his heartfelt prose. Nevertheless, many of his life experiences were more exciting than his fiction.

**Jack London . . . The Sailor** No man has ever loved to sail more than Jack London. Even as a very young boy, fishing with his stepfather in small boats, his head would fill with visions of tropical islands and faraway places. As he grew up, he occasionally rented boats with money earned from his many part-time jobs. At fifteen, with the financial assistance of “Aunt Jenny” Prentiss, Jack bought a sloop, the *Razzle Dazzle*, in order to escape the life of the “work beast”. He became an illegal oyster pirate, and before long, had earned the title of “Prince of the Oyster Pirates”; he made more money in one week than he was able to earn in his first full year as a professional writer. Realizing that the life of an oyster pirate frequently ended in prison or death, he reformed and became a California Fish Patrol deputy.

During his lifetime, Jack sailed on a variety of ships including: the sealing schooner *Sophia Sutherland* to Japan (on which he served as an able-bodied seaman); on the steamship *SS Umatilla* and the *City of Topeka* (to Alaska); the *RMS Majestic* (to England); the *SS Siberia* (as correspondent during the Russo-Japanese War); took a sampan to Korea; bought and sailed the *Spray*; designed, built, and sailed the *Snark* [named after the humoresque Lewis Carroll story] to Hawaii and the South Seas; returned from Tahiti to San Francisco on the *SS Mariposa*; sailed on the ketch *Minota* near Tahiti; sailed from Australia to

Ecuador on the *Tymeric*; cruised on the San Francisco Bay and environs in the *Roamer*; sailed from Seattle to California on the *City of Pueblo*; sailed on the *Dirigo* from New York to San Francisco by way of Cape Horn; took the US Army transport *Kilpatrick* to Mexico (to write about the Mexican Revolution); sailed on fishing boats; stayed on a houseboat; visited the hospital ship USS *Solace*, the repair ship USS *Vestal*, and the battleships *New York*, *Arkansas*, and *Mississippi*; returned to Galveston on the transport *Ossabow*; sailed to Hawaii on the *Matsonia*; and returned to California on the SS *Sonoma*.

**Jack London . . . The Gold Prospector** Overcome with “Klondike fever,” Jack departed from San Francisco on the SS *Umatilla* on July 25, 1897, accompanied and bankrolled by his much older brother-in-law, Captain Shepard, who returned home after only two days on the rugged Alaska trails. With nearly 2,000 pounds of required equipment — including warm garments, food, mining implements, tents, blankets, Klondike stoves, and a copy of Miner Bruce’s *Alaska*, Jack entered the Yukon Territory by way of the Dyea River and the notorious Chilkoot Pass.<sup>4</sup>

Jack moved into a cabin and staked a claim on Henderson Creek in early November of 1897, after a month of prospecting. During the long winter which followed, he became well-known to his fellow prospectors for his storytelling ability. In May 1898, he developed a severe case of scurvy from lack of fresh fruit and vegetables; he could no longer work his claim. Desperately needing immediate medical attention, he anxiously awaited the melting of the ice blocking the Yukon River. He eventually did receive some medical help but was advised to return home. On June 28, he arrived in St. Michael, after making his way in a small boat down 1,500 miles of the Yukon River. From St. Michael, he sailed home.

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<sup>4</sup> Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2006.

Jack London gained a tremendous amount of insight and perspective while in Alaska and the Klondike [in Canada]. Although he had not discovered much gold, he had uncovered a Mother Lode of experience from which he would draw material for his future novels and stories. Upon his return to Oakland, California, he discovered that his stepfather, John London, had died. At the age of 22, he now shouldered the responsibility of supporting his mother and his step nephew. Despite tackling every job opening possible, he could not find steady work. In desperation, he sold many of his belongings and dove into writing. He was talented and prolific, yet at first all of his manuscripts were rejected. In early December 1898, he sold his first short story, an Alaskan tale entitled, "To The Man On Trail". His writing career was launched.

**Jack London . . . the Rancher ..... "I am the sailor on horseback! Watch my dust! Oh, I shall make mistakes a-many; but watch my dreams come true... Try to dream with me my dreams of fruitful acres. Do not be a slave to an old conception. Try to realize what I am after." – Jack London circa 1913**

"I ride over my beautiful ranch. Between my legs is a beautiful horse. The air is wine. The grapes on a score of rolling hills are red with autumn flame. Across Sonoma Mountain, wisps of sea fog are stealing.<sup>5</sup>

The afternoon sun smolders in the drowsy sky. I have everything to make me glad I am alive." In 1905, while living with Charmian at Wake Robin Lodge in Glen Ellen, California, Jack London decided to settle permanently in the Valley of the Moon. In June, he purchased his first piece of real estate — the Hill Ranch — 130 beautiful acres of trees, fields, springs, streams, canyons, hills, and abundant wildlife. After six additional land purchases, Jack London's "Beauty Ranch" eventually totaled 1,400 acres and consisted of seven parcels of land bought between 1905 and 1913. Jack loved ranch life. At Beauty Ranch, he raised many animals such as prize bulls, horses, and pigs. He cultivated a wide variety of crops, including forty acres of wine grapes which were formerly part

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<sup>5</sup> Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2006.

of the Kohler-Frohling Winery. By damming a stream that crossed the property, Jack built a lake for irrigation and recreation. He introduced terracing and green water mulching. He produced record yields of oat hay on acreage that had been considered overfarmed. He experimented with innovative ideas such as growing spineless cactus, which was developed by his friend, the “Plant Wizard”, Luther Burbank (who lived in nearby Santa Rosa), for use as a cattle feed in arid regions; unfortunately, the cactus was not completely spineless and could not be used for feed. He imported thousands of Australian eucalyptus trees hoping the wood could be used for hardwood lumber and pier pilings, but the wood was found to be too soft. Jack’s “Pig Palace” was the showplace of the county. It allowed one man to feed up to two hundred hogs. And, his ranch’s concrete silos were the first in California. The ranch was also the building site for the majestic Wolf House. Constructed completely with native redwood trees, locally-quarried boulders, volcanic rock and blue slate, Wolf House took more than two years to build. Only a few days before Jack and Charmian were to move in, the house tragically burned due to spontaneous combustion caused by a careless oversight by a workman; only the walls were left standing. You can visit and enjoy Jack London’s Beauty Ranch today. It is now a California State Historic Park which includes the House of Happy Walls museum, the Pig Palace, Jack London’s grave, the Lake, the Wolf House ruins, and more.

**Family background** Flora Wellman. Biographer Clarice Stasz and others believe that London's father was astrologer William Chaney. London's mother, Flora Wellman, a music teacher and spiritualist who claimed to channel the spirit of an Indian chief, was living with Chaney in San Francisco and became pregnant. Whether Wellman and Chaney were legally married is unknown. Most San Francisco civil records were destroyed by the extensive fires that followed the 1906 earthquake; it is not known with certainty what name appeared on his birth certificate. Stasz notes that in his memoirs, Chaney refers to London's mother Flora Wellman as having been his "wife" and also cites an advertisement in which Flora called herself "Florence Wellman Chaney".

According to Flora Wellman's account, as recorded in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of June 4, 1875, Chaney demanded that she have an abortion. When she refused, he disclaimed responsibility for the child. In desperation, she shot herself. She was not seriously wounded, but she was temporarily deranged. After she gave birth, Flora turned the baby over to ex-slave Virginia Prentiss, who remained a major maternal figure throughout London's life. Late in 1876, Flora Wellman married John London, a partially disabled Civil War veteran, and brought her baby John, later known as Jack, to live with the newly married couple. The family moved around the San Francisco Bay Area before settling in Oakland, where London completed grade school. In 1897, when he was 21 and a student at the University of California, Berkeley, and a student at the University of California, Berkeley, London searched for and read the newspaper accounts of his mother's suicide attempt and the name of his biological father. He wrote to William Chaney, then living in Chicago. Chaney responded that he could not be London's father because he was impotent; he casually asserted that London's mother had relations with other men and averred that she had slandered him when she said he insisted on an abortion. He concluded that he was more to be pitied than London. London was devastated by his father's letter. In the months following, he quit school at Berkeley and went to the Klondike.

**Early life** London at the age of nine with his dog Rollo, 1885. London was born near Third and Brannan Streets in San Francisco. The house burned down in the fire after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake; the California Historical Society placed a plaque at the site in 1953. Though the family was working class, it was not as impoverished as London's later accounts claimed. London was essentially self-educated. In 1885 London found and read Ouida's long Victorian novel *Signa*. He credited this as the seed of his literary success. In 1886 he went to the Oakland Public Library and found a sympathetic librarian, Ina Coolbrith, who encouraged his learning. (She later became California's first *poet laureate* and an important figure in the San Francisco literary community).

In 1889, London began working 12 to 18 hours a day at Hickmott's Cannery. Seeking a way out, he borrowed money from his black foster mother Virginia Prentiss, bought the sloop *Razzle-Dazzle* from an oyster pirate named French Frank, and became an oyster pirate. In his novel, *John Barleycorn*, he claims to have stolen French Frank's mistress Mamie. After a few months, his sloop became damaged beyond repair. London became hired as a member of the California Fish Patrol. In 1893, he signed on to the sealing schooner *Sophie Sutherland*, bound for the coast of Japan. When he returned, the country was in the grip of the panic of '93 and Oakland was swept by labor unrest. After grueling jobs in a jute mill and a street-railway power plant, he joined Kelly's Army and began his career as a tramp. In 1894, he spent 30 days for vagrancy in the Erie County Penitentiary at Buffalo. In *The Road*, he wrote: "Man-handling was merely one of the very minor unprintable horrors of the Erie County Pen. I say 'unprintable'; and in justice I must also say indescribable. They were unthinkable to me until I saw them, and I was no spring chicken in the ways of the world and the awful abysses of human degradation. It would take a deep plummet to reach bottom in the Erie County Pen, and I do but skim lightly and facetiously the surface of things as I there saw them."

After many experiences as a hobo and a sailor, he returned to Oakland and attended Oakland High School. He contributed a number of articles to the high school's magazine, *The Aegis*. His first published work was "Typhoon off the Coast of Japan", an account of his sailing experiences.

London desperately wanted to attend the University of California, Berkeley. In 1896 after a summer of intense cramming to pass certification exams, he was admitted. Financial circumstances forced him to leave in 1897 and he never graduated. No evidence suggests that London wrote for student publications while studying at Berkeley.

**Gold rush and first success** Miners and prospectors ascend the Chilkoot Trail during the Klondike Gold Rush. On July 12, 1897, London (age 21) and his

sister's husband Captain Shepard sailed to join the Klondike Gold Rush. This was the setting for some of his first successful stories. London's time in the Klondike, however, was detrimental to his health. Like so many other men who were malnourished in the goldfields, London developed scurvy. His gums became swollen, leading to the loss of his four front teeth. A constant gnawing pain affected his hip and leg muscles, and his face was stricken with marks that always reminded him of the struggles he faced in the Klondike. Father William Judge, "The Saint of Dawson," had a facility in Dawson that provided shelter, food and any available medicine to London and others. His struggles there inspired London's short story, "To Build a Fire", which many critics assess as his best.

His landlords in Dawson were mining engineers Marshall Latham Bond and Louis Whitford Bond, educated at Yale and Stanford. The brothers' father, Judge Hiram Bond, was a wealthy mining investor. The Bonds, especially Hiram, were active Republicans. Marshall Bond's diary mentions friendly sparring with London on political issues as a camp pastime. London left Oakland with a social conscience and socialist leanings; he returned to become an activist for socialism. He concluded that his only hope of escaping the work "trap" was to get an education and "sell his brains." He saw his writing as a business, his ticket out of poverty, and, he hoped, a means of beating the wealthy at his own game. On returning to California in 1898, London began working deliberately to get published, a struggle described in his novel, *Martin Eden*. His first published story was "To the Man On Trail", which has frequently been collected in anthologies. When *The Overland Monthly* offered him only five dollars for it—and was slow paying—London came close to abandoning his writing career. In his words, "literally and literarily I was saved" when *The Black Cat* accepted his story "A Thousand Deaths," and paid him \$40—the "first money I ever received for a story."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mohan, Chandra, "Jack London's Humanism," Jack London Newsletter

London was fortunate in the timing of his writing career. He started just as new printing technologies enabled lower-cost production of magazines. This resulted in a boom in popular magazines aimed at a wide public, and a strong market for short fiction. In 1900, he made \$2,500 in writing, about \$66,000 in current value. His career was well under way.

Among the works he sold to magazines was a short story known as either "Batard" or "Diable", in two editions of the same basic story. A cruel French Canadian brutalizes his dog. The dog retaliates and kills the man. London told some of his critics that man's actions are the main cause of the behavior of their animals, and he would show this in another short story.

"On January 26, 1903, Jack London submitted the completed manuscript of 'The Call of the Wild' to *The Saturday Evening Post*. On February 12 the editor agreed to purchase the story if he would cut it by five thousand words, and they asked him to set his price. Jack agreed to shorten it and set the price at three cents a word. On March 3 he received a check for seven hundred and fifty dollars. Twenty-two days later Macmillan bought the book rights for two thousand dollars with a promise to give it extensive advertising. At the time it seemed a very sensible thing to do. His previous books had not hit the best seller lists, and neither he nor Macmillan New York publisher George Platt Brett, Sr. had any idea that *The Call of the Wild* would do much better. If Jack had known at the time that his book would become a classic in American literature, and the royalties from it would have made him wealthy, he would have bargained differently. Yet, without the extensive promotional program, it could have easily become just another dog book. The answer will never be known, but Jack never regretted his decision, feeling that the extra promotion by Macmillan had been a major factor in its success."

The story begins on an estate in the Santa Clara Valley and features a St. Bernard/Scotch Shepherd mix named Buck. The opening scene describes the Bond family farm, which London visited at one time. Buck was based on a dog

that the Bond brothers loaned London in Dawson. While living at his rented villa on Lake Merritt in Oakland, London met poet George Sterling and in time they became best friends. In 1902, Sterling helped London find a home closer to his own in nearby Piedmont. In his letters London addressed Sterling as "Greek," owing to his aquiline nose and classical profile, and signed them as "Wolf." London was later to depict Sterling as Russ Brissenden in his autobiographical novel *Martin Eden* (1909) and as Mark Hall in *The Valley of the Moon* (1913). In later life London indulged his wide-ranging interests by accumulating a personal library of 15,000 volumes. He referred to his books as "the tools of my trade."

**First marriage** (1900–1904) Bessie Maddern London and daughters, Joan and Becky. London married Elizabeth "Bessie" Maddern on April 7, 1900, the same day *The Son of the Wolf* was edited. Bess had been part of his circle of friends for a number of years. Stasz says, "Both acknowledged publicly that they were not marrying out of love, but from friendship and a belief that they would produce sturdy children." Kingman says, "they were comfortable together... Jack had made it clear to Bessie that he did not love her, but that he liked her enough to make a successful marriage." During the marriage, London continued his friendship with Anna Strunsky, co-authoring *The Kempton-Wace Letters*, an epistolary novel contrasting two philosophies of love. Anna, writing "Dane Kempton's" letters, arguing for a romantic view of marriage, while London, writing "Herbert Wace's" letters, argued for a scientific view, based on Darwinism and eugenics. In the novel, his fictional character contrasted two women he had known. London's pet name for Bess was "Mother-Girl" and Bess's for London was "Daddy-Boy". Their first child, Joan, was born on January 15, 1901, and their second, Bessie (later called Becky), on October 20, 1902. Both children were born in Piedmont, California. Here London wrote one of his most celebrated works, *The Call of the Wild*.

While London had pride in his children, the marriage was under strain. Kingman (1979) says that by 1903 they were close to separation as they were "extremely

incompatible." Nevertheless, "Jack was still so kind and gentle with Bessie that when Cloudsley Johns was a house guest in February 1903 he didn't suspect a breakup of their marriage."

London reportedly complained to friends Joseph Noel and George Sterling that, "[Bessie] is devoted to purity. When I tell her morality is only evidence of low blood pressure, she hates me. She'd sell me and the children out for her damned purity. It's terrible. Every time I come back after being away from home for a night she won't let me be in the same room with her if she can help it." Stasz writes that these were "code words for [Bess's] fear that [Jack] was consorting with prostitutes and might bring home venereal disease." On July 24, 1903, London told Bessie he was leaving and moved out. During 1904 London and Bess negotiated the terms of a divorce, and the decree was granted on November 11, 1904.

**Bohemian Club** London (*right*) at the Bohemian Grove with his friends Porter Garnett and George Sterling. A painting parodies his book *The White Silence*.

On August 18, 1904, London went with his close friend, the poet George Sterling, to "Summer High Jinks" at the Bohemian Grove. London was elected to honorary membership in the Bohemian Club and took part in many activities. Other noted members of the Bohemian Club during this time included Ambrose Bierce, Allan Dunn, John Muir, Gelett Burgess, and Frank Norris. Beginning in December 1914, London worked on *The Acorn Planter, A California Forest Play*, to be performed as one of the annual Grove Plays, but it was never selected—it was described as too difficult to set to music. London published *The Acorn Planter* in 1916.

**Second marriage** Jack and Charmian London, 1911, at the old Winery Cottage, their home at Beauty Ranch. After divorcing Maddern, London married Charmian Kittredge in 1905. London was introduced to Kittredge by his MacMillan publisher, George Platt Brett, Sr., while Kittredge served as Brett's secretary. Biographer Russ Kingman called Charmian "Jack's soul-mate, always

at his side, and a perfect match." Their time together included numerous trips, including a 1907 cruise on the yacht Snark to Hawaii and Australia.<sup>[24]</sup> Many of London's stories are based on his visits to Hawaii, the last one for 10 months beginning in December 1915. The couple also visited Goldfield, Nevada in 1907, where they were guests of the Bond brothers, London's Dawson City landlords. The Bond brothers were working in Nevada as mining engineers.

London had contrasted the concepts of the "Mother Woman" and the "Mate Woman" in *The Kempton-Wace Letters*. His pet name for Bess had been "mother-girl;" his pet name for Charmian was "mate-woman." Charmian's aunt and foster mother, a disciple of Victoria Woodhull, had raised her without prudishness. Every biographer alludes to Charmian's uninhibited sexuality.

Noel (1940) calls the events from 1903 to 1905 "a domestic drama that would have intrigued the pen of an Ibsen.... London's had comedy relief in it and a sort of easy-going romance." In broad outline, London was restless in his marriage; sought extramarital sexual affairs; and found, in Charmian Kittredge, not only a sexually active and adventurous partner, but his future life-companion. They attempted to have children. One child died at birth, and another pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. In 1906, London published in *Collier's* magazine his eye-witness report of the San Francisco earthquake.

**Beauty Ranch** (1905–1916) The old Winery Cottage, where London died (in the left sleeping porch) on November 22, 1916. In 1905, London purchased a 1,000 acre (4 km<sup>2</sup>) ranch in Glen Ellen, Sonoma County, California, on the eastern slope of Sonoma Mountain, for \$26,450. He wrote that "Next to my wife, the ranch is the dearest thing in the world to me." He desperately wanted the ranch to become a successful business enterprise. Writing, always a commercial enterprise with London, now became even more a means to an end: "I write for no other purpose than to add to the beauty that now belongs to me. I write a book for no other reason than to add three or four hundred acres to my

magnificent estate." After 1910, his literary works were mostly potboilers, written out of the need to provide operating income for the ranch.

**London in 1914** Stasz writes that London "had taken fully to heart the vision, expressed in his agrarian fiction, of the land as the closest earthly version of Eden ... he educated himself through the study of agricultural manuals and scientific tomes. He conceived of a system of ranching that today would be praised for its ecological wisdom."Template: He was proud to own the first concrete silo in California, a circular piggery that he designed. He hoped to adapt the wisdom of Asian sustainable agriculture to the United States. He hired both Italian and Chinese stonemasons, whose distinctly different styles are obvious.

The ranch was an economic failure. Sympathetic observers such as Stasz treat his projects as potentially feasible, and ascribe their failure to bad luck or to being ahead of their time. Unsympathetic historians such as Kevin Starr suggest that he was a bad manager, distracted by other concerns and impaired by his alcoholism. Starr notes that London was absent from his ranch about six months a year between 1910 and 1916, and say, "He liked the show of managerial power, but not grinding attention to detail .... London's workers laughed at his efforts to play big-time rancher [and considered] the operation a rich man's hobby." London spent \$80,000 (\$1,950,000 in current value) to build a 15,000-square-foot (1,400 m<sup>2</sup>) stone mansion ("Wolf House") on the property.<sup>7</sup> Just as the mansion was nearing completion, two weeks before the Londons planned to move in, it was destroyed by fire. London's last visit to Hawaii, beginning in December 1915, lasted eight months. He met with Duke Kahanamoku, Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, Queen Lili'uokalani and many others, before returning to his ranch in July 1916. He was suffering from kidney failure, but he continued to work. The ranch (abutting stone remnants of Wolf House) is now a National Historic Landmark and is protected in Jack London State Historic Park.

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<sup>7</sup> "London, Jack." Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online Library Edition.

**Accusations of plagiarism** Jack London in his office. London was vulnerable to accusations of plagiarism not only because he was such a conspicuous, prolific, and successful writer, but also because of his methods of working. He wrote in a letter to Elwyn Hoffman, "expression, you see—with me—is far easier than invention." He purchased plots and novels from the young Sinclair Lewis and used incidents from newspaper clippings as writing material.

Egerton R. Young claimed *The Call of the Wild* was taken from his book *My Dogs in the Northland*. London acknowledged using it as a source and claimed to have written a letter to Young thanking him.

In July 1901, two pieces of fiction appeared within the same month: London's "Moon-Face", in the *San Francisco Argonaut*, and Frank Norris's "The Passing of Cock-eye Blacklock," in *Century*. Newspapers showed the similarities between the stories, which London said were "quite different in manner of treatment, [but] patently the same in foundation and motive." London explained both writers based their stories on the same newspaper account. A year later, it was discovered that Charles Forrest McLean had published a fictional story also based on the same incident. In 1906, the *New York World* published "deadly parallel" columns showing eighteen passages from London's short story "Love of Life" side by side with similar passages from a nonfiction article by Augustus Biddle and J. K. Macdonald, entitled "Lost in the Land of the Midnight Sun." London noted the *World* did not accuse him of "plagiarism," but only of "identity of time and situation," to which he defiantly "pled guilty."

The most serious charge of plagiarism was based on London's "The Bishop's Vision", Chapter 7 of his *The Iron Heel*. The chapter is nearly identical to an ironic essay that Frank Harris published in 1901, entitled "The Bishop of London and Public Morality." Harris was incensed and suggested he should receive 1/60th of the royalties from *The Iron Heel*, the disputed material constituting about that fraction of the whole novel. London insisted he had

clipped a reprint of the article, which had appeared in an American newspaper, and believed it to be a genuine speech delivered by the Bishop of London.

**1.2 Political views** Jack London bust at Centenary College of Louisiana in Shreveport—Socialism. London joined the Socialist Labor Party in April 1896. In the same year, the *San Francisco Chronicle* published a story about the twenty-year-old London giving nightly speeches in Oakland's City Hall Park, an activity he was arrested for a year later. In 1901, he left the Socialist Labor Party and joined the new Socialist Party of America. He ran unsuccessfully as the high-profile Socialist nominee for mayor of Oakland in 1901 (receiving 245 votes) and 1905 (improving to 981 votes), toured the country lecturing on socialism in 1906, and published collections of essays about socialism (*The War of the Classes*, 1905; *Revolution, and other Essays*, 1906). As London explained in his essay, "How I Became a Socialist", his views were influenced by his experience with people at the bottom of the social pit. His optimism and individualism faded, and he vowed never to do more hard work than necessary. He wrote that his individualism was hammered out of him, and he was politically reborn. He often closed his letters "Yours for the Revolution."<sup>8</sup>

In his Glen Ellen ranch years, London felt some ambivalence toward socialism and complained about the "inefficient Italian laborers" in his employ. In 1916, he resigned from the Glen Ellen chapter of the Socialist Party, but stated emphatically he did so "because of its lack of fire and fight, and its loss of emphasis on the class struggle." Stasz notes that "London regarded the Wobblies as a welcome addition to the Socialist cause, although he never joined them in

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<sup>8</sup> Mohan, Chandra, "Jack London's Humanism," Jack London Newsletter

going so far as to recommend sabotage." Stasz mentions a personal meeting between London and Big Bill Haywood in 1912.

**Influence on writing** London wrote from a socialist viewpoint, which is evident in his novel *The Iron Heel*. Neither a theorist nor an intellectual socialist, London's socialism grew out of his life experience. In his late (1913) book *The Cruise of the Snark*, London writes, without empathy, about appeals to him for membership of the Snark's crew from office workers and other "toilers" who longed for escape from the cities, and of being cheated by workmen.

In an unflattering portrait of London's ranch days, Kevin Starr (1973) refers to this period as "post-socialist" and says "... by 1911 ... London was more bored by the class struggle than he cared to admit." Starr maintains London's socialism always had a streak of elitism in it, and a good deal of pose. He liked to play working class intellectual when it suited his purpose. Invited to a prominent Piedmont house, he featured a flannel shirt, but, as someone there remarked, London's badge of solidarity with the working class "looked as if it had been specially laundered for the occasion." [Mark Twain said] "It would serve this man London right to have the working class get control of things. He would have to call out the militia to collect his royalties."

**Racial views** London shared common Californian concerns about Asian immigration and "the yellow peril", which he used as the title of a 1904 essay. This theme was also the subject of a story he wrote in 1910 called "The Unparalleled Invasion". Taking place in a fictional 1975, London describes a China with an ever-increasing population taking over and colonizing its neighbors, with the intention of taking over the entire Earth. The Western Nations respond with biological warfare and bombard China with dozens of the most infectious diseases. The genocide, described in considerable detail, is throughout the book described as justified and "the only possible solution to the Chinese problem".

Many of London's short stories are notable for their empathetic portrayal of Mexican ("The Mexican"), Asian ("The Chinago"), and Hawaiian ("Koolau the Leper") characters. London's war correspondence from the Russo-Japanese War, as well as his unfinished novel *Cherry*, show he admired much about Japanese customs and capabilities.

In London's 1902 novel *Daughter of the Snows*, the character FronaWelse has a speech about Teutonic virtues in contrast to the characteristics of other "races". The scholar Andrew Furer, in a long essay exploring the complexity of London's views, says there is no doubt that FronaWelse is acting as a mouthpiece for London in this passage. London's 1904 essay, "The Yellow Peril", criticizes Asians. He admits, "It must be taken into consideration that the above postulate is itself a product of Western race-egotism, urged by our belief in our own righteousness and fostered by a faith in ourselves which may be as erroneous as are most fond race fancies." In "Koolau the Leper", London describes Koolau, who is a Hawaiian leper—and thus a very different sort of "superman" than Martin Eden—and who fights off an entire cavalry troop to elude capture, as "indomitable spiritually— a ... magnificent rebel".

Jeffries (left) vs. Johnson, 1910. An amateur boxer and avid boxing fan, London reported on the 1910 Johnson-Jeffries fight, in which the black boxer Jack Johnson vanquished Jim Jeffries, the "Great White Hope". In 1908, according to Furer, London praised Johnson highly, contrasting the black boxer's coolness and intellectual style, with the apelike appearance and fighting style of his white opponent, Tommy Burns: "what . . . [won] on Saturday was bigness, coolness, quickness, cleverness, and vast physical superiority... Because a white man wishes a white man to win, this should not prevent him from giving absolute credit to the best man, even when that best man was black. All hail to Johnson." Johnson was "superb. He was impregnable . . . as inaccessible as Mont Blanc."

Those who defend London against charges of racism cite the letter he wrote to the *Japanese-American Commercial Weekly* in 1913: In reply to yours of

August 16, 1913. First of all, I should say by stopping the stupid newspaper from always fomenting race prejudice. This of course, being impossible, I would say, next, by educating the people of Japan so that they will be too intelligently tolerant to respond to any call to race prejudice. And, finally, by realizing, in industry and government, of socialism—which last word is merely a word that stands for the actual application of in the affairs of men of the theory of the Brotherhood of Man.

In the meantime the nations and races are only unruly boys who have not yet grown to the stature of men. So we must expect them to do unruly and boisterous things at times. And, just as boys grow up, so the races of mankind will grow up and laugh when they look back upon their childish quarrels.

In Yukon in 1996, after the City of Whitehorse renamed two streets to honor London and Robert Service, protests over London's racist views forced the city to change the name of "Jack London Boulevard" back to "Two-mile Hill".

**Death Grave of Jack and Charmian London** Many older sources describe London's death as a suicide, and some still do. This conjecture appears to be a rumor, or speculation based on incidents in his fiction writings. His death certificate gives the cause as uremia, following acute renal colic, a type of pain often described as "the worst pain [...] ever experienced", commonly caused by kidney stones. Uremia is also known as uremic poisoning. London died November 22, 1916, in a sleeping porch in a cottage on his ranch. He was in extreme pain and taking morphine, and it is possible that a morphine overdose, accidental or deliberate, may have contributed to his death. The biographer Stasz writes, "Following London's death, for a number of reasons, a biographical myth developed in which he has been portrayed as an alcoholic womanizer who committed suicide. Recent scholarship based upon firsthand documents challenges this caricature."

London's fiction featured suicides. In his autobiographical novel *Martin Eden*, the protagonist commits suicide by drowning. In his autobiographical memoir

*John Barleycorn*, he claims, as a youth, to have drunkenly stumbled overboard into the San Francisco Bay, "some maundering fancy of going out with the tide suddenly obsessed me". He said he drifted and nearly succeeded in drowning before sobering up and being rescued by fishermen. In the dénouement of *The Little Lady of the Big House*, the heroine, confronted by the pain of a mortal gunshot wound, undergoes a physician-assisted suicide by morphine.<sup>9</sup>

London had been a robust man but had suffered several serious illnesses, including scurvy in the Klondike. At the time of his death, he suffered from dysentery and uremia. During travels on the *Snark*, he and Charmian may have picked up unspecified tropical infections. Most biographers, including Russ Kingman, now agree he died of uremia aggravated by an accidental morphine overdose.

London's ashes were buried, together with those of his second wife Charmian (who died in 1955), in Jack London State Historic Park, in Glen Ellen, California. The simple grave is marked only by a mossy boulder.

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<sup>9</sup> The New York Times, story datelined Santa Rosa, Cal., Nov. 22; appeared November 24, 1916, p. 13. States he died "at 7:45 o'clock tonight," and says he was "born in San Francisco on January 12, 1876."

**1.3 Working on short stories** Western writer and historian Dale L. Walker writes: ...London's true métier was the short story .... London's true genius lay in the short form, 7,500 words and under, where the flood of images in his teeming brain and the innate power of his narrative gift were at once constrained and freed. His stories that run longer than the magic 7,500 generally—but certainly not always—could have benefited from self-editing.

London's "strength of utterance" is at its height in his stories, and they are painstakingly well-constructed. "To Build a Fire" is the best known of all his stories. Set in the harsh Klondike, it recounts the haphazard trek of a new arrival that has ignored an old-timer's warning about the risks of traveling alone. Falling through the ice into a creek in seventy-five-below weather, the unnamed man is keenly aware that survival depends on his untested skills at quickly building a fire to dry his clothes and warm his extremities. After publishing a tame version of this story—with a sunny outcome—in *The Youth's Companion* in 1902, London offered a second, more severe take on the man's predicament in *The Century Magazine* in 1908. Reading both provides an illustration of London's growth and maturation as a writer. As "Labor" (1994) observes: "To compare the two versions is itself an instructive lesson in what distinguished a great work of literary art from a good children's story."<sup>10</sup>

Other stories from the Klondike period include: "All Gold Canyon", about a battle between a gold prospector and a claim jumper; "The Law of Life", about an aging American Indian man abandoned by his tribe and left to die; "Love of Life", about a trek by a prospector across the Canadian tundra; "To the Man on Trail," which tells the story of a prospector fleeing the Mounted Police in a sled race, and raises the question of the contrast between written law and morality;

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<sup>10</sup> London, Jack (1917) "Eight Factors of Literary Success", in Labor (1994)

and "An Odyssey of the North," which raises questions of conditional morality, and paints a sympathetic portrait of a man of mixed White and Aleut ancestry.

London was a boxing fan and an avid amateur boxer. "A Piece of Steak" is a tale about a match between older and younger boxers. It contrasts the differing experiences of youth and age but also raises the social question of the treatment of aging workers. "The Mexican" combines boxing with a social theme, as a young Mexican endures an unfair fight and ethnic prejudice in order to earn money with which to aid the revolution.

Numerous stories of London would today be classified as science fiction. "The Unparalleled Invasion" describes germ warfare against China; "Goliath" revolves around an irresistible energy weapon; "The Shadow and the Flash" is a tale about two brothers who take different routes to achieving invisibility; "A Relic of the Pliocene" is a tall tale about an encounter of a modern-day man with a mammoth. "The Red One" is a late story from a period when London was intrigued by the theories of the psychiatrist and writer Jung. It tells of an island tribe held in thrall by an extraterrestrial object. His dystopian novel, *The Iron Heel*, meets the contemporary definition of soft science fiction. Some nineteen original collections of short stories were published during London's brief life or shortly after his death. There have been numerous posthumous anthologies drawn from this pool of nineteen books. Many of these collections have been themed around the locales of the Klondike and the Pacific. A collection of *Jack London's San Francisco Stories* was published in October 2010 by Sydney Samizdat Press.

**Nonfiction and autobiographical memoirs** He was commissioned to write *The People of the Abyss* (1903), an exposé of the slum conditions in which the poor lived in the capital of the British Empire. *The Road* (1907) is a series of tales and reminiscences of London's hobo days. It relates the tricks that hoboes used to evade train crews, and reminisces about his travels with Kelly's Army. He

credits his story-telling skill to the hobo's necessity of concocting tales to coax meals from sympathetic strangers.

London's autobiographical book of "alcoholic memoirs", John Barleycorn, was published in 1913. Recommended by Alcoholics Anonymous, it depicts the outward and inward life of an alcoholic. The passages depicting his interior mental state, which he called the "White Logic", are among his strongest and most evocative writing. The question must, however, be raised: is it truly against alcohol, or a love hymn to alcohol? He makes alcohol sound exciting, dangerous, comradely, glamorous, manly. In the end, when he sums it up, this is the total he comes up with: ...And so I pondered my problem. I should not care to revisit all these fair places of the world except in the fashion I visited them before. Glass in hand! There is a magic in the phrase. It means more than all the words in the dictionary can be made to mean. It is a habit of mind to which I have been trained all my life. It is now part of the stuff that composes me. I like the bubbling play of wit, the chesty laughs, the resonant voices of men, when, glass in hand, they shut the grey world outside and prod their brains with the fun and folly of an accelerated pulse. ....No, I decided; I shall take my drink on occasion. London does, however, show his strong support for the abolition of alcohol from civilized society, as if it were the culmination of social progress. He consistently blames his alcohol problem as the manifestation of alcohol's ubiquitous availability and of the social establishments which provide it. He provides imagery of John Barleycorn as a well which should be covered up, lest children fall into its dangerous depths.

As nonfiction, John Barleycorn should be taken with a grain of salt. Memoirist Joseph Noel (who is quite unflattering toward London) quotes a friend of London's as saying: ....Jack has a right to put out as his life story anything he likes, but he lays himself open to just criticism to those who know, when he draws on his imagination for his facts. If he is writing fiction, as in "Martin Eden", that is all right... This "John Barleycorn" of his, however, is not disguised. It is put out as fact. It tells who Jack London is, and of his bouts with

liquor, and his reactions. Nearly every line of it provokes thought, but the incidents in many cases are untrue. I know them to be untrue. They are like spurious coins found in a cash drawer supposed to contain good money.

The Cruise of the Snark (1911) is a memoir of London's 1907-1909 voyages across the Pacific. In 1906, he began to build a 45-foot (14 m) yacht on which he planned a round-the-world voyage, to last seven years. After many delays, Jack and Charmian London and a small crew sailed out of San Francisco Bay on April 23, 1907, bound for the South Pacific. His descriptions of "surf-riding", which he dubbed a "royal sport", helped introduce it to and popularize it with the mainland. London writes: .....Through the white crest of a breaker suddenly appears a dark figure, erect, a man-fish or a sea-god, on the very forward face of the crest where the top falls over and down, driving in toward shore, buried to his loins in smoking spray, caught up by the sea and flung landward, bodily, a quarter of a mile. It is a Kanaka on a surf-board. And I know that when I have finished these lines I shall be out in that riot of colour and pounding surf, trying to bit those breakers even as he, and failing as he never failed, but living life as the best of us may live it. The journey was also met with danger as London recounts an earlier incident near Laulasi Island Solomon Islands: ..."He(Captain Mackenzie) believed in kindness. He also contended that better confidence was established by carrying no weapons. On his second trip to Malaita, recruiting,he ran into Bina, which is near LangaLanga Lagoon(Malaita). The rifles, with which the boat's-crew should have been armed, were locked up in his cabin. When the whale-boat went ashore after recruits, he paraded around the deck without even a revolver on him. He was tomahawked. His head remains in Malaita. It was suicide". The Log of the Snark states: "..still bore the tomahawk marks where the Malaitans at Langa Langa several months before broke in for the trove of rifles and ammunition locked therein, after bloodily slaughtering Jansen's predecessor, Captain Mackenzie. The burning of the vessel was somehow prevented by the black crew, but this was so unprecedented that the

owner feared some complicity between them and the attacking party. However, it could not be proved.....

## Chapter II

### I would rather be ashes than dust!.....

**2.1 Novels Jack writing** 1905 London's most famous novels are *The Call of the Wild*, *White Fang*, *The Sea-Wolf*, *The Iron Heel*, and *Martin Eden*. In a letter dated Dec 27, 1901, London's Macmillan publisher George Platt Brett, Sr. said "he believed Jack's fiction represented 'the very best kind of work' done in America." Critic Maxwell Geismar called *The Call of the Wild* "a beautiful prose poem;" editor Franklin Walker said that it "belongs on a shelf with *Walden* and *Huckleberry Finn*"; and novelist E.L. Doctorow called it "a mordant parable ... his masterpiece." The historian Dale L. Walker commented: Jack London was an uncomfortable novelist, that form too long for his natural impatience and the quickness of his mind. His novels, even the best of them, are hugely flawed. Critics have said his novels are episodic and resemble a linked series of short stories. Walker writes: ...The *Star Rover*, that magnificent experiment, is actually a series of short stories connected by a unifying device ... *Smoke Bellew* is a series of stories bound together in a novel-like form by their reappearing protagonist, Kit Bellew; and *John Barleycorn* ... is a synoptic series of short episodes. Ambrose Bierce said of *The Sea-Wolf* that "the great thing—and it is among the greatest of things—is that tremendous creation, Wolf Larsen ... the hewing out and setting up of such a figure is enough for a man to do in one lifetime." However, he noted, "The love element, with its absurd suppressions, and impossible proprieties, is awful." *The Iron Heel* is interesting as an example of a dystopian novel that anticipates and influenced George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London's socialist politics are explicitly on display here.

**Apocrypha. Jack London Credo** London's literary executor, Irving Shepard, quoted a "Jack London Credo" in an introduction to a 1956 collection of London stories:

*...I would rather be ashes than dust!*

*I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze*

*than it should be stifled by dry-rot.*

*I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet.*

*The function of man is to live, not to exist.*

*I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them.*

*I shall use my time.*

The biographer Stasz notes that the passage "has many marks of London's style" but the only line that could be safely attributed to London was the first. The words Shepard quoted were from a story in the *San Francisco Bulletin*, December 2, 1916 by journalist Ernest J. Hopkins, who visited the ranch just weeks before London's death. Stasz notes "Even more so than today journalists' quotes were unreliable or even sheer inventions" and says no direct source in London's writings has been found.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Stasz, Clarice (2001). "Jack (John Griffith) London"

**“The Scab” Main article: Strikebreaker** A short diatribe on "The Scab" is often quoted within the U.S. labor movement and frequently attributed to London. It opens: After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab. A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumor of rotten principles. When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs and Angels weep in Heaven, and the Devil shuts the gates of hell to keep him out...."

This passage figured in a 1974 Supreme Court case, in which Justice Thurgood Marshall quoted the passage in full and referred to it as "a well-known piece of trade union literature, generally attributed to author Jack London." A union newsletter had published a "list of scabs," which was granted to be factual and therefore not libelous, but then went on to quote the passage as the "definition of a scab." The case turned on the question of whether the "definition" was defamatory. The court ruled that "Jack London's... 'Definition of a scab' is merely rhetorical hyperbole, a lusty and imaginative expression of the contempt felt by union members towards those who refuse to join," and as such was not libelous and was protected under the First Amendment.

The passage does not seem to appear in London's published work. He once gave a speech entitled "The Scab", which he published in his book *The War of the Classes*, but this speech contains nothing similar to the "corkscrew soul" quotation and is completely different from it in content, style, and tone. Generally London did *not* use demotic language in his writing except in dialogue spoken by his characters.

In 1913 and 1914, a number of newspapers printed a passage virtually identical to the first three sentences of the "scab" diatribe, except that the type of individual being vilified varies: God uses the awful substance to make, not a "scab," but a "knocker," or a "stool pigeon," or a "scandal monger." A 1913 Fort Worth newspaper columnist quotes the "Rule Review" as saying "After God had

finished making the rattlesnake, the toad and the vampire, He had some awful substance left, with which he made the knocker." A Macon, Georgia paper published three full sentences of the definition of a "knocker." A 1914 Duluth newspaper article, reporting on a trial, has the defense using this passage as a definition of a "stool pigeon." In 1914 the *New Age Magazine*, quoted a paragraph from *The Eastern Star*, another Masonic publication. This passage, too, is virtually identical to the first three sentences of the "Scab" diatribe, except that it defines the "scandal monger."

**Might is Right** Anton LaVey's Church of Satan claims that "RagnarRedbeard", pseudonymous author of the 1896 book *Might is Right*, was London. No London biographers mention any such possibility. Rodger Jacobs published an essay ridiculing this theory, arguing that in 1896 London was unfamiliar with philosophers heavily cited by "Redbeard", such as Nietzsche, and had not even begun to develop his mature literary style.

**B. Traven** ..... The enigmatic novelist B. Traven, best known in the U.S. as the author of *The Death Ship* (1926) and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1927), was hailed as "the German Jack London". Traven kept his identity secret during his life. Almost every commentator on Traven mentions in passing a fanciful speculation that Traven actually was London. It is not clear whether this suggestion was ever made seriously. No London biographer has even bothered to mention it. Any serious assertion that London authored Traven's best-known novels would need to reconcile their publication dates with London's death certificate, which states that London died in 1916. Supporters of this theory suggest that London only pretended to have died. The identification of Traven with London is one of many such speculations—another unlikely one being Ambrose Bierce. In a 1990 interview Traven's widow identified Traven as Ret Marut, a left-wing revolutionary in Germany during World War I<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dale L. Walker, "Jack London: The Stories", *The World of Jack London*

## **Novels**

The Cruise of the Dazzler (1902)

A Daughter of the Snows (1902)

The Call of the Wild (1903)

The Kempton-Wace Letters (1903)

**(published anonymously, co-authored with Anna Strunsky)**

The Sea-Wolf (1904)

The Game (1905)

White Fang (1906)

The Iron Heel (1908)

Martin Eden (1909)

Burning Daylight (1910)

Adventure (1911)

The Scarlet Plague (1912)

A Son of the Sun (1912)

The Abysmal Brute (1913)

The Valley of the Moon (1913)

The Mutiny of the Elsinore (1914)

The Star Rover (1915)

**(published in England as The Jacket)**

The Little Lady of the Big House (1916)

Jerry of the Islands (1917)

Michael, Brother of Jerry (1917)

Hearts of Three (1920)

**(novelization of a movie script by Charles Goddard)**

The Assassination Bureau, Ltd (1963)

**(left half-finished, completed by Robert L. Fish)**

Short story collections

Son of the Wolf (1900)

Chris Farrington, Able Seaman (1901)

Children of the Frost (1902)

Tales of the Fish Patrol (1906)

Lost Face (1910)

South Sea Tales (1911)

The House of Pride & Other Tales of Hawaii (1912)

Smoke Bellew (1912)

The Turtles of Tasman (1916)

On the Makaloa Mat (1919)

**Autobiographical memoirs**

The Road at Project Gutenberg (1907)

John Barleycorn (etext) at Project Gutenberg (1913)

Nonfiction and essays

The People of the Abyss (1903)

Revolution, and other Essays (1910)

The Cruise of the Snark (1911)

## **Short stories**

- "A Curious Fragment" (1908)
- "A Piece of Steak" (1909)
- "A Relic of the Pliocene" (1901)
- "A Thousand Deaths" (1899)
- "An Odyssey of the North" (1900)
- "All Gold Canyon" (1905)
- "Aloha Oe" (1908)
- "Diable—A Dog" (1902), renamed Bâtard in 1904
- "Before Adam" (1907)
- "By The Turtles of Tasman"
- "Even unto Death" (1900)
- "Goliah" (1910)
- "Good-by, Jack" (1909)
- "In a Far Country" (1899)
- "In the Forests of the North" (1902)
- "Keesh, Son of Keesh" (1902)
- "Love of Life" (1905)
- "Moon-Face" (1902)
- "Negore the Coward" (1904)
- "Samuel" (1909)
- "South of the Slot" (1909)
- "That Spot" (1908)
- "The Apostate" (1906)
- "The Chinago" (1909)

"The Death of Ligoun" (1902)

"The Dream of Debs" (1909)

"The Dominant Primordial Beast" (1903)

"The Enemy of All the World" (1908)

"The God of His Fathers" (1901)

"The Heathen" (1908)

"The King of Mazy May" (1899)

"The Law of Life" (1901)

"The Leopard Man's Story" (1903)

"The Madness of John Harned"

"The Man With the Gash" (1900)

"The Mexican" (1911)

"The Minions of Midas" (1901)

"The One Thousand Dozen" (1903)

"The Red One" (1918)

"The Rejuvenation of Major Rathbone" (1899)

"The Scarlet Plague" (1912)

"The Seed of McCoy" (1909)

"The Shadow and the Flash" (1903)

"The Strength of the Strong" (1911)

"The Sun-Dog Trail" (1905)

"The Unparalleled Invasion" (1910)

"The White Silence" (1899)

"To Build a Fire" (1902, revised 1908)

"Told in the Drooling Ward" (1910)

"War" (1911)

"When the World was Young" (1910)

"Who Believes in Ghosts!" (1895)

## **Plays**

Theft (1910)

Daughters of the Rich: A One Act Play (1915)

The Acorn Planter: a California Forest Play (1916)

**Legacy and honors** Mount London, also known as Boundary Peak 100, on the Alaska-British Columbia boundary, in the Boundary Ranges of the Coast Mountains of British Columbia, is named for him.

A leftist artists' club in Newark, New Jersey, was named after him. Jack London Square on the waterfront of Oakland, California was named for him.

He was honored by the United States Postal Service with a 25¢ Great Americans series postage stamp.

The mascot for Sonoma State University is a Seawolf named after his adventure novel Sea-Wolf. The mascot is a Seawolf because of the ties London had to Sonoma County.

Jack London Lake (Russian: Озеро Джека Лондона), a mountain lake located in the upper reaches of the Kolyma River in Yagodninsky district of Magadan Oblast.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <http://london.sonoma.edu/Documents/I0040981.html>

## 2.2 Jack London's 'frozen' stories

**“White Fang”**..... This article displays (disambiguation) *White Fang* a novel by Jack London. First serialized in *Outing* magazine, it was published in 1906. The story takes place in Yukon Territory, Canada, during the Klondike Gold Rush at the end of the 19th-century, and details a wild wolf dog's journey to domestication. *White Fang* is a companion novel (and a thematic mirror) to London's best-known work, *The Call of the Wild*, which concerns a kidnapped, domesticated dog turning into a wild animal.

Much of the novel is written from the view-point of his canine character, enabling London to explore how animals view their world and how they view humans. *White Fang* examines the violent world of wild animals and the equally violent world of humans. The book also explores complex themes including morality and redemption.

*White Fang* has been adapted for the screen numerous times, including a live-action Disney film in 1991 starring Ethan Hawke.

### **“To Build a Fire”**.....

The following entry presents criticism on London's short story “To Build a Fire” (1902). Introduction “To Build a Fire” (1902) is one of London's most redoubtable and frequently anthologized short stories. The initial version of the story appeared in *Youth's Companion* in 1902 but was considered strictly a children's cautionary tale. A revised version of the tale was published in *Century* in 1908 and collected in London's volume of short fiction entitled *Lost Face* in

1910. Both versions of the story concern man's struggle for survival in nature, but the latter incarnation of the narrative ends in the death of the protagonist, which signals man's defeat by nature as he freezes to death in the Alaskan wilderness.

**Four stories** in *The Son of the Wolf*, "The White Silence," the title story, "To the Man on Trail," and "The Wisdom of the Trail," illustrate the implications of disobedience to the law. In each story, at issue is whether rules are in alignment with principles. In "The White Silence," the Malemute Kid, traveling with Mason and Ruth, Mason's pregnant Indian wife, must decide to kill the mortally injured Mason in order to save himself and Ruth. Mason slips into a coma, and the Kid must consider the alignment of the legal rule against homicide with the principle of preserving three lives, including Ruth's unborn baby, against saving one. In the end, the Kid contrives to catapult Mason's body into an "aerial sepulcher . . ." simultaneously with his death shot to Mason. The simultaneity of the Kid's act, which one may say eclipses the issue of his guilt, reinforces that the law must serve those who submit to it, even if their submission means their technical disobedience to rules.

In the book's title story, "Scruff" Mackenzie presses his suit for Zarinka, the daughter of Chief Thling-Tinneh. In this "meeting of the stone age and the steel", Scruff at first does obey the tribe's legal rules by offering gifts. However, when his suit is unsuccessful, he creates his own rules by disobeying the old ones: "Listen to the Law of the Wolf: Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf the forfeit shall ten of his people pay". Because Mackenzie then successfully takes Zarinka, his imperialism changes the law of the tribe - a solution that a current reader may find particularly obnoxious. Nonetheless, one might at least say that Mackenzie's triumph reestablishes the process of competition when status, here in the Chief's law, hinders individual goals and no longer furthers collective development.

London's Christmas story, "To the Man on Trail," demonstrates the triumph of the Klondike's law. London assembles the Malemute Kid, Big Jim Belden, and

others; when a stranger, Jack Westondale, enters, the Kid recognizes him from a description by Sitka Charley. Westondale shows pictures of his wife and rests; refreshed and provisioned, he leaves. Fifteen minutes later a policeman enters in search of Westondale, who has stolen forty-thousand dollars from Harry McFarland's gambling business. Taking their cue from the Kid, the men are uncooperative, and the policeman leaves without the advantages given Westondale. Explaining his actions, the Kid reasons that "honesty, above all, was man's prime jewel" (: it seems Westondale had given his whole load, forty-thousand dollars, to Joe Castrell to invest in the ultimately rich Dominion stake. Castrell, however, had lost the money in gambling at McFarland's while Westondale had tended his partner who was stricken with scurvy. The question, then, is how the law serves both Westondale and society. In the end, as it is in "The White Silence," the law must serve those who submit to it, for Westondale has stolen only what he had unjustly lost. Indeed, one feels in this Christmas story the stature and decency of Westondale. He is six-foot two, two Colt revolvers and a hunting knife strapped to him, with a "smooth-shaven face nipped by the cold to a gleaming pink . . . he seemed, of a verity, the Frost King . . .". In all, the immediate understanding between him and the Kid demonstrates the justice that the process of competition sustains. Last, "The Wisdom of the Trail" illustrates that the law must, after all, involve tangible penalties. London begins the story: "Sitka Charley had achieved the impossible. Other Indians might have known as much of the wisdom of the trail as did he; but he alone knew the white man's wisdom, the honor of the trail, and the law". As a result of his knowledge, Charley finds himself in a position in which he must judge whether to execute the Indians Kah-Chucte and Gowhee. Both Kah-Chucte and Gowhee, who are "beyond the pale of the honor and the law . . .", have stolen from the common share. The law, which protects those who submit to it, also exposes those who do not. After Kah-Chucte and Gowhee acknowledge their crime, Charley executes them just as another party arrives. Noting their arrival, Charley "smile[s] viciously at the wisdom of the trail . . .". McClintock explains: Sitka Charlie can live in an ambivalent situation; the individual and the

code may be limited but he has a sense of dignity and inner worth. Killing, although destructive, is partially redemptive. Not only killing by the code, but dying by it as well, provides a measure of salvation.<sup>14</sup>

McClintock's argument centers on the limitations of people if they are to survive - in a sense, only if they are capable of making efficient, untroubled, and sometimes violent decisions. McClintock is correct, for Charley knows that to mitigate Kah-Chucte and Gowhee's punishment would undermine the Klondike's law. In competition, again, people must first submit to the rules; only later may they come to consider larger consequences. However ironic the arrival of the "Men of the Yukon" might seem, Charley knows that he has judged fairly.

London's stories in *The Son of the Wolf* that treat the misapprehension of individuals and judges demonstrate that the law needs to adapt to changing social needs. In a system of religion that illuminates that of the law, the alteration of rules is at issue in "The Priestly Prerogative." Father (Paul) Roubreau must decide whether Grace Bentham, married to the weak Edwin, may escape with the man whom she loves, Clyde Wharton. Grace reasons: "My misery with him [Edwin] has been great. Why should it be greater?". Father Roubreau does not relent, however, reasoning that Grace and Clyde would have an unhappy life of illegitimate love and children. Nonetheless, the Father perhaps misapprehends his principle-bound role as a judge, for Grace's case is not easily categorized. The Father's rigid sense of rules, in other words, is not necessarily in alignment with the principles of his religion, for the substance of his religion should bring individuals peace. When the scene shifts to a few weeks later and the Father is fishing with the Malemute Kid, the Father wonders if he was correct, after all, to decide as he did.

Like "The Priestly Prerogative," the last story in *The Son of the Wolf*, "An Odyssey of the North," shows that London demanded that law work for society. Naass, whom the Malemute Kid and Prince call "Ulysses" in this framed story,

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<sup>14</sup>(1910) "Specialty of Short-story Writing", *The Writer*, XXII, January–Dec.

recounts his travails in recapturing his fairly won bride, Unga, from an invading white man. Naass follows the white man and Unga to the south and then to the remote corners of the globe. They finally meet again in Dawson and Naass, unrecognized by the couple, becomes their guide. He is, essentially, outside the law in seeking direct revenge. The results are grotesque. He takes the couple to a remote cabin, keeping hidden enough food for himself; when he has reduced the two to an animal-like state, revenge would seem to be his. However, after Naass stabs the white man, Unga decides to stay with her dying husband. Prince calls the whole story one of "murder," but the Kid responds, "There be things greater than our wisdom beyond justice". The point, here, is that those things remain undefinable, for the case clearly transcends the law's boundaries.

In its emphasis on the potential alignment of rules with principles, London's Klondike is a world in which justice is possible. Given this possibility, one may contest McClintock's thesis that "Pessimism is the pervasive mood of *The Son of the Wolf*". Rather than being a pessimist, or even a red-in-the-tooth naturalist, London simply took a harsh environment and showed why and how it often compelled people to define better their society. The result, London shows in his stories, can even foster the process of competition and, with it, a bridge between the theory and practice of the law.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Wilcox, Earl. "'The Kipling of the Klondike': Naturalism in London's Early Klondike Fiction." *Jack London Newsletter* 6 (1973): 1-12.

**2.3 Major Themes** As with most of London's fiction, the central motif of “To Build a Fire” concerns the struggle of man versus nature. While some critics maintain that the protagonist of the story dies due to a lack of intuition or imagination, unable to conceive of the possibility of his own death, others assert that he dies as a result of panic and the failure of his rational faculties. The protagonist's dangerous expedition—taken against the advice of experienced prospectors—and his superciliousness in assuming he will prevail are regarded as important themes in the story. Some critics assert that London's moral is that by using reason instead of intuition, modern man has allowed his primal instincts to atrophy. The theme of rebirth is also suggested, as the man realizes his mistakes and accepts his death with dignity. The repetitive nature of London's imagery and language functions to create an atmosphere of doom and loneliness. Some commentators suggest that this milieu also signals the inevitable fate of the protagonist, as the young man eventually freezes to death.

**Critical Reception** Most critics consider the 1908 version of “To Build a Fire” as a masterpiece of naturalist fiction. It is certainly one of most anthologized short stories produced by an American author. Some reviewers have noted that the story exhibits many of the Aristotelian concepts of tragedy. Other critics perceive the protagonist as an Everyman who is punished for his transgression of natural laws and the unwritten code of the wilderness. A few reviewers regard the protagonist and his canine companion as archetypal characters. The dog is viewed as the foil to the young man, as the animal displays the instinct and wisdom that the man lacks. Commentators have analyzed the significance of the symbolism in the setting, particularly the whiteness of the landscape and the absence of sunlight. The story has also been praised for its vivid narrative, its graphic description of physical action, and its dramatic sense of irony.

**The Nonfiction of Jack London** ....My passion for Jack London and his work was born on my tenth birthday when my father presented me with a collection of London's short stories..... shares Daniel J. Wichlan. I vividly remember staying awake all that night reading "To Build a Fire", "A Piece of Steak", "Samuel" and other stories. Since that time, I have read and reread his complete fiction many times. Years later, having exhausted the fiction and having become obsessively curious about Jack London, the man, I began to read everything about him and by him that I had not already read. It became my super ordinate goal to read every word that London had written. What I had not already read consisted primarily of his nonfiction. My curiosity was further piqued by the fact that the complete nonfiction had not been previously collected and its extent was the subject of widely varying speculation. Finally, it occurred to me that the collected complete nonfiction would be a surrogate for the autobiography that London had planned to write but never did. (London had intended to call his autobiography "Sailor on Horseback" which Irving Stone later "borrowed" for the title of his London biography.) My passion for London and the challenge of identifying and collecting his complete nonfiction combined to inspire me to spend much of my discretionary time over the last twenty-four years on this mission. I may very well be the only person who has read every word that Jack London wrote for publication.<sup>16</sup>

The scope of my research included thousands of publications and dozens of libraries, archives and private collections. I soon discovered works that did not appear in any of the existing bibliographies. This lead me to research newspaper files in cities across the United States and around the world that London had visited. This research yielded articles that were not otherwise available and some that were not previously documented. This research also raised the question as to when all of the nonfiction has been identified. My claim may sound boastful, but the rigors of my research have yielded nothing new during the past few

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<sup>16</sup> (1910) "Specialty of Short-story Writing", *The Writer*, XXII, January–December 1910

years, such that I am highly confident that I have identified very nearly all of the nonfiction, if not all of it.

Another of the difficulties in compiling London's complete nonfiction is the curious fact that many of his articles were reprinted under different titles. An extreme case of this is London's essay on surfing in Hawaii which was originally published as "Riding the South Sea Surf" in the October, 1907 edition of *Woman's Home Companion* and which was subsequently reprinted under six different titles ("Joys of the Surf Rider", "Surfing at Waikiki", "A Royal Sport", "Psychology of the Surf Board", "Learning to Ride the Surf Board", and "Taming the Monsters"). In fact, there are a total of 230 articles that are reprints of original works under variant titles. Therefore, after collecting works by London, a critical step became cross-referencing the content. Great care was required here, because many of the reprinted works with variant titles are excerpts from the original work and a paragraph by paragraph or even a sentence by sentence comparison was often required to identify duplicate content. Although London was a prolific writer, he was less prolific, with his nonfiction, than he first appears because of this practice of reprinting under different titles.

The nonfiction of Jack London represents a significant, although neglected, segment of his work. "Significant" because it consists of over 500 articles, essays, lectures, public letters and other categorizations that address a variety of important social and political issues of his day and ours -- labor laws, unionism, equal rights for women, divorce, child rearing, prison reform, capital punishment, war, racism, population control, conservation, animal rights, poverty, homelessness, addiction, epidemic disease, political reform, religion, capitalism and socialism. "Neglected" over half of the articles has not been collected or reprinted.

The significance of London's nonfiction extends to the insight, which it provides into the schema of his fiction. London's nonfiction also demonstrates the breadth

and depth of his thinking and his versatility as a writer. His nonfiction allows us to more clearly interpret his ideas as they emerge through his fiction. The nonfiction also provides a historical context for much of the fiction. Not only does the nonfiction portray socialism during its most influential period, but it also delineates the American psyche during one of the most volatile transitions in our history.

In addition to the categories mentioned above, over 100 newspaper interviews of London have been identified and collected that constitute a special segment of his nonfiction — words spoken for publication as opposed to words written for publication. The interviews include: "How to Get Thirty Cents a Word for What You Write"; "Novelist Tells Journal's Readers How to Write Novel"; "American Fiction Lacking in Courage"; and "Jack London's Call of the Wild Draws Him to Poetry and Song". Interviews such as these are very significant in providing insight to London's philosophy of writing.<sup>17</sup>

The first of these interviews, "How to Get Thirty Cents a Word for What You Write", is of interest because it illustrates the dichotomy under which London labored. In the interview, London talks about how to be commercially successful while implying his own dissatisfaction with that success. In "Novelist Tells Journal's Readers How to Write Novel", he sarcastically talks about a formula approach to commercial writing. In "American Fiction Lacking in Courage", London surveys some of his contemporary writers and literary critics and criticizes them for selecting and praising "safe" themes that avoid the difficult social issues of the day. In the last of these listed interviews, "Jack London's Call of the Wild Draws Him to Poetry and Song", he talks about his passion for poetry and song and how his use of language and descriptions in his masterpiece, *The Call of the Wild*, are influenced by this passion. He goes on to say that he hopes that the success of this book will enable him to devote more time to poetry and song writing. His proclivity for poetry and song is even more

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<sup>17</sup> (1910) "Specialty of Short-story Writing", *The Writer*, XXII, January–December 1910

evident in his parallel and later written novel, *White Fang*, in which there is much more lyricism. Individually and collectively, these interviews enhance our understanding of London's philosophy of writing and provide insight to his inner conflict between meaningful writing and "hack" work and his love-hate relationship with the reading public of his day. These interviews and others pieces of the nonfiction provide a philosophical framework for the fiction.

Again, in John Barleycorn, as in the interview mentioned above, London tells us that poetry was his second love, music being the first. (Writing fiction actually ranked fourth after nonfiction philosophic, economic, and political essays.) He early decided that pursuing a career writing poetry and music was not economically feasible. (My research also identified 53 poems and the lyrics to five songs that London had written.) The lack of a commercial motivation is common to much of London's nonfiction writing as well as his poetry. Because the nonfiction and poetry were less influenced by the demands of the marketplace and because they are more closely aligned with London's creative instinct, they reveal more about the man and the writer. Therefore, reading both the fictional and nonfictional segments of his work is essential to fully understanding him intellectually, emotionally and artistically.

Although London's nonfiction does contain its share of commercial writing (e.g. *The Cruise of the Snark* collection, which was written primarily to finance his world cruise and the Hearst newspaper articles) as a body of work it contains some of his strongest convictions, purest philosophy, and most passionately articulated thoughts. He stated that he put more of himself into *The People of the Abyss* than any of his other books; many consider this book his best nonfiction work. London frequently wrote his nonfiction without any expectation of financial gain and, sometimes, with the threat of financial loss; consider the *Revolution* collection which was published over the protest of his publisher who was concerned that its publication would damage London's reputation with his reading public.

Another work, which demonstrates the conviction behind London's nonfiction, is his introduction to *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* by Alexander Berkman. Although London supported in principle the social and political reform that Berkman proposed in his book, he disagreed with some of the anarchist strategies that Berkman proposed. Therefore, when Berkman asked London to write an introduction, London, wanting to be supportive, agreed; but, in his introduction, he made clear his concerns over the means proposed such that Berkman asked him to revise the text. London refused and his introduction was not used. London later wrote a preface to this introduction in which he recorded his disappointment with the reaction of Berkman and other socialist leaders to his comments. This may have been the prelude to his resignation from the Socialist Party.

The nonfiction not only traces the development of London's politics but also some of his basic values and philosophy. London has been often called a racist. His was not an "Immaculate Conception" and, having grown up in the working class of the Oakland waterfront, he reflected many of the prejudices of that society. It is no surprise that he wrote the racially biased "Salt of the Earth" essay in 1901. However, his 1915 article, "Language of the Tribe", is very much in contrast to this early work. In this article, he proposes founding the Pan-Pacific Club in Hawaii where people of all races can come together to exchange ideas, better understand each other and realize a synergy through their diversity. London's thinking regarding race had changed dramatically as he educated himself and as he traveled throughout the world. London's nonfiction tells us exactly where he stood on the issue of race at different periods of his life. One does not have to interpret the dialogue of fictional characters to make this determination.

As noted above, in *John Barleycorn* London tells us that writing fiction was of less importance to him than writing nonfictional philosophic, economic, and political essays. Therefore, it is no coincidence that London's fiction was often at its best when it had a nonfictional basis — *Martin Eden* is a prime example of

this. Even *The Call of the Wild*, which many consider to be his masterpiece, draws heavily upon his personal experiences in the Yukon. Contrariwise, his "second-hand" fiction (that based on newspaper accounts or plots which he purchased) tends to be his poorest. *The Assassination Bureau, Ltd.*, which he struggled to finish and finally abandoned, is a good example of his lack of inspiration when his writing was not based on his own personal reality. Given London's preference and passion for fact or experiential based writing, it follows that, not only does the nonfiction provide a broader basis on which to assess him as a writer, but also that the nonfiction provides a different and more personal perspective of him as an individual. Therefore, the reading of this body of work provides both a more rigorous framework for interpreting his art and craft and a basis for understanding his psyche.

The nonfiction can be classified into six broad categories. The first of these is literary works consisting of articles and letters about writers and the art and craft of writing; book reviews; and book introductions. The second category relates to political writings largely, but not exclusively, about socialism. The third category focuses on social reform issues such as divorce, child labor, euthanasia, etc. The fourth category is made up of essays relating personal experiences mostly based on his travels. The fifth category is comprised of London's war correspondence and other war related works. The sixth, and last category, consists of sports reporting and other writing about sports including boxing, hunting, football, horseback riding and surfing. Generally, works in the literary, political, social reform and war correspondence categories are less commercial in their orientation than the travel and sports related works and the conviction and passion with which they were written are more evident.

I have long struggled to find a publisher for the complete nonfiction with little success to date. In part this is due to the large volume of text involved — an estimated nine to ten standard size volumes. In order to make the rarer works available to London scholars and aficionados without further delay, I have decided to publish the previously unpublished works and selected uncollected

works on the Jack London website so as to reach the largest portion of the Jack London community in the shortest amount of time. The nonfiction contains a handful of unpublished works that document the genesis of London's social conscience. Two interesting examples are the essays "Principals of the Republican Party" and "Telic Action and Collective Stupidity" which will now be published here for the first time in the first of a series of articles that will publish and discuss previously unpublished and uncollected works by London.

## Conclusion

Reviewing all the research work it is obvious that Jack London, iconic American author, as protagonist, London exposes the fine line between civility and the violence of nature, and the at-times harsh and cruel world created by men in their greed for fame and fortune. Cleverly portraying the animals' point of view *White Fang*(1906) follows similar themes. As the two most popular novels of London's based on his own life experiences in the Yukon, they have inspired numerous authors' works, and adaptations for television and film. During his short lifetime of forty years, London developed great passions for sailing, traveling, ranching, and the wilderness, and his works encompass the myriad interests he embraced to the full.

**Jack London's Racial Lives:** Jack London was a self-avowed proponent of the late Victorian/early 20th century "scientific racialism" supposedly derived from Darwin's theory of evolution. The "scientific racialism" held the superiority of the white race. Nonetheless, London's racial views as depicted and implied in his writings were much more complex; to the point of raising questions about whether London really did believe in "scientific racialism. The U. of Texas English professor Reesman sees this author's racial views conventional among whites of the era as associated with the rough conditions of his childhood, but as demonstrably being considerably modified or even abandoned as London moved to and wrote about far-flung parts of the world. It is in London's fiction, Reesman notes, with the characterizations, settings, interplay of characters, and resolutions of fiction, where his complex feelings and observations about race are most evident.

London was a pioneer in the realistic/naturalistic style of literature coming about in the early 1900s. He wrote journalism about the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the heavyweight championship boxing match pitting the African-American Jack

Johnson against the white man Tommy Burns in 1908, and the Mexican Revolution in 1914. Reesman follows how in London's series of writings on the heavyweight fight, his regard of Johnson underwent a sea change. Settings of London's fiction were the wilderness of Alaska or the Klondike, the remote islands of the South Pacific, or some other unpopulated place where individuals had to use their wits and their strength to survive in direct contact with nature. London's stories drew the interest of movie studios for their adventure and drama of survival.

Reesman relates London's ambivalence and changing views toward race as a sequence of "homes" corresponding to the actual homes the writer lived in different parts of the world. The organization of her book is thus biographical, not thematic or theoretical reflecting some school of literary critique. This seems only natural considering London's rootedness in journalism and naturalism. The literary critique places London alongside Conrad and Kipling as a late Victorian/early 20th century white author whose works shed much light on the era's insubstantial, largely fanciful theories of white superiority and portray alternate views on other races inhabiting the settings of their books.

Rich and multicolored is the poetical world of Jack London—fierce and cruel, full of breakdowns and hopes, defeats and victories, inhabited by people for whom life is a constant overcoming, and who value duty, honor, and justice more than life. His books are deeply realistic but, at the same time, are imbued with romanticism. London wrote about the sufferings of human beings and about their steadfastness, about selfless love and passionate hate, about striving to build a just society on earth. Books of this writer are full of sympathy for laboring people, for people of high dignity and courage; London condemned any exploitation of one human being by another.

London's brave heroes inspired soldiers of World War II (Great Patriotic War, for Russians) and they continue to influence the lives of our contemporaries. A talented storyteller, a romanticist, a dramatist, and a journalist, Jack London is interesting for all ages: young readers are carried away by his Northern short

stories, sea novels, his stories about animals, and novels like *The Sea-Wolf* and *White Fang*; adults are fascinated not only by London's stories, but also by his essays, and, of course, by his novels *The Iron Heel*, *Martin Eden*, *The Little Lady of the Big House*, and many others. In the Soviet Union, the works of Jack London hold a peculiar supremacy among translated literature—more than 90 million copies of his books, translated into 33 languages of the nations inhabiting the former USSR, have been published in our country. One will not find a library, even the most modest private library, which does not include his romantic, yet sometimes harsh works. Books of Jack London are being published again and again in France, England, Finland, Japan, India, Denmark, and other countries. A survey conducted in the United States in 1915 indicated the great popularity of the author in his native country. His novella *The Call of the Wild* has been voted by the majority to be the best among his stories about animals. Before *Adam* has been recognized as the best among science fiction stories, and *The Sea-Wolf* ranked second among the sea novels, the first place being reserved for Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

American literary scholars and critics have acknowledged that, in the first decade of this century, Jack London was one of the most famous writers in the United States. "He has really been a king among our fiction writers," declared famous American author Upton Sinclair in *Mammonart*, "and the brightest star that has ever shined on our horizon. He combined tremendous talent with the great mind."

Jack London, a well known American author, has written a fair share of truly classic works. *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* are staples of middle and high school reading requirements. His other novels, such as *The People of the Abyss* and *Sea Wolf* are not as well known, but are still regarded as brilliant pieces of literature by many scholars. Lesser known are his many volumes of short stories; "To Build a Fire" being the most popular. I cannot say that I have read even a small percentage of London's works, but from what I have read, I noticed some recurring similarities.

During the semester in class, we have learned how authors utilize various elements of writing to make their point more prominent. For Jack London's earlier works, his Yukon setting and rugged, adventurous characters appear quite frequently.

It becomes clear that London did this to enable the use of survival as the story's theme. Put the characters in a different setting, and what do you have? It's not going to take much to survive in a tropical island, grasslands, or jungle. In these places, food and water are readily available, and you don't have the extreme elements to deal with. The only other setting that could be as barren and harsh as the Yukon would be a desert or possibly the sea; another setting London loved to write about. One look at London's biography can tell you why he chose the Yukon over the desert-London spent an entire year when he was younger looking for gold in the Yukon and also spent much of his life at sea. The experiences he had here obviously influenced him greatly.

To further show his theme of survival, London chose to use strong, hardy characters. Again, when asked why this is, there wouldn't be a story if the character was any other way. Because of the harsh realm of the setting, the characters must be suited to walk the tight rope of life and death. If the character was too weak, he would die easily, and the story would be pointless. If he was too strong, he would seem inhuman to the reader, and the reader wouldn't be able to connect with the characters. London knew that he must use people that were neither extraordinary nor frail. This enables the reader to relate to the characters, while remaining in awe of them. London used not only the physical setting, but the man's mental setting to make his situation even bleaker.

The protagonist's lack of respect for nature and inability to step back and pay attention to the details surrounding his situation ultimately lead to his demise.

"The protagonist does not wish to die, but he lacks the 'love of life' that would force him to struggle to the end." London writes that the man "drowns off into

what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known." This clearly contrasts the main character in "Love of Life."

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## GLOSSARY:

- 1. Conviction**- noun [countable/uncountable] conviction noun a decision by a court of law that someone is guilty of a crime 1 [countable/uncountable] a decision by a court of law that someone is guilty of a crime. The conviction of three youths was later overturned by the Court of Appeals. She has a conviction for dangerous driving. Conviction noun [countable] conviction noun a strong belief or opinion about something 2 [countable] a strong belief or opinion about something. She holds deep religious convictions.
- 2. Widespread** - adjective happening or existing in many places, or affecting many people happening or existing in many places, or affecting many people the widespread use of antibiotics. The project has received widespread public support. These facilities are becoming more widespread in urban areas.
- 3. Controversial** - adjective controversial adjective a controversial subject, opinion, or decision is one that people disagree about or do not approve of a controversial subject, opinion, or decision is one that people disagree about or do not approve of controversial plans to build a new motor way a controversial issue/topic/proposal/decision. We tried to stay away from controversial topics at the dinner party. Controversial adjective controversial adjective sometimes used about a person, especially a person in public life a sometimes used about a person, especially a person in public life. The president's wife was a powerful and controversial figure.
- 4. Unique** - adjective unique adjective very special, unusual, or good 1 very special, unusual, or good. You will be given the unique opportunity to study with one of Europe's top chefs. Unique adjective unique adjective not the same as anything or anyone else 2 not the same as anything or anyone else. Each person's DNA is unique. They have a totally unique approach to staff training.
- 5. Supremacy** - noun [uncountable] supremacy noun a situation in which one person, group, or thing has more power or influence than any other a situation in which one person, group, or thing has more power or influence than any other. Rival gangs battled for supremacy.

- 6. Verify** –verb [transitive] formal verify verb to check or to prove that something is true or correct to check or to prove that something is true or correct. There was no way to verify his claims. Verify  
verb[transitive]formal verify verb to say that something is true or correct a to say that something is true or correct. His story has been verified by other witnesses.
- 7. Racism**- noun [uncountable] racism noun a way of behaving or thinking that shows that you do not like or respect people who belong to races that are different from your own and that you believe your race is better than others a way of behaving or thinking that shows that you do not like or respect people who belong to races that are different from your own and that you believe your race is better than others. They promised to continue the struggle against racism, a victim of racism. There have been allegations of racism against the police.
- 8. Itinerant** - adjective only before noun itinerant adjective travelling around frequently, especially in order to get work travelling around frequently, especially in order to get work itinerant workers
- 9. Preoccupation**- noun [singular/uncountable] preoccupation noun a state in which you think about something so much that you do not think about other things[singular/uncountable]a state in which you think about something so much that you do not think about other things .She noticed his look of preoccupation. Preoccupation with a preoccupation with death/sex/violence preoccupation noun [countable] preoccupation noun something that you think about and want to do because it is important a[countable]something that you think about and want to do because it is important. The safety of their children is a constant preoccupation of most parents.
- 10. Disturbance**- noun[countable]disturbance noun an occasion on which people behave in a noisy or violent way in a public place 1[countable]an occasion on which people behave in a noisy or violent way in a public place. There were serious disturbances in the city last summer.
- 11. Posthumous**- adjective posthumous adjective given to someone after their death, or happening after their death given to someone after their death, or happening after their death posthumous awards for bravery posthumous adjective posthumous adjective published after a writer's death a published after a writer's death

- 12. Humorous-** adjective humorous adjective funny 1 funny a humorous story humorous adjective humorous adjective using or showing humor 2 using or showing humor, humorous writer/face/imagination
- 13. Compassionate-** adjective compassionate adjective feeling sympathy for someone who is in a bad situation because you understand and care about them feeling sympathy for someone who is in a bad situation because you understand and care about them
- 14. Drowsy** - adjective drowsy adjective feeling that you want to sleep feeling that you want to sleep. Some cough medicines can make you feel drowsy.
- 15. Spineless-** adjective spineless adjective not brave or determined enough to deal with a situation well 1 not brave or determined enough to deal with a situation well. Critics condemned the government's decision to back down as spineless.
- 16. Responsibly-** adverb responsibly adverb in a sensible way that shows you are reliable and can be trusted to do the right thing in a sensible way that shows you are reliable and can be trusted to do the right thing I blame them for not acting responsibly.
- 17. Plummet** verb [intransitive] plummet verb to fall straight down very quickly from a high position 1 to fall straight down very quickly from a high position plummet verb [intransitive] plummet verb if something such as an amount, rate, or value plummets, it suddenly becomes much lower 2 if something such as an amount, rate, or value plummets, it suddenly becomes much lower Share prices plummeted today to a three-month low. The president's popularity has plummeted since the war began.
- 18. Malnourished** adjective malnourished adjective weak or ill because you do not eat enough or do not eat enough of the right foods weak or ill because you do not eat enough or do not eat enough of the right foods malnourished children
- 19. Classic** adjective usually before noun classic adjective completely typical 1 usually before noun completely typical She was displaying classic symptoms of shock, a classic example/case Their romance is a classic case of opposites attracting.
- 20. Protagonist** protagonist noun [countable] protagonist noun the main character in a play, film, book, or story 1 the main character in a play, film, book, or story protagonist noun [countable] protagonist noun someone who

tries to make something such as a new idea or policy popular 2someone who tries to make something such as a new idea or policy popular  
protagonist noun[countable]protagonist noun one of the main people or groups involved in an argument, battle, or competition 3one of the main people or groups involved in an argument, battle, or competition