

The Call of the Wild

Chapters 1–3

by Jack London

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: cadence, cunning, dignity, ecstasy, inexorable, insidious, primitive, primordial, toil, vicarious

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

Section 1 · Chapters 1–3 · Buck's comfortable life in California

Section 2 · Chapters 4–5 · Buck and the sled team

Section 3 · Chapters 6–7 · Buck and John Thornton

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. The marching band moved to the steady **cadence** of the drum.

- A. fading echo
- B. rhythmic flow of sound
- C. growing loudness

2. The **cunning** fox slipped past the sleeping dog.

- A. clever and sly
- B. quick and graceful
- C. bold and fearless

3. Even after losing, he carried himself with **dignity**.

- A. calm self-respect
- B. open friendliness
- C. cheerful energy

4. Winning the championship filled the team with **ecstasy**.

- A. calm relief
- B. proud surprise
- C. overwhelming joy

5. The **inexorable** rising of the tide swallowed the sandcastle.

- A. sudden and violent
- B. strange and unexpected
- C. impossible to stop

6. An **insidious** rumor slowly turned his friends against him.

- A. slowly and secretly harmful
- B. false and exaggerated
- C. cruel and hurtful

7. The campers built a **primitive** shelter from branches and mud.

- A. secret and hidden
- B. basic and unrefined
- C. sturdy and weatherproof

8. Deep in the swamp lay a **primordial** forest untouched for ages.

- A. thick and overgrown
- B. from the earliest times
- C. strange and mysterious

9. After hours of **toil** in the fields, the workers rested.

- A. cheerful play
- B. slow travel
- C. hard work

10. She felt **vicarious** excitement watching her brother win the race.

- A. felt through someone else
- B. felt only for a moment
- C. felt with great pride

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

demesne — a large property and its land; here, Judge Miller's home and grounds, where Buck behaves like a ruler

no fair play — no fairness or agreed rules protecting the weak

imagination — here, the ability to invent new tactics rather than fight only by instinct

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	A
3	A
4	C
5	C
6	A
7	B
8	B
9	C
10	A

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 *“Buck had accepted the rope with quiet dignity.”*

As it is used in the passage, the word “dignity” most nearly describes a bearing of...

- A. calm self-respect
- B. cheerful excitement
- C. nervous fear

2 *“That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law, and he met the introduction halfway.”*

Which statement about the “reign of primitive law” is best supported by the passage?

- A. It is rule by force, not fairness.
- B. It is a gentle, civilized order.
- C. It is a set of written rules.

3 *“It is true, it was a vicarious experience, else he would not have lived to profit by it.”*

In context, the word “vicarious” emphasizes that Buck learned the lesson...

- A. through his own suffering
- B. from repeated fights
- C. by watching another’s fate

4 *“The toil of the traces seemed the supreme expression of their being, and all that they lived for and the only thing in which they took delight.”*

According to the passage, the toil that the dogs delight in is...

- A. their rest after the journey
- B. their grueling work in harness
- C. their freedom to roam the wild

5 *“And his cadences were their cadences, the cadences which voiced their woe and what to them was the meaning of the stiffness, and the cold, and dark.”*

As it is used in the passage, the word “cadences” most nearly means the...

- A. rising and falling of the howl
- B. words of an ancient song
- C. silence between the howls

6 *“His newborn cunning gave him poise and control.”*

The passage most strongly suggests that Buck’s newborn cunning leads him to...

- A. hide his plans and bide his time
- B. attack Spitz openly at once
- C. avoid all conflict out of fear

7 *“The insidious revolt led by Buck had destroyed the solidarity of the team.”*

Which detail best supports the idea that Buck’s revolt against Spitz was insidious?

- A. he fought Spitz in one open duel
- B. he stayed loyal to Spitz
- C. he undermined Spitz secretly over time

8 *“There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive.”*

It can reasonably be inferred that Buck feels this ecstasy when he is...

- A. finally resting after a hard day
- B. returning to his old home
- C. leading the wild chase for meat

9 *“There was no hope for him. Buck was inexorable. Mercy was a thing reserved for gentler climes.”*

The passage most strongly suggests that, because Buck is inexorable, he will...

- A. spare Spitz now that he is beaten
- B. press the attack until Spitz dies
- C. pause to recover his strength

10 *“Buck stood and looked on, the successful champion, the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good.”*

Which statement is best supported by Buck’s description as the “dominant primordial beast”?

- A. He is still a tame house pet.
- B. He is now a savage, ancient beast.
- C. He feels regret for killing Spitz.

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	
3	C	
4	B	
5	A	Here 'cadences' means the rise and fall of the howl itself, not its words.
6	A	Character comprehension.
7	C	
8	C	Event comprehension. The excerpt states the idea abstractly; in the section it is Buck's rapture in the chase.
9	B	
10	B	

Teacher Context: Chapters 1–3

Buck, a pampered dog on a California estate, is stolen and shipped north into brutal sled work in the Klondike, where he learns the law of club and fang and his primitive instincts awaken. By the end of Chapter 3 he is openly challenging Spitz for dominance of the team. The break falls here to group the awakening arc; the leadership showdown opens the next section.