*The Call of the Wild – Jack London*

Study questions

Chapter 1

1. In the beginning of Chapter I, how is Buck described? Based on this description, how do you think he will deal with the hardships of the Yukon Territory? Which of his traits will serve him well in his new life? Which will he have to abandon to survive?

2. What important lesson did Buck learn from the man with the club? What is meant by the line, “It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law, and he met the introduction halfway.”?

3. How did François begin to earn Buck’s respect? From the description of this incident, predict what Buck’s relationship will be with “a big, snowy-white fellow from Spitzbergen.”

4. What is the significance of the title of this chapter?

Chapter 2

1. What are the “laws of club and fang” that Buck learned in chapter II? How are these laws different from what Buck was used to?
2. What is the one thing that Dave and Sol-leks live for? Why do you think they are like this? How do you think they got this way? Can you think of examples of other animals or humans that show these traits? What does this tell you about animal and human nature?
3. What trait insures that Buck will survive in the north? How is this aspect of his character shown in the story? How would this trait be accepted in his former life? What does this say about the differences in the two worlds?
4. Explain the meaning of the following quotation from page 18: “And not only did he learn by experience, but instincts long dead became alive again. The domesticated generations fell from him. In vague ways he remembered back to the youth of the breed, to the time the wild dogs ranged in packs through the primeval forest and killed their meat as they ran it down. . . . Thus, as token of what a puppet thing life is, the ancient song surged through him and he came into his own again. “
5. In adapting to his new world, has Buck developed or retrogressed? Defend your answer.

Chapter 3

1. Describe Spitz’s character using examples from the chapter to support your answer.
2. How do François and Perrault display their true natures in this chapter? Give specific examples to support your answer.
3. How does Buck begin to undermine Spitz’s authority in this chapter? What were the effects of Buck’s actions? What does this say about Buck’s transformation from a “southland dog?”
4. In the following quotation what does London mean by “the dominant primordial beast” ? “A pause seemed to fall. Every animal was motionless as though turned to stone. Only Spitz quivered and bristled as he staggered back and forth, snarling with horrible menace, as though to frighten off impending death. Then Buck sprang in and out; but while he was in, shoulder had at last squarely met shoulder. The dark circle became a dot on the moon-flooded snow as Spitz disappeared from view. Buck stood and looked on, the successful champion, the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good” (31).
5. What traits have helped Buck thrive in his new world? Of them, which do you think is the most important? Why?