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“IT WAS IN  
THE NORTH  
THAT I FOUND  
MYSELF,”

In 1897, Jack London joined the Gold Rush in the Klondike region of the Yukon, in north-east Canada. London was twenty-one years old, and he spent eleven months in this frozen land. Much of his writing, including his two most famous novels, *The Call Of The Wild* and *White Fang*, were greatly influenced by this extreme experience.

For London, the ice-covered Arctic was ‘primordial’ – a place where daily life was a fight for survival against cold, hunger, and predators. The harsh landscape where this fight takes place is described in the opening pages of *White Fang*.



## White Fang

London describes how White Fang is influenced by his environment and develops skills which are different to those of his species. Note them as you read.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and the survival of the fittest<sup>•</sup> had a great influence on London. The author brought a copy of Darwin's book, *On the Origin of Species*, with him when he went to the Klondike, and he found confirmation<sup>•</sup> of Darwin's theories in the hostile<sup>•</sup> North.

London believed that nature and the environment decide the behaviour<sup>•</sup> of all living species. Over time, a species needs to adapt<sup>•</sup> to its environment in order to survive. All life is decided by the law of the survival of the fittest, which means that only the strongest and most successful species will survive and reproduce. And the harsh environment of Alaska was a terrible test for both humans and animals. The experience in Alaska also taught London the value of co-operation between different species when humans and animals work together in order to survive.

### OVER TO YOU

Find words in the article which describe the environment of the Klondike.

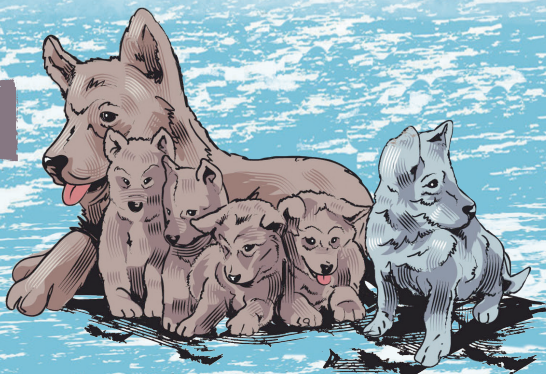
- **adapt:** change
- **behaviour:** way of acting
- **confirmation:** sign they were true
- **extreme:** very big
- **fittest:** strongest/most healthy
- **harsh:** difficult; cruel
- **hostile:** unfriendly
- **influenced:** affected (the experience was important for them)
- **predators:** animals that eat/kill other animals
- **primordial:** primitive
- **region:** area
- **survival:** staying alive





# White Fang

Kiche

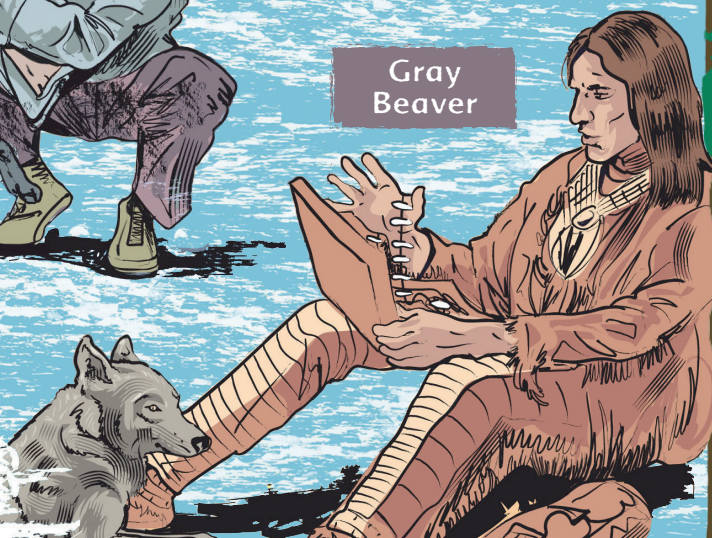


White Fang



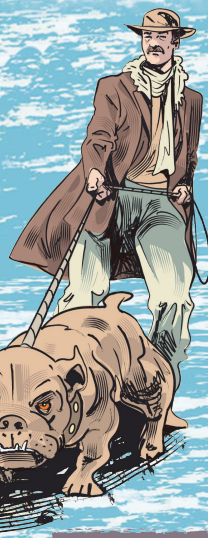
Scott

Gray Beaver





Tim  
Keenan



The  
bulldog

Mit-sah

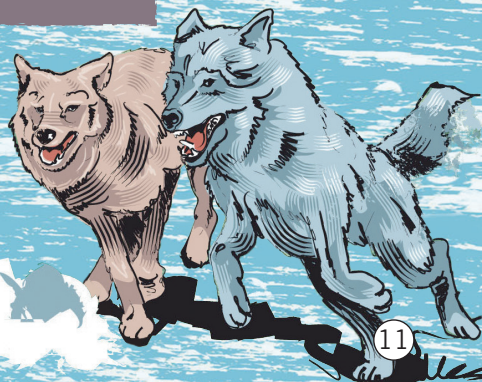


Lip-lip

Beauty  
Smith



Collie



## BEFORE READING

1 Match the words to the pictures.

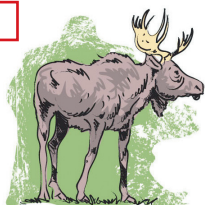
1 moose

2 squirrel

3 weasel

4 wolf

a ☐



b ☐



c ☐



d ☐



2 Choose one of the animals and fill in this fact file.

Name .....

Habitat .....

Height .....

Length .....

Lifespan .....

Diet .....

3 Now use the facts to write a short description of the animal.





**4 The story takes place in Alaska and California. Answer these questions:**

- a** What country are Alaska and California part of?
- b** Where is Alaska located?
- c** Where is California located?
- d** What is the climate like in each place?
- e** Who were the first people to live in Alaska?
- f** What language other than English is widely spoken in California? Why?

**5 If you went to Alaska and California, you would need different clothes and equipment. Make a list of some of the things you would take to each place.**

**ALASKA**


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**CALIFORNIA**

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**6  Where would you prefer to live, Alaska or California? Tell a partner, giving reasons.**

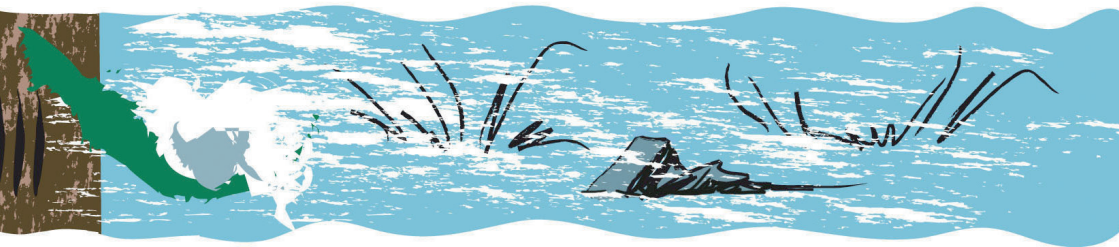
## LOVE AND THE LAIR•

 It was winter. Snow and ice covered the land. The land was silent, and empty. It was the Wild. But in these dark, cold winter forests in Northland, there was life.

The she-wolf• was at the front of the pack•. She was large, and an unusual color for a wolf – reddish•. Next to her were two males. One was a large gray wolf who wanted the she-wolf as a mate•. On her right side was another, older wolf, called One Eye. He was blind• in his left eye. And he, too, wanted her as a mate.

They ran all that day, through the night, and the next day. The world was frozen and dead. Only the wolves were alive, and they were looking for other living things to eat, and so continue to live.

Finally, they found a big moose•. They were so hungry that the whole pack attacked him. He fought hard, kicking and hitting the wolves with his large antlers•. But there were too many wolves for him, and in the end, they killed him and ate him immediately. There was meat for each wolf. Soon, the pack started to break up. One Eye and the she-wolf became friendly and they ran side by side, hunting and eating together.



### GLOSSARY



- **antlers:** horns
- **blind:** unable to see
- **lair:** secret place where some animals live
- **mate:** partner
- **moose:** large American deer
- **pack:** group of wolves which live together
- **reddish:** not completely red
- **she-wolf:** female wolf



Soon, the she-wolf felt she needed to find a small cave•. She found one near a stream•. It was dry and warm. She looked around carefully, and she decided that this was the right place. This was her lair. She lay down.

One Eye came to see where she was, and he lay down outside the cave. It was April. Spring was coming. Water was starting to run in the stream, birds were singing, and One Eye left the cave to explore.

Later, inside the cave, he heard small noises and saw there were five wolf cubs• lying beside the she-wolf. She snarled• at him, and he moved back. He knew now that he must hunt for food.

When he came back, he gave some meat to his mate. The she-wolf turned and licked his neck, to show him she was pleased. She did not snarl or show her teeth. She understood he was being a good wolf-father, and that he didn't want to eat her five cubs.

## PROTECTION

Why do you think the she-wolf snarls at One Eye?

Who does she want to protect?

Who protects you?



## GLOSSARY

- **cave:** large hole in the side of a hill or mountain
- **snarled:** (of wolves) made an angry noise
- **stream:** very small river
- **wolf cubs:** baby wolves

## AFTER READING VOCABULARY

### 1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.

moose      pack      wound      thief  
while      stream      claws      surgeon

- a The lynx cut with her ..... and teeth, the she-wolf with her teeth.
- b A ..... is a large deer with antlers found in North America.
- c A very small river can be called a ..... .
- d A ..... is an injury in which the skin is cut or broken.
- e He lay down on the grass and rested for a ..... .

### 2 In pairs, create three sentences with the words left out in Exercise 1.

### 3 Complete the following sentences with appropriate question tags.

- a 'It was winter, .....?'
- b 'He didn't have a good grip, .....?'
- c 'She lay down, .....?'
- d 'Gray Beaver went back home with his family, .....?'
- e 'You've heard that, .....?'
- f 'In San Francisco, white men seemed like powerful gods, .....?'
- g 'But even in those cold forests there is life, .....?'
- h 'You were walking in the wood, .....?'
- i 'He hurt his knee, .....?'

### 4 Complete the sentences with the correct form of *make* or *do*.

- a It was a young weasel, and it ..... strange noises.
- b At first, White Fang liked his new master, and ..... things for him.



### **K** A2 Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 5

#### **1** Complete the following text with **ONE** word for each gap.

Although the story of White Fang's life is often brutal and filled **(1)** ..... violence and suffering, the end of the novel is definitely happy. In the course of the book, and especially thanks **(2)** ..... Scott's kindness and gentle treatment, White Fang starts to become **(3)** ..... aggressive and to overcome his fear and mistrust of men. By the end of the novel, he is completely transformed. He has adapted to a new environment and learned to live within a civilized society in **(4)** ..... master's wealthy estate in California. He is **(5)** ..... longer the killer he used to be, and is only ready to use violence when it comes to defending his master's property and family. He has learned to give and receive affection, and is now totally integrated in the human world, and completely devoted to a human being. He has become a house pet, patient with children, and he is himself a father of Scott's sheepdog's puppies. In the final scene of the book, we find him half-asleep **(6)** ..... the sun, allowing **(7)** ..... puppies to climb and tumble all over him. But when did White Fang's transformation into a domesticated animal really **(8)** .....? Some people believe that it began much **(9)** ..... than his meeting with Scott. That it began instead with Gray Beaver's words, 'He is mine, because Kiche was my brother's dog'. What do you think?