

Call of the Wild - Jack London

Lesson 2

Read the extract below:

The dominant primordial beast was strong in Buck, and under the fierce conditions of trail life it grew and grew. Yet it was a secret growth. His newborn cunning gave him poise and control. He was too busy adjusting himself to the new life to feel at ease, and not only did he not pick fights, but he avoided them whenever possible. A certain deliberateness characterized his attitude. He was not prone to rashness and precipitate action; and in the bitter hatred between him and Spitz he betrayed no impatience, shunned all offensive acts.

On the other hand, possibly because he divined in Buck a dangerous rival, Spitz never lost an opportunity of showing his teeth. He even went out of his way to bully Buck, striving constantly to start the fight which could end only in the death of one or the other. Early in the trip this might have taken place had it not been for an unwonted accident. At the end of this day they made a bleak and miserable camp on the shore of Lake Le Barge. Driving snow, a wind that cut like a white-hot knife, and darkness had forced them to grope for a camping place. They could hardly have fared worse. At their backs rose a perpendicular wall of rock, and Perrault and François were compelled to make their fire and spread their sleeping robes on the ice of the lake itself. The tent they had discarded at Dyea in order to travel light. A few sticks of driftwood furnished them with a fire that thawed down through the ice and left them to eat supper in the dark.

Close in under the sheltering rock Buck made his nest. So snug and warm was it, that he was loath to leave it when François distributed the fish which he had first thawed over the fire. But when Buck finished his ration and returned, he found his nest occupied. A warning snarl told him that the trespasser was Spitz. Till now Buck had avoided trouble with his enemy, but this was too much. The beast in him roared. He sprang upon Spitz with a fury which surprised them both, and Spitz particularly, for his whole experience with Buck had gone to teach him that his rival was an unusually timid dog, who managed to hold his own only because of his great weight and size.

François was surprised, too, when they shot out in a tangle from the disrupted nest and he divined the cause of the trouble. "A-a-ah!" he cried to Buck. "Gif it to heem, by Gar! Gif it to heem, the dirty t'eef!"

Spitz was equally willing. He was crying with sheer rage and eagerness as he circled back and forth for a chance to spring in. Buck was no less eager, and no less cautious, as he likewise circled back and forth for the advantage. But it was then that the unexpected happened, the thing which projected their struggle for supremacy far into the future, past many a weary mile of trail and toil.

Comprehension

Use the extract above to help you to answer the following questions:

1. Why was Buck not 'at ease'?

2. Who was Buck's rival?

3. How did Buck's rival bully him?

4. Where did they make their camp?

5. What food did they eat?

6. What did Spitz do that particularly angered Buck?

7. How would you feel if you were Buck in this situation?

8. How would you describe Buck?

9. How would you describe Spitz?

10. Would you avoid fights or get into them?

Vocabulary

1. Dominant
2. Rival
3. Trial
4. Cunning
5. Constant
6. Bleak
7. Perpendicular
8. Discarded
9. Timid
10. Eager
11. Resounding
12. Pandemonium
13. Slaver
14. Irresistible
15. Opposed
16. Frightful
17. Malingerer
18. Crippled
19. Treacherous
20. Compelled

HOMEWORK

Using the **work we did today as inspiration**, write a **diary entry** imagining you are **Buck** and it is your **first day in the wild**.

OR

Write a **short story** using **at least 5 new words** (above) that we learned from these chapters.