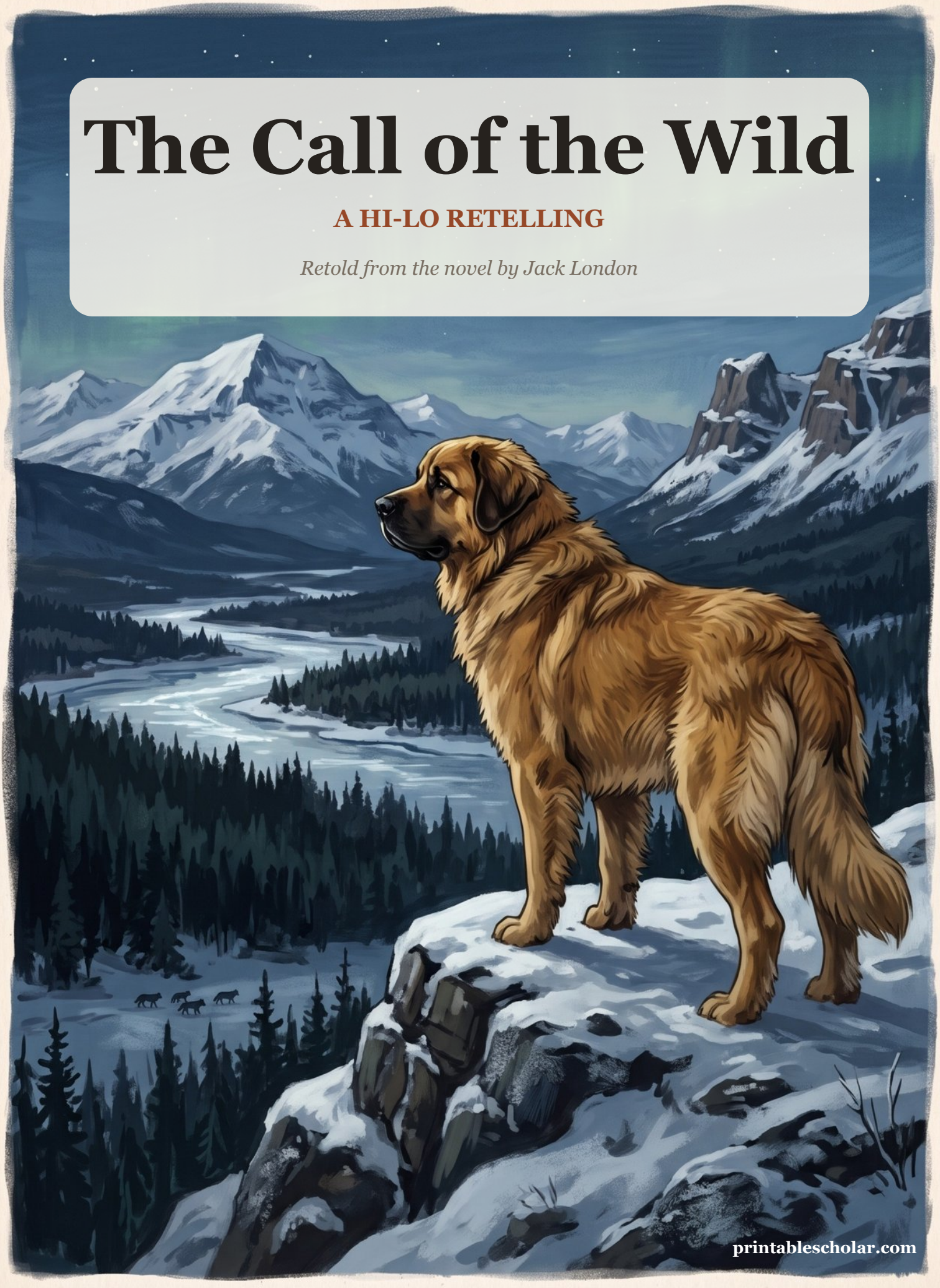
The Call of the Wild

A HI-LO RETELLING

Retold from the novel by Jack London



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CHAPTER 1

Stolen



Buck did not read the news. If he had, he would have known that trouble was on its way. It was coming for every big, strong dog with a warm, thick coat on the west coast.

Buck lived at Judge Miller's place in the Santa Clara Valley, in sunny California. It was a big house set back from the road, with wide green lawns and tall trees. There were barns and rows of grapes. There was also a pool where the Judge's boys swam on hot summer days.

Buck was four years old, and he was king of it all. His father was a Saint Bernard, a huge dog bred to find people lost in the snow. His mother was a

Scotch shepherd, a smart farm dog that herds sheep. From his father, Buck got his great size, and he weighed 140 pounds. From his mother, he got his quick mind.

Buck walked with the Judge in the mornings. He swam with the boys and kept the girls safe on their walks. On cold nights, he lay at the Judge's feet by the fire. Other dogs came and went at the ranch, but none of them mattered, because Buck ruled them all.

But far to the north, in a cold land called the Klondike, men had found gold. Word of it spread fast, and soon thousands of men were rushing north to dig for it. This was the gold rush, and it changed everything.

The Klondike was a land of snow and ice. There were no roads and no trains up there. The only way to move food and tools was by sled. A sled needs dogs to pull it, and not small dogs. It needs big, strong dogs with thick coats to keep out the frost. Dogs like Buck.

One of the men who worked at the ranch was Manuel, the gardener. Manuel had a bad habit. He loved to gamble, which means to bet money on games of chance. He lost far more than he won. Now he owed money that he could not pay.

One night, the Judge was away at a meeting, and the boys were busy at home. Manuel called Buck, and Buck went with him. Why not? He knew Manuel well. The two of them walked through the trees and down the dark road to a small train stop.

A strange man was waiting there. Coins clinked as they passed from hand to hand. Then Manuel tied a rope around Buck's neck.

Buck let him do it. He had learned to trust the men he knew. But when the stranger took the end of the rope, Buck gave a low growl. It was a warning.

The man pulled the rope tight around his neck. Buck could not breathe, so he jumped at the man, but the man was too quick for him. The man twisted the rope hard, and Buck fell on his back. He had never been treated like this in his whole life. Then everything went dark.

When Buck woke up, he was lying on the floor of a train car. It rocked and shook and roared as it rushed along, and his throat was sore. The man with the rope sat near him.

Buck sprang at him, and his jaws closed on the man's hand. Then the rope choked him down again.

For two days and two nights, the train rolled north. Buck had no food and no water, and his eyes turned red with rage. He was no longer a pet. He was a prisoner, and he was headed for a city called Seattle.

Think about it

1. Why did big, strong dogs suddenly become worth a lot of money?
2. Why did Manuel sell Buck?
3. Buck trusted Manuel. Why do you think that made it easy for Manuel to steal him?