

## **FRIENDSHIP IN JACK LONDON'S *THE CALL OF THE WILD***

**CLEMENT FABIAN LUMOWA, NIHTA V. F. LIANDO, MERLIN M. MAUKAR**

*Faculty of Languages and Arts  
English Language and Literature Study Program  
Universitas Negeri Manado  
Tondano, Indonesia*

Correspondence author: [nihtaliando@unima.ac.id](mailto:nihtaliando@unima.ac.id)

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**Abstract** : This study aims to reveal the friendship in Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*. It is qualitative research, with the data used being primary sources and secondary. Primary data was taken from the quotes from the novel, and secondary was from articles, journals, books, and the internet related to the analysis. The objective approach by M. H. Abrams was used in analyzing the data. Based on the analysis, it was found that the friendship between Buck and Thornton was revealed in some settings and times. Their friendship revealed to admire one another's good qualities with sympathy, generosity, fairness, and courage of the friend, while the characteristics of their friendship revealed in this novel were voluntary, personal relationship, affective bond, and mutual and equal relationship. This study primarily found their friendship revealed in four contexts: They supported and protected each other, showed affection, were faithful towards each other, and they shared good and bad moments. It is suggested that future researchers may use the objective approach to analyze the themes in this novel since the approach is considered appropriate for analyzing the intrinsic parts of the literary works. The future researcher may also analyze other interesting themes or elements of the novel with the same approach or the same theme with a different approach.

**Keywords:** *Friendship, The Call Of The Wild, Jack London, Objective Approach.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Friendship is an activity of humans to socialize from an individual with other individuals. The state of being friends, according Merriam-Webster is a friendly relationship, or attachment, to someone, or between individuals; affection that springs from mutual respect and goodwill; friendliness; friendship; goodwill." Living things are a form of life mechanism interconnected with one another. Friendship is

a relationship between living things that describes the behaviour of cooperation or a bond between living creatures in this world. Telfer (1971:223) argues, "friendship is among the most important constituents of a worthwhile life".

Friendship is an essential part of life, and it reflects trust and feelings between living things or individuals that provide reciprocity between one another. According to Aristotle (in Welldon, 1987, p. 253), "friendship is a virtue or suggests goodness. It is also necessary for survival. For no one would choose to live without friends, even if he had everything else." It does not only exist among humans but also between humans and animals. To emphasize this kind of relationship, Townley (2011, p. 45) claims, some people simply believe that friendship with an animal is a complete, even supreme, manifestation of everything friendship should be. However, friendship varies on the subject; as Hosey & Melvi (2014, p. 1) state, "an animal can be treated differently, either as a loved one or an object of wonder through to a victim or threat." Therefore, certain animals can conduct this kind of relationship with humans, not considered a threat. The dog is an animal that has a special relationship with humans. Dotson & Hyatt (2008) consider that dogs can provide human needs for companionship, friendship, unconditional love, and affection. Such attachment is attributed to many long-lasting human ties, such as the bond experienced by a child with its mother, a person with his or her romantic partner, or close friends (Crowell et al., 2008; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). According to Aristotle, there are three categories of friendships: utility, pleasure, and virtue (Welldon, 1985), while Rawlins (2017) explains that voluntary, personal, equal, and mutual relationships are characteristics of friendship.

Friendship is an act of living beings portrayed in literary works since literature refers to a composition that tells stories, dramatizes the situation, expresses emotion, and analyzes and advocates ideas (Roberts & Jacobs, 2010, p. 2). In most situations, literature is defined as the entirety of written expression, with the caveat that not every written item may be classified as literature in the strictest sense of the word (Klarer, 2004, p. 1). In other words, literature is the author's self-expression indirectly related to the story of human life. *The Call Of The Wild* is a literary work by Jack London, published in 1903. This novel tells about a friendship

between humans and animals, in which a dog named Buck and a human, John Thornton. Buck was kidnapped during a gold rush in Klondike, where a big and strong dog was highly interested in being used as a sled puller. Perrault was the first person who met Buck. He bought him and became one of the sled dogs to travel around the Yukon. On their return from their trip, Perrault's mail delivery received news that the delivery of the letter had been replaced by a telegram and forced Perrault to sell Buck and other carriage dogs. Hal later bought Buck and his pack, and the dogs were forced to carry heavy loads in the extreme weather. The exhausted dogs stopped to rest, but Hall put a gun to force them to move; John Thornton saved Buck. The two then traveled beyond the Yukon map, where they could live freely to fulfill the summons from the wild.

There were few studies conducted on *The Call Of The Wild*. Some previous studies analyzed Buck's character development (Hadid, 2018; Liliana, 2001) and conflict and motivation (Purnomo, 2016). In comparison, this study analyses the friendship between Buck and John Thornton. The study conducted by Weigo (2016) portrayed their friendship, but it used a linguistics approach, which differs from this literary study. The friendship between Buck and John Thornton is interesting to analyze. They are two living beings who have close and loving relationships, support and protect each other, and share their moment in good and bad situations. Therefore, by reading the novel and following the stories, the writer determines to analyze their friendship and intends to reveal how it exists in the novel.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

Qualitative research was used in this study, which means the data without numbers, diagrams, or formulas but only dealt with words. The data was analyzed by explaining descriptively. Qualitative research, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 28), is descriptive research. Rather than numbers, the data is collected in the form of words or images. Based on the definition, qualitative research was the method for analyzing text in words or quotations. Cresswell & Cresswell (2018)

explained that the result qualitative research are descriptive and provided in words or visuals than numbers.

Furthermore, the library research was applied. Library research is a research activity that involves gathering data from some sources, including the library and other sources (George, 2008, p. 28). Qualitative research could be conducted through library research by reading and examining literature on the subject.

### ***Data Collection***

To carry this research, two types of data sources are required: primary sources and secondary sources. According to Griffith (p.32), "there are two types of evidence useful for essays about literature: evidences for primary sources are the work of literature themselves and secondary evidence is fact or opinion outside the work itself". The primary data in this research is the novel "The Call Of The Wild" by Jack London. The secondary data are some books such as theories, journals/articles, internet sources, and some supporting materials.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data must be analyzed to find the answer to this research. According to Griffith (1986), analyzing something entails breaking it down into its constituent parts and determining the relationship between them that provides unity and coherence to the whole. We can understand more about literary works when we analyze them.

The writer used the objective approach to analyze the data. The objective viewpoint, which considers the work of art in isolation from all these external sources of reference, analyses as a self-sufficient entity composed of its elements in their internal relationship and is judged purely by criteria intrinsic to its mode being (Abrams, 1979, p.26-29). In this research, the writer only analyzes the internal part of The Call Of The Wild by Jack London's novel, not the external part.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Friendship has its characteristics that attach to it whether it is between humans or humans and animals. A friendship between John Thornton and Buck, a human and an animal, began when Thornton rescued Buck from being tortured by Hil. Since then, he took the dog as a partner and a travel companion. Their friendship was revealed in different settings and series of events. The purpose of the study is to reveal the friendship between Buck and John Thornton. By reading this novel, the writer found that the friendship shown by both of them took place in four contexts: when they protect each other, their faithfulness towards each other, the moment that they shared, and the affection between them.

### ***Buck and Thornton Support and Protect Each Other***

Friendship is about supporting each other in a difficult situation, especially a dangerous one. John Thornton shows that he can support and protect Buck from being harmed by Hal and being taken by other hunters, and Buck also tries his best to support his partner, as revealed in some events in the story. When John Thornton was in a bar in Circle City, he saw a quarrel between "Black" Burton – a man evil-tempered and malicious – and a tenderfoot. Thornton tried to step good-naturedly between them. However, instead of being calm, Burton struck him out, which made him sent spinning and almost hit the floor.

"They saw Buck's body rise up in the air as he left the floor for Burton's throat. The man saved his life by instinctively throwing out his arm, but was hurled backward to the floor with Buck on top of him." London (1903, pp. 63-64)

As illustrated in the quotation above, Buck's action injured Burton, so he was discharged by the "miners club." However, he showed that he could support his partner even though John Thornton did not even give a sign or ask him to attack the man. This event shows that friendship is a personal relationship that makes one party protects another party when he is harmed and in danger. Moreover, friendship as a personal relationship is revealed, as Thornton does not try to blame Buck after the incident.

In another event, John Thornton almost got killed downstream of the river. The incident occurred in the fall when Thornton and his two partners, Hans and Pete, lined a long, narrow poling boat through a section of rapids on the Forty-Mile Creek. Thornton, who remained in the boat poled the boat out into the stream while Hans and Pete moved along the bank. The boat, on the other hand, flew downstream in a river, flirted with, and snubbed into the bank bottom up. Thornton was thrown out of it and taken downstream toward the most dangerous of the rapids.

“Buck, on the bank, worried and anxious, kept abreast of the boat where his master was aboard. When his master flung out of it, he could not stay still, then Buck had sprung in on the instant; and at the end of three hundred yards, amid a mad swirl of water, he overhauled Thornton. When he felt him grasp his tail, Buck headed for the bank, swimming with all his splendid strength.” London (1903, p. 64)

Buck jumped on a swirl of water and swam to reach his master, so his master could grasp his tail to get out of the stream, swam back to the shore as hard as possible. Then with the help of Hans and Pete, Thornton was finally saved. As a consequence of his action, Buck got wounded. John Thornton was worried about him and checked Buck's body. He found three broken ribs. This life-saving event shows how the act of friendship is. Buck could not let his partner die. Otherwise, Thornton was worried about Buck's condition. He even decided that the group set the camp there and returned later when Buck looked better.

Buck tried as hard as possible to support and protect Thornton, so Thornton did. It was revealed when they rested in a valley near the gold mining, where Thornton and his partners, Hans and Pete, worked. On one night, when they made a fire and slept around it, both Buck and Thornton heard the sounding from the depth of the forest.

“Through the forest they crept noiselessly, Buck at the hairy man’s heels; and they were alert and vigilant, the pair of them, ears twitching and moving and

nostrils quivering, for the man heard and smelled as keenly as Buck." London (1903, p. 73)

One another night, Buck heard a long-drawn howl come from the forest, so "he sprang from sleep with a start, eager-eyed, nostrils quivering and scenting, his mane bristling in recurrent waves" (London, 1903, p.75). His alertness from the surroundings is to protect John Thornton from the attack as his partner was sleeping recklessly after the busy days in the mining.

Buck recognized that the howl was distinct from that of a husky dog or a wolf. So, in response to the sound, he dashed through the sleeping camp and through the woods in complete silence. He move more slowly as he approached the cry with caution. Buck then noticed a timber wolf was standing up in an open area among the trees, with his nose pointed to the sky. To protect his partner, John Thornton, Buck was not afraid of the wolf. He did not make any noises, but it made the howling stop.

"Buck stalked into the open, half crouching, body gathered compactly together, tail straight and stiff, feet falling with unwonted care. Every movement advertised commingled threatening and overture of friendliness. It was the menacing truce that marks the meeting of wild beasts that prey. But the wolf fled at sight of him. He followed, with wild leapings, in a frenzy to overtake." London (1903, p. 76)

In that tense moment, Buck did not attack the wolf, while the wolf saw Buck as a beast-like him, so he ran away. The wolf was terrified since Buck made three times his size. Buck refused to let him go. He persued him and cornered him. Buck relizing that no harm was intended for him, sniffed noses with the wolf as a symbol of friendship. After the moment, the wolf showed a sign of going somewhere, and Buck returned to his John Thornton side.

Buck showed he wanted to prevent this from happening again and protect his master from possible attacks by other beasts. "For two days and nights Buck never left camp, never let Thornton out of his sight," describes how he was worried about him, and "he watched him when he ate, saw him into his blanket at night and out of

them in the morning" (London, 1903, p. 76). Buck shows a feature of virtue friendship, which contains the courage to act when a friend is harmed. This type of friendship attracts and binds the friends together.

### ***John Thornton's Faithfulness to Buck***

Friendship is about having faith in our friends that our friends have the ability to accomplish something. After being rescued by John Thornton, Buck becomes a loyal partner. On the other hand, Thornton treats him like a friend and puts his faith in Buck. The bet about the best sled dog to carry the carriage portrays Thornton trusting him and how he defended Buck from being badmouthed by the other miners. The bet was started by the talk in the Eldorado Saloon during which three men spoke about their favorite pets and compared them to Buck.

"One of the men even said that his dog "could start a sled with five hundred pounds five hundred pounds and walk off with it." The second man bragged six hundred pounds for his dog, and a third, seven hundred. Listening to those who belittled Buck, Thornton confidently replied, "Buck can start a thousand pounds." London (1903, p. 65)

To defend and support his partner, John Thornton dared to bet with them without possessing one thousand dollars. He didn't even know if Buck could start with a thousand pounds. Nevertheless, Thornton could not back off and solely believed that Buck could do it since "he had great faith in Buck's strength and had often thought him capable of starting such a load" (London, 1903, p. 67). Thornton finally got the money from Jim O'Brien, an old-time comrade, and settled the bet. Before the test started, John Thornton gave Buck words of encouragement even though Buck was a dog who could not speak. He knelt down by Buck's side. Thornton took his head in his two hands and rested cheek on cheek. He did not playfully shake him, as was his wont, or murmur soft love curses, but he whispered in his ear. "As you love me, Buck. As you love me."(London, 1903, p. 69).

The story reveals one of the characteristics of friendship, that friendship is a personal relationship, where the decision to live in a friendship is because of an



individual's qualities. Even though John Thornton doubts whether Buck can win the test, he believes in his friend's qualities. Buck answered Thornton's faithfulness to him by doing his best to win the test.

"Buck threw himself forward, tightening the traces with a jarring lunge. His whole body was gathered compactly together in the tremendous effort, the muscles writhing and knotting like live things under the silky fur. His great chest was low to the ground, his head forward and down, while his feet were flying like mad, the claws scarring the hard-packed snow in parallel grooves."  
London (1903, p. 70)

The quotation above shows that for the sake of friendship, Buck must try his best to win the best. It shows that the friendship between Buck and John Thornton is a mutual relationship, where friends share activities demonstrating each party's regard for the other to accomplish and sustain it.

### ***Thornton and Buck Share the Moment Together***

Friendship is about sharing the moment with a friend. It is a mutual relationship where friends demonstrate the shared activities with valuable friends and keep sustaining it. In Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, the friendship between Buck and John Thornton is revealed from their sharing activities, both in good and bad situations

"One day (they had grub-staked themselves from the proceeds of the raft and left Dawson for the head-waters of the Tanana) the men and dogs were sitting on the crest of a cliff which fell away, straight down, to naked bed-rock three hundred feet below. John Thornton was sitting near the edge, Buck at his shoulder." London (1903, p. 63)

The quotation above reveals the friendship between Buck and John Thornton when they share the moment on the cliff's crest and Buck at Thornton's shoulder. Moreover, on another moment, Jack London depicts Thornton fell on his knees beside Buck then "head was against head, and he was shaking him back and forth... Buck seized Thornton's hand in his teeth. Thornton shook him back and forth."

(London, 1903, p. 70) This moment illustrates Buck and Thornton sharing a happy moment after winning the test as a friend. Buck can prove to his master that he is a helpful dog, while Thornton can prove to the others that Buck is the best sled dog and wins the money.

The moments Buck and Thornton spend together when they hunt, fishing, and wandering through strange places for weeks.

“For weeks at a time they would hold on steadily, day after day; and for weeks upon end they would camp, here and there, the dogs loafing and the men burning holes through frozen muck and gravel and washing countless pans of dirt by the heat of the fire. Sometimes they went hungry, sometimes they feasted riotously, all according to the abundance of game and the fortune of hunting.” London (1903, p. 72)

The quote above depicts how they share their moment from camp to camp while enjoying the heat of the fire and in a difficult moment of being hungry or a happy moment when they successfully hunt.

### ***Affection between Buck and John Thornton***

One of the characteristics of friendship is an affective bond between friends shown by how each individual profoundly love each other. The relationship between Buck and Thornton shows this characteristic. The novel tells that this kind of affective bond never Buck found with his previous masters. John gives him a kind of emotional attachment that he is devoted himself to serve this master.

“Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time. This he had never experienced at Judge Miller’s down in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. With the Judge’s sons, hunting and tramping, it had been a working partnership; with the Judge’s grandsons, a sort of pompous guardianship; and with the Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness, it had taken John Thornton to arouse.” London (1903, p. 60)

The quotation above reveals that Buck's friendship with John Thornton was motivated by his love towards him. However, the majority of his love is expressed in adoration. He "went wild with happiness" whenever John Thornton touched him or spoke to him. Buck found Thornton as an equal partner for him. Moreover, Thornton met his standard as a master who does not restrain his wild nature. London portrays how Buck saw John Thornton "bespeak the soft civilizing influence" and arouse "the strain of the primitive." (London, 1903, p. 61) Being together with Thornton makes Buck can retain his wildness and wiliness. John Thornton shows that his "wild" friend can sit side by side with him and be himself. Thus, adding this kind of quality Thornton has makes Buck have a great love for him.

"Because of his very great love, he could not steal from this man, but from any other man, in any other camp, he did not hesitate an instant; while the cunning with which he stole enabled him to escape detection." London (1903, p. 61)

The quotation above describes Buck Thornton's love makes him unable to steal something from that man. On the other hand, Thornton's love for Buck seemed to grow. Thornton's love, on the other hand seemed to grow and grow. He was the only man who could put a load on Buck's back while travelling in the heat. In this case, John Thornton treats Buck as a companion, not as merely a master. If Buck's previous masters forced him to work hard for them, John let Buck wander around in the wild. Buck leaves the camp for days a time. He walks for a week, crosses the creek's division and descends into the country of timber and streams.

"He fished for salmon in a broad stream that emptied somewhere into the sea, and by this stream he killed a large black bear, blinded by the mosquitoes while likewise fishing, and raging through the forest helpless and terrible." London (1903, p. 77)

The quotation above reveals how Thornton let Buck wander into the wild to meet other animals. He does not restrain Buck from staying with him all the time or keep carrying the carriage. It shows a mutual relationship that the friendship has,

when an individual treats his friend as an equal, a virtue friendship that contains generosity and fairness.

Buck continued his traveling activity, but he felt something was wrong one day. During his hunting, nature gave him a sign that a calamity would come. He rushed toward the camp with greater caution. When he approached the camp and John Thornton, he found that the camp was attacked by Yeehats and raged that his beloved one might be killed.

“A gust of overpowering rage swept over him. He did not know that he growled, but he growled aloud with a terrible ferocity. For the last time in his life he allowed passion to usurp cunning and reason, and it was because of his great love for John Thornton that he lost his head.” London (1903, p. 82)

The quotation above describes how much he loves John, and he cannot accept that the man’s life is taken. To save the man Buck ignored himself being surrounded by the group of Yeehats. He defied all the arrows and kept attacking them until they fled in terror to the woods. Buck desperately followed Thornton’s trace into the pool, and while standing at the edge of the water, he saw the man’s body laid down there. Losing a man whom he loves, “All day Buck brooded by the pool or roamed restlessly about the camp.” (83).

Friendship is an affection bond between two friends. It shows how an individual cares about his friend. Therefore, when Buck loses a friend, it makes him feel sorrow. This emotion was felt by Buck when Thornton died. The death of Thornton “left a great void in him,” and as London describes the void, “ached and ached, and which food could not fill.” (London, 1903, p. 83).

## **CONCLUSION**

The writer finds the friendship between Buck and John Thornton in a series of events in the novel *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London. The friendship started after Thornton saved Buck from Hal until his death of Thornton. The type of friendship between Buck and John Thornton is a virtue friendship, which benefits one another. Each is revealed to admire one other’s good qualities with the friend’s sympathy,

generosity, fairness, and courage. Moreover, they shared activities as friends and wanted the best for one another, for the friend's sake. The characteristics of their friendship revealed in this novel is voluntary, personal relationship, affective bond, and mutual and equal relationship. It can be seen by how they protect each other, show affection, is faithful, and share the good and bad moments.

It is suggested that future researchers use the objective approach to analyze the themes in this novel since the approach is considered appropriate for analyzing the intrinsic parts of the literary works. The future researcher may analyze other interesting themes or elements of the novel with the same approach or the same theme with a different approach.

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