

Cornell Notes: “For the Love of a Man” - Chapter 6, *The Call of the Wild*

Questions	Notes
1. What internal conflict does Buck begin to experience? Why does he experience this conflict? How does he feel about each side of the conflict? Cite evidence from the text to support your response.	Buck’s instincts and connection to his primitive side draw him toward the forest and his love for John Thornton draws him toward civilization. Buck feels a deep love and sense of loyalty to John Thornton and does not want to let him out of his sight after he is rescued by him. Buck has a deep love for John Thornton, which can be seen by the way in which he returns to him each time he leaves for the wild. John Thornton is characterized as “the ideal master.” He looks after his dogs and cares for them “as if they were his own children.” He also engages with his dogs in ways that shows his love and affection toward them. In the text, it states, “He had a way of taking Buck’s head roughly between his hands, and resting his own head upon Buck’s, of shaking him back and forth, the while calling him ill names that to Buck were love names.” Buck felt joy in return for the love and care he received. However, Buck also feels the “strain of the primitive” and the call from deep in the forest that compels him to want to leave Thornton’s side and embrace his primitive nature as a dog in the wild. Buck is really a wild dog, a member of the law of club and fang.
2. How does Buck prove his love and loyalty to Thornton in paragraphs 20-28? How does Thornton demonstrate his love and respect for Buck?	Buck demonstrates his loyalty and love by being willing to do whatever John Thornton asks of him, including being prepared to jump off a cliff to his death when Thornton asks him to do so. He also proves his loyalty to Thornton by jumping into the river after Thornton is thrown from a boat into the wild rapids. When Thornton grabs Buck’s tail, they try to swim to shore but the current is too powerful, so Thornton tells Buck to leave him and return to safety. After Buck returns to shore, Hans attaches a rope on him and he again jumps into the currents to save Thornton, injuring himself badly in the process. Thornton demonstrates his love for Buck by immediately examining him upon being rescued, identifying his injuries, and declaring the men will camp at the spot until Buck has enough time to rest and heal from his broken ribs.
3. What bet does John Thornton make with Matthewson about Buck? What does this reveal about Thornton’s character?	John Thornton bets \$1000 dollars that Buck can pull a sled with a thousand pounds when provoked by Matthewson. This reveals that while Thornton loves Buck, he is also willing to put Buck in a challenging situation for Thornton’s personal gain.
4. Read the lines from the text: “Thornton knelt down by Buck’s side. He took his head in his hands and rested cheek on cheek. He did not playfully shake him, as was his wont, or	These lines show that, despite putting Buck up to the challenge of pulling a thousand pounds to win the bet, Thornton has a deep love for Buck. Instead of yelling at him or using fear or “the club” to motivate Buck to pull the load, Thornton instead talks to Buck, playfully holds and strokes his head, and tells Buck that he should attempt to move the load “as you love me,” or in other words, he should be motivated by the love that Buck has for Thornton. This suggests that Thornton understands Buck more deeply than his previous

<p>murmur soft love curses; but he whispered in his ear. ‘As you love me, Buck. As you love me,’ was what he whispered.”</p> <p>What does this demonstrate about Thornton’s character and his relationship with Buck?</p>	<p>owners and understands the extent to which he feels love and loyalty to him.</p>
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Summary

In what ways is Buck primitive? In what ways is Buck civilized? Cite evidence from the text to support your response.

Buck is merciless. He knows it is eat or get eaten in the wild. He is a member of the “law of club and fang.” The text says, “He was older than the days he had seen and the breaths he had drawn. He linked the past with the present, and the eternity behind him throbbed through him in a mighty rhythm to which he swayed as the tides and seasons swayed.” Buck is a product of his ancestry. He is connected to wolves and wild dogs that came before him. Buck feels compelled to rejoin the wild.

Buck is also loving and loyal to John Thornton, which is demonstrated by the care for one another and their willingness to sacrifice for one another. This is very civilized and based on emotions and reason, not instinct. The text says, “But as often as he gained the soft unbroken earth and the green shade, the love for John Thornton drew him back to the fire again.” So, Buck’s love and loyalty for Thornton compels him to stay with civilization despite the call of the wild.