



The Sea Wolf by Jack London (B2 Upper Intermediate)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Do you like reading adventure stories?
2. If so, do you have a favourite?
3. What do you know about Jack London?
4. Have you read any of his novels or seen the film versions?

B – Listen and answer

Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).

1. One of the themes of Jack London's novel *The Sea Wolf* is the fight for survival.
2. The main protagonist of the story, Humphrey Van Weyden, is a literature professor.
3. The other protagonist is Wolf Larsen, a sea captain.
4. Van Weyden offers to work as a cabin boy on Larsen's ship.
5. Larsen is a foolish and ignorant man.
6. He treats the ship's crew very badly.
7. Maud Brewster comes to work on the ship.
8. She wants Van Weyden to kill Larsen.
9. Van Weyden's personality changes during his time on board the ship.
10. Wolf Larsen abandons Van Weyden and Maud Brewster on a remote island.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. How did Humphrey Van Weyden come to be on Wolf Larsen's ship?
2. What did he expect Larsen to do with him?
3. Why does Larsen think working as a cabin boy will be good for Van Weyden?
4. How does Larsen see relationships between human beings?
5. Why does Van Weyden think moral courage is useless when dealing with Larsen?
6. Why doesn't Maud Brewster feel safe even though she and Van Weyden have got away?
7. What inspired Jack London to write a nautical adventure?
8. What did he intend to counter in writing the novel?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense.)

1. It's dangerous to swim in that bay. Lots of people have _____ there.
2. If you don't know the answer, try _____. You might be lucky.
3. Flying over the Grand Canyon in a helicopter is a _____ experience.
4. Robert's manager _____ to dismiss him if he kept arriving late and leaving early.
5. The Titanic _____ on 15th April 1912 after striking an iceberg.
6. If you don't exercise regularly, your muscles will _____.

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 2)

Read the text and think of the word which best fits each gap. Use only one word for each gap.

A literary critic once said of Jack London, "The greatest story Jack London ever wrote was the story he lived." His tales of survival were all ¹_____ on his own experiences.

London left school at the age of 14 and, ²_____ the time he was 18, he had already been a crew member on a ³_____ hunting seals in the Bering Sea and had spent a month in prison, having been arrested ⁴_____ living as a vagabond.

Profoundly affected by the abuse he had suffered in prison ⁵_____ still an adolescent, he ⁶_____ the Socialist Party and began writing stories. Then, at the age of 21, he travelled to the Yukon in north-west Canada to ⁷_____ part in the Klondike Gold Rush. His experience of winter in the Yukon ⁸_____ him with the material for his best-seller, *The Call of the Wild*, a story about Buck, a sled dog in Alaska.

F – Write about it

Write about your favourite adventure novel. Mention:

- who wrote it;
 - where/when the story is set;
 - who the main characters are;
 - what happens in the story;
 - why you enjoyed it.
-

Answers: The Sea Wolf by Jack London (B2)

B – Listen and answer

1. T 2. F – He's a literary critic. 3. T 4. F – He's forced to work as a cabin boy. 5. F – He's an intelligent, self-educated man. 6. T 7. F – She's a passenger. 8. F – She wants him to show moral courage and to protect the crew from Larsen. 9. T 10. F – They escape from Larsen and go to a remote island.

C – Read and answer

1. He was on a boat that sank in San Francisco Bay and was rescued from drowning by Larsen's ship *Ghost*. 2. He expected Larsen to put him (safely) to shore. 3. Because he thinks Van Weyden is a weak person who has never done manual work and would not be able to survive on his own. 4. He sees them as a fight for survival in which the strong eat the weak. 5. Because he has learnt that it's impossible to try to reason with Larsen or appeal to his humanity. For Larsen, people are just commodities like the seals he hunts. 6. Because her intuition tells her something is going to happen to them. 7. He was inspired by his own experience and by a real-life sea captain. 8. He intended to counter Nietzsche's super-man ideal.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. drowned 2. guessing 3. thrilling 4. threatened 5. sank 6. weaken

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English?

1. based 2. by 3. boat/ship 4. for 5. while 6. joined 7. take 8. provided/supplied