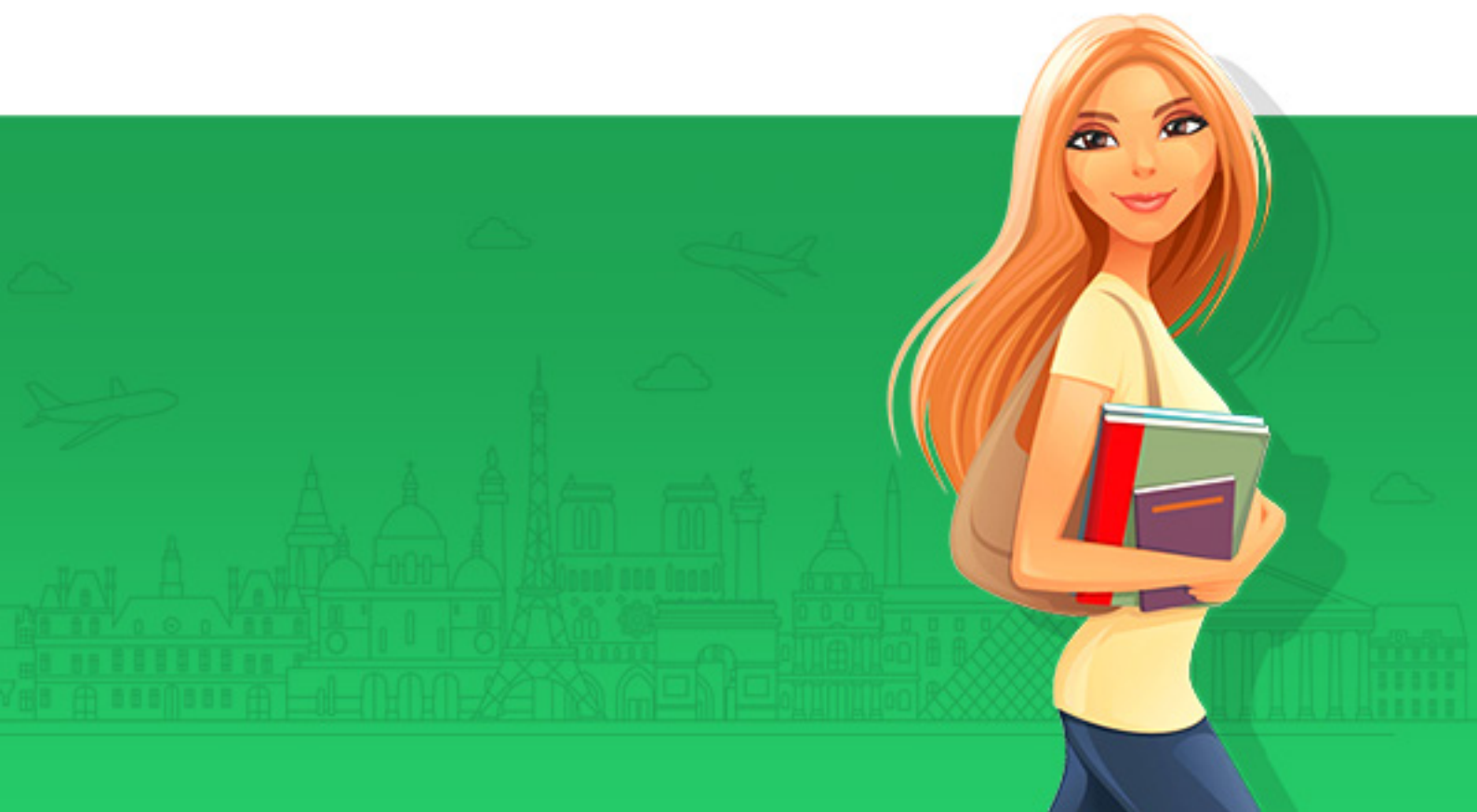




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Human and Animal Interrelationships from Domestication



— Jack London White Fang

Science and technological progress have established the human position as prior to the other living creatures. People often behave as if they are kings of the Earth, but when a person is surrounded by the wild, he or she feels helpless and confused. Ability to survive becomes the most important trait, and men are equaled to animals.

For my report, I have chosen the book *White Fang* by Jack London. It is an example of illustrative and instructive story about the human animal relations. The book is about the domestication of a wolf bred in the wild. The main character was born in severe nature conditions of Alaska. The time of the book refers to the end of the nineteenth century, when thousands of diggers rushed to Alaska in search of new gold fields. Jack London was one of those men. Unfortunately, he did not find any gold there, but he was lucky to survive, and he found characters for his books. The author's personal experience enabled him to depict a supportive and antagonistic nature of human – animal relations, which drew my attention.

In the first chapter “The Trial of Meat”, the author makes an introduction into the severe “frozen-hearted” Northern Wild. It seems that no living creature can survive in this still and frozen world. Then, along a still white frosty plain, a group of two men and a team of seven dogs appear. They have to transport a dead body of a rich man across the “white desert”. They are concerned of the wild cries heard in the distance. The men and the dogs are persecuted by a pack of wolves. Their pursuit is not open but obvious. It turns out that one dog is missing, and the men suggest that it has been accidentally lost.



The relations of the men and the dogs are represented as those in a team. People and animals have to perform their functions properly in order to survive in hard natural conditions. When one of the dogs disappears, the men characterize it as a weak link but regret her as a lost comrade.

The wolves are depicted as hunters and the winning team. The men and dogs are just some meat which they trial. It becomes clear from the dialogues that men are scared of the wolves' and conscious of their presence. Even gun does not make them feel confident.

The next chapter "The She-Wolf" reveals the wolves' strategy in stealing dogs. The tame wolf of the pack lures the strongest of the dogs into a trap and baffles the men. The strategy is very human-like and seems to be conscious. Animals do not claim to have intellect, but sometimes they are very logical and consequent in their actions, and they are a real threat to people, who have used to consider themselves prior to other species.

In the next chapter "The Hunger Cry", Bill, one of the men, is killed by the wolves as all the other victims. Being irritated by the disappearance of one more dog, Bill takes the gun and wastes all the bullets. Harry, the other man, seems to be frustrated but does not lose his survival instincts. He fights the wolves by means of a fire and does not succumb till the very end of the non-equal battle. The first part of the book is an introduction into the Wild, where the main character is to be born.

The next chapters "The Battle of the Fangs", "The Lair", and "The Grey Cub" reveal the story of the main character's birth and wild upbringing.



White Fang is the name of a grey wolf which represents an extraordinary example of his breed. Born from the leaders of the wolf pack, the grey cub shows unusual capacities to survive in the process of becoming an adult wolf. The story of his breed resembles those about future leaders in historical books about human. The animal is endowed with abilities of sensitive perception and response.

The next chapter reveals the White Fang's first encounter with a man. It turns out that the cub's mother is one of the dogs which belonged to an Indian tribe man. The two Indians who find the cub are very surprised to see the she-wolf alive.

From the very first sight, White Fang perceives the unspoken privileged position of a "man-animal". The small cub is unconsciously surrendered. He feels weak and little at the glance at the men (London 64). This first encounter with the man arises in the young wolf two opposing instincts of fighting and submission. He experiences two opposing impulses and cannot follow any (London 65).

The further events and vague pictures persuade White Fang that men are supreme creatures, and it is a general animal rule to surrender them (London 64).

Some further occasions reveal to the cub that laughing is one of the ways for men to express their superiority. White Fang hates being laughed at. It is one of his worst punishments. (London 67)

The human-animal relations, depicted in the chapter, resemble those of an upper class representative to a talented but a poor man of the lower class.



In the second part of the book, the most astonishing impression of the young wolf is his acquaintance with the fire. White Fang is seriously burned, and the hurt he feels is the worst he has ever known. People, the creatures who can surrender the fire, seem to be unmistakable and inescapable Gods for the young wolf. He is nearly paralyzed when he sees men produce the fire from sticks and moss. (London 23) Since then, he believes them to be gods. (London 68)

The next chapters “The Bondage” and “The Outcast” show the ways of a wild wolf’s adaptation in the human domain. The White Fang’s master, Grey Beaver, beats him severely and sells the cub’s mother at the market, but the whole bondage is rather instructive for the young wolf. Human life and people’s usual routine are a source of great interest for the cub. White Fang wins his master’s sympathy and is given a better piece of meat or defended from other dogs. For White Fang, it is the possibility to learn the man-made world and develop the ability to survive in a new cultivated environment. From the other hand, the young wolf’s unusual capacities, strong and dexterous body, and quick reaction make him an outcast in the dogs’ pack. The confrontation strengthens and White Fang hopes to escape.

He makes such an attempt. The following chapters describe an episode when White Fang runs away to the forest and does not go to a new place with the tribe when autumn comes. It turns out to be a severe trial, as the wild wolf has been used to the comforts of the human world, to the warmth of the hearth, to the fuss, and constant activity in people habitat. He missed his Gods and rushed after them along the river. He joins the camp with a new strong confidence that his master is inescapable. He has got used to them and their defended way of living. The young dog makes a silent agreement with his master to serve him loyally and faithfully. In response, he is provided with food and defense



from his ill-wishers. There are many of them among the tribe, both dogs and people. In the chapter “The Covenant”, the human-animal relation is shown as an example of union in a common struggle for better food and conditions. Such alliances are common among people, and sometimes they occur between a man and other species.

In the next chapter, the characters face a famine. People and animals have to eat one another if they want to survive. Some dogs, like White Fang, go away from the camp into the nearby forests and have to hunt for living. The chapter explains that hunger determines a general but strict rule: everyone is for himself. When the famine period ends, White Fang comes back to his master and is gladly accepted.

The next part of the book reveals White Fang’s life in the Yukon down the Mackenzie River. The port becomes a place of new impressions and challenges. White Fang meets a white man for the first time here. He is strongly affected by the achievements of civilization. In the atmosphere of severe rivalry and contest, his natural aggressiveness and combative instinct only strengthen. In the chapter, the author shows that human’s attitude and behavior can affect the fighting spirit of a wolf. In the port, there is a white man, Beauty Smith, who is passionate about dogs’ fighting. He is eager to possess White Fang for this purpose. In the end, he manages to become a new Mad God for the wolf. White Fang is unconsciously afraid of that man and considers him full of evil and hurtfulness (London 93). For some period, White Fang remains the best fighting dog in the port, but it cannot last long and in the end, he becomes an animal at bay. There is a bulldog dog, Cherokee, which manages to overcome the wolf. White Fang has been lucky to be alive after that fighting. Another stroke of luck for the wolf is being bought by another white man.



In the next chapter “The Indomitable”, White Fang shows signs of incurable aggressiveness and hatred to the whole world. The new master, Weedon Scott, has sympathy to the wolf, but even he believes that the effort to tame and calm down White Fang is hopeless.

The new master’s attitude has a marvelous effect on the wolf. The relations of White Fang with his last master present a remarkable example of human-animal friendship. In the last part of the book, which is presented by such chapters as “The Long trial”, “The Southland”, “The God’s Domain”, “The call of Kind”, and “The Sleeping Wolf”, the author depicts White Fang’s happiest period of life with Weedon Scott in California. The new master is wealthy, has a family, and is quite respectable in his circles. However, it does not prevent him from taking his wolf friend into his domain. The attitude of Weedon Scott’s relatives is quiet dubious, as White Fang is a real wolf, though tamed, with the blood full of evil instincts. In the end, White Fang manages to gain affection of almost everyone in his master’s house. Moreover, he meets a female dog Collie, and they have a cub. While reading the last part chapters, there constantly appears a question whether a wild born wolf can adequately adapt in a human society.

In the last chapter “The Sleeping Wolf”, White Fang is given the possibility to reveal his loyal and self-sacrificing nature. He saves his master’s life and unmasks a criminal.

This personal story of the wild bred wolf is an instructive example of human-animal relations and domestication. It teaches once again that kind heart, patience, and positive attitude can lead to positive changes in



any living creature. From several vivid examples of human-animal relationships, the reader of *The White Fang* by Jack London may conclude that animals can be very loyal companions and ready for mutual understanding and response in the struggle for life.

