

Before You Read

The Call of the Wild Chapters 6 and 7

FOCUS ACTIVITY

How does it make you feel when you experience *déjà vu*—a feeling that you have done something or been some place before?

Journal

Write about an experience you have had with *déjà vu*. Did the feeling make you uneasy? Or did it reassure you in some way?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out about Buck's experience with *déjà vu* as he rests near John Thornton's fire.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Wolves and domestic dogs are both members of the Canidae family. We know them, more commonly, as canines. They share characteristics—such as powerful teeth and bushy tails—and differ in certain other details, such as size and weight.

Scientists believe that dogs were the first wild animals to be domesticated. Archaeologists have found evidence in sites dating as far back as 8,000 years that dogs were living with humans. Wolves still survive in significant numbers in Alaska and Canada. In the United States, however, only small populations exist. Over the years, urban expansion has eliminated the wolves' habitat. People have long believed that wolves are dangerous animals. In fact, there are few instances of wolves attacking humans. The attitude persists, however, and there is relatively little support for increasing the wolf population in the United States.

Realism

Have you ever looked at an old painting and thought the characters and the setting looked like a scene from a dream? Chances are, you were looking at the work of a romanticist—someone who created art in a highly subjective, or emotional, manner according to ideas and customs that were fashionable in his or her time. Around the middle of the 1800s, some artists and writers attempted to show and to write about things as they really were, not as someone thought they ought to be. The attempt to depict or describe *real* human behavior and circumstances is called realism.

Jack London uses realism in his telling of *The Call of the Wild*. He does not pick and choose only the “nice” details or only the unpleasant ones. London includes details and episodes that represent life faithfully, even if that life is unpleasant.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

commingled [kə ming' gəld] *adj.* mixed together

expediency [iks pē' dē ən sē] *n.* practical haste

feigned [fānd] *n.* pretended; faked

ministrations [min' is trā' shəns] *n.* careful attentions

palpitant [pal' pə tənt] *adj.* trembling, throbbing

peremptorily [pə remp tə ri lē] *adv.* in an arrogant or self-assured manner

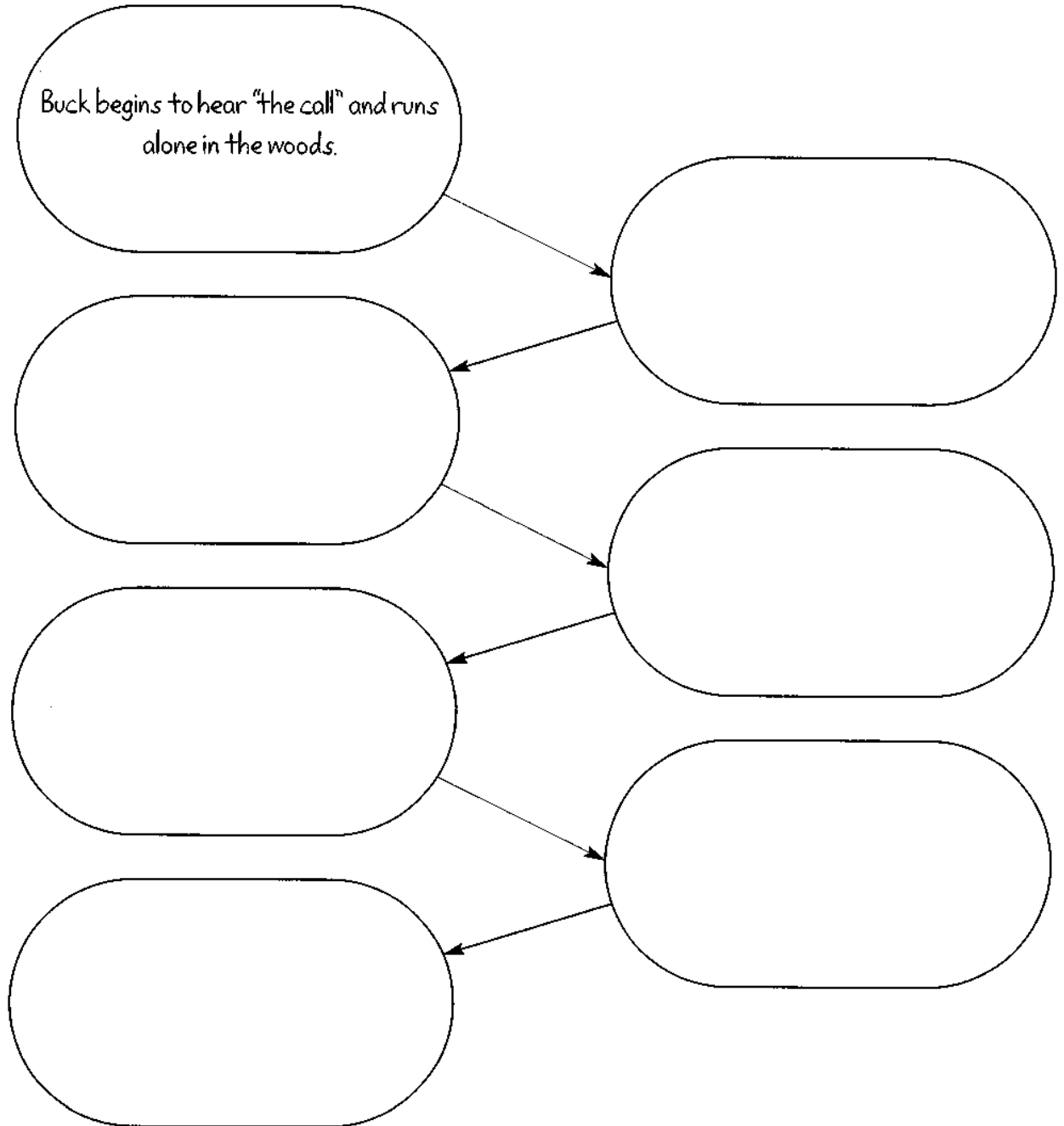
plethoric [ple thōr' ik] *adj.* excessively full

tangible [tan' jə bəl] *adj.* real; capable of being perceived by the senses

Active Reading

***The Call of the Wild* Chapters 6 and 7**

Buck's return to the wild happens gradually. Record the steps Buck takes, or the phases he goes through, in the sequence chain on this page.



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Responding

The Call of the Wild Chapters 6 and 7

Personal Response

How did you react to Buck becoming wild? Did you find yourself cheering for him? Or did you feel regret that he was moving away from the world of men? Explain.

How, if at all, would you change what happens to the various characters?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why was Thornton camping alone? Why was he the ideal master?

2. What do Thornton and his partners find after a long search? Why does this cause Buck to move toward the call of the wild?

3. What does Buck find when he returns to camp after killing the moose? Why do the Yeehats consider Buck an Evil Spirit?

Responding

The Call of the Wild Chapters 6 and 7

Analyzing Literature (continued)

Evaluate and Connect

4. How does London create suspense in the scene in which Buck pulls the thousand-pound load?

5. Were you surprised by what happened to John Thornton? Why or why not?

Literature and Writing

Plot Explanation

The story of Buck moves gradually from his life as a pampered pet to wild woodland dog-wolf. On a separate piece of paper, describe the process of Buck's return to the wild. What, if anything, does London do to prepare readers for John Thornton's death? In your opinion, could the story have ended *without* Thornton's death? Why or why not?

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Before meeting with your group, review the journal entry you made in the **Focus Activity** on page 20. Discuss whether any of you feel that your *déjà vu* experiences were related to instinct. Identify passages in the last section of the novel in which Buck begins to be aware of his more basic instincts. Talk about how London uses those passages to hint at the outcome of the novel.

Art Connection

Artists sometimes try to show progress, or a process, in works of art. How could an artist show the transformation of Buck from pet to lead sled dog? What medium would lend itself to showing this change? Plan such a work of art. If possible, carry out your plan. If the medium is not available, describe the work, explaining how the work will depict Buck's transformation.



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