

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The Call of the Wild (Year 9)

TEST PAPER

1 hour 45 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Use black ink or black ball-point pen.

Answer all questions in Section A.

Select one title to use for your writing in Section B.

Write your answers on a separate sheet.

You are advised to spend your time as follows:

- Section A
 - about 10 minutes reading
 - about 50 minutes answering the questions
- Section B
 - about 10 minutes planning
 - about 35 minutes writing

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

Section A (Reading): 40 marks

Section B (Writing): 40 marks

The number of marks is given in brackets at the end of each question or part-question.

Section A: 40 marks

Read carefully the passage below. Then answer all the questions which follow it.

This is a passage about a miner called John Thornton who has recently rescued a large and wild looking dog called Buck from an abusive owner.

When John Thornton injured his foot in the previous December his friends had made him comfortable and left him to get well, going on themselves up the river to work. He was still limping slightly at the time he rescued Buck, but with the continued warm weather even the slight limp left him. It was here, lying by the river bank, the dog Buck also won back his strength.

- 5 Buck was lazy as his wounds healed, his muscles swelled out, and the flesh came back to cover his bones. For that matter, they were all lazing —Buck, John Thornton, and Skeet and Nig —waiting for the raft to come that was to carry them to town. Skeet was a little Irish setter who soon made friends with Buck, who, close to death at that time, was unable to resent her first advances. She had the doctor trait which some dogs possess; and as a mother cat washes her kittens, so she washed
10 and cleansed Buck's wounds. Regularly, each morning after he had finished his breakfast, she performed her self-appointed task, till he came to look for her attentions as much as he did for Thornton's. Nig, equally friendly, though less demonstrative, was a huge dog, half bloodhound and half deerhound, with eyes that laughed and a boundless good nature.

- To Buck's surprise these dogs showed no jealousy toward him. They seemed to share the kindness
15 and generosity of John Thornton. As Buck grew stronger they enticed him into all sorts of games, and in this fashion Buck romped through his recovery and into a new existence. Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time. This he had never experienced at his first home 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
20 Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration it had taken John Thornton to arouse.

- This man had saved his life, which was something; but, further, he was the ideal master. Other men saw to the welfare of their dogs from a sense of duty and business; he saw to the welfare of his as if
25 they were his own children, because he could not help it. More than that, he never forgot a kindly greeting or to sit down for a long talk with them ("gas" he called it). He had a way of taking Buck's head roughly between his hands, and resting his own head upon Buck's, or of shaking him back and forth, while calling him harsh names that to Buck were love names. Buck knew no greater joy than that rough embrace and the sound of murmured insults, and at each jerk back and forth it seemed that his heart would be shaken out of his body so great was his happiness. And when, released, he
30 sprang to his feet, his mouth laughing, his eyes bright, his throat vibrant with unuttered sound, and in that fashion remained without movement, John Thornton would exclaim, "God! you can all but speak!"

- For the most part, however, Buck's love was expressed in adoration. While he went wild with happiness when Thornton touched him or spoke to him, he did not seek these tokens. Unlike Skeet,
35 who was wont to shove her nose under Thornton's hand and nudge and nudge till petted, Buck was content to adore at a distance. He would lie alert, at Thornton's feet, looking up into his face, studying it, following with keen interest each changing expression. Or, he would lie farther away, to the side or rear, watching the outlines of the man and the occasional movements of his body. And often, such was the communion in which they lived, the strength of Buck's gaze would draw John

40 Thornton's head around, and he would return the gaze, without speech, his heart shining out of his eyes.

For a long time after his rescue, Buck did not like Thornton being out of his sight. From the moment he left the tent to when he entered it again, Buck would follow at his heels. His past had caused him to fear that no master could be permanent. He was afraid that Thornton would pass out of his life.

45 Even in the night, he was haunted by this fear. At such times he would creep through the chill to the flap of the tent, where he would stand and listen to the sound of his master's breathing.

But in spite of this great love he felt for John Thornton, he retained his wildness. He was a thing of the wild, come in from the wild to sit by John Thornton's fire, rather than a dog of civilization.

50 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. His face and body were scarred by the teeth of many dogs, and he fought as fiercely as ever and more shrewdly. Skeet and Nig were too good-natured for quarrelling — besides, they belonged to John Thornton; but strange dogs swiftly acknowledged Buck's supremacy or found themselves struggling for life with a terrible enemy. And Buck was merciless. He knew there was no middle course. He must master or be mastered; to show mercy was
55 a weakness because it was misunderstood for fear, and such misunderstandings made for death. Kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law; and he obeyed.

He was loyal to Thornton alone. The rest of mankind was as nothing. Chance travellers might praise or pet him; but he was cold under it all, and from a too demonstrative man he would get up and walk away. When Thornton's partners, Hans and Pete, returned, Buck refused to notice them till he
60 learned they were close to Thornton; after that he tolerated them in a passive sort of way, accepting treats from them as though he were doing them the favour. They were of the same large type as Thornton, living close to the earth, thinking simply and seeing clearly; and they soon understood Buck and his ways.

For Thornton, however, Buck's love seemed to grow and grow. He, alone among men, could put a
65 pack upon Buck's back in the summer travelling. Nothing was too great for Buck to do, when Thornton commanded. One day 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. A thoughtless whim seized Thornton, and he drew the attention of Hans and Pete to the experiment he had in mind. "Jump, Buck!" he commanded, sweeping his arm out
70 and over the chasm. The next instant he was grappling with Buck on the extreme edge, while Hans and Pete were dragging them back into safety.

"It's uncanny," Pete said, after it was over and they had caught their speech.

Thornton shook his head. "No, it is splendid, and it is terrible, too. Do you know, it sometimes makes me afraid."

75 "I'm not hankering to be the man that lays hands on you while he's around," Pete announced conclusively, nodding his head toward Buck.

It was at Circle City, before the year was out, that Pete's apprehensions were realized. Burton, a man evil-tempered and malicious, had been picking a quarrel with a newcomer at the bar, when Thornton stepped good-naturedly between them. Buck, as was his custom, was lying in a corner,
80 head on paws, watching his master's every action. Burton struck out, without warning, straight from the shoulder. Thornton was sent spinning, and saved himself from falling only by clutching the rail of the bar.

Those who were looking on heard what was neither bark nor yelp, but a something which is best described as a roar, and they saw Buck's body rise up in the air as he left the floor for Burton's

- 85 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. Buck loosened his teeth from the flesh of the arm and drove in again for the throat. This time the man succeeded only in partly blocking, and his throat was torn open. Then the crowd was upon Buck, and he was driven off. While a surgeon checked the bleeding, Buck prowled up and down, growling furiously, attempting to rush in, and being forced back by men with clubs. A "miners' meeting," called on the spot, decided that the dog had been provoked, and Buck was discharged. But his reputation was made, and from that day his name spread through every camp in Alaska.
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(Adapted from *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London)

Read lines 1-13

A1. List **five** things you learn, in these lines, about Thornton and Buck. [5]

Read lines 14-32

A2. How does the writer show that Thornton is a good master, in these lines? [5]
You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer.

Read lines 33-46

A3. What are Buck's feelings towards Thornton, in these lines? How does the writer show this? [10]
You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer.

Read lines 47-76

A4. How does the writer show Thornton's power over Buck in these lines? [10]
You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer.

Read lines 77 to the end of the passage.

A5. Thornton has mixed views about Buck's feelings towards him. He describes them as both a 'splendid' and 'terrible' thing.

What do you think and feel about this?

You should write about:

- your impressions of Buck as he is presented in these lines and the passage as a whole;
- how the writer has created these impressions.

Section B: 40 marks

In this section you will be assessed for the quality of your story writing skills. 24 marks are awarded for the way in which you put together and develop your story; 16 marks are awarded for your use of vocabulary and the accuracy of your writing.

Try to choose a title that appeals to you and that you think you can write about.

Spend a few minutes planning your work – you may wish to think about how your story will begin and end and which characters will be involved.

When you have finished writing your story try to leave time to check your work and correct any errors.

Choose one of the following titles for your writing:

[40]

Either

(a) Write about an occasion when you have shown loyalty to someone.

Or

**(b) Write a story which begins:
He checked his watch again...**

Or

(c) The Rescue.