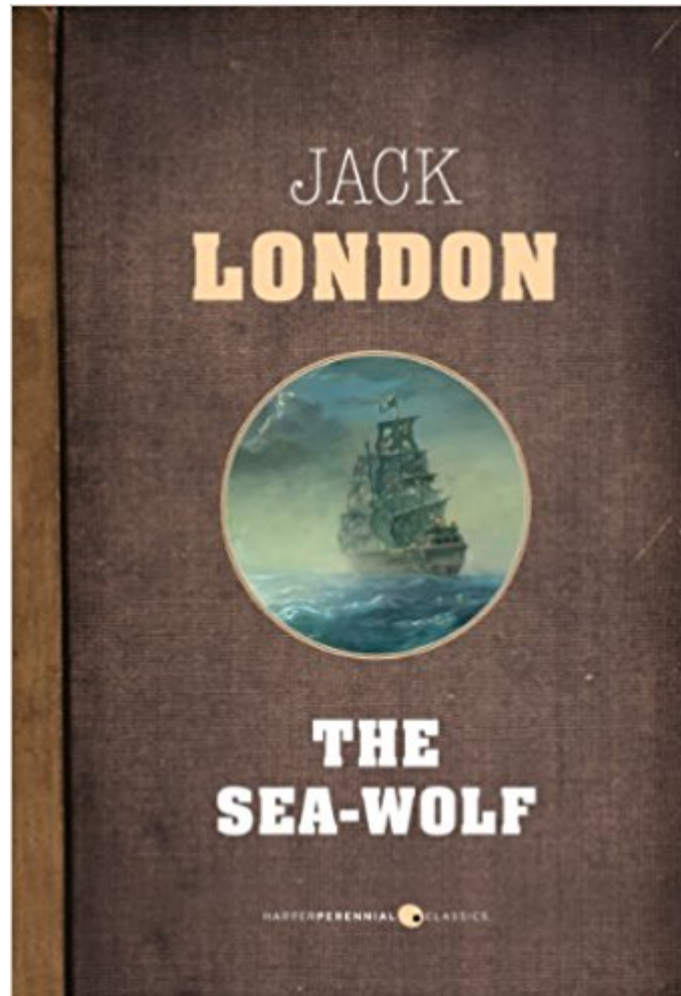


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The Sea Wolf



Synopsis

The Sea-Wolf is the gripping tale of Humphrey Van Weyden who is ship-wrecked after embarking on what was meant to be a pleasure cruise. When he is picked up by a passing ship, he initially believes he has been rescued by kind saviours. But Humphrey soon finds out that he has in fact boarded the Ghost—a seal-hunting ship captained by the terrifying and twisted Wolf Larsen, known by his crew as the Sea-Wolf. A captivating tale of survival, Jack London's The Sea-Wolf has been adapted for the screen numerous times, most notably in the 1941 film which was nominated for the Academy Award for best visual effects that year. HarperPerennial Classics brings great works of literature to life in digital form, upholding the highest standards in ebook production and celebrating reading in all its forms. Look for more titles in the HarperPerennial Classics collection to build your digital library

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Customer Reviews

When I first dipped into THE SEA WOLF, I was struck by its similarity to CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS. Humphrey van Weydon's ferry-steamer, The Martinez, is rammed by another ship

in San Francisco Bay in a heavy fog. Van Weydon is rescued by Wolf Larsen, captain of the seal-hunter, *The Ghost*. Larsen refuses to take Van Weydon ashore, laughing at his offer of money. Once again, I am reminded of another famous book, *MOBY DICK*, and Larsen is Captain Ahab. Ruthless and single-minded, Larsen decides to make Van Weydon his cabin boy on this four month trip to provide seal pelts for fashionable American women. Van Weydon resists until Larsen catches hold of his arm and squeezes. A man of letters who freely admits never working a day in his life, Van Weydon does everything he's told from that point on, including aiding and abetting the Captain as he mistreats his crew. Early on we learn some of Larsen's motivation when he and Van Weydon have a literary discussion. We discover that Larsen is a literary bully. He's never spent a day in school, but he reads Shakespeare, Robert Browning and John Milton. London's theme becomes clear and Larsen and van Weydon argue about immortality, van Weydon declaring that man has a soul; Larsen retorting with a Scrooge-like "Bah!" And suddenly we have the first gleanings of an existentialist novel. If there were no God, how should man behave? Larsen, seeing evil everywhere he looks, decides he will do whatever is best for him personally. The conflict is not precisely good versus evil. Van Weydon is a weakling, a pampered rich man, a coward. There is also much to admire about Wolf Larsen. He outduels seven men during a mutiny. He's constantly reading, constantly trying to understand.

Caution: *The Sea Wolf* is full of examples of man's inhumanity to man. If you are easily upset by callous disregard of the health and safety of others, you will not enjoy this book. Further, the book describes many of the worst abuses of the ways that seals were hunted for their fur. On the surface, *The Sea Wolf* is a story about seal hunting expeditions to the Bering Sea. Beneath the surface, this book is an allegory about the nature of a human's life. *The Sea Wolf* is one of those novels that explores philosophy as its primary purpose. The idea is to take abstract philosophical ideas, and make the philosophies come to life by putting them into interesting circumstances. So while there's an adventure tale on the surface of *The Sea Wolf*, that story is there merely to provide examples of the philosophical points. So don't be surprised if the adventure falters from time to time in favor of developing the philosophical examples. In *The Sea Wolf*, action is included primarily for character development rather than the reader's visceral entertainment. In this book, Jack London was obviously fascinated by the new theories of Social Darwinism that grew out of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, indicating that the most capable people survived and prospered while the least capable fell by the wayside. Another influence was Nietzsche's concept of the amoral superman. A third influence was Milton's poem, *Paradise Lost*, and the role that Lucifer played in that story. To explore

these points, Mr. London developed Captain Wolf Larsen, owner of the seal hunting schooner, Ghost. Captain Larsen is as amoral and strong in body and mind as you can imagine. Think of him as 100 percent traditional masculinity. For a counterpoint, Mr.

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