

Incident Chart

In the chart below, track and analyze the incidents that reveal aspects of Buck’s character, the other sled dogs, and Buck’s owners. These incidents may be interactions with nature, with other animals, or with men. In the first column, record and summarize the incident, citing textual evidence and specific page numbers. In the second column, record your observations and inferences about how the incidents develop the characters and themes.

Incident Summary	Observations and Inferences
(Chapter 1) Spitz is introduced as a sneaky dog not to be trusted (i.e., he’s treacherous). He’s described as “smiling into one’s face the while he meditated some underhanded trick, as, for instance, when he stole from Buck’s food at the first meal.”	I suspect that Buck and Spitz may have a contentious relationship. The first incident of the two of them together is one where Spitz steals from Buck, and Buck wants to fight back, which suggests they may fight each other for more food or more power. Second, this emphasizes the harsh reality of nature and the idea that it’s eat or be eaten, take or get taken. This is a key theme that has come out throughout chapter one, and also connects to this idea of Buck’s return “into the primitive.”
(Chapter 1) As Buck springs to punish Spitz for stealing his food, Francois cracks his whip to hit Spitz as punishment for stealing food from Buck.	This incident suggests that Francois does not miss much; he’s aware of his dogs and their behavior. Buck also reflects that this punishment seemed fair, which suggests that the Francois is a fair owner who will treat his dogs fairly (and not be afraid to punish them if they step out of line).
(Chapter 1) Buck experiences his first snow. He is puzzled by the snow because he has never been in this type of weather before. The other animals laughed at him because it is strange to them that a sled dog like Buck would have lived a pampered life and not felt snow before. “He sniffed it curiously, then licked some up on his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next instant was gone. This puzzled him. He tried it again, with the same results. The onlookers laughed uproariously, and he felt ashamed, he knew not why, for it was his first snow.”	This incident suggests that Buck’s transition to the wild or primitive will be a long process. There are many things that he does not know about what it means to be a dog of the wild. This also suggests that the animals have feelings about one another, and that Buck can feel an emotion like shame, which emphasizes the anthropomorphism.

<p>(Chapter 2) Curly's death: After Curly is killed by the wolves who attack camp, Buck is troubled by Curly's death and what that teaches him about surviving in the wild. The text states: "So sudden was it, and so unexpected, that Buck was taken aback.... But she lay there limp and lifeless in the bloody, trampled snow, almost literally torn to pieces, the swart half-breed standing over her and cursing horribly. The scene often came back to Buck to trouble him in his sleep. So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you. Well, he would see to it that he never went down.</p>	<p>This incident helps Buck fully understand the "kill or be killed" aspect of survival in the wild. When he sees Curly die so horribly and suddenly, he resolves to never get "knocked down" or in a situation where he is able to be preyed upon by other dogs/ wolves. This shows his resolve and determination.</p> <p>The fact that Buck was troubled in his sleep also suggests that he has the emotional capacity to think in a longer-term way, and reason somewhat abstractly (e.g., if this happened to Curly, it could happen to me).</p>
<p>(Chapter 2) Buck learns to sleep in the snow: When Buck is unable to get comfortable and warm enough to sleep in the frozen snow, he decides he will seek out his fellow teammates to learn from them. He finds Billee, who had dug a hole for himself, and then digs his own hole in the ground to find a warm sleeping place.</p>	<p>This incident shows that Buck is clever and able to problem-solve by thinking about what he can learn from others. It also shows his quick thinking as a key characteristic that helps him to adapt (and ultimately to survive) in the wild.</p>
<p>(Chapter 2) (Chapter 2) Buck learns to eat fast, steal food. Buck is a slow eater, and because of this, the other dogs steal his food before he can finish it. To address this, but adapts and begins to eat more quickly so that he is able to get all of his food. He also sees Pike steal food from the owners, and begins to slyly steal a piece of bacon - and other food - for himself. From the text: "To remedy this, he ate as fast as they; and, so greatly did hunger compel him, he was not above taking what did not belong to him. He watched and learned. When he saw Pike, one of the new dogs, a clever malingerer and thief, slyly steal a slice of bacon when Perrault's back was turned, he duplicated the performance the following day, getting away with the whole chunk."</p> <p>This part of the text also suggests Buck's moral character is changing: It marked, further, the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was all well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private</p>	<p>These incidents demonstrate Buck's ability to adapt to his surroundings. This is a key characteristic that will allow him to survive. This also helps to underscore the idea or theme of "eat or be eaten" of the Wild - Buck has to fend for himself if he wants to survive. Buck's decision to steal bacon also shows the way he has changed from his time with the Judge, when he would have respected the "law" or moral rules of not stealing from others. By stealing, Buck shows that he is following the law of "club and fang" - doing what it takes to survive in the woods.</p>

<p>property and personal feeling; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whoso took such things into account was a fool, and in so far as he observed them he would fail to prosper.</p>	
<p>(Chapter 2) Francois and Perrault: Francois and Perrault are characterized in the text as knowledgeable, fair dog sled owners. For example, Francois uses his whip to help train Buck in the traces, but lessens the whip as he learns. Perrault “honors” Buck by looking at his feet, which suggests they care about - and care for - the dogs. him.</p> <p>“As Francois' whip backed him up, Buck found it to be cheaper to mend his ways than to retaliate. Once, during a brief halt, when he got tangled in the traces and delayed the start, both Dave and Sol-leks flew at him and administered a sound trouncing. The resulting tangle was even worse, but Buck took good care to keep the traces clear thereafter; and ere the day was done, so well had he mastered his work, his mates about ceased nagging him. Francois' whip snapped less frequently, and Perrault even honored Buck by lifting up his feet and carefully examining them.”</p>	<p>Francois and Perrault are motivated to get to their destination and are characterized as knowledgeable and fair owners of the dogs. Buck seems to be adapting well under their leadership, which suggests that they are able to care for, break in, and work well with dogs.</p>
<p>(Chapter 3) Buck uses Pike to surprise Spitz with an attack. His attack on Spitz also leads Pike to stand up to Spitz as well. Buck is punished for his actions by Francois with the whip (and Pike is punished by Spitz), but this only causes him to continue to challenge Spitz in more secretive ways.</p>	<p>Buck’s decision to challenge Spitz demonstrates that his “primordial beast” is no longer silent or secret, and that he is embracing the call to be wild and dominant. This helps to show that Buck is adapting and changing, and also suggests that there can only be one leader/ dominant dog in the wild. Buck is ready to challenge/threaten Spitz, which suggests that he’s more fully embracing his wild nature and destiny.</p>

<p>(Chapter 3) Buck continues to threaten Spitz' leadership on the sly. He realizes that Francois and Perrault are onto him, so he works hard in the traces but continues to find ways when they are not looking to upset the balance of power, which leads the other dogs to begin to revolt against Spitz as well. The text states: "Francois knew he was behind all the trouble, and Buck knew he knew; but Buck was too clever ever again to be caught red-handed. He worked faithfully in the harness, for the toil had become a delight to him; yet it was a greater delight slyly to precipitate a fight amongst his mates and tangle the traces."</p>	<p>Buck expresses delight in the toil of the work of being in the traces, but seems to enjoy provoking Spitz and causing upheaval on the team even more. This demonstrates Buck's growing desire for leadership in the wild; he is no longer content to be second to Spitz or the other dogs. His ability to provoke Spitz in sly and cunning ways when his owners are not looking also suggests an ability to think through decisions or actions and consequences.</p>
<p>(Chapter 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Buck retreats when he is called to the harness. When Francois throws the club down, he still does not come, because he is revolting against them for not allowing him to be the lead dog. ● Buck stays out of reach and continues to run and dodge clubs from the owners for an hour, frustrating them and stalling the entire team from being able to leave. ● Finally, Francois and Perrault give up, and move Sol-leks and place Buck in the lead position. 	<p>By revolting against them, he has provoked them into making a decision and changing their mind about allowing him to be the lead dog. Without his actions, they would not have given him the lead position; without giving them the lead position, they would not have been able to leave.</p> <p>This shows that Buck is demanding leadership. It also demonstrates his cunning intelligence and ability to reason and act in ways that will accomplish his wants.</p>

<p>(Chapter 4) As leader of the team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buck disciplines the other dogs so that they fall in line and work together during their runs: "Pike... who never put an ounce more of his weight against the breastband than he was compelled to do, was swiftly and repeatedly shaken for loafing; and ere the first day was done he was pulling more than ever before in his life." "The first night in camp, Joe, the sour one, was punished soundly -- a thing that Spitz had never succeeded him in doing." • Buck breaks in two new dogs - Teek and Koonah - with a speed that amazes Francois. • Due to Buck's leadership, the team makes record time. Not only do they start covering ground more quickly, they do so consistently day after day. "They covered in one day going out what had taken them ten days coming in." "Each day for fourteen days they had averaged forty miles." 	<p>These incidents demonstrate that Buck has come into his own as a leader. In addition, under Buck's leadership, the team thrives. The other dogs respect his leadership and fall in line quickly under his command. The team begins to make record time, which demonstrates that Buck is a capable leader, able to control, motivate, and push the team forward through the rough terrain.</p> <p>In prior chapters, Buck was learning to adapt in his new surroundings; in chapter 4, we see Buck emerge as a true leader among the dogs and a strong force that can even bend the ideas and will of his owners.</p>
<p>(Chapter 5) Buck's new owners appear inexperienced and ignorant:</p> <p>"You've got a right smart load as it is," said one of them; "and its not me should tell you your business, but I wouldn't tote that tent along if I was you."</p> <p>"'Undreamed of!' cried Mercedes, throwing up her hands in dainty dismay.</p> <p>"'However in the world could I manage without a tent?'</p> <p>"'It's springtime, and you won't get any more cold weather,' the man replied.</p> <p>"She shook her head decidedly, and Charles and Hal put the last odds and ends on top the mountainous load.</p> <p>"'Think it'll ride?' one of the men asked.</p> <p>"'Why shouldn't it?' Charles demanded rather shortly."</p>	<p>The dialogue between the characters shows they are unfit for leading a team of dogs through the wild. They have too big of a load to carry. Mercedes is upset because they recommend not bringing a tent, which she says that she cannot survive without, even though they tell he the temperature will be warm enough to do without it.</p> <p>Not only do they seem oblivious for how to prepare and what they need to take, they also seem resistant to others' advice. Mercedes does not listen to the advice of the men about the tent, and when they ask if they think the load will go, Charles responds with a harsh tone of voice to say, "Why shouldn't it?" This suggests perhaps they are arrogant or think they do not need anyone's advice.</p>

<p>(Chapter 5) They buy additional dogs: “With the newcomers hopeless and forlorn, and the old team worn out by twenty-five hundred miles of continuous trail, the outlook was anything but bright. The two men, however, were quite cheerful. And they were proud, too. They were doing the thing in style, with fourteen dogs. They had seen other sleds depart over the Pass for Dawson, or come in from Dawson, but never had they seen a sled with so many as fourteen dogs. In the nature of Arctic travel there was a reason why fourteen dogs should not drag one sled, and that was that one sled could not carry the food for fourteen dogs. But Charles and Hal did not know this. They had worked the trip out with a pencil, so much to a dog, so many dogs, and so many days. Mercedes looked over their shoulders and nodded comprehensively, it was all so very simple.”</p>	<p>Hal, Charles, and Mercedes feel proud that they have 14 dogs pulling their team because they have never seen a sled with so many dogs. They feel as though they have the best team because they can afford so many dogs. However, what they don’t realize is that teams do not have that many dogs because it would be impossible for the sled to carry food for so many dogs. Hal, Charles, and Mercedes are ignorant and arrogant.</p>
<p>(Chapter 5) They run out of dog food “It was inevitable that they should go short on dog food. But they hastened it by overfeeding, bringing the day nearer when underfeeding would commence. And to cap it all, when Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes and a quaver in her throat, could not cajole Hal into giving the dogs still more, she stole from the fish-sacks and fed them slyly.</p> <p>“Then came the underfeeding. Hal awoke one day to the fact that his dog food was half-gone and the distance only quarter covered; further, that for love or money no additional dog food was to be obtained. So he cut down even the orthodox ration and tried to increase the day's travel. His sister and brother-in-law seconded him; but they were frustrated by their heavy outfit and their own incompetence. It was a simple matter to give the dogs less food; but it was impossible to make the dogs travel faster, while their own inability to get under way earlier in the morning prevented them from traveling longer hours. Not only did they not know how to work dogs, but they did not know how to work themselves.”</p>	<p>They can’t keep themselves together, let alone take care of the dogs. They are messy and disorganized, which leads them to make additional mistakes, like miscalculating how much dog food they will need. This leads to deadly consequences, as they begin to lose dogs.</p>

(Chapter 5) Their mistreatment of animals leads to the animals suffering/dying: "And through it all Buck staggered along at the head of the team as in a nightmare. He pulled when he could; when he could no longer pull, he fell down and remained down till blows from whip or club drove him to his feet again. All the stiffness and gloss had gone out of his beautiful furry coat. The hair hung down, limp and draggled, or matted with dried blood where Hal's club had bruised him. His muscles had wasted away to knotty strings, and the flesh pads had disappeared, so that each rib and every bone in his frame were outlined cleanly through the loose hide that was wrinkled in folds of emptiness. It was heartbreaking, only Buck's heart was unbreakable. The man in the red sweater had proved that.

"As it was with Buck, so was it with his mates. They were skeletons. There were seven all together, including him. In their very great misery they had become insensible to the bite of the lash or the bruise of the club. The pain of the beating was dull and distant, just as the things their eyes saw and their ears heard seemed dull and distant. They were not half-living, or quarter-living. They were simply so many bags of bones in which sparks of life fluttered faintly. When a halt was made, they dropped down in the traces like dead dogs, and the spark dimmed and paled and seemed to go out. And when the club or whip fell upon them, the spark fluttered feebly up, and they tottered to their feet and staggered on."

Hal, Charles, and Mercedes are inept and cruel owners. Their arrogance and selfishness has led to the death and starvation of the dogs. They are the reason for the downfall of the team.

<p>(Chapter 5) Billee's death:</p> <p>"There came a day when Billee, the good-natured, fell and could not rise. Hal had traded off his revolver, so he took the axe and knocked Billee on the head as he lay in the traces, then cut the carcass out of the harness and dragged it to one side. Buck saw, and his mates saw, and they knew that this thing was very close to them."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Billee dies as a result of the mistreatment from the owners. The dogs are starving, overworked, and becoming ill, injured, or close to death as a result. When Dave was suffering before death, the owners tried to figure out what was wrong with him, and offered to let him run beside the sled out of the traces. They also let him continue in the traces because they wanted him to die honorably. Finally, the owner shot him to end his suffering when he couldn't continue. Billee is run down by his owners. They are callous and show complete disregard for his welfare. When they realize that he is unable to continue, Hal kills Billee by clubbing him on the head with an axe in front of the other dogs and dragging him out of the traces. ● This incident shows how callous the owners are toward the dogs. They have complete disregard for the dogs' healthy and safety, and do not care if they are killed in the process of traveling through the wild.
<p>(Chapter 6) Buck's love for John Thornton:</p> <p>Buck demonstrates his loyalty and love by being willing to do whatever John Thornton asks of him, including being prepared to jump off a cliff to his death when Thornton asks him to do so. He also proves his loyalty to Thornton by jumping into the river after Thornton is thrown from a boat into the wild rapids. When Thornton grabs Buck's tail, they try to swim to shore but the current is too powerful, so Thornton tells Buck to leave him and return to safety. After Buck returns to shore, Hans attaches a rope on him and he again jumps into the currents to save Thornton, injuring himself badly in the process. Thornton demonstrates his love for Buck by immediately examining him upon being rescued, identifying his injuries, and declaring the men will camp at the spot until Buck has enough time to rest and heal from his broken ribs.</p>	<p>This incident shows that Buck is loyal to John Thornton. He is so loyal, he is willing to risk his life. Buck hasn't acted this way with his other owners, but since Thornton treats Buck with respect, Buck returns the same.</p>

<p>(Chapter 6) John Thornton bets \$1000 dollars that Buck can pull a sled with a thousand pounds when provoked by Matthewson.</p> <p>“Thornton knelt down by Buck's side. He took his head in his hands and rested cheek on cheek. He did not playfully shake him, as was his wont, or murmur soft love curses; but he whispered in his ear. ‘As you love me, Buck. As you love me,’ was what he whispered.”</p>	<p>This reveals that while Thornton loves Buck, he is also willing to put Buck in a challenging situation for Thornton’s personal gain.</p> <p>These lines show that, despite putting Buck up to the challenge of pulling a thousand pounds to win the bet, Thornton has a deep love for Buck. Instead of yelling at him or using fear or “the club” to motivate Buck to pull the load, Thornton instead talks to Buck, playfully holds and strokes his head, and tells Buck that he should attempt to move the load “as you love me,” or in other words, he should be motivated by the love that Buck has for Thornton. This suggests that Thornton understands Buck more deeply than his previous owners and understands the extent to which he feels love and loyalty to him.</p>
<p>(Chapter 7) Buck returns to John Thornton after befriending the wolf: They stopped by a running stream to drink, and, stopping, Buck remembered John Thornton. He sat down. The wolf started on toward the place from where the call surely came, then returned to him, sniffing noses and making actions as though to encourage him. But Buck turned about and started slowly on the back track. For the better part of an hour the wild brother ran by his side, whining softly. Then he sat down, pointed his nose upward, and howled. It was a mournful howl, and as Buck held steadily on his way he heard it grow faint and fainter until it was lost in the distance.</p>	<p>Despite feeling an urge to be a part of the wild, Buck returns to John Thornton. This demonstrates his deep loyalty and love for his owner and the tension he feels between wanting to be wild and wanting to be Thornton’s dog.</p>

<p>(Chapter 7) Buck kills a bear, fights off a pack of wolverines: He fished for salmon in a broad stream that emptied somewhere into the sea, and by this stream he killed a large black bear, blinded by the mosquitoes while likewise fishing, and raging through the forest helpless and terrible. Even so, it was a hard fight, and it aroused the last latent remnants of Buck's ferocity. And two days later, when he returned to his kill and found a dozen wolverines quarreling over the spoil, he scattered them like chaff; and those that fled left two behind who would quarrel no more.</p>	<p>These actions show that Buck has what it takes to survive in the wild. He is able to kill food, protect himself from predators, and defend what is his from other wild animals who may try to take it.</p>
<p>(chapter 7) Takes revenge on the Yeehats: And truly Buck was the Fiend incarnate, raging at their heels and dragging them down like deer as they raced through the trees. It was a fateful day for the Yeehats. They scattered far and wide over the country, and it was not till a week later that the last of the survivors gathered together in a lower valley and counted their losses. As for Buck, wearying of the pursuit, he returned to the desolated camp. He found Pete where he had been killed in his blankets in the first moment of surprise. Thornton's desperate struggle was fresh-written on the earth and Buck scented every detail of it down to the edge of a deep pool. By the edge, head and fore feet in the water, lay Skeet, faithful to the last. The pool itself, muddy and discolored from the sluice boxes, effectually hid what it contained, and it contained John Thornton; for Buck followed his trace into the water, from which no trace led away.</p>	<p>This incident demonstrates Buck's loyalty and love for John Thornton. It also demonstrates his ferocity and power. In this scene, we see Buck overpowering a tribe of men, which suggests that he is able to survive and thrive on his own.</p>

(chapter 7) Joins a wild pack of wolves: Then an old wolf, gaunt and battle-scarred, came forward. Buck writhed his lips into the preliminary of a snarl, but sniffed noses with him. Whereupon the old wolf sat down, pointed nose at the moon, and broke out the long wolf howl. The others sat down and howled. And now the call came to Buck in unmistakable accents. He, too, sat down and howled. This over, he came out of his angle and the pack crowded around him, sniffing in half-friendly, half-savage manner. the leaders lifted the yelp of the pack and sprang away into the woods. The wolves swung in behind, yelping in chorus. And Buck ran with them, side by side with the wild brother, yelping as he ran.

Buck is finally able to fully join the wild. He has demonstrated that he will be able to survive in the wild, and he is no longer held back by loyalty to John Thornton or any other owner. As such, Buck is finally ready to heed "the call."