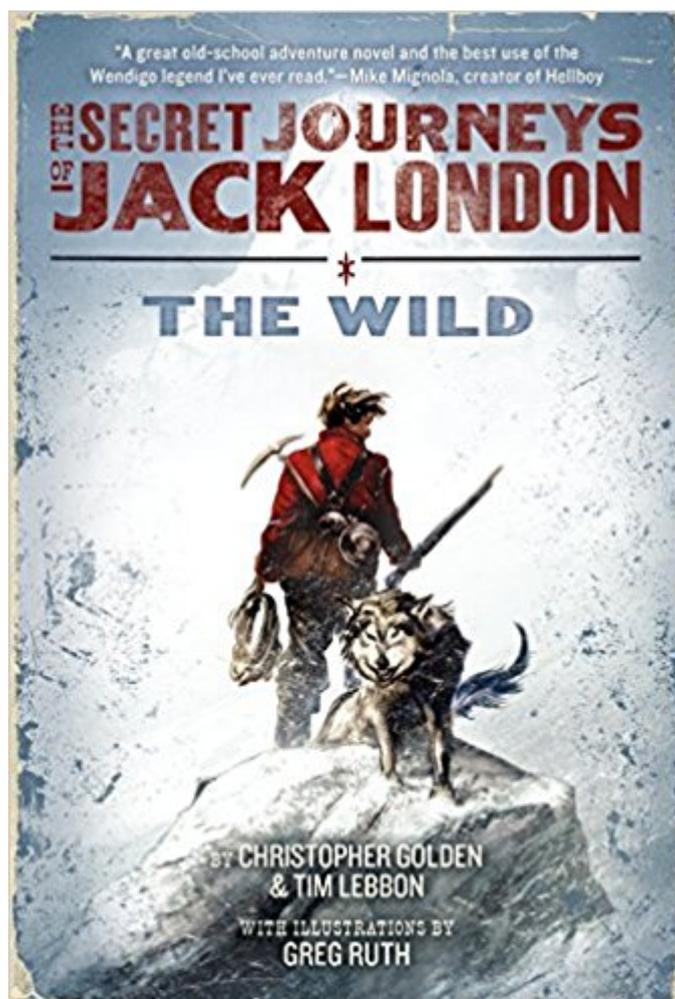


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The Secret Journeys Of Jack London, Book One: The Wild



Synopsis

The world knows Jack London as a writer who lived his own real-life adventures. But there are some parts of his life that have remained hidden for many years, things even he couldn't set down in writing. Terrifying, mysterious, bizarre, and magical—these are the Secret Journeys of Jack London. Jack, age seventeen, journeys far into the Yukon Territory in search of gold and adventure. But what he finds in the wild reaches of the north freezes his blood: kidnapping and slavery, the murderous nature of desperate men, and, amidst it all, supernatural beasts of the wilderness that prey on the weakness in men's hearts. Jack's survival will depend on his ability to quell the demons within himself as much as those without.

Book Information

Series: Secret Journeys of Jack London (Book 1)

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: HarperTeen; Reprint edition (February 28, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 006186319X

ISBN-13: 978-0061863196

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.8 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,858,414 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Canada](#) #1884 in [Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Fairy Tales & Folklore](#) #4298 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Action & Adventure > Fantasy](#)

Customer Reviews

Imagining author Jack London as a 17-year-old adventurer is the easy part—after all, it's not far from the truth. Golden and Lebbon's gamble is peppering their story with the fantastic and supernatural, and it pays off. In this gung-ho series starter, Jack enters into the Yukon gold rush. However, an early winter puts him and his new friends through the gauntlet: a raging river, a frigid season spent starving in an isolated cabin, capture into the gold-panning slave trade. And those are the good months! Golden and Lebbon write with a gritty assurance that brings the fantasy elements—most notably, Jack's multiple face-offs with the mythic Wendigo—down to earth. The book's second half stretches into dark folktale territory,

as Jack finds himself being rescued by a mysterious woman whose love forms a kind of prison. Connections to London's real life are everywhere: a wolf acts as Jack's spirit guide, and he literally learns the call of the wild. Occasional sketches add a bit of cinematic drama. Best of all, this first chapter kicks the door wide open for almost anything in book two. Grades 7-10. --Daniel Kraus --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"A masterful mix of gold, cold, supernatural creatures, and dread magic makes this a great action adventure story." (Garth Nix, author of the Abhorsen Trilogy) "A great old-school adventure novel and the best use of the Wendigo legend I've ever read." (Mike Mignola, creator of Hellboy) A rollicking adventure tale for modern-day readers, depicting with great awe the unforgiving, and yet beautiful, conditions Jack confronts. There is enough biographical reality to drive curious readers into sampling the works of the actual London while they eagerly await another chapter. That is a fire worth starting. (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) (starred review)) Golden and Lebbon write with a gritty assurance that brings the fantasy elements--most notably, Jack's multiple face-offs with the mythic Wendigo--down to earth. This first chapter kicks the door open for almost anything in book two. (ALA Booklist)

In the interest of full disclosure, I will start by stating that I'm a middle-aged man who never reads young adult fiction. I made an exception in this case, however, because what I do read a lot of is Jack London. So when I heard about this series so audaciously titled *The Secret Journeys of Jack London*, I immediately wanted to check it out to see if these books were worthy of bearing the name of their illustrious subject. Once I started reading *Book One: The Wild*, I was pleasantly surprised by how well written and entertaining this book is. Authors Christopher Golden and Tim Lebbon have crafted a clever coming-of-age tale with all the characteristics of a classic London adventure. The beginning of the story is loosely based on the actual events of London's life. Spurred on by the Klondike Gold Rush of the 1890s, teenage Jack and his brother-in-law Shepard venture up to the Yukon Territory hoping to strike it rich. The two make it as far as Dyea, but when the ailing Shepard lays eyes on the grueling Chilkoot pass, he decides to head back to San Francisco, leaving young Jack on his own. Jack, far from disappointed at this unexpected parting of the ways, relishes his newfound independence. He soon hooks up with two companions, and together the three embark on the arduous journey up river to Dawson. From that point the plot departs from the semi-biographical narrative, and the authors take the story in a completely different and unexpected direction. Though London was a strident Darwinist, atheist, and rationalist, he was not averse to

introducing supernatural elements into his work as long as it resulted in a good story. The most obvious examples of this are his novel *The Star Rover* and the novella "Planchette". In this book, however, Golden and Lebbon step way beyond London's paranormal comfort zone and take it to a whole new level. Almost every chapter, much like the lion's share of young adult literature today, is loaded with supernatural occurrences and superhuman feats. The genre of wilderness adventure has all but disappeared from bookstore shelves in the past few decades, while vampires, werewolves, and zombies have multiplied like rabbits. If introducing a few monsters and spirits into the wilderness is what it takes to breathe new life into this underappreciated genre, then more power to the authors for trying. Golden and Lebbon have done their research well. Not only are they well versed in London's life and work, they also make creative use of the Native American myth of the Wendigo and the Russian folktale of the forest spirit known as the Leshii. They have created a very original story that definitely departs from London's familiar territory, yet they still manage to vividly and contagiously convey his spirit of adventure and his love for the wild. "Young adult" is a good label for this book, as it contains quite a bit of violence and gore, and a hint of sex. It's probably too mature for a junior high audience. Hopefully this book will succeed in turning some young readers on to London's classic works like *The Call of the Wild* and *The Iron Heel*. I wish the authors the best of luck with this series. This book, by the way, would make an excellent movie. It's about time Jack London became a household name again.

When I was in the 7th grade, I fell in love with Jack London. Stories such as "To Build a Fire", "The Call of The Wild", and "The Sea Wolf" sparked in me a lifelong enjoyment for tales of high adventure and a man's quest to survive the elements long enough to fulfill a dream. Christopher Golden and Tim Lebbon have found a way to tap into that joy I felt as a child reading those Jack London stories with "The Secret Journeys of Jack London: The Wild", and true to form Golden has thrown in a little of the supernatural for that extra twist. From the moment you dive into this book, you are brought into a world so fantastic, yet steeped the familiar lore and history of those adventurous mad men, journeying to the frozen wilds in search of gold. This forbidden text, the never-before-seen journal of a seventeen year old Jack London, gives Golden and Lebbon the means to play around with reality and history, and it never loses you or gets dull. When I was first reading London at young age, I could only imagine what kind of man you would have to be to withstand the rigors of the Yukon in search of gold. Now that I am older, I find myself thinking only a seventeen year old could have that youthful confidence and sense of adventure to take that journey. The blend of the adventure a genre with a little of the supernatural horror, in the form of facing off against the legendary Wendigo, is a

joy to behold, and I have read few writers who can pace an adventure the way Christopher Golden can. I cannot bring myself to spoil this for you, but Jack London is eventually accompanied by wolf spirit guide, and it is so...perfect. The book is aimed at younger readers, and rightly so, younger readers need to know about Jack London. A seventeen year old Jack London is clearly more accessible to a younger crowd (not that he lived to be an old man) so if this gives London a whole new audience, all the better. If you enjoy an old school adventure that tugs at something deep inside you, do yourself a favor and give it a read.

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