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Lesson Ten

FOCUS: What Makes a Great Book?

Works of fiction illustrate the connections between individuals and questions of humanity. Great stories articulate and explore the mysteries of our daily lives, while painting those conflicts in the larger picture of human struggle. Readers forge bonds with the story as the writer's voice, style, and sense of poetry inform the plot, characters, and themes. By creating opportunities for learning, imagining, and reflecting, a great book is a work of art that affects many generations of readers, changing lives, challenging assumptions, and breaking new ground.



Discussion Activities

Ask students to make a list of the characteristics of a great book. Write these on the board. In small groups, ask students to discuss specific books that include some of these characteristics. Do any of these books remind them of *The Call of the Wild*?

A great writer can be the voice of a generation. What kind of voice does Jack London create through *The Call of the Wild*? Although the protagonist of the novel is a dog, what does this story suggest about the concerns and motivations of people during the 1890s Gold Rush? Are these concerns and motivations still relevant in 21st century America? Why or why not?



Writing Exercise

Ask students to write a persuasive letter to a friend, perhaps one who does not like to read, explaining why *The Call of the Wild* is a good book. Develop an argument that explains why the novel has meaning for many people, not just a particular group.

Have students work on essays in class. Be available to assist students in developing their thesis. Have students partner to edit outlines and/or rough drafts. Provide students with the characteristics of a well-written essay.



Homework

Continue working on essays. Students will turn in a rough draft of their essays at the next class.