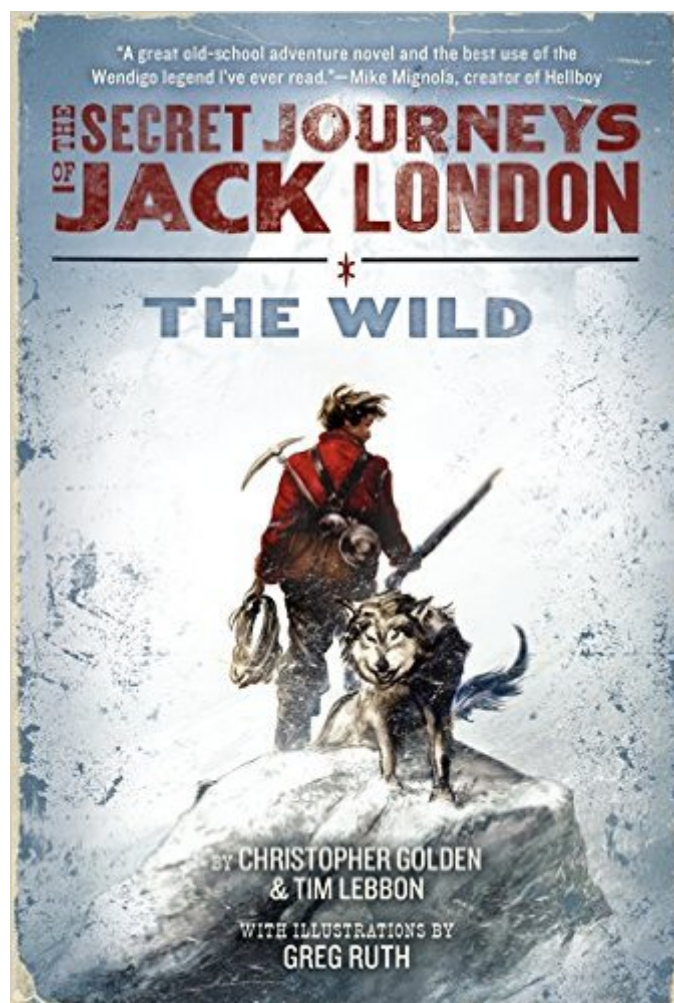


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The Secret Journeys Of Jack London, Book One: The Wild



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

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Customer Reviews

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".

I really didn't know what to expect from Christopher Golden and Tim Lebbon's first book about Jack London. *The Secret Journeys of Jack London: The Wild* is listed as a YA novel, but it's a sophisticated read and very authentic. Of course, the authors bent real history in interesting ways and threw in some twists and turns that were totally their own. Since Golden is a fellow author on the *Buffy the Vampire* series and Lebbon is known for his work in the horror and dark fantasy fields, I'd expected a lot of supernatural threats early on in the novel. They don't come till later, though, and that may be off-putting to some YA readers who picked this book up thinking that seeing Jack London going up against truly "wild" creatures would be awesome. I don't know how many kids know who Jack London is these days. My thirteen year old doesn't and he's well read. I grew up on London, and his book, *Before Adam*, was one of my first loves - rivaling the *Tarzan* series that I'd just discovered. Golden and Lebbon's book is more solid adventure story than supernatural. At least, it is at first. Then they dip into some eerie twists that reminded me of a lot of fantasy tropes, like Robert E. Howard's "The Frost-Giant's Daughter" and staples of the northern mythology involving the Wendigo. This was good stuff and I enjoyed it immensely. The thing that I liked the most, oddly enough, may be the thing that young readers find least appealing. I loved the adventure, the measure of a man taken against the savage loneliness of the wilderness.

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.

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