



## **JACK LONDON: FROM AMATEUR TO CLASSIC OF WORLD LITERATURE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The article contains recommendations for students, post-graduate students and young scientists on how to learn to create scientific research works or works of art. The experience of Jack London, an American writer, is given as an example of successful intellectual creativity.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Jack London, a writer, scientific and literary creativity, reading, own works.*

## **ДЖЕК ЛОНДОН: - ОТ ЛЮБИТЕЛЯ К КЛАССИКУ МИРОВОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ**

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### **Аннотация**

*В настоящей статье содержатся рекомендации для студентов, аспирантов и молодых ученых о том, как можно научиться создавать научные или художественные произведения. В качестве примера успешного интеллектуального творчества приводится опыт американского писателя Джека Лондона.*

**Ключевые слова:** *писатель Джек Лондон, научное и литературное творчество, чтение, собственные произведения.*

As practice shows, students, graduate students, young writers and other persons engaged in intellectual work, but who do not yet have sufficient

experience, often have difficulties in creating their works. This raises the natural question of how you can relatively quickly and efficiently learn to write



books, articles, monographs, etc., avoiding typical mistakes. Currently, a variety of seminars and trainings on this topic are being held, there are many sites and blogs on the Internet that provide assistance to novice scientists and writers. Of course, there is no one, once and for all established methodology, having mastered which any person could easily create scientific works or works of literature. As the old Chinese proverb says: "There are many different paths leading to the top of the mountain," as a result of which every writer or scientist must find his own artistic or scientific style, and not blindly copy the existing ones. Nevertheless, practice has developed certain techniques, following which you can improve your works [1]. The answer to the question of how you can learn to write can be found by referring to the experience of a person who, in just a few years, was able to go from a laborer, a vagabond and a frequenter of hot spots to a world-famous writer and public figure who entered the annals of world literature. We are talking about Jack London (harvest. D. G. Cheney), the author of two dozen major novels and stories, as well as many short stories, an active participant in the socialist movement in the United States in the early XX century. London was and remains the embodiment of the "American Dream", a man who achieved great success solely thanks to his own diligence, perseverance and constant self-improvement, which got out of the lower ranks of society and deserved worldwide recognition.

The future writer grew up in a poor American family from the suburbs of San Francisco [2]. From the age of 10, Jack was forced to earn a living - to deliver newspapers, earn extra money in a bowling alley, and later go to work at a cannery. It should be remembered that at the beginning of the 20th century, child labor was widely used. Later, in his story "The Apostate," London will detail the monstrous exploitation of minors in the factories of the time. Unfortunately, the young American did not escape the conflict with the law, making forays into private oyster shoals, and also early on to alcohol. However, from childhood he developed a passion for reading, and he re-read stacks of books, mainly about strong and courageous people, about sea adventures. At the age of 17, he sailed as a cabin boy on a schooner, the crew of which got the skins of seals. During the voyage, the young man first became acquainted with classical literature - the works of Leo Tolstoy and Gustav Flaubert. These impressions prompted him to write his first story "Typhoon off the coast of Japan", published in the Oakland newspaper, whose editors paid London a good fee. At the same time, the self-taught sailor's essay turned out to be better than anything that was written by the students of the University of California! After this success, Jack

decided to become a writer, he sent his manuscripts to various publications in Oakland and San Francisco, but they were all rejected. This is not surprising, since the style of the future classic had not yet been developed, he was fond of unnecessarily beautiful turns and borrowings from already published works. London returned to "black" work, then became a vagabond and traveled the United States from ocean to ocean (he later recalled his wanderings in the collection of stories "The Road"), he had to serve his sentence in prison, because at that time American laws are very harsh punished vagrancy. Returning to his native Oakland, he makes the final decision to engage only in intellectual work, enrolling for this at the University of California. However, since he did not even graduate from high school and he clearly lacked systematic knowledge, Jack prepares externally for the entrance exams. Here is an excerpt from his memories of this period of his life, which can serve as an example for every applicant: "Well, I was cramming! After all, it was necessary to master the material in two classes in four months ... I hammered nineteen hours a day for all these three months, allowing myself a short break only a few times. I was exhausted to the last degree: my body ached, my head was splitting to pieces, but I continued to cram. My eyes began to hurt, my eyelids twitched, a little more - and I would have to quit classes! In the end ... it seemed to me that I decided to square the circle, but I found the firmness to postpone the derivation of the formula ... Passing the exams, I did not rest for several days and did not sleep for almost a minute ... But when I passed the last written exam, my exhaustion reached limit ... "[3]. Thanks to this preparation, London was able to become a student and successfully complete the first semester, but then he left the university, as he was forced to earn money to support his family. Jack again unsuccessfully tries to publish his stories, but at this time the "gold rush" begins in Alaska and tens of thousands of gold prospectors from all over the world rush to the Klondike. London, succumbing to the temptation to become a millionaire overnight, travels to the North, but despite the hardest trials and the scurvy suffered, he does not find gold and returns home. However, the failed gold digger brings with him something more valuable - subjects for his future works, which he or other prospectors have witnessed. Upon his return, Jack seriously begins to engage in literary work and, finally, succeeds.

Collections of his stories opened for readers the harsh romance of Alaska, a difficult confrontation between man and nature. Then the writer publishes the novels included in the golden fund of world literature: "The Sea Wolf", "Iron Heel", "Martin Eden". London's works are striking in their realism, praising courage, perseverance, readiness to achieve



victory under the most unfavorable circumstances. The heroes of the writer are not just strong and courageous people, but only those of them who help others, who are capable of self-sacrifice in the name of higher interests, who are alien to the passion for profit. A gold miner who has received a ransom for his ex-wife, who once fled from him, drowns gold in an ice-hole ("One-Day Camp"). The Mexican revolutionary wins a formidable rival in the ring, because he will spend a large cash prize not on satisfying his own whims, but on buying weapons to fight the dictatorship ("Mexican"). The prospector who decided to save the Indian girl from a brutal death remains alive, and his friends, who refused to help the Indian woman, perish at the hands of her fellow tribesmen ("Where the roads diverge"). On the contrary, one who at any cost strives to achieve material well-being, sooner or later fails. A clever businessman, who decided to make capital on the trade in eggs, which are in short supply in the Klondike, goes bankrupt and commits suicide ("Thousand Dozen"). The adventurer, possessed by a passion for gold, dies from his own negligence ("The Man with the Scar"). London also has a very negative attitude to such characters who put personal interests above public ones. The young man who left his comrades dies from the cold ("Kindle the Fire"), and the strong and intelligent individualist Nietzschean Wolf Larsen turns into a helpless cripple and dies ("The Sea Wolf"). Unfortunately, the last works of the writer were clearly weaker than his best works and had only commercial, but not literary success ("Adventure", "Hearts of Three"). It should also be noted that in addition to literary creativity, Jack London was actively involved in social activities, promoted the ideas of socialism, took part as a war correspondent during the Russian-Japanese war (the writer even had to spend several days in Japanese captivity). With the advent of cinematography, many works of London were filmed, and more than once (for example, "The Sea Wolf"). The creative heritage of the American writer today does not leave indifferent many people in different countries of the world.

A logical question arises: how did a guy from a working environment who did not even graduate from high school manage to become a famous writer? Of course, one can say that by nature he possessed some special talent, which other novice writers did not have. There is a certain amount of truth in this statement, but nothing more. First, there were many people who, possessing significant abilities in the most diverse areas of creativity, were never able to achieve anything significant (for example, due to their own disorganization). An example of such a talented, but weak-willed person was brought out by I.A. Goncharov in the image of Boris Raisky (the

novel "The Break"), who never became an artist, despite his outstanding inclinations. Secondly, as already mentioned, the early works of London were repeatedly rejected by the editors of print publications due to their obvious weakness and artificiality. Thus, everything cannot be reduced to just one "talent". The answer to the above question lies in the famous saying of the American inventor Thomas Edison: "Genius is one percent of talent and ninety-nine percent of sweat." Jack London, while studying writing, worked 19 hours a day, seven days a week, without giving himself the slightest indulgence. His writing career can serve as an example for anyone who wants to learn how to create real scientific or literary works.

First, it's impossible to learn how to write well if you don't systematically practice reading. The future writer read constantly, even while he was wandering or serving a sentence in prison. True, sometimes this led to sad consequences. Once young Jack was so carried away by reading a book right on the street that he did not give way to a policeman. The representative of the authorities, who regarded such an act as "an insult to the uniform," immediately launched his club, and the young man had to flee, leaving the book unread [4]. Of course, by reading only entertainment literature, it is impossible to learn to write. Therefore, he gave preference to serious works that develop the process of thinking, classical novels and works on philosophy.

Secondly, reading alone is not enough, if you do not constantly analyze what you have read and do not learn from it. In the semi-biographical novel "Martin Eden", which became the pinnacle of London's creativity, this process is shown on the example of the self-improvement of the protagonist of the work, the prototype of which was the writer himself: "... he did not waste a single minute. He attached sheets of paper to the mirror, where he wrote out new words, their meanings and pronunciation: while shaving, dressing, combing his hair, he memorized them. The same lists were hung on the wall above the kerosene stove and he also studied them while he was cooking or washing the dishes ... Martin wrote out every unfamiliar or incomprehensible word he encountered in the book, and when he had enough of them, he printed the list and attached it to the mirror or the wall. He also carried such sheets in his pocket and sometimes looked in the street or while he waited in a grocery or a butcher's shop ... Reading successful authors, he noted their every success; thought over the techniques used for this - the techniques of storytelling, composition, style, thought, comparison, sharpness; and wrote it all out and thought it over. He did not imitate anyone. He was looking for principles. He compiled lists of impressive and



attractive features, then from a variety of them selected from different writers, he deduced some general principle and, equipped in this way, pondered new (own) techniques and already competently weighed, determined and evaluated them. In the same way, he wrote out vivid expressions, lively conversational turns ... "[5]. Such work will help to significantly increase your personal vocabulary, teach you to express your own thoughts clearly and allow you to form a specific writing or scientific style.

Thirdly, one had to constantly improve one's own works, since it is rarely possible to write a perfect text the first time. So, London established a rule for itself, according to which he had to write one and a half to two thousand words every day, and until this was done, the work did not end. The writer constantly improved what was already written by him, looking for and correcting weak points.

Fourth, the author himself should have liked what he wrote. If the writer is not satisfied with the work done, his work is unlikely to be successful. Unfortunately, it is often necessary to adapt to the existing political regime, the conditions of demand in the fiction market, "adjusting" books and scientific works to certain rules that currently exist in the state and society. This cannot but affect the quality of the works created. Jack London could not avoid this either. For example, at the request of the editor of the print edition, he was forced to make the banal "happy and" at the end of his famous novel *The Sea Wolf*. As a result of this, a brilliantly started philosophical adventure work in the finale turned into a sentimental Robinson's, clearly not corresponding to the general level of the novel [6]. Finally, the writer tried himself in different directions of creativity, not limited to some narrow topic. The wrong thing is done by those authors who, constantly specializing in the same issues, turn their scientific or writing activities into a kind of "conveyor belt" and become like a worker who tightens the same nut from day to day (like the character of Charlie Chaplin from the movie "New time"). This narrowness of creativity will never allow you to reach your full potential. Jack London left his mark in a wide variety of literary genres: adventure ("*Daughter of the Snows*"), drama ("*Martin Eden*"), fantasy ("*Interstellar Wanderer*"), social utopia ("*Goliath*"), dystopia ("*The Scarlet Plague*"), sports drama ("*Fierce Beast*"), works about animals ("*The Eternal Call*"), melodrama ("*Little mistress of a big house*"), play ("*Theft*"), etc. path in world literature can serve as a guide for everyone who linked their lives with intellectual activity.

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