



# Jack: A Biography of Jack London

*Andrew Sinclair*

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## **Jack: A Biography of Jack London** Andrew Sinclair

In 1913, Jack London was the highest-paid, best-known and most popular writer in the world.

Today, more than a century after his birth, twenty-eight of his fifty books are still in print in the U.S. (including fourteen editions of *Call of the Wild*), a French publisher is reissuing all his books, European critics are calling him the finest American novelist — including Mark Twain — and the Russians claim to have invented him.

The vitality, stamina, and passion which marked London's best work also filled his personal life with drama and adventure. From his impoverished and precocious boyhood, his stormy adolescence as oyster pirate, merchant seaman, tramp, his gruelling months in the Klondike Gold Rush, his bitter literary apprenticeship, his intense (and muddled) involvement in Marxism, to his sudden leap to fame at the age of twenty-seven with *Call of the Wild*, London's inexhaustible energy and his sheer, all-conquering charm made him the hero of a myth.

But there was nothing mythical about his prodigious deeds and productivity. Whether he was making headlines as a war correspondent, sailing his ketch across the Pacific or carrying on a scandalous love affair, the events themselves were on a scale larger than life.

Even his death at the age of forty, due in part to an overdose of a prescribed drug, sustained and intensified the legend.

In producing this definitive biography, Andrew Sinclair, historian and biographer of Dylan Thomas, has had unrestricted access to the London papers, including journals, letters and notes for unfinished work, and the full cooperation of the late Irving Shepard and his son Milo, proprietors of the London estate. He sees London as the embodiment of the Californian dream, and his book brings back to vigorous life one of the most appealing, most flamboyant and most gifted Americans ever to seize and inspire the imagination of more settled folk ... the prototype of the free spirit, the champion of the primeval and the partisan of the downtrodden.

Andrew Sinclair is a novelist, historian, critic and filmmaker. He was a Founding Member of Churchill College, Cambridge, and has taught and travelled across the world. He made the film, now regarded as a classic, of *Under Milk Wood*. He lives in London and is married to the writer Sonia Melchett.

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