

# Unit Overview: Parent Guide

## Call of the Wild, Grade 8

### What is the goal of this unit?

Your child will read fiction and nonfiction texts about human interaction with animals and nature. She will understand how authors portray animals to serve a purpose and make a comment about human interaction with animals.

### What topics and skills is your eighth grader learning in this unit?

- Humans and animals
- Humans and nature
- Animal cognition
- Symbolism
- Informational writing
- Argument writing

### What tasks will your child engage in to help them consider the topics and skills of this unit?

- **Culminating Writing Task:** Your child will bring together all her learning near the end of the unit by writing an essay in response to the question: *What central idea or theme about humans' treatment of animals does The Call of the Wild convey?*
- **Extension Task:** Your child will extend her learning by writing an argument essay in response to the question: *Given Jack London's characterization of Buck in the novel and your understanding of animal cognition, should he be considered a "nature faker"? Why or why not?*

### Your child will read these texts and listen to these audio clips:

Text Title	Author/Source	How it is used in the Unit
<i>The Call of the Wild</i>	Jack London	Main text of the unit
<i>How Smart are Animals?</i>	PBS	Read aloud
"Minds of Their Own: Animals are Smarter Than You Think"	Virginia Morell from <i>National Geographic</i> , March 2008	Student text
"To Build a Fire"	Jack London	Student text
"The Other Animals"	Jack London	Student text

<i>The Ways of Nature</i>	John Burroughs (October 1905)	Student text
"To Build a Fire" (audio)	Librivox	Read aloud
<i>The Call of the Wild</i> (audio)	Librivox	Read aloud

### Ideas for discussing the human interaction with animals and nature

- Do you have a pet? If yes, what is your connection with your pet? How do you know they understand you?
- How do you interact with nature?
- What can we learn from how animals behave?
- How have animals been used to understand human behavior?
- What can we learn from nature?

Want to deepen your and your child's knowledge on the topic being studied?

Here is a suggested book list:

Title	Author
Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog	John Grogan
A Dog's Purpose: A Novel for Humans	Bruce W. Cameron
Call of the Osprey	Dorothy Hinshaw Patent
War Dogs: Tales of Canine Heroism, History, and Love	Rebecca Frankel

### What does independent reading look like at home?

Independent reading gives your child the opportunity to read and interact with books that are on her reading level and that address topics that she chooses. Supporting independent reading at home helps build your child's confidence with reading, her reading stamina and reading achievement, and will help her do better in school.

Here are some ways you can encourage independent reading at home:

- Let your child pick out books that she finds interesting
- Prioritize reading. Protect time every day for reading. Before bedtime is a great time to read!

- Read together
- Read aloud
- Discuss what you're reading. Ask questions like:
  - Tell me about what you read today.
  - What did you like about it?
  - What didn't you like about it?
  - What did you learn?
  - What questions do you have about what you read?
  - What didn't you understand about what you read?
  - What do you want to learn more about after reading?
  - How does what you've read connect to other things you've read?