

EXCERPT FROM **WHITE FANG** BY JACK LONDON

- 1 He was different from his brothers and sisters. Their hair already betrayed the reddish hue inherited from their mother, the she-wolf; while he alone took after his father. He was the one little gray cub of the litter. He had bred true to the straight wolf-stock—in fact, he had bred true to old One Eye himself, physically, with but a single exception, and that was he had two eyes to his father's one.
- 2 The gray cub's eyes had not been open long, yet already he could see with steady clearness. He knew his two brothers and his two sisters very well. He had already begun to romp with them in a feeble, awkward way. And long before his eyes had opened, he had learned by touch, taste, and smell to know his mother—a fount of tenderness. She possessed a gentle, caressing tongue that soothed him when it passed over his soft little body, and that impelled him to snuggle close against her and to doze off to sleep.
- 3 His world was very small and dim. Its limits were the walls of the lair, but he had discovered early that one wall of his world was different from the rest. This was the mouth of the cave and the source of light. He had discovered that it was different from the other walls long before he had any conscious thoughts of his own. It had been an **irresistible** attraction before ever his eyes opened and looked upon it. The light from it had beat upon his sealed lids. Every fiber of his body yearned toward this light and urged him toward it in the same way that the cunning chemistry of a plant urges it toward the sun.
- 4 Always, he had crawled toward the mouth of the cave. And in this his brothers and sisters were one with him. The light drew them as if they were plants, and their little bodies crawled blindly, like the tendrils of a vine. Later on, the attraction of the light increased. They were always crawling and sprawling toward it, and being driven back from it by their mother.



- 5 He was a fierce little cub. So were his brothers and sisters. It was to be expected. But he was the fiercest of the litter. He could make a louder rasping growl than any of them. His tiny rages were much more terrible than theirs. It was he that first learned the trick of rolling a fellow-cub over with a cunning paw-stroke. And certainly it was he that caused the mother the most trouble in keeping her litter from the mouth of the cave.
- 6 The fascination of the light for the gray cub increased from day to day. He was perpetually adventuring toward the cave's entrance, and as perpetually being driven back. To him, the entrance of the cave was a wall—a wall of light. It attracted him as a candle attracts a moth. He was always striving to attain it. The life that was so swiftly expanding within him, urged him continually toward the wall of light. The life that was within him knew that it was the one way out, the way he was predestined to tread.
- 7 There came a time when the gray cub no longer saw his father appearing and disappearing in the wall. The she-wolf knew why One Eye never came back. She had followed a day-old trail of One Eye and had found him, or what remained of him, at the end of the trail. There were many signs of the battle that had been fought, and of the lynx's withdrawal to her lair after having won the victory.
- 8 After this, his mother began leaving the cave on hunting expeditions, and the cub had learned well the law that forbade his approaching the entrance. But there were other forces at work in the cub, the greatest of which was growth. Growth is life, and life is forever destined to make for light. In the end, one day, fear and obedience were swept away by the rush of life, and the cub sprawled toward the entrance. Fear urged him to go back, but growth drove him on. Suddenly he found himself at the mouth of the cave. The light had become painfully bright. He was dazzled by it. He sat up and gazed about him. The cub had broken through the wall of the world. But the first man on Mars would have experienced less unfamiliarity than did he. Without any prior knowledge, without any warning whatever that such existed, he found himself an explorer in a totally new world.



Answer the questions about the excerpt from *White Fang*.**1. How does the author develop the gray cub's point of view?**

- a. by sharing his relationship with his father
- b. by detailing his feelings and actions
- c. by describing his physical characteristics
- d. by presenting his dialogue with other characters

**2. How is the wolf cub different from his brothers and sisters, both physically and in his personality?**

**3. Reread this part of the passage.**

“And long before his eyes had opened, he had learned by touch, taste, and smell to know his mother—a fount of tenderness. She possessed a gentle, caressing tongue that soothed him when it passed over his soft little body, and that impelled him to snuggle close against her and to doze off to sleep.”

a. Select the tone created by these sentences.

- a. thrilled
- b. hopeful
- c. confident
- d. affectionate

b. How do you know? Highlight the words above that helped you determine the tone.**4. What is the meaning of the word **irresistible** as it is used in paragraph 3? Use context clues and your knowledge of prefixes, roots, and suffixes to help you.**

5. Why does the author compare the cubs to plants in paragraphs 3 and 4?

**6. Why is the wall of light irresistible to the wolf cub? What do you think it represents?**

**7. What inference can be drawn from the information in paragraph 7?**

**8. Which sentence from the passage best embodies the theme of this selection?**

- a. “He was different from his brothers and sisters.”
- b. “His world was very small and dim.”
- c. “Growth is life, and life is forever destined to make for light.”
- d. “But the first man on Mars would have experienced less unfamiliarity than did he.”

**9. What challenges do you think the gray cub might face outside the cave?**
