

The Sale of Buck

Now and again men came, strangers, who talked excitedly, wheedlingly, and in all kinds of fashions to the man in the red sweater. And at such times that money passed between them the strangers took one or more of the dogs away with them. Buck wondered where they went, for they never came back; but the fear of the future was strong upon him, and he was glad each time when he was not selected.

Yet his time came, in the end, in the form of a little wizened man who spat broken English and many strange and uncouth exclamations which Buck could not understand.

"Sacrebleu!" he cried, when his eyes lit upon Buck. "Dat one bully dog! Eh? How moch?"

"Three hundred, and a present at that," was the prompt reply of the man in the red sweater. "And seem it's government money, you ain't got no kick coming, eh, Perrault?"

Perrault grinned. Considering that the price of dogs had been boomed skyward by the unwonted demand, it was not an unfair sum for so fine an animal. The Canadian Government would be no loser, nor would its dispatches travel the slower. Perrault knew dogs, and when he looked at Buck he knew that he was one in a thousand. "One in ten t'ousand, he commented mentally.

Buck saw money pass between them, and was not surprised when Curly, a good-natured Newfoundland, and he were led away by the little wizened man. That was the last he saw of the man in the red sweater, and as Curly and he looked at receding Seattle from the deck of the Narwhal, it was the last he saw of the warm Southland. Curly and he were taken below by Perrault and turned over to a black-faced giant called Francois. Perrault was a French-Canadian, and swarthy; but Francois was a French-Canadian half-breed, and twice as swarthy. They were a new kind of men to Buck (of which he was destined to see many more), and while he developed no affection for them, he none the less grew honestly to respect them. He speedily learned that Perrault and Francois were fair men, calm and impartial in administering justice, and too wise in the way of dogs to be fooled by dogs.

From *Call of the Wild* by Jack London

The Sale of Baldy

"Scotty" felt the dog's legs, and noted the breadth of his chest. "What do you want for him, Ben?"

"Would ten dollars be too much?" asked the boy, eagerly.

"Ten dollars would be too little," quickly exclaimed the Woman. "You see we are getting ahead of all the others who do not know his fine points yet, and we should be willing to pay something extra for this opportunity. Do you think that twenty-five dollars would be fair, considering that we are in on the ground floor?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's lots more'n I expected. But it ain't so much the money I'm gittin' as the home he's gittin' an' the trainin' an' all."

"Well, that's a bargain, then; come to my husband's office--Darling and Dean, on Front Street, you know--the first time you are in town, and we will give you a check; and you can bring Baldy with you then."

"I guess," slowly, "you'd better take him now. It 'ud be easier fer me t' let him go while I'm kinda worked up to it. Mebbe ef I thought about it fer a few days I wouldn't be able t' do it, an' he mightn't have another chanct like this in his whole life."

He drew a frayed bit of rope from a torn pocket, and tied it to the old strap that served as Baldy's collar--handing the end to "Scotty."

In the deepening shadows of the chill November dusk the boy's face was ashen. He stooped over as if to see that the knot in the rope was secure at the dog's neck--but the Woman knew in that brief instant the trembling blue lips had been pressed in an agony of renunciation against Baldy's rough coat.

"Thank you both very much," he said in a tone that he tried to keep steady. "Thank you fer the ride and fer--fer everything."

He did not trust himself to look at the dog again, but stepped quickly into the Golconda Trail.

"You must come to see Baldy often," the Woman called to him.

"Yes, ma'am, I'll be glad to--after a while," he replied gratefully.

And then as "Scotty" gave the word to the impatient Racers, and the team swung round to return to Nome, there came to them out of the grayness a voice, faint and quavering like an echo, "Someday you'll be glad you've got Baldy."

From *Baldy of Nome* by Esther Birdsall Darling

Name _____

1. Compare and contrast the characters in each story that sell the dog.

2. Compare and contrast the characters in each story that buy the dog.

3. What is the significant stylistic difference between these two stories?

ANSWERS

1. The man in the red shirt is selling a lot of dogs, and he does it without much interest in any particular dog. Ben is only selling one dog and he really cares about the dog. He doesn't really want to let him go but thinks it is in the dog's best interest.
2. Perrault seems like a decent person. He is really impressed with Buck, and he values him and will treat him well. "Scotty" is as interested in the welfare of the boy selling Baldy as she is in Baldy. She offers the boy more money than he asks for, and she invites him to come see Baldy often. It's more like she's offering Baldy a foster home than that she's buying him.
3. The Sale of Baldy is told in the third person point of view, while The Sale of Buck is told from Buck's point of view.