

Jack London: A Writer's Fight for a Better America

Cecelia Tichi

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London steps from Tichi's pages as a self-educated intellectual absorbed by the plight of the downtrodden and the oppressed.

This specialized look at American author Jack London (1876-1916) examines an outspoken socialist seeking an enlightened world where human rights prevail. Cecelia Tichi's biography of the literary icon focuses on the political and moral issues that touched his soul throughout the course of his short life. *Jack London: A Writer's Fight for a Better America* presents a resilient man who experienced poverty, manual labor, and incarceration for a petty crime.

Ahead of his contemporaries and forceful in his views, London garnered ego-boosting praise and triggered hard-hitting criticism. His fiction and nonfiction addressed serious ills plaguing society; his gift with words educated and inspired. Ambitious and charismatic, he achieved the international acclaim and monetary compensation he sought; however, his well-deserved fame was not without sophisticated derision: "More than a curiosity, in his lifetime Jack had often been the butt of smug condescension cloaked as concern and friendship."

Annotated, illustrated, and backed with an extensive bibliography, Tichi's six-chapter academic text builds a solid foundation for further study. Her tone is appropriate for a college classroom, yet the book may appeal to mainstream lovers of celebrity biography. London's personality emerges in snatches, much like snapshots in a photo album carefully selected for specific emphasis. Featured are the highlights of his life—accomplishments, setbacks, and events that left the greatest mark on his career. The e-book edition contains archival motion picture footage.

Typical of the period in which he lived, London demonstrated fluency in a rebellious, socialist ideology. His views were perceived as extreme in a time when pure capitalism was considered the norm, as opposed to our present-day mixed economy. "To Jack, defiance was necessary. Defiant, he could denounce the incorrigible captains of industry and expose the conventional social arrangement that insulated the bourgeoisie from their own unwitting barbarity."

A detailed chapter-by-chapter tome this work does not strive to be, but its style is succinct and rarely veers from the intended purpose. Cecelia Tichi is a professor of English and American studies at Vanderbilt University.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (Fall 2015)

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