



The Jungle Book

Rudyard Kipling



About the author

Joseph Rudyard Kipling was born in India in 1865. He travelled widely during his life, living in England, India, the United States and South Africa.

During his second visit to India, from 1882 to 1889, he worked as a journalist, keeping exhaustive notes about life in that country. These notes became the basis of many books, including the children's story *The Jungle Book*.

Kipling was an immensely popular author during his lifetime, producing a vast amount of novels, poems, a semi-autobiography and several collections of short stories. His poem *If* is now included in innumerable anthologies around the world, and the Disney version of *The Jungle Book* became one of the most popular children's films of all time. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907.

Summary

A very young boy, called Mowgli lives in the jungle. Shere Khan, the tiger, wants to look after him, and so do the wolves. Akela, the wolf leader, decides that Mowgli will

into the pack after Baloo, the bear, speaks for him and Bagheera, the panther, gives the pack food in return.

Chapter 2: Mowgli grows up happily with the wolves. He learns the law of the jungle but also watches the men in the village. As Akela becomes weaker and weaker, Shere Khan gets closer and closer to the young wolves to get support to have Mowgli excluded from the pack. Finally, Mowgli realises that it is time to move on. But before he goes, he follows Bagheera's advice: he gets the Red Flower from outside the house of a man. The Red Flower is the animals' way of talking about fire. Animals are too afraid of it to use it as a weapon, but Mowgli is not an animal. He is a man-cub. He hits Shere Khan with a fiery stick and leaves the mountain-top, promising to return one day with the tiger's skin. He cries for the first time and Bagheera sees he is now a man.

Chapter 3: Baloo, the old brown bear, is Mowgli's teacher during his happy years with the pack. He teaches Mowgli the language of the jungle. He learns how to hunt, how to communicate in the different animal languages, survival techniques and all about jungle etiquette. Baloo and Bagheera also warn Mowgli to stay away from the Monkeys because they are foolish and have no law. But one day, Mowgli is kidnapped by the Monkeys. Mowgli remembers Baloo's teachings and asks Chil, a big bird, to notify Baloo and Bagheera. Baloo asks Kaa, a ten-metre-long snake for help, and they track Mowgli to Monkey City.

Chapter 4: Once in Monkey City, the monkeys take Mowgli to a building with no doors or windows. Bagheera is the first to arrive and fights hard with the monkeys, which want to kill him. Mowgli suggests Bagheera gets into the water, where the monkeys will not follow him.



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in the village thinks Mowgli must work, so he is given the menial task of herding the cattle. One day, when he is looking after the animals, Mowgli hears from Grey Brother (one of his wolf cub step-brothers) that Shere Khan still wants to kill and eat him. Mowgli still wants to take the tiger's skin back to the mountain-top. So, when Mowgli hears that Shere Khan has come back, he plans an ambush: he divides the cattle up into two groups. Akela takes the bulls to one end of the dry river and Grey Brother takes charge of the other cattle on the opposite end.

Chapter 6: Mowgli taunts Shere Khan and traps him in the middle of the river. Mowgli charges the cattle to stampede, and Shere Khan is trampled to death. When Mowgli is skinning the tiger, Buldeo comes and tries to take the tiger skin for himself. He can make good money by selling it. But Mowgli and Akela scare Buldeo away. Buldeo tells the villagers that Mowgli is not a boy and that he has strange conversations with the wolves. The villagers stop Mowgli from returning to the village. Now he is not welcome anywhere. He is too much a man for the wolves and too much a wolf for the men. However, he fulfils his promise and drags the tiger skin up to the mountain cave. He is welcomed back by his friends Bagheera and Akela and a small group of cubs who will hunt with him in the future.

The Original Text

The Jungle Book was originally written by Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) and it is his most well-known story. It was published in 1894, and its sequel *The Second Jungle Book* came a year later in Vermont. Like *Just So Stories* (1902) it portrays the natural world and especially its creatures, and

founding of Rome, with the twins Romulus and Remus supposedly suckled by a wolf. Perhaps Kipling picked up such a story in India, or perhaps he had heard of the 'wild boy of Aveyron', an eleven-year-old child who had been found running naked and wild in a forest in France.

As the story unfolds, we realise that Kipling is conveying a deeper message. Mowgli, the man-cub, is driven out of the pack of wolves that brought him up because he is too much like a man, and then driven out of the man village, because he is too much like a wolf. Ironically, Kipling has sometimes been accused of racism, perhaps because his stories are now viewed from a modern perspective. But in fact *The Jungle Book* can be seen as anti-racist and a powerful plea for social acceptance of differences.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- 1 Discuss:** Ask students if any of them have seen the film of *The Jungle Book*. If the answer is yes, can they remember any of the scenes?
- 2** If none of the students have seen the film, ask them to look at the picture in the introduction. Divide them into small groups and have them choose an animal. They describe its looks and its routines for the rest to guess. Then they can compare two or three animals.

Chapters 1–2

Before reading

- 3 Research:** Have students find out in which countries we find jungle environments. Ask the students to work in groups and to describe a jungle. Have them discuss which other kinds of animals they can find in the jungle apart from those in *The Jungle Book*. Refer them to the pictures in the book and to page vi.

While reading