

# 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 stay with the wolves. Baloo the bear and Bagheera the panther also look after him. Mowgli stays in the jungle for ten years. When Akela becomes old, Shere Khan thinks he might now get Mowgli with the help of the young wolves who don't like him. Mowgli defends himself by throwing fire at his enemies, but he must leave the jungle. He says goodbye sadly to his friends and family and goes to live in the village.

**Chapter 1:** Mowgli, the man-cub, arrives at the mountain top home of the wolf pack led by Akela. He is taken in by Mother and Father Wolf. But Shere Khan, the tiger, wants to catch and eat the man-cub. He is very hungry and in pain because his foot hurts badly. He is finally accepted

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. Then Baloo arrives and some monkeys attack him as well. In the end Kaa comes down, kills a few monkeys and the rest are so afraid that they climb walls, running away from Kaa. The great snake starts a snake-dance which captivates all the animals, including the bear and the panther. Mowgli sees no fascination in it, and helps his friends not to fall under the snake's spell. Mowgli has disobeyed the Law of the Jungle and is physically punished for his mistake.

**Chapter 5:** When Mowgli leaves the Wolf Pack, he goes to a man village. There he is rescued by Messua and her husband. They believe Mowgli is their own son, who was taken by a tiger many years ago. Mowgli makes an effort to learn the ways and speech of man. One of the men in the village thinks Mowgli must work, so he is given

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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 is entertaining to adult and child alike. The simplicity of the concept and the lack of didactic moral overtones have made *The Jungle Book* a lasting influence on the young.

### The film

To many, *The Jungle Book* is the 1967 Disney film. It is a very jolly fairy tale version of the story, with no idea about the struggle for life that happens in real jungles.

### Background and themes

At first sight, *The Jungle Book* appears to be a 'rites of passage' story, about a rather unusual boy growing up with wolves in the jungle. The myth of the wolf boy is an abiding one, dating back at least to the legend of the 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

- 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?
- 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

- 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

- Role play:** Ask students to work in pairs to role play a conversation between Shere Khan, the tiger, and Akela, the leader of the Pack. Shere Khan tries to persuade Akela to give him the man-cub and Akela refuses.
- Role play:** Divide the students into pairs and have them imagine they are another animal that wants to speak for the man-cub. They prepare and say their speech to the Pack. (page 6)
- Discuss:** Akela says 'We did the right thing.' Have a class discussion to decide if keeping the man-cub in the Pack was the right thing to do. (page 8)
- Guess:** Encourage students to guess what happened to Akela, and how things will change in the jungle now. (page 10)
- Check:** They check their answers to the prediction above. Was anyone right? (page 11)

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- 9 **Group work:** The Red Flower is the animals' way of saying 'fire'. Have the groups think of other elements man has which the animals do not and encourage students to find new names for them, the way animals might call them.

### After reading

- 10 **Group work:** Put students into small groups and ask each group to list the examples of the law of the jungle that appear in this section. Then ask them to make up at least one new law of the jungle. Ask the groups for their laws and decide, as a whole class, which ones are good and useful for the animals.
- 11 **Role play:** Ask students to role play the goodbye scene between Mowgli and his wolf mother, Raksha.

### Chapters 3–4

#### Before reading

- 12 **Guess:** Have students discuss what kind of learner Mowgli is. *Does he need to learn the language of the jungle? Why or why not? Does he need to learn more than a young wolf? Why or why not?*
- 13 **Research:** Ask students to find out what a young wolf can do. Compare what it can do with what a child can do at the age of 7.

#### While reading

- 14 **Check:** Have students check if their predictions were correct. Is Mowgli a quick learner? Does he need to learn what Bagheera is teaching him?
- 15 **Artwork:** Have students imagine they are Bagheera. To teach Mowgli what he cannot do with the monkeys, Bagheera designs a poster. Get students to make the poster.
- 16 **Guess:** Kaa, the great snake, is hungry. Have students predict what will happen when Kaa meets the monkeys at Monkey City.
- 17 **Discuss:** Ask students to have a class discussion: *Mowgli needs to learn how to say 'We are brothers, you and I' in all the different animal languages. Get into groups and discuss why. Mowgli tells the monkeys, 'Bring me food or I will have to hunt.' Mowgli knows the Law of the Jungle. Does he kill for nothing or only when he is hungry? What about men? Do they only kill when they are hungry?*
- 18 **Guess:** Kaa says 'Bad things are going to happen here.' Have students speculate why Kaa tells Mowgli to go away with his friends.

#### After reading

- 19 **Artwork:** Have students design a poster warning the animals in the jungle against the Monkey City.
- 20 **Discuss:** Have students compare the wolves' lifestyle and the monkeys' lifestyles.
- 21 **Pair work:** Have students work in pairs and discuss the kind of help the different animals (e.g. Chil, Kaa,

the snakes in Monkey City, his two friends, etc.) give Mowgli when he is taken by the monkeys.

- 22 **Check:** Ask students whether their predictions were right or wrong. *Was Kaa afraid he would eat the animals he helped?*

### Chapters 5–6

#### Before reading

- 23 **Guess:** Have students read the titles of Chapters 5 and 6. Get them to speculate what will happen to Mowgli. *Will he be happy in the Land of Men?*

#### While reading

- 24 **Discuss:** Have students discuss the difference between a boy from the village and a boy from the jungle.
- 25 **Pair work:** Have students work in pairs and discover what Mowgli does to become a village boy.
- 26 **Discuss:** In the evenings the old men in the village told stories. Buldeo, the hunter, told stories about the animals in the jungle. Mowgli listened to them but 'tried not to laugh'. Have students work in groups and discuss why Mowgli thought they were only stories.
- 27 **Discuss:** Have students discuss the following 'Rama's feet hit something.' *What did the buffalo's feet hit? What was there on the ground?*
- 28 **Role play:** Buldeo goes back to the village and tells them that Mowgli talks to the wolves. Have students imagine the conversation between Buldeo and the people in the village.
- 29 **Write:** Messua is very sad that Mowgli has to leave the village. Have students write a goodbye letter from Messua to Mowgli.

#### After reading

- 30 **Check:** Ask students if their predictions were correct. *Was Mowgli happy in the Land of Men? Did he understand his ways? Did they understand him?*
- 31 **Discuss:** Have students discuss why the people in the story said the following:  
'Will men change you?'  
'They did not want me in the Pack.'  
'Never stop my hunting again.'  
'Go, or they will kill you.'  
'Your brothers are not different from the Pack.'
- 32 **Discuss:** *Mowgli killed the tiger in the end. Did he break the Law of the Jungle? Why or why not?*

#### Extra activities

- 33 **Discuss:** To Mowgli, the bear and panther are his friends and family. Ask the pupils which animal family they might like to live with. They then think about how their lives might be different.
- 34 **Write:** Have students imagine that the villagers are happy Mowgli has killed Shere Khan. Get them to write a different ending to this story.