

The Jungle Book

From the book by Rudyard Kipling

Pictures by Maurice and Edward Detmold, and drawings from the first edition

Young Reader Guide

FIRST CLASSICS · NO. 2

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Retold for little listeners from Rudyard Kipling's book

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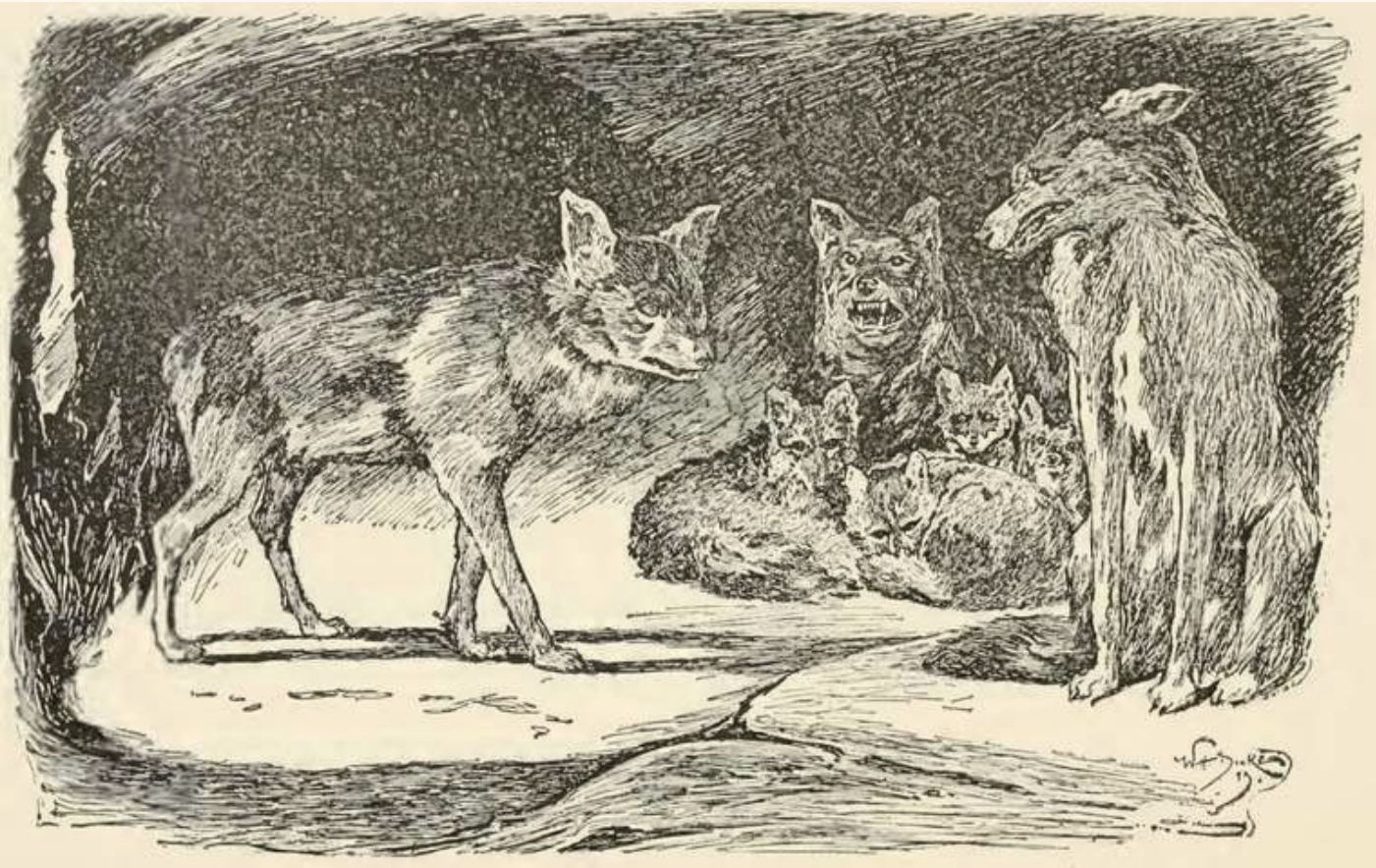
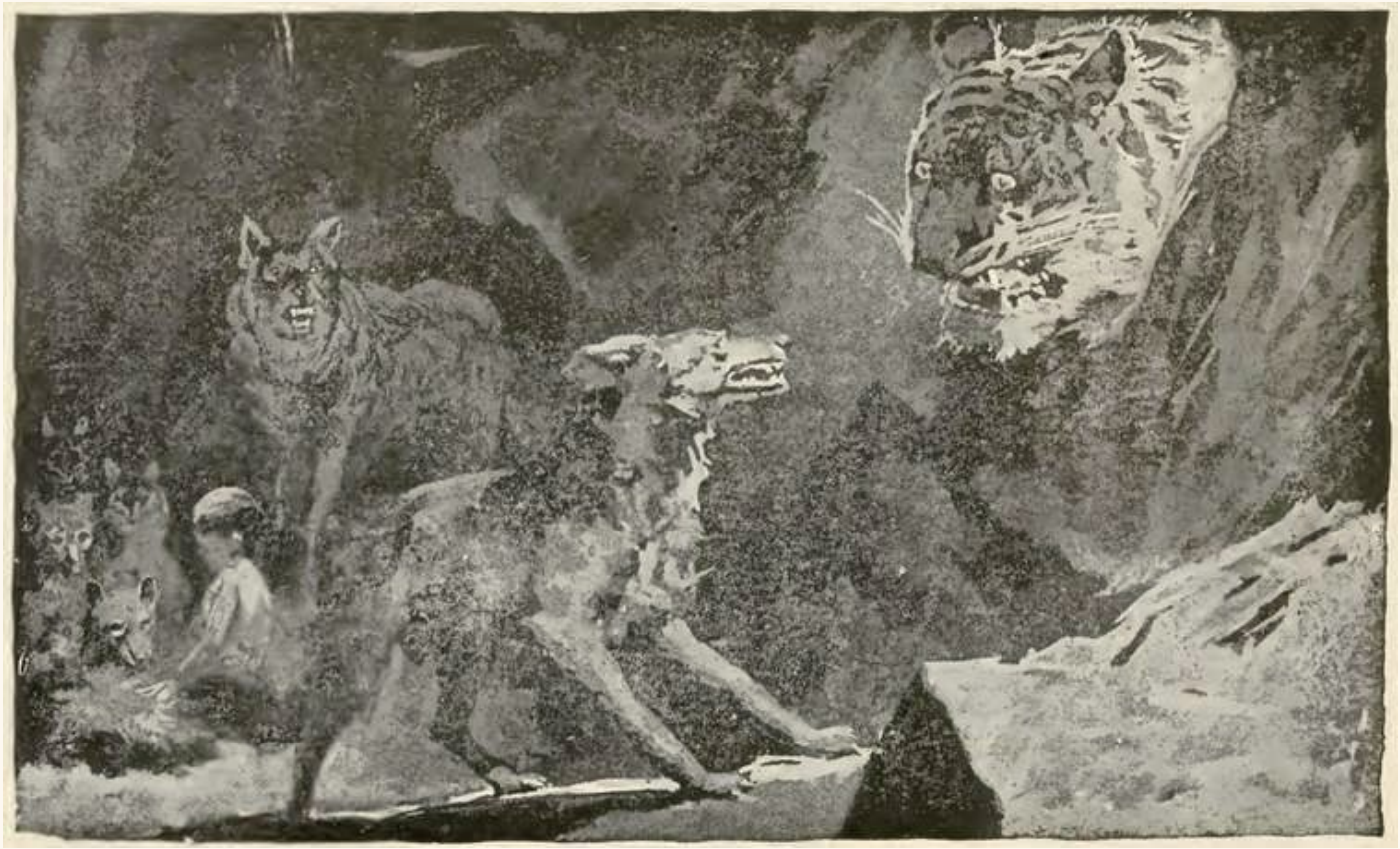
It was a warm evening in the Seeonee hills, and Father Wolf had just woken up when he heard something coming through the bushes. He jumped! For there, to his surprise, stood a little baby. The baby looked up into Father Wolf's face, and giggled.

Father Wolf picked the baby up in his mouth and carried him home to the cave. He held him so gently that not one tooth scratched him. “How little!” said Mother Wolf. She let him snuggle in with her four warm cubs, and the baby wriggled in close. He wasn’t a bit afraid.



Just then, somebody came poking into the cave, sniff, sniff, sniff. It was Tabaqui, the sneaky jackal. Father Wolf showed his teeth, and Tabaqui squeaked, “Ooh, you’d better watch out! Shere Khan, the tiger with the limp, is coming. And he’s coming for that baby!”



Then the doorway went dark. Shere Khan pushed his big striped head into the cave. “Give me the man’s cub!” he roared. “He is mine!” Mother Wolf jumped up, her eyes shining. “He is mine,” she said. “Go away!” The tiger was far too big to fit through the door, so he backed out, grumbling.

Mother Wolf looked down at the baby, who had no fur at all, and smiled. “I will call you Mowgli, the little frog,” she said softly. “And I will keep you.” Then she sighed. “But first the whole wolf Pack must come and see you, and they must all say yes.”



When the moon was full, the wolves met at the Council Rock. They sat in a big ring among the stones, and Mowgli sat right in the middle, playing with pebbles in the moonlight. Then a roar came from behind the rocks. “That cub is mine!” growled Shere Khan. “Give him to me!”



Akela, the great gray leader of the wolves, stood up on his rock. "Look well, O Wolves!" he called. "Who will speak for the man's cub?" The wolves looked at each other. They looked at their paws. They looked at the ground. But nobody said a word.



Then a big, sleepy voice rumbled out of the trees. It was Baloo, the brown bear. He yawned, and he stretched, and he stood up, slow and heavy. “I speak for the man’s cub,” said Baloo. “Let him stay with the Pack. I will teach him myself.”

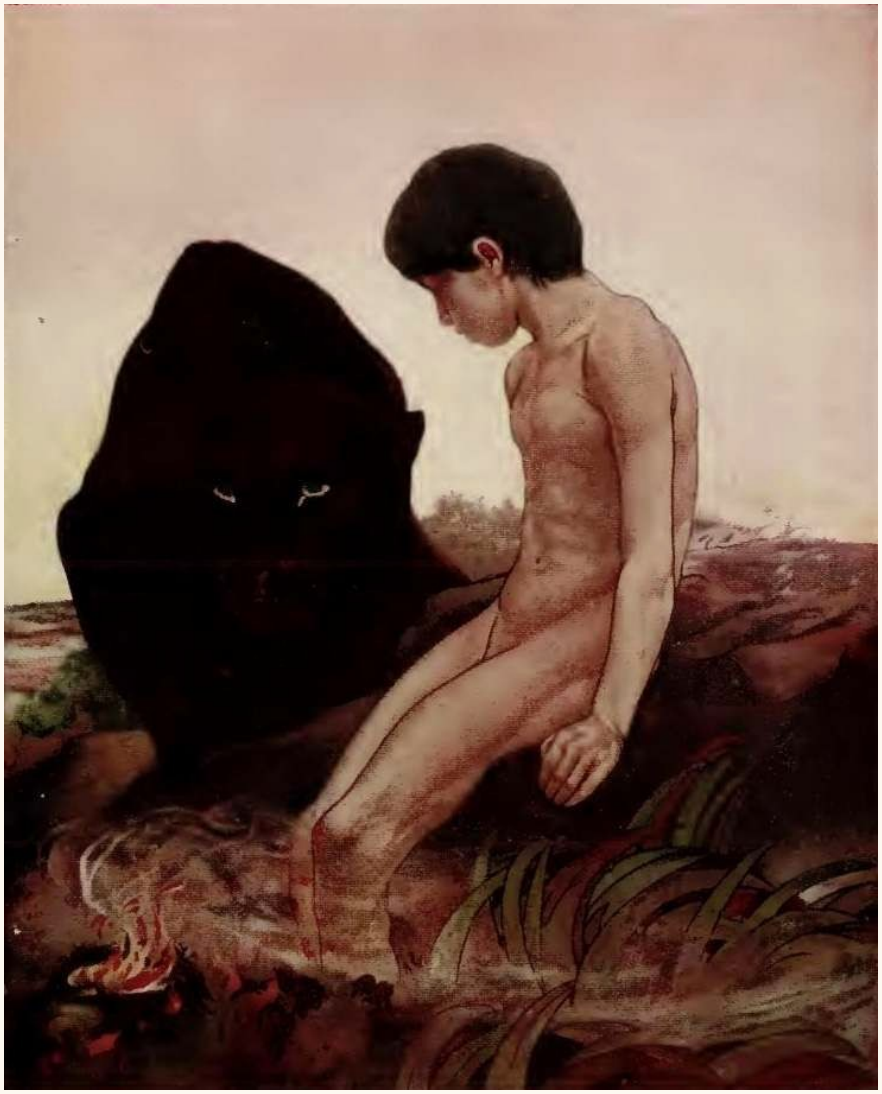


Then a black shadow slipped into the circle, soft as velvet. It was Bagheera, the panther. “I will give you a fat bull,” he purred, “if you let the baby stay.” The wolves licked their lips, and they all said yes. And so Mowgli joined the Pack, and he was a wolf too.



Mowgli grew up with his wolf brothers, running and tumbling all day long. Baloo taught him the jungle rules, every single one. And Bagheera taught him to climb, higher and higher into the trees. “Come along, Little Brother,” Bagheera would call from his branch, and up Mowgli went.

But Akela grew old and gray, too old to keep Mowgli safe much longer. And Shere Khan crept about, whispering to the young wolves. “A man-cub doesn’t belong in the Pack,” he said, and the young wolves began to listen. “Go down to the village,” Bagheera told Mowgli, “and bring back the Red Flower. It is fire, and every animal in the jungle is afraid of it.”



That night Mowgli crept down the hill to the village. He saw a boy carrying a little pot of glowing fire, and he took it and ran, back up into the jungle. He sat beside Bagheera and fed it with little sticks. The fire crackled and smoked. But Mowgli wasn't afraid of it at all.

The next night the wolves met at the Council Rock, and Mowgli came too, with his pot of fire. Shere Khan and the young wolves shouted and howled. “He is a man! He must go!” Mowgli stood up tall. He threw his fire on the ground and waved a burning branch high, and the tiger and the wolves ran away.



Then everything went very quiet. Mowgli felt a hurt inside, and something wet ran down his face. He had never cried before. “Let them fall, Mowgli,” said Bagheera gently. “They are only tears. Now, Little Brother, you must go and live with people.”

Mowgli went to the cave and hugged Mother Wolf and his four brothers, one by one. “Don’t forget me,” he whispered. “Never while we can follow a trail,” said his brothers. Then, as the sun came up, Mowgli walked down the hill all by himself, to the village and the people.

The End

Retold for little listeners by Young Reader Guide, from Rudyard Kipling's book.
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Read Rudyard Kipling's whole book, free, with every picture:
youngreaderguide.org/books/jungle-book/

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One warm evening Father Wolf finds a little baby in the bushes, and the wolves keep him. Mowgli grows up in the jungle with Baloo the bear and Bagheera the black panther to look after him, until the night Shere Khan the tiger comes for him, and Mowgli brings the Red Flower. The first story in Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book, with the first edition's drawings and the Detmold brothers' pictures, retold to read aloud in about six minutes.

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