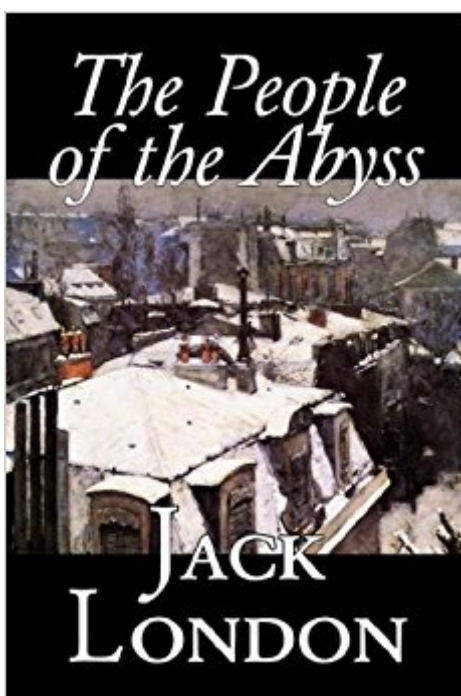


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# The People Of The Abyss By Jack London, Nonfiction, Social Issues, Homelessness & Poverty



## Synopsis

From the author's preface: "The experiences related in this volume fell to me in the summer of 1902. I went down into the underworld of London with an attitude of mind which I may best liken to that of the explorer. I was open to be convinced by the evidence of my eyes, rather than by the teachings of those who had not seen, or by the words of those who had seen and gone before. Further, I took with me certain simple criteria with which to measure the life of the underworld. That which made for more life, for physical and spiritual health, was good; that which made for less life, which hurt, and dwarfed, and distorted life, was bad."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"It is written with the smoldering anger of turn-of-the-century revolutionary socialism. There are no gray shadings in London's economic world. There is only the evil of capitalism and the saintly suffering of the poor. The rich had had their stories told in mass periodicals, and London felt it was time to let the ignored speak. He thus wrote the biographies of the people who have been exploited by imperialism and capitalism. This is the book that counters the Horatio Alger story. For every Alger, for every Rockefeller, there is a mass of sufferers whose plight enabled the speedy rise to wealth of a few. In its sociological and journalistic documentation of poverty is a call for direct action. Wealth blinds, and London makes us see. With this reprinting of London's incredibly important and readable book, Pluto Press and London remind us of how economic exploitation must always be fought, that we must always be educated in the lives of the unfortunate." --James Williams, editor and publisher of the Jack London Journal, USA  
"The People of the Abyss" was written at the

beginning of the twentieth century and yet it speaks just as vividly of the conditions at end of the century. We are seeing the erosion and deterioration of all that was won through hard-fought labor battles: the end of the 8 hour work day; people working two jobs and still not being able to make ends meet; children left to their own devices as parents are stretched to the breaking point; the rise of infectious diseases, especially tuberculosis, as people are forced to live in more crowded, unsanitary conditions; the lack of healthcare; increasing numbers of people living on the street; and hunger. These were the conditions Jack London saw and described in *East London* at the turn of the century; but they could as easily have been New York City or any large American city; and they could be any large American city today." -- .com reader in San Francisco "No other book of mine took so much of my young heart and tears as that study of the economic degradation of the poor." --Jack London --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this 1903 publication, which influenced later socially minded authors like George Orwell, American writer Jack London (1876-1916) examines the living conditions of the impoverished residents of London's East End, demonstrating how politics had failed the vulnerable. The text is illustrated with photographs of the places and people mentioned. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Don't go into this one unless you are prepared for intensely depressing scenarios. While this is not one of Jack London's most exciting books, it is most certainly effective. A description of the author's first-hand descent into early 20th century London's East End, it takes off where Dickens left nearly a century earlier. But this is not fiction. No one says "Please sir, may I have some more?" The poor of the East End rarely have anything at all to eat, nowhere to sleep, and nothing at all to look forward to. Hundreds of thousands barely exist in this nether world of starvation, disease, crime and depravity. And it is all real, described first-hand by the intrepid Jack London, as he lives the life of an East-Enders. It would be unbelievable as fiction; as fact it is clear how socialism struck such a strong chord with this passionate, expressive writer.

I have been interested in the history of England and the East End of London that developed around the ports and busy commerce of the Thames river. Overpopulation and scarcity of jobs created a distressed environment for the people of the East End. Jack London actually dressed in poor mans clothes and went to live among them. One can read about the history and facts of these people but Jack London wrote from personal experience as he walked the streets of the East End. The spirit

and characteristics of the Cockney people is intriguing, as they have their own lingo and sense of community. They possess a determined strength in such adverse, difficult conditions. Reading about the dire conditions of the East End has made me aware of poverty and deprivation that exists still today. I believe we all need to be more aware of the struggles of those around us, walking in the shoes of those who face hardship and difficult times.

While watching a story on Jack the Ripper, a mention was made of this book by Jack London. Jack London was a reporter as well as a novelist. In 1902 he went under cover as a beached American Sailor in London's poverty stricken East End. This book is the report of his "adventure". It points out, not only the disparity between the classes, but also the illogic of the laws. For example, it was illegal to sleep on the streets, or in the parks at night in London so the homeless had to walk the streets all night until morning, then they could sleep in the parks and on the streets. He also experienced the comfort afforded to the "casuals" at the poor law workhouses. He interviewed (through conversations) many people whose only reason for being in the East End was that they were too old or sick to work anymore and their children happened to die and had no one to take care of them. A real eye opener and there were a few felling expresses that are still prevalent today.

After having read "Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain", it was interesting to read accounts of those who did not go into service. Jack London was a world traveller and adventurer. His accounts of being on the streets of East End London at the turn of the century leaves no doubt about the dire straights people were living under. As he often states that at this time Britain was at its height but the poor were at their lowest. Death, hunger and disease are a constant. The workhouse or the poorhouse were just brief stops. Makes you think

Jack London was well known to be a socialist. Here, he goes undercover in the East End of London in the early 1900s. Naturally, he finds the absolute bottom class of society & his description is certainly not pretty. So, living in America in the 21st century, all this squalor, degradation & lack of hope has been eliminated, hasn't it? The "homeless shelter" is more humane than the "workhouse," isn't it? The standard of living between rich & poor must have narrowed, mustn't it? Humanity, charity, advances in the social sciences have brought us to where all classes are happier, aren't they? Read it and weep!

Jack London posed as an impoverished, down-on-his-luck seaman living in the slums of East

London to gather material for this memoir. It is said to have inspired Orwell, who in similar fashion, gathered material for his book, *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

Jack London went undercover in England in the early 1900's. He went as a homeless person to experience what the homeless endured. His story is incredible! How he made this transition from a wealthy prominent writer to being homeless. The clothes and shoes he wore could not give him away. He had a driver drop him off at a friend's house who briefed him on what and how they were going to do this. It is an amazing story and one I'll never forget. IT'S FREE!! Jack London was one of Robert E. Howard's favorite authors particularly the book called *The Star Rover* (IT'S FREE) about a man in a straight jacket.

Jack London writes a remarkable book about his experiences posing as a poor, jobless seaman stranded in London. His description of the poor and their desperate attempts to provide food and shelter for their families is far more shocking than fiction. I would have given this book 5 stars, however, it was so badly formatted it made reading the book quite difficult. I highly recommend reading London's account of the *Abyss*, but I suggest you read another version of the book devoid of grammatical and formatting errors.

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