

BLACK FANG

Originally in ancient China, it was a gang cult of assassins and artisans that protected the rights of innocent victims of the Powerful. Later representations of human form were Native American. Chief Black Hawk's speech of surrender in 1832 was illustrative:

I fought hard. But your guns were well aimed. The bullets flew like birds in the air and whizzed by our ears like the wind through the trees in the winter. My warriors fell around me.... The sun rose dim on us in the morning, and at night it sunk in a dark cloud, and looked like a ball of fire. That was the last sun that shone on Black Hawk. ... He is now a prisoner to the white men ... He has done nothing for which an Indian ought to be ashamed. He has fought for his countrymen, the squaws and papooses, against white men, who came year after year, to cheat them and take away their lands. You know the cause of our making war. It is known to all white men. They ought to be ashamed of it. Indians are not deceitful. The white men speak bad of the Indian and look at him spitefully. But the Indian does not tell lies. Indians do not steal. An Indian who is as bad as the white men could not live in our nation; he would be put to death and eaten up by the wolves. The white men are bad school-masters; they carry false books, and deal in false actions; they smile in the face of the poor Indian to cheat him; they shake them by the hand to gain their confidence, to make them drunk, to deceive them, and ruin our wives. We told them to leave us alone, and keep away from us; they followed on, and beset our paths, and they coiled themselves among us, like the snake. They poisoned us by their touch. We were not safe. We lived in danger. We were becoming like them, hypocrites and liars, adulterous lazy drones, all talkers and no workers The white men do not scalp the head; but they do worse they poison the heart ...

In the animal kingdom Black Fang is a term of respect for carnivores, that must eat others to survive. The Fang is a tearing and killing tooth, necessary for this function. "White Fang" is Jack London's companion novel to "Call of the Wild." In the former, a wild Wolf is partially civilized, and, in the latter, a civilized dog turns to the wild. Both are stories of survival of the fittest and the need for instinctual intelligence as well as ferocity. White Fang was civilized by the Club of Man-God, but he learned to distinguish good from evil. Those instincts saved his beloved master in the end.

"White Fang, in the very nature of him, could never know anything about gods; at the best he could know only things that were beyond knowing—but the wonder and the awe that he had of these man-animals in ways resembled what would be the wonder and awe of man at the sight of some celestial creature, on a mountain top, hurling thunderbolts..."

"All that stood between the flesh of life and the cold of death were the Fangs of hunger."

If you study evolutionary patterns, you will notice that the Fangs of the sabre tooth tiger have dwindled when manifest in modern cats. Same for Wolf v. Dog. Maybe we are evolving to a more peaceable and less violent existence. But, as White Fang acknowledged, man is unique in using inanimate objects to project his strength and mastery over Nature, for better or worse. Black Fangs are Nature's defense against the aggressions and destructiveness of Man.

So, what does Black Fang symbolize? It is the avenger for justice. It is the underdog who when defeated goes down with pride. It is the natural force opposed to the destructive domination of man but acknowledging man as the dominant species.

