

Jack London's firsthand engagement with the world—the process of becoming and maintaining himself as a citizen of the world—helps define the kind of writing he produced. It is insufficient now to call him a naturalist writer if his principal concern was to reflect and represent, not the usual fare of violence and natural forces that literary theorists have used to periodize London's work, but rather something larger, more indeterminate, contemporary.

The word “modern” appears often in the pages of this *Handbook*, and though it is not new to call London a modernist, the sheer weight of the scholarship in this volume that attests to this alternative designation gives it a thorough grounding that previous attempts lacked. London called his times the Machine Age, not just to underscore the rapidity of modern life and its new mechanization, but also to highlight the need for a new social and economic order. *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London* honors him as a representative American writer of the age as he understood it.

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