

# **The Black Pearl Study Guide**

## **The Black Pearl by Scott O'Dell**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <a href="#">The Black Pearl Study Guide.....</a> | <a href="#">1</a>  |
| <a href="#">Contents.....</a>                    | <a href="#">2</a>  |
| <a href="#">Overview.....</a>                    | <a href="#">4</a>  |
| <a href="#">About the Author.....</a>            | <a href="#">5</a>  |
| <a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>                | <a href="#">6</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 1.....</a>                   | <a href="#">7</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 2.....</a>                   | <a href="#">9</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 3.....</a>                   | <a href="#">10</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 4.....</a>                   | <a href="#">12</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 5.....</a>                   | <a href="#">13</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 6.....</a>                   | <a href="#">14</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 7.....</a>                   | <a href="#">15</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 8.....</a>                   | <a href="#">17</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 9.....</a>                   | <a href="#">18</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 10.....</a>                  | <a href="#">19</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 11.....</a>                  | <a href="#">20</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 12.....</a>                  | <a href="#">21</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 13.....</a>                  | <a href="#">22</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 14.....</a>                  | <a href="#">23</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 15.....</a>                  | <a href="#">24</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 16.....</a>                  | <a href="#">25</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 17.....</a>                  | <a href="#">26</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 18.....</a>                  | <a href="#">27</a> |
| <a href="#">Characters.....</a>                  | <a href="#">28</a> |
| <a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>              | <a href="#">32</a> |



Setting..... 34

Social Sensitivity..... 35

Literary Qualities..... 36

Themes..... 37

Themes/Characters..... 39

Style..... 41

Quotes..... 44

Adaptations..... 46

Topics for Discussion..... 47

Essay Topics..... 48

Ideas for Reports and Papers..... 49

Further Study..... 50

Copyright Information..... 51

## Overview

O'Dell creates an aura of mystery and the supernatural in *The Black Pearl*, transplanting familiar themes into a foreign environment. Set in coastal Mexico, the book depicts a realm dominated by religion and superstition, hope and desperation. O'Dell provides a vivid entrance into this region and an introduction to its folklore. The novel emphasizes the universality of experience, demonstrating that young people everywhere share the same dreams and flaws of character, and face the same struggles on the path to maturity.

## About the Author

Scott O'Dell was born in Los Angeles, California, on May 23, 1903. His father worked on the railroad, and the family moved often throughout California.

O'Dell attended Occidental College, the University of Wisconsin, and Stanford University, but never found college rewarding. In 1925 he took a job as a cameraman, working on the original motion picture version of Ben-Hur, and took courses at the University of Rome. He joined the U.S. Air Force during World War II and later became a book editor for a Los Angeles newspaper.



## Plot Summary

Sixteen-year-old Ramun Salazar longs to become a pearl diver. With his father out of town, Ramun dives in a remote lagoon and finds a huge black pearl, the Pearl of Heaven, in a forbidden cave. According to Indian legend, the cave is guarded by the Manta Diablo, a demon incarnated as a giant manta ray. Ramun's father makes an offering of the pearl to the Virgin Mary for the safety of the pearl fleet. On the next voyage, the fleet is destroyed by an unexpected storm. Ramun believes that the Manta Diablo is taking revenge for the loss of the Pearl of Heaven, and he is determined to return the pearl to its undersea cave. An arrogant, unscrupulous pearl diver, Gaspar Ruiz, steals the pearl and forces Ramun to row across the sea with him. When the Manta Diablo attacks the two, Ramun is certain the devil has come for them. When Ruiz admits that the fleet was lost because they were overconfident, Ramun realizes that the Manta Diablo is not evil personified. Ruiz tries to harpoon the manta and is drowned. Ramun returns the Pearl of Heaven to the Virgin Mary, believing he has finally conquered the superstitions of his childhood.

*The Black Pearl* is a coming of age story set in Baja California during the early 20th century. Ramun Salazar, a young man, has recently been made a full partner in the family pearl business. Despite his small size, Ramun longs to dive for pearls like his father and the Sevillano, Gaspar Ruiz. While his father is away, Ramun convinces an old Indian pearl diver, Soto Luzon, to teach him to dive for black pearls in a remote lagoon. There, the two find a cave rich with clusters of huge oysters. Luzon refuses to dive in the cave, insisting it is the special province of the Manta Diablo, the devil personified in a huge manta ray. Ramun dives alone and finds the Pearl of Heaven, a black pearl so large it fills his hand.

When Ramun's father is unable to get a good price for the black pearl, he donates it to the Catholic Church as an offering to the Virgin Mary. On the next voyage, the entire pearl fleet is destroyed by an unexpected storm. Gaspar Ruiz is the only survivor. Convinced that the demon of the deep will not rest until he gets the pearl back, Ramun steals the pearl and rows back to the lagoon in the mist. Ramun tosses the pearl back into the sea. Gaspar Ruiz, who has followed Ramun, retrieves the valuable pearl and forces Ramun to row them across the sea to sell the gem.

The Manta Diablo attacks the two. Gaspar tries to harpoon the creature but succeeds only in drowning himself. Before he dies, Gaspar confesses to Ramun that the Manta Diablo had nothing to do with the loss of the pearl fleet. Ramun's father was simply overconfident and neglected to seek shelter when the storm struck. Ramun realizes that the huge manta ray is simply a large sea creature, not the devil incarnate. He returns to La Paz and replaces the Pearl of Heaven in the Virgin's outstretched hand.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Sixteen-year-old Ramun Salazar longs to become a pearl diver. With his father out of town, Ramun dives in a remote lagoon and finds a huge black pearl, the Pearl of Heaven, in a forbidden cave. According to Indian legend, the cave is guarded by the Manta Diablo, a demon incarnated as a giant manta ray. Ramun's father makes an offering of the pearl to the Virgin Mary for the safety of the pearl fleet. On the next voyage, the fleet is destroyed by an unexpected storm. Ramun believes that the Manta Diablo is taking revenge for the loss of the Pearl of Heaven, and he is determined to return the pearl to its undersea cave. An arrogant, unscrupulous pearl diver, Gaspar Ruiz, steals the pearl and forces Ramun to row across the sea with him. When the two are attacked by the Manta Diablo, Ramun is certain the devil has come for them. When Ruiz admits that the fleet was lost because they were overconfident, Ramun realizes that the Manta Diablo is not evil personified. Ruiz tries to harpoon the manta and is drowned. Ramun returns the Pearl of Heaven to the Virgin Mary, believing he has finally conquered the superstitions of his childhood.

Everyone in La Paz, Mexico has heard of the Manta Diablo, the devil ray. Of the many who say they have seen the Manta Diablo, only two actually have. Of the two, only Ramun Salazar is still alive. When Ramun was smaller, his mother would threaten him with stories of the Manta Diablo when he misbehaved. According to Ramun's mama, the demon ray is bigger than the biggest boat in the harbor. It has seven amber crescent-shaped eyes and seven rows of huge, sharp teeth. Other mothers also use the Manta Diablo to frighten their children. They might describe the giant ray differently, with a single monstrous eye or more teeth, but the children are equally as frightened.

Before Ramun's grandfather's death, he was the most educated man in the village. He could recite long poems by heart. His description of the Manta Diablo is closer to the truth as Ramun now knows it, but it is still not perfect. Perhaps if Father Linares were still alive, he could give an accurate picture of the Manta Diablo, because the priest was the first to see the demon ray more than a hundred years ago. At that time, the Manta Diablo roamed the earth with claws and a forked tongue. According to legend, Father Linares banished the creature to the sea, where it remains.

As a child, Ramun did not believe in the Manta Diablo. He would laugh to himself when his mother tried to scare him into obedience with tales of the fanciful monster. Surely, if such evil existed his mother could not command it. Now Ramun knows the legend of the Manta Diablo is true. He has struggled with the monster for an entire day and night. First, though, he must tell about the Pearl of Heaven.



## Chapter 1 Analysis

*The Black Pearl* is written in the style of a myth or ancient legend. As such, Ramun reveals the ending of the story in the first chapter. The reader is told that Ramun, along with the Sevillano Gaspar Ruiz, struggles with the Manta Diablo for an entire day and night and that only one of the men survives. Since Ramun is the speaker, Ruiz must perish.

One of the major themes in the novel is an exploration of the intertwined nature of religion and superstition, which is illustrated perfectly in this chapter. The Manta Diablo is a type of sea creature used as a bogeyman story by the mothers of La Paz to keep their children from misbehaving. However, the creature is also a genuine demonic figure in the tradition of Milton's Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*, roaming the earth with claws and a forked tongue, giving off a terrible odor and causing the crops to fail. According to legend, this demonic figure was vanquished by the Roman Catholic priest Father Linares a hundred years ago and is now confined to the sea.





# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Ramun's father is Blas Salazar, the most famous pearl dealer on the Vermillion Sea. When Ramun turned sixteen last summer, his father made him a full partner in the pearl business. There was a fiesta, and Salazar Senior unveiled a new sign that read, "Salazar and Son." Ramun quickly learned the grading and valuation of the pearls, but he longs to join the pearl divers on the sea.

Since Ramun was a child, his father has promised that when he turned sixteen he could join the pearl divers. Now, however, Mr. Salazar is reluctant to have both Salazar men on board the same boat, where a single shipwreck or storm could destroy the entire business. When one of the sailors is sick, Ramun convinces his father to let him come along on the pearl diving expedition as a tender, who will remain aboard ship hauling ropes for the divers. Mr. Salazar reluctantly agrees, and the two rouse Father Gallardo from his siesta to bless the sailors before they set out.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Ramun is happy to be granted a partnership in the family business and the adult status it confers. Despite the prestige, Ramun still does not feel like a man. He believes that will come only from learning to dive for pearls, the hazardous and highly profitable village trade.

Ramun is aware that his father is ashamed of Ramun's small, slender stature and thin wrists. Ramun's delicate appearance is in contrast to his father's burly form, suntanned from many years on the water. Despite the disparity in size, Blas Salazar treats his son as an equal in the shop, challenging his valuation of the pearls and enjoying the younger man's rebuttal. Despite their closeness, Ramun is painfully conscious of the Latin tradition of machismo and makes an effort not to appear smarter than his father is.

The intertwined nature of religion and superstition is revealed again as Blas Salazar rouses the Roman Catholic priest to bless the pearl divers before their expedition. Behind the priest, Ramun sees the Madonna in her niche of seashells. She is the statue of a young woman with the face of a child, her golden brown cheeks and almond eyes betraying Indian and Spanish blood. When Ramun volunteers to tell his mother he is going on the voyage, Mr. Salazar replies superstitiously that tears and lamentations are bad luck for a voyage.



## Chapter 3

### Chapter 3 Summary

The Salazar fleet consists of five boats, each named after a saint. Each is about twenty feet in length, shaped like a very wide canoe with a small square sail. Each boat has a crew of four or five men. Ramun is on the Santa Theresa with his father, Gaspar Ruiz and an Indian. Gaspar Ruiz recently came to the village of La Paz. He claims to have traveled from Seville in Spain and is called the Sevillano. Ruiz's body is covered with tattoos depicting his various exploits, and he often brags about his skill and the adventures he has survived. One tattoo shows Ruiz fighting an octopus with a dozen tentacles.

Despite Ruiz's arrogant, bragging nature, he is an excellent pearl diver who can stay underwater for up to four minutes. He never fails to find the biggest, highest quality pearls. Ruiz claims he once found a perfect pearl bigger than a hen's egg in the Gulf of Persia, which he sold to the Shah. When it becomes obvious that Ruiz is lying, he turns on Ramun and says, "You are the son of a rich man and you live in a big house and you eat good food and all of your life you have done little. Nor will you ever do more." Ruiz also denigrates Ramun for having reddish hair, which he claims comes from the Moorish infidels.

When the expedition reaches the oyster beds, Mr. Salazar and Ruiz dive. Ramun and the Indian act as tenders, pulling the sinking stones and baskets full of oysters up by their ropes. When Ramun mentions he would like to dive for pearls, Ruiz taunts him with tales of sharks and huge burro clams. By midday, the Santa Theresa is so loaded with oysters that Mr. Salazar sends Ruiz to help the divers from another boat.

On the way home with the heavily laden boats, Ramun begins to daydream of finding a huge pearl. Suddenly, the Sevillano points behind them where the Manta Diablo is surfacing. It is a Giant Manta, which grow twenty feet or more in length and weigh up to three tons. The huge beasts can easily capsize a boat or break a man's back by accident, with a single swipe of the fin or tail. Mr. Salazar denies that the ray is the fabled Manta Diablo, the devil incarnate, but the Indian sailor is very frightened and hides in the bottom of the boat.

### Chapter 3 Analysis

Gaspar Ruiz is a handsome, arrogant braggart. When he claims to have fought a twelve-armed octopus or saved his own pearl fleet from a terrible storm, he is clearly lying. An even stronger clue to the Sevillano's character comes in his obvious animosity towards and rivalry with Ramun, who is barely more than a boy. Ramun bristles under the Sevillano's challenges, but Mr. Salazar advises caution. Ruiz is their best pearl diver, by far. Mr. Salazar has heard that Ruiz was born in Culiacbn, where he killed a



man in a fight. Out of respect for his father, Ramun does not confront the Sevillano, although he feels his manhood is in question.

Gaspar Ruiz's taunts about Ramun carry religious overtones, since he accuses the boy of being descended from Muslim Moors, who Ruiz calls "infidels." When Ruiz claims the ray following the Santa Theresa is the Manta Diablo, he is clearly trying to scare Ramun. While he is somewhat successful, the Indian sailor is terrified out of his wits and hides in the bottom of the boat for the rest of the trip, despite Mr. Salazar's reassurances.

The author, Scott O'Dell is highly sensitive to portraying Hispanic culture in a positive light, translating phrases like "amigo" into the English equivalent, mate. Yet, he displays little cultural sensitivity in portraying those of Indian descent. The "Indian" in this chapter is never identified by name or even called a man. His portrayal as mindlessly superstitious and terrified is less than flattering.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

A few days later, while Mr. Salazar is out with the fleet, Soto Luzon appears at Salazar and Son. Luzon is an old Indian man with a tiny red canoe, who regularly brings in one large, beautiful black pearl at a time. Ramun is thrilled, since the five boatloads of oysters from their last trip yielded few pearls. Ramun overpays the Indian for his two-carat pearl and asks Luzon to teach him pearl diving. A bit reluctantly, Luzon agrees to take Ramun to his secluded lagoon and teach him the craft.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Luzon is initially reluctant to take Ramun with him. The lad argues that his father is safely away at Cerralvo hunting black pearls, and his mother and sisters are out of town visiting relatives. Ramun still hopes to find the fabled huge pearl, and he promises that if he does, he will pay Luzon the entire price of the pearl. Ramun offers to pay Luzon a commission on each smaller pearl he finds, and the Indian man finally agrees. Ramun imagines how everyone in town will talk about him when he finds the great pearl and how jealous Ruiz will be.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

The dawn is almost breaking by the time Ramun and Luzon reach the hidden lagoon. There are a few huts on the shore, with smoke from breakfast fires rising. As they enter the lagoon, the old man points out a gray shark ominously circling the boat. When the two enter the small village, Luzon cautions Ramun against talking too much on the water. "It is well to hold the tongue and not to talk needlessly when you are on the lagoon. Remember this when we go out to dive, for there is one who listens and is quickly angered." When Ramun asks who listens, the old man glances over his shoulder twice before he replies, "The Manta Diablo."

The two men sleep until noon and then go pearl diving. Although the Manta Diablo has departed with the mist, Luzon cautions Ramun that the sharks and other sea creatures will report their words and actions to the monster. Luzon insists that his family has had a pact with the demon for many years. "I show him proper respect and tip my hat when I come into the lagoon and when I leave it. For this he allows me to dive for the black pearls which belong to him and which we now go to search for."

Luzon teaches Ramun to dive in the reef, beginning with breathing exercises. He shows the boy how to avoid the deadly giant clams, which can trap a hand or foot and hold an unwary diver underwater until he drowns. For three days, the two gather many oysters, but they find only a few worthless pearls. Finally, on the fourth day, the old man stays behind because he has cut his hand on a shell. Ramun goes to the lagoon alone. "It was on this day that I found the Pearl of Heaven."

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Despite the homey village, the lagoon makes Ramun uncomfortable. The strong currents and headwinds they encounter on the way seem ill portents. In Luzon's Indian belief system, the Manta Diablo lives in an undersea cave off the lagoon that connects with the open water. Luzon insists that when the mist dissipates, the Manta Diablo has gone, as well. Luzon believes that when the Manta Diablo leaves the lagoon, he assumes the shape of an octopus to attack sailors who have spoken against him. At other times, the old Indian man insists, the demon takes the shape of a man and walks the streets of La Paz. The supernatural is as real to Soto Luzon as the stones and dirt of his village. Despite the old man's warnings, Ramun feels compelled to prove his manhood by continuing to dive.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

The fourth morning, Ramun paddles to the hidden cave, although he has trouble locating it in the mist. The night before, Ramun asks Luzon why he does not hunt for pearls in the cave. Clearly uncomfortable, the old man finally replies, "I cannot go to the cave to search for pearls. I cannot go because I fear the Manta Diablo. If you go there, then it is alone. El Diablo cannot blame me."

When the mist finally parts, Ramun descends into the cave. The oysters there are by far the largest Ramun has ever seen. He selects a shell that is half as long as his arm and laboriously pries it off the reef. After several dives, the oyster is free, although it is too heavy for Ramun to lift into the boat. He ties it to the stern and paddles the boat ashore, where the old man is waiting. Ramun prizes the oyster open and finds three small pearls. Then he feels a stone inside the oyster shell. When he pulls it out, Ramun finds it is a pearl the color of smoke, so large that it fills his cupped hand. He has found the great Pearl of Heaven. Ramun offers the pearl to Luzon, but the older man refuses to touch it. Instead, he urges Ramun to hurry. They must leave the lagoon before the Manta Diablo returns.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

In Luzon's Indian religion, all living things are part of the same natural order and in communication with each other. The old man rigidly conforms to his belief in the supernatural and the pact his family has made with the Manta Diablo. Luzon watches from the shore, but Ramun knows he will do nothing to help, even if the boat should capsize and Ramun should start to drown. If Ramun finds a big pearl, the old man will not accept it, believing he is safe as long as he had nothing to do with finding the pearl. When Ramun asks to borrow the old man's knife to prize open the oyster, the old man refuses. Luzon fears the other sea creatures will tell the Manta Diablo that they have taken the pearl.

Ramun chooses the first oyster he comes to, because it seems less securely attached to the bottom. Although the cave is full of oysters even larger than the one he chooses, Ramun has no thought of going back to exploit such riches. Ramun is not greedy. He merely wants to find the fabled Pearl of Heaven to prove his worth as a man. In Ramun's belief system, the Pearl of Heaven is semi-sacred and wholly good.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

The two men leave without eating supper. All Ramun can think about is how impressed his neighbors - especially Gasper Ruiz - will be when they see the pearl he has found. As they row towards La Paz, the old man sights a ghostly manta behind them. Luzon says it is the Manta Diablo, but Ramun insists it is the same ray that followed the Santa Theresa earlier. Still, the old man is panicked, so the two put into nearby Pichilique instead of continuing on to La Paz. As they enter the harbor at Pichilique, a tremendous splash overturns the canoe. The giant manta has surfaced practically on top of them. All Ramun can think of is his mother's stories of the seven layers of teeth that can tear a man apart. The two men swim ashore.

Ramun has the Pearl of Heaven securely inside his shirt. Luzon begs him to throw it back into the sea. "El Diablo is waiting for the pearl and he will not rest until he gets it. He is there now." Luzon refuses to accompany Ramun to La Paz or to have any part of the pearl. He insists he will stay at Pichilique to find his canoe and then return to the lagoon.

As soon as Ramun reaches La Paz, he goes to the office of Salazar and Son and measures the pearl. It weighs 62.3 carats. As dawn is breaking, Ramun goes to bed with the pearl under his pillow. He tosses and turns, unable to sleep. After several hours, Ramun suddenly remembers that he neglected to lock the office door. With the pearl inside his shirt, he hurries to the office. On the way, he passes a woman selling chocolate in the market. She tells him there is a rumor that a great pearl has been found. At the office of Salazar and Sons, a crowd has gathered. When Ramun arrives, they demand to see the pearl. Again, Ramun denies possessing any such object. Ramun puts the pearl into the safe.

The crowd continues to mill around outside until the Salazar fleet returns at two o'clock. As soon as Mr. Salazar enters the office, Ramun shows him the enormous pearl. At first, Mr. Salazar does not believe his eyes, and he insists that Ramun must have fabricated the gem. Then, Mr. Salazar opens the door and holds the Pearl of Heaven aloft for the entire town to see. "Then my father closed the door and looked at me and said, 'Madre de Dios.' He said these words three times over and sat down and stared at the great black pearl that filled his hands."

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Soto Luzon is frightened again when the canoe is capsized in Pichilique by the giant manta. Luzon sees this as a clear sign that the demon is unhappy with him and Ramun and will never rest until the pearl is returned to the sea. The creature's actions do, indeed, seem supernatural.



For Ramun's part, he sees the Pearl of Heaven as a sign of divine favor. He dismisses rumors in the village of a giant pearl. He is aware that as the head of the family, his father should be the first one to hear about the pearl. It is Mr. Salazar who will decide how the pearl is to be disposed of.





# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

When Ramun and his father return home that evening, it is like a parade. News of the giant pearl has spread throughout the town, and they are followed by fishermen, divers, merchants, women and children, and even the priest, Father Gallardo. Because pearl diving is the town's major industry, everyone shares in rejoicing when a great pearl is discovered.

In the Salazars' small home workshop, Mr. Salazar measures the pearl and confirms its weight. He agrees that it is perfectly round. The pearl, however, has a flaw. Ramun has already seen the flaw but hoped his father would not notice it. Mr. Salazar suggests trying to cut the flaw out. Ramun tells his father, "If you cut the pearl, you may find that the flaw goes deep." Mr. Salazar argues that if they leave the flaw, despite the pearl's beautiful color and huge size, the only thing people will notice is the flaw.

When Mr. Salazar takes the sharp, curved knife to trim the top layer off the pearl, Ramun averts his eyes. Mr. Salazar insists he watch, because he may have to trim a pearl someday. Mr. Salazar trims off the flaw in the top layer and proclaims that Ramun's pearl is truly the Pearl of Heaven.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

The only person who does not help escort the Salazars home is the person Ramun most wants to impress, Gaspar Ruiz. The collective nature of Hispanic culture means the entire town shares in the Salazar's good fortune, and the celebration is bigger than Cinco de Mayo. Ramun imagined that finding a great black pearl would confer instant manhood upon him, but despite the crowds, he still doesn't feel any different.

As Mr. Salazar is trimming the flaw from the pearl, Ramun tries to pray, but the only words that come to him are Soto Luzon's promise that the pearl would one day be returned to the sea. Mr. Salazar, though, seems to have no doubts about the blessed nature of the pearl.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

A week later, Mr. Salazar gathers the four remaining pearl dealers from La Paz. No one dealer is wealthy enough to buy the pearl, but the four combined can summon the necessary capital. They bring a satchel full of money to buy the great black pearl. The four pearl dealers negotiate with Mr. Salazar, who is adamant that he will not accept less than 20,000 pesos for the prize. The dealers demure, saying the pearl is more like a grapefruit than a gem and offering 10,000 pesos. Mr. Salazar persists.

Finally, after hours of haggling, the dealers offer 15,000 pesos. Mr. Salazar still refuses to accept less than 20,000 pesos. He sends Ramun to the church to bring back Father Gallardo. Ramun rouses Father Gallardo from his siesta and rushes him back to the house. There, Mr. Salazar presents the pearl as an offering to the Madonna. "My son and I give it to you so that you may give it to the Madonna, our beloved Lady-of-the-Sea, to hold and keep forever."

## Chapter 9 Analysis

The major plot point when Salazar and Sons, the premier pearl dealers of La Paz, sell the pearl to a consortium of lesser pearl dealers is a bit puzzling. Surely, if Salazar and Sons deal in pearls, they must have buyers for the gems. Yet, it seems Mr. Salazar knows of nowhere to sell this, or any, pearl and receive a fair price for it. The dealers in Mexico City have paid him less than the pearls were worth in the past. When the dealers remind Mr. Salazar of his humiliation in Mexico City, he is deeply offended and decides not to sell the pearl at all.

Mrs. Salazar hopes to buy a red carriage and four white horses with the proceeds from the pearl, and she is very disappointed when Mr. Salazar refuses to sell it. Ramun has not thought much past the glory of finding the fabled pearl, so he is satisfied that his father has triumphed over the miserly pearl dealers. Mr. Salazar believes that the family's prestige is increased by donating the pearl to the Madonna. Even more important, he has faith that the gift will ensure the House of Salazar is favored in heaven, forever. This belief is actually a type of superstition. Mr. Salazar has no doubt that by donating the pearl, he is purchasing safety and prosperity for the family pearl business.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Five days later, the village holds a giant celebration honoring the gift to the Madonna. The statue from the church is paraded twice around the plaza and to the harbor to bless the Salazar fleet. Ramun's mother, still miffed at the loss of the pearl, has a headache and refuses to attend. After the Madonna is returned to her niche, Ramun gives thanks that he was allowed to discover the pearl.

On the way home, Ramun encounters the Sevillano for the first time since finding the pearl. The older man is just as arrogant as ever, insisting that the Pearl of Heaven is nothing compared to his own great pearl, which the Sevillano claims to have sold to the Shah. Ruiz persists in calling the pearl "your pearl," indicating his disbelief in the Virgin Mary.

Near home, Ramun encounters Soto Luzon. The old man insists that the pearl doesn't belong to the people, the Madonna or the Catholic Church. He proclaims that it belongs only to the Manta Diablo, who will never rest until it is returned to the sea. The next day Mr. Salazar asks Ramun if Luzon would allow the fleet to search for pearls in his lagoon. Ramun explains Luzon's superstitions about the Manta Diablo, and Mr. Salazar calls the old Indian man crazy. Crazy or not, the lagoon belongs to him, and he will not permit the Salazar fleet to gather oysters there.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

The collective nature of the pearl's discovery is explored again, as the storyteller notes "to those who had little and to those who had nothing, the pearl also belonged to each of them, to dream of the rest of their lives." Still, for a few moments Ramun thinks of the dozen fleets of new pearl boats the gem could have purchased for Salazar and Son. Gaspar Ruiz's bragging doesn't annoy Ramun nearly as much. He realizes that no man can ever again say that Ramun Salazar has done nothing. Ruiz's callous disbelief in the Virgin foreshadows his evil conduct.

Many people attribute positive supernatural powers to the pearl. Father Gallardo believes the pearl has worked a miracle when a band of Indians dressed in rabbit skins attends the celebration. To Mr. Salazar, the pearl is a bribe to ensure the safety of his fleet of ships. Yet, to Luzon, the pearl remains a symbol of evil, which must be returned to the sea at all costs. Despite his own superstitions, Mr. Salazar looks down on the Indian's beliefs, calling him crazy.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

The next morning, with Mr. Salazar captaining the fleet, it sails for Cerralvo on a beautiful day under blue skies. By afternoon, the wind had started to blow. Ramun's mother, always fearful of the slightest change in the weather when his father is on the sea, looks worried. Ramun goes outside to check the wind, and he finds it is the dangerous chubasco, blowing from the sea. He goes back inside the house and lies to his mother, telling her it is the mild and harmless coromuel, from the mountains.

Soon, Ramun's pretenses are useless. After supper, the wind increases, and the candles are snuffed out "as by an unseen hand." Ramun again assures his mother that all will be well. The fleet had plenty of warning and no doubt put in safely at Pichilique or another safe cove. The family huddles together, listening to the storm howl outside. By midnight, the wind abates. Everyone walks down to the harbor to be there when the fleet returns. They pass trees blown down and roofs blown off houses.

By dawn, the fleet still has not returned, but Father Gallardo assures the crowd that the Virgin will protect the Salazar fleet. The priest tells everyone to go home until afternoon, but they remain on the beach. Soon, a red canoe appears. It is Soto Luzon. The old man speaks to Ramun privately. He has not seen the fleet, but he is sure they are lost. At nightfall, they build a fire on the beach, and Father Gallardo erects a cross as a symbol of hope. They continue to wait all night. The next morning, a lone figure is seen stumbling along the sea wall. It is Gaspar Ruiz, the Sevillano, and his eyes are alight with terror. He brings the news that the entire fleet has been lost.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

When the fleet sails, the weather is as fine as if "the Madonna Herself had willed it so." In Mr. Salazar's eyes, of course, she has. He has no doubt that this trip, and every voyage of the Salazar fleet, will be blessed because of the gift of the pearl to the Virgin. The priest, Father Gallardo, seems to share this belief. The author seems to imply that all religion is nothing more than superstition, with Christians and Indians alike offering sacrifices to propitiate their separate gods. Soto Luzon believes the Manta Diablo has caused the storm and destroyed the fleet in displeasure because the black pearl was taken. As Ramun continues on his coming-of-age journey, he acts like a man, in his own estimation, by lying to his mother about the weather so she won't worry. His ruse proves pointless, as the truth is soon obvious.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

On the fourth day after the storm, funerals are held for the thirty-one men of the Salazar fleet. Only the Sevillano has survived. Everyone remarks that the two greatest events that have ever occurred in the village - the discovery of the black pearl and the loss of the Salazar fleet - happened within weeks of each other. Ramun is among those who wonder if the two are connected.

The Sevillano scoffs at the suggestion that the pearl has brought bad luck. Once again, Luzon confronts Ramun privately and urges him to return the pearl to the lagoon. Confused, Ramun returns to the church in search of Father Gallardo. The priest is absent, so Ramun kneels in front of the Madonna and prays. His eyes fasten on the pearl, and Ramun realizes that the gem has brought nothing but disaster on La Paz. Determined to return the pearl, he takes it from the statue and puts it in his pocket. On his way out the door, he encounters the Sevillano once again.

That night, the church bells are rung, and everyone learns the pearl has been stolen. Ramun is tempted to confess that he took the pearl, but then he thinks of the wrecked boats and resists. After supper, Ramun slips down to the harbor and takes the boat of a man he knows, one of the few boats left whole after the storm. He starts across the water to the Manta Diablo's cave.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Ramun is among those who feel there must be a supernatural explanation for the loss of the fleet, occurring so soon after the discovery of the pearl. He begins to realize that Soto Luzon was right. Perhaps his mother was also right. The Manta Diablo is the devil, and evil will befall them until the devil's pearl is returned to the cave in the lagoon. When Mr. Salazar's superstitious gift to the Madonna fails, Ramun transfers his superstition to the supernatural in the form of the Manta Diablo, instead of abandoning superstition altogether.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

About dawn, Ramun reaches the lagoon. Ramun is no longer afraid of the Manta Diablo. He figures that a creature that can change into a man and walk the streets of La Paz is powerful enough to know he is returning the pearl to the undersea cave. Suddenly, Ramun hears the voice of Gaspar Ruiz, the Sevillano, behind him. The man has followed him in another boat. Ruiz has a knife and demands that Ramun hand over the pearl. As Ruiz reaches for the pearl, Ramun throws it into the water at the mouth of the cave.

Instantly, the Sevillano dives into the water and catches the pearl, saying, "You toss it to the devil and the devil picks it up." Ruiz forces Ramun into his boat and tells the boy to row out to sea. Soon Ruiz reveals his plan. Because the name of Salazar is widely respected amongst pearl dealers, Ruiz demands that Ramun accompany him into Guaymas to sell the pearl. The Sevillano is convinced he will receive a higher price with Ramun along. Once they are too far from shore for Ramun to escape, Ruiz raises the sail.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Ramun has completely accepted Luzon's version of the Manta Diablo superstition. Whether the manta is a supernatural being or the Catholic devil incarnate, Ramun is certain the pearl is the source of all the village's misfortune. He is determined to end the bad luck in La Paz by returning the black pearl to the Manta Diablo.

Before Ramun can return the pearl to the watery deeps, however, Ruiz confronts Ramun. Ruiz claims to be the devil in another form, and Ramun sees no reason to doubt him. It is unclear why Gaspar Ruiz is able to command a high price for the pearl in Guaymas, when the Salazars were unable to sell it. Perhaps, though, Ruiz will not ask as high a price and will be satisfied with 15,000.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

By night, Ramun and Ruiz are far from home. Ramun offers to take the tiller while the Sevillano sleeps, but Ruiz is too suspicious to accept. Instead, he dozes fitfully while gripping the pearl. Throughout the day, the two have seen many sharks. After dark, Ramun sees the ghostly visage of a giant manta's fins rising in the moonlight, following the boat. Ruiz wishes the powerful creature would swim ahead of them so that he could harness it with a rope and let the small boat be pulled to Guaymas. Ruiz says this manta is the largest he has ever seen. The giants are usually gentle, but they are so powerful that a casual swipe of the fin or tail can easily kill a man.

As the manta passes the boat, Ramun sees the creature's eyes, which are the color of amber. He thinks that his mother was wrong. The manta has only one set of teeth, and they are not long and sharp as knives. The manta continues to swim around the boat, in smaller and smaller circles. Finally, Ruiz exclaims that he will harpoon the creature if it comes any closer. The waves created by the ray begin to swamp the small boat. The two are just off the Isla de los Muertos, the Island of the Dead. A group of murderous Indians is rumored to live on the island, but they are less frightening than the giant manta. Ramun bails while Ruiz rows. As the two head for the island, the manta disappears.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

At first, Ramun attaches no particular significance to the giant manta's appearance. They have seen several manta rays that day, jumping from the water or playing with each other. As the creature swims in tight concentric circles, it threatens to capsize their small boat. When Ruiz starts to harpoon the creature, Ramun wants to discourage him. One harpoon will only be a pinprick to such a giant, he thinks. Ramun tries to tell the man that this is truly the Manta Diablo, but he is unable to speak. Ramun's dumbness may be caused by his fear or by the Manta Diablo's supernatural powers. The demon manta seems to be forcing them onto the island, the home of a murderous Indian tribe.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

The two men make land undetected by the Indians in the village. They crouch under their overturned boat and share corn cakes. Ruiz plans to wait for an hour and then go back into the sea, trusting that the manta will have departed. Ramun urges Ruiz to throw the pearl into the sea so that the Manta Diablo will leave them alone, but Ruiz ridicules him.

After moonrise, Ramun sees a solitary Indian standing on the rise of a hill. He considers explaining the situation to the man and asking for his help in returning the black pearl. Surely, the Indian will understand about the Manta Diablo. Unfortunately, Ruiz sees the Indian as well and insists they launch the boat. The Sevillano offers to leave Ramun behind, where the Indians can bury him in sand and allow the turtles to eat his face off. While Ramun is pondering his choices, the Indians start firing on them. Amid a shower of arrows, the two jump into the boat and row away.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

Ramun continues to attribute supernatural powers to the manta. He is certain that if the men wait an hour or a week, the manta will return as soon as they leave the island. In spite of Ruiz's ridicule, Ramun is convinced that the giant ray will take his revenge unless he receives the black pearl again. Ruiz is blinded by greed and sees the pearl only for the money it can bring him in Guaymas.





# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary

At sunrise, the island is far behind Ramun and the Sevillano. The Manta Diablo does not appear until the mist has cleared. The giant manta leaps into the air behind the boat, scattering water and foam around the two men. The Sevillano wedges the pearl between the water jug and the edge of the boat. He is determined to kill the manta, claiming that he has killed nine giant mantas in the past. As the creature sails past around noon, Ramun is certain the Manta Diablo is demanding the return of the black pearl. The manta swims just out of range of Ruiz's harpoon. Ramun plots how he can reach the pearl and throw it into the sea before Ruiz stops him.

In a voice tinged with wonder, Ruiz explains that he understands Ramun's actions now. The boy stole the pearl from the Madonna because she failed to protect Mr. Salazar from the storm. Instead, he believes that the black pearl must be returned to the lagoon, to end the village's misfortune. Ruiz tells Ramun that the Manta Diablo did not cause his father's death. Ruiz says that if not for one small mistake, the fleet would be safely in harbor now. The storm was no worse than many the Salazar fleet had sailed through. When the storm came up, Ruiz urged Ramun's father to turn back to the harbor at Las Animas. Salazar, usually a fine captain, laughed in the Sevillano's face. He was certain that the fleet could outrun the storm. Ruiz asks if Ramun would still have stolen the pearl, knowing his father's true fate. Ramun refuses to reply, but he silently mulls his answer while Ruiz prepares to harpoon the Manta Diablo.

## Chapter 16 Analysis

Ramun is completely convinced of the manta's supernatural powers and no longer worries that Ruiz regards him as a child or a crazy man. Then, he learns that it was his father's error in judgment that caused the fleet to sink, not the Manta Diablo. Mr. Salazar was so confident in the Madonna's powers, and in her favor after the beautiful gift of the black pearl, that he decided not to seek shelter from the storm. It is the elder Salazar's superstition, or his arrogant pride, that cost everyone in the fleet their lives.



# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary

The Manta Diablo passes the boat again, closer than before. It seems to be daring Gaspar Ruiz to cast the harpoon. The Sevillano gives a loud grunt, and the harpoon lodges between the creature's wings. The small boat shudders as the enormous monster tows it through the sea. The manta turns back and swims towards the lagoon. It glides through the water smoothly, as if taking care not to swamp the boat. The barbed harpoon seems to affect the manta no more than a pinprick.

As the boat approaches the Isle de los Muertos again, Ruiz begins hauling on the rope. When the manta is close enough to touch, Ruiz fills his lungs deeply with air three times, like a man going for a dive. Ramun has the impression that Ruiz has vowed to kill the Manta Diablo, no matter what. Ramun jumps up, pulls his small knife from its sheath and vows to help Ruiz kill the devil beast. Ruiz ridicules Ramun's knife and tells him to sit down. Then, the Sevillano tells Ramun to cut the rope to the harpoon if the manta begins to dive. "And remember this, mate, do not touch the pearl."

The Sevillano leaps onto the giant manta's back. Ruiz thrusts his knife deep into the creature's back near the harpoon. The manta shudders and leaps through the air. The manta dives, and Ramun has no time to cut the rope. The boat tips, spilling all the provisions out into the sea. As the boat begins to go under the waves, the rope frays and breaks free. The loose end of the rope wraps around the Sevillano, anchoring him to the manta as it dives.

Ramun finds the oars and rows back to the place where the manta and the man disappeared. All he finds is foam and Ruiz's cork-handled knife. At sunset, he sets sail for La Paz. That is when Ramun remembers to check for the pearl. It is still wedged safely in the bow of the boat, the only thing that hasn't fallen into the sea.

## Chapter 17 Analysis

Although Ramun no longer believes the Manta Diablo has supernatural powers, he still attributes human intelligence to the creature. When he realizes Ruiz is determined to kill the creature, all Ramun's old animosity returns, and he volunteers to help. Ramun assumes that when he found the black pearl, his rivalry with Ruiz ended and the Sevillano will accept him as an equal. Now, Ramun realizes that in Ruiz's mind they are still competing. Ruiz believes the only way he can best Ramun is to kill the giant manta alone.

When the manta dives with the harpoon in its back, the boat tips and nearly capsizes. Everything in the boat falls out, except Ramun and the pearl. The pearl is miraculously safe, seeming to indicate that it isn't meant to be returned to the sea, after all.



# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary

Ramun returns to La Paz just before dawn. He creeps into the silent church and returns the black Pearl of Heaven into the Madonna's outstretched hand. He says a prayer for his soul and that of Ruiz, and for the Manta Diablo. Ramun climbs the church tower and rings the bells, alerting the village to the return of the black pearl. As the crowd flows into the church, Ramun joins them unnoticed.

## Chapter 18 Analysis

Ramun's statement that everyone comes to know the Manta Diablo at some time in his or her life indicates that the creature still represents evil to him. Ramun has learned, however, that evil can have many forms, including arrogant pride, overconfidence and greed. It is more likely to be found in human form than as a giant manta in the sea. Ramun realizes that by rejecting superstition, he has found the manhood he sought.



# Characters

## Ramun Salazar

Ramun Salazar is the sixteen-year-old protagonist of *The Black Pearl*. He is shorter than average and slight with slender wrists. Ramun is unlike his father, who is burly, to the older man's chagrin. Ramun's reddish hair often sticks up like a rooster's comb. Ramun lives at home with his mother and sisters, although they play little part in the narrative. Mr. Salazar is one of the wealthiest men in La Paz, and the family has a large home with many servants. Ramun's father recently accepted him as a full partner in the family pearl business, now called Salazar and Son. Despite the huge celebration, Ramun is surprised to find that he still does not feel like a man.

Ramun wants to learn to dive for pearls. He longs to find a huge gem, the fabled Pearl of Heaven, to prove his maturity. His father has long promised that when Ramun turns sixteen, he will be allowed to sail with the pearl fleet. Instead, Mr. Salazar is now reluctant to have both partners on the open water at the same time. He fears that one storm could wipe out the entire Salazar business. Desperate to prove himself, Ramun convinces an old Indian man, Soto Luzon, to teach him to dive for pearls.

After Ramun finds the black pearl, he begins to believe that the giant manta from the lagoon is truly the Manta Diablo, the devil incarnate. As disaster befalls the village, Ramun realizes that the only way to save the village is to return the Pearl of Heaven to the cave in the lagoon. However, by the end of the story, Ramun begins to accept that superstition is perhaps the real evil.

## The Manta Diablo

The Manta Diablo is a legendary figure associated with many superstitions. Mothers throughout the village use the specter of the giant manta as a bogeyman to frighten children into behaving. Ramun's own mother tells tales of a huge demon beast with seven amber eyes and seven rows of teeth. Ramun finds it difficult to believe that his mother would be close to such an evil monster and that it would do her bidding.

Catholics in La Paz believe the Manta Diablo was once a devil with forked tongue and claws, which roamed the land in a foul stench. The demon ruined the crops for many miles around. Over a hundred years ago, Father Linares banished the creature to the sea, where it has roamed ever since.

The Indian Soto Luzon believes that the entire natural world is connected in one living organism. Luzon believes that the Manta Diablo is evil and can assume different shapes at will. The giant manta can transform itself into an octopus to battle unsuspecting sailors or a man to walk the streets of La Paz. Luzon believes that the sharks and clams talk to the giant manta and that the monster itself can hear conversation across the sea. Luzon's family has a longstanding pact with the Manta Diablo, which lives in the



undersea cave in their lagoon. They pay their respects to the giant manta, and they never gather oysters from inside the cave. In return, the manta allows them to take enough pearls to live.

## Soto Luzon

Soto Luzon is the old Indian man who teaches Ramun to dive for pearls. The man lives in a small village on a secluded lagoon with his wife, unmarried daughters and two small sons. At first, Luzon refuses to take Ramun to the hidden lagoon and teach him to dive. When Ramun persists, however, and promises to pay Luzon for each pearl Ramun finds, the Indian man reconsiders. He has many mouths to feed, and the income from the pearls will be welcome.

In the Indian's religion, all of nature is connected. The mist, the stones, the sharks and clams all speak to each other and to the giant manta. In Luzon's belief structure, the manta owns the earth and everything on it, and man is merely an interloper. Like his father and grandfather before him, Luzon honors a pact with the giant manta. He is allowed to take an occasional pearl from the waters of the lagoon, as long as he never goes near the undersea cave. The undersea cave belongs exclusively to the manta. Luzon warns Ramun repeatedly about interfering with the natural order by violating the sanctity of the cave. When the boy decides to harvest a giant pearl from the cave, Luzon will have no part in it. He even refuses to lend Ramun a knife when the boy's is dulled. Luzon pursues Ramun to La Paz and tries repeatedly to convince the boy to return the pearl to the sea, restoring the natural order.

## Gaspar Ruiz, the Sevillano

Gaspar Ruiz is a charming, handsome liar. He is a sailor who claims to be from Seville, Spain. Ramun learns from his father that Ruiz is actually from a nearby city, which he fled after killing a man. Ruiz's body is covered with tattoos recording the sailor's fantastical exploits, such as wrestling with an octopus with a dozen arms. Gaspar, by his own admission, is poor and never knew his father's name. Despite this poverty and lack of opportunity, Ruiz is the most capable pearl diver in La Paz. Still, he feels an intense rivalry with Ramun Salazar, the son of the powerful Salazar family. Ruiz constantly berates Ramun, calling him a coward and an infidel. Ramun longs to fight back with words or fists, but at his father's urging, he ignores the man.

## Mr. Blas Salazar

Blas Salazar is Ramun's father. A burly, strong, tanned man, Mr. Salazar is a capable ship's captain and the most admired pearl dealer in La Paz. Mr. Salazar is a cautious man. He is unwilling to teach Ramun to dive for pearls because he does not want to risk both of them being lost in the same storm.



Despite Salazar's strength and experience, he is highly superstitious. A deeply religious man, he asks the priest to bless the fleet each time it departs. Mr. Salazar gives the black pearl to the Madonna as a bribe to ensure the safety of the Salazar fleet. Once Mr. Salazar has made the gift, there is no doubt in his mind that God will protect his ships, and he takes foolish risks in the next storm. Mr. Salazar's fatal flaw is hubris, an arrogant pride. Secure in the protection of the Madonna, he fails to take the simplest steps to protect his ships, and the entire Salazar fleet is lost.

## **Father Gallardo**

The La Paz Roman Catholic priest, Father Gallardo, seems to be taking a siesta every time he is needed. Father Gallardo is as superstitious as his parishioners are. When the Salazar fleet is lost in a storm, Father Gallardo assures everyone they will return safely because Mr. Salazar has donated the priceless black pearl to the Madonna. Unfortunately, God cannot be bribed, and the entire fleet is lost.

## **Ramun's Mother**

Like all the women in the novel, Ramun's mother is a shadowy figure. Her only impact on the story line is to bewail Mr. Salazar's gift of the black pearl to the church. Mrs. Salazar had hoped to buy a red carriage and four white horses with the money.

## **The Indian in the Boat**

When a giant manta follows the pearl boat after Ramun's first and only trip with the Salazar fleet, Gaspar Ruiz insists it is the Manta Diablo. The anonymous Indian sailor is terrified and crouches in the bottom of the boat muttering.

## **The Indian Servants**

The Salazar household has several Indian servants, who usually remain anonymous.

## **The Indian on the Hill**

When Ramun and the Sevillano put into Isle de los Muertos to escape the Manta Diablo, a lone Indian appears on a slight rise in the night. Just as Ramun considers asking the Indian for help in returning the black pearl to the sea, he is joined by many others who begin to fire arrows on the two men.



## The Old Women in the Market

Returning home after finding the black pearl, Ramun eats and takes a nap. He tells no one about his marvelous find, believing his father should hear the news first. When Ramun rises, he is accosted by an elderly woman in the market, with gossip that a huge black pearl has been found.



## Objects/Places

### The Black Pearl

The narrative centers on the gorgeous black pearl, the size of an orange, which Ramun discovers in an undersea cave in a hidden lagoon. As the fabled Pearl of Heaven, it represents good to Ramun, while the Manta Diablo represents evil. When first found, the pearl has a tiny flaw, which Mr. Salazar trims out, making the pearl perfect.

### The Statue of the Madonna

The statue of the Madonna resides in a shell-shaped niche in the church. The statue reflects the ethnic heritage of the city. Our-lady-of-the-sea has broad brown cheeks like an Indian and almond-shaped eyes like a Castilian. One hand is outstretched. When Mr. Salazar donates the huge black pearl to the Catholic Church, it is displayed in the Virgin's outstretched hand.

### Sharks

The people of La Paz are terrified of the Manta Diablo, but they have no fear of sharks. Sharks often swim among the oyster beds without causing any panic. Many people believe that sharks can talk with the Manta Diablo, telling the giant ray of human exploits.

### The Lagoon

Ramun is eager to learn to dive for pearls. He longs to find the fabled Pearl of Heaven for the prestige and wealth it will bring. When Mr. Salazar hesitates to teach Ramun the pearl diver's art, Ramun convinces Soto Luzon to teach him in a hidden lagoon. The lagoon is the Indian's private property, and Ramun knows that many pearls will be found there.

### The Cave in the Lagoon

Luzon's lagoon contains an undersea cave that is the home of the Manta Diablo. The lagoon's inlet is much too small for the huge creature to enter. Instead, the cave has a second entrance directly from the sea. Luzon urges Ramun not to anger the Manta Diablo by harvesting pearls from the cave, but the boy disregards the old man's advice.





## **La Paz, Mexico**

Named "the Peace" in Spanish for its calm atmosphere, La Paz is a large but sleepy village. The Salazar family, Gaspar Ruiz and Father Gallardo all live in La Paz.

## **The Vermillion Sea**

Another name for the Sea of Cortez, the Vermillion Sea is the body of water located between the peninsula of Baja Mexico and the Mexican mainland. The Cortez is called the Vermillion for the frequent red tides, or phytoplankton blooms, in winter. The pearl divers of La Paz search the nearby sea for their treasures.

## **Pichilique**

Pichilique is a safe harbor near La Paz. When the Manta Diablo pursues Luzon and Ramun, they put into the nearest port at Pichilique.

## **Cerralvo**

Unable to find pearls close to La Paz, the Salazar fleet travels to Cerralvo in search of the gems. It is during one of these trips that the fleet is lost.

## **Isle de los Muertos**

The "Island of the Dead" is rumored to be the home of murderous Indians. They bury men up to their necks and allow the turtles to eat the victim's faces.

## Setting

The events in this novel occur off the waters of Baja California, a lengthy Mexican peninsula that runs south from California into the Pacific Ocean. The waters teem with exotic and dangerous creatures. The citizens of La Paz, a village community of fishermen and pearlers, are always at the mercy of the climate and its powerful storms. No specific time period is identified in this story, for the pearlers have practiced their trade for centuries, with few changes in their way of life.

# Social Sensitivity

The *Black Pearl* contains few elements that are likely to prove controversial.

O'Dell shows how Catholicism and legend influence the lives of his characters, but he does not encourage readers to embrace a particular faith. Rather, he advocates that people respect religion.

The novel's protagonist acknowledges that there are forces in the universe more powerful than any one individual, but he also learns that the individual has the ability and obligation to act responsibly.

## Literary Qualities

The *Black Pearl*, like many of O'Dell's works, incorporates elements of legend, myth, and history. Structured around the ancient literary pattern of the quest, the book features a youth who sets out to attain glory but finds the path to success littered with physical trials and moral dilemmas. Like most heroes of legend, Ramon faces enemies both human and supernatural, finding evil in the Sevillano's greed as well as in the Manta Diablo's destructiveness. The Manta Diablo recalls such legendary supernatural creatures as the medieval dragon; able to communicate with other animals and change its shape at will, its many attributes and dread reputation have been confirmed and bolstered by the spoken fears of people. The Sevillano, like Sinbad and other legendary warriors, is boastful and uncommonly brave. His tattoos speak of confrontations with such powerful natural creatures as the octopus. His flaws are, of course, his pride and his scornful attitude toward forces greater than himself. Still another figure typical of classical legend is Soto Luzon, who, like the seer of Greek myth and the Ancient Mariner of Samuel Coleridge's nineteenth-century poem, warns young Ramon about the cost of "stealing" the great pearl from the Manta Diablo.

The *Black Pearl* also reflects the work of nineteenth-century American writer Herman Melville. The mythic style and themes of O'Dell's work resemble those of Melville's *Moby-Dick*, in which Captain Ahab, like the Sevillano, fails to respect powerful forces and dies while trying to kill a monster of the sea. Twentieth-century American author John Steinbeck based his novel *The Pearl* on the same legend from which O'Dell derived his story, but the two works demonstrate very different interpretations of the same source.

Ramon's first-person narration gives *The Black Pearl* a sense of immediacy.

O'Dell's repeated references to dramatic nature imagery develop the novel's emotional climate. Red skies over the sea signal either peace or violence; the Pearl of Heaven is black, foreshadowing the grave consequences of Ramon's theft.

Ramon's description of the approaching chubasco, the violent windstorm that dooms his father and the fleet, suggests that this will be a storm of death: The candles moved back and forth and then were snuffed out by an unseen hand. I tried to relight the candles but failed, for through the barred window the air was being sucked from the room in a great sigh."These dramatic images, combined with supernatural elements, create a constant air of suspense.



# Themes

## Religion and Superstition

Religion and superstition are deeply entwined in *The Black Pearl*. The Manta Diablo is believed to have originated over a hundred years ago when the legendary Father Lineares banished a malodorous, clawed, fork-tongued demon from the land forever, transforming him into a giant manta. Although Ramun does not initially believe in the legend, the Manta Diablo, or Devil Ray, is a symbol of evil from the start.

Ramun's father, Blas Salazar, is a deeply religious man. He insists that Father Gallardo bless the fleet before they sail, and he donates the Pearl of Heaven to the Madonna. Mr. Salazar's form of faith is highly akin to superstition. He believes that religion is a form of bribery, a quid-pro-quo where the priest's blessing ensures the fleet's safety. Blas Salazar has mixed motives for donating the Pearl of Heaven to the Madonna. He is inexplicably unable to find a buyer to pay what the pearl is worth. Worse yet, the dealers remind him of his ill-fated and humiliating trip to Mexico City. Loss of face is the greatest insult to a Hispanic male, and Mr. Salazar is so angry that he donates the pearl to spite the miserly dealers. In doing so, Blas Salazar believes he is purchasing the guaranteed safety and success of the Salazar fleet. Father Gallardo seems to share this view of religion as a business transaction, since he assures the Salazars that the missing fleet will return safely because the pearl has been donated to the Madonna.

The view of religion as a comfort in travail and a refuge against uncertain times, or as a guide in developing a moral code, is entirely absent from the novel. While many have claimed that O'Dell's novel is neutral towards religion, the major theme of *The Black Pearl* seems to be that Ramun truly reaches manhood only when he abandons all religious superstition and embraces a belief in an entirely rational world.

## The Supernatural

Soto Luzon, the Indian expert pearl diver who mentors Ramun, believes that everything is connected in the natural order. Luzon believes that the giant manta has great powers, although they may not necessarily be for evil. To Luzon, the stones and earth whisper secrets about mankind to the sharks, clams and the Manta Diablo. In Luzon's view, the earth is a delicate and precariously balanced ecological system where every being is connected. Thus, harvesting too many pearls or pearls from the forbidden undersea cave will disturb the natural balance. When that balance is disturbed, the Manta Diablo becomes enraged and may even change form to take revenge. The Manta Diablo, Luzon believes, can transform itself into an octopus to fight errant sailors or into a man walking the streets of La Paz. Luzon's family has a long-standing pact with the Manta Diablo. The men occasionally harvest a pearl from the lagoon and carefully avoid the manta's special province, the undersea cave.



Initially, Ramun does not agree with Luzon's beliefs about the Manta Diablo and goes into the undersea cave alone to harvest an oyster. When the Salazar fleet is lost despite the gift of the Pearl of Heaven to the Madonna, Ramun begins to see the Manta Diablo as evil. Ramun believes that only by returning the gem to the undersea cave can he avoid more misfortune. Eventually, Gaspar Ruiz's confession leads Ramun to believe that the loss of the Salazar fleet had entirely human causes and that the Manta Diablo is not an evil, supernatural being.

## Manhood

Ramun has always believed that becoming a partner in the family pearl dealership will make him a man. Yet, even after the huge celebration and the unveiling of the Salazar and Son sign, Ramun feels incomplete. He begs his father to teach him the skill of pearl diving, but Ramun has to endure the humiliating jibes of Gaspar Ruiz.

A master pearl diver, Ruiz is a swaggering braggart from a nearby city, where he is rumored to have killed a man. Ruiz pretends to be from Seville, and he is frequently called the Sevillano. The man admits he never knew the name of his father, and he has been poor all his life. Despite his great prowess as a pearl diver, Ruiz's insecurity in his own manhood causes him to target the boss's son, Ramun. He constantly berates Ramun, calling him a coward and an infidel. Worst of all, Ruiz insists that Ramun is a soft, spoiled child who will never amount to anything.

Ramun's father, Blas Salazar, represents the traditional view of Hispanic manhood. Mr. Salazar is the undisputed head of the family. Ramun is careful to follow his father's directions and preserve the older man's dignity. When Ramun discovers the priceless pearl, he tells no one until his father's return. Ramun readily accepts that as the head of the family, Mr. Salazar owns the pearl and will dispose of it as he sees fit.

Ramun believes that if he can find a great pearl, all his critics will be quieted and finally accept him as a man. Ramun convinces the reluctant Soto Luzon to teach him to dive for pearls in the Indian's remote lagoon. Soon, Ramun finds a gigantic pearl, the legendary Pearl of Heaven. He is sure that finally he will receive the acclaim and respect he desires.

Instead, the Pearl of Heaven brings disaster to the Salazar fleet and La Paz. Ramun realizes that he has caused this misfortune, and he is the only one who can correct it. He steals a small boat and rows back to the lagoon, determined to return the pearl to the sea. Only when Ramun accepts that the disaster to the fleet had human, not supernatural, causes does he embrace a wholly rational view of the world. By discarding the superstitions of his youth and the supernatural view of life, Ramun truly discovers his manhood.



## Themes/Characters

O'Dell's tale of a young boy's abrupt passage into adulthood follows a familiar and elemental pattern: a youth defies his elders and embarks on a dangerous quest that climaxes in an encounter with a supernatural being. The protagonist eventually gains a material prize as well as a vital understanding of life's hardships, and comes to realize that evil wears many faces.

In drawing upon this timeless theme of passage into adulthood, *The Black Pearl* stresses ideas that apply to young people of any era or culture: that gaining maturity is necessarily an ordeal; that growing up involves conflict with parents; and, most important, that human beings are part of a vast world of natural forces, few of which they understand.

O'Dell's protagonist, Ramon Salazar, is a boy whose impatience with childhood leads him into trouble and, at the same time, speeds his maturation.

Certainly, Ramon is childish in his rash campaign to outdo the boastful Sevillano (Gaspar Ruiz) and in his disregard for the warnings given him by the old man Soto Luzon, yet his brashness eventually contributes to his wisdom about people, God, and nature. He dives into a cave that Luzon warns is guarded by the Manta Diablo ("devil manta"), and there he finds the great black pearl, or the Pearl of Heaven.

The spiritual world of *The Black Pearl* is as real as the simple fishing village of La Paz. O'Dell focuses on a conflict rarely touched upon in young adult literature: the difficulty in distinguishing religion from superstition. Christianity, as represented by the Madonna to whom the Pearl of Heaven is given, and the dark forces, as represented by the Manta Diablo play a role in the characters' fates. Yet O'Dell suggests that human nature is ultimately responsible for the course of events; emotions such as greed and pride shape people's attitudes about religion and the supernatural, and these attitudes in turn determine the outcome of the novel.

O'Dell implies that a delicate balance must be struck between paying due respect to supernatural forces and religious beliefs, and taking responsibility for one's own fate. Ramon's father, Blas Salazar, places blind trust in the church to the extent that he is more superstitious than he is religious. He presumes that his donation of the great pearl to the church will assure his fleet of the Madonna's protection, and thus abandons his own responsibility to look after the fleet. As a result, he and thirty of his men are killed in a storm they could easily have escaped. On the other hand, the Sevillano regards the world as an arena for the struggle between humanity and nature, and fails to recognize the power of the supernatural. His bragging and false pride reveal an unrealistic view of his own abilities. He chides Ramon, expressing surprise that an educated boy would believe in the supernatural, but eventually perishes while trying to slay the monster of the deep whose powers he has denied.



Through his own quest, Ramon learns to respect these forces and to take responsibility for his own actions.

O'Dell stresses that there are many kinds of responsibility. Ramon initially believes that becoming a partner in his father's business will automatically make him a "grown up." But O'Dell shows that genuine maturity is earned through confronting responsibility. It is not "achievement" that marks passage into adulthood; it is a change in values.

Ramon finds that responsibility involves commitment; once acted upon, decisions are difficult to reverse. Having stolen the pearl, he cannot simply return it to the sea, because greedy humans such as the Sevillano will attempt to intervene.

The old pearler, Soto Luzon, brings to mind the wise old man of legend who invariably repeats the wisdom of ancient times to unheeding young people fated to learn only through bitter experience.

When Luzon, whose name means "light," tells Ramon that the Manta Diablo assumes different forms, he is suggesting that evil and disaster assume different shapes. By the end of the novel, Ramon has come to understand life's complexities, and he says a prayer not for himself but for the Sevillano, the Manta Diablo, and the human race in general.





# Style

## Point of View

*The Black Pearl* is told in the first person past tense, from the point of view of the protagonist, Ramun Salazar. The only events related in the story are those that Ramun directly experiences. Little background information is included, and the reader knows nothing of Ramun's earlier life, his schooling or even the exact number of siblings that he has.

This point of view allows the reader to understand Ramun's changing opinions of the Manta Diablo, from a childhood bogeyman, to an Indian superstition, to the devil incarnate and back to merely a large sea creature in a rational universe.

Much of the information that Ramun possesses comes from his grandfather, a well-educated man. From his grandfather, Ramun has learned that giant mantas eat shrimp and crabs and may weigh two or three tons. That information was considered correct in 1961, when *The Black Pearl* was published. Today, we realize that giant mantas are vegetarians who eat microscopic plankton. The largest manta on record measured twenty-two feet from wing to wing and weighed 3,000 pounds, or about 1.5 tons. (Larger mantas have been reported but not substantiated.) Much is still unknown about giant mantas, since they don't survive in captivity and their wide range makes the animals difficult to study in the wild.

## Setting

The novel is set in La Paz, Mexico sometime in the early 20th century. No automobiles or electricity is mentioned in the novel, which supports the early-1900s timeline. When the valuable pearl is found, Mrs. Salazar hopes to purchase a red carriage and white horses with the proceeds, which further supports this timeline. Events in *The Black Pearl* probably occur between 1895, when Indian divers first began to use knives to harvest oysters (instead of their bare hands) and about 1933-1940, when the oyster inexplicably became extinct in the Bay of Cortez. Some people suggest that the oysters died due to over-harvesting, while others blame nutrient depletion caused by the building of the Hoover Dam. Today, attempts are being made to reintroduce oysters to the Sea of Cortez at farms near Guaymas.

La Paz, named after the town's peaceful atmosphere, has been the capital of the Mexican state of Baja California Sur since the mid-1800s. It is the economic heart of the state and the seat of state government, although neither is apparent in *The Black Pearl*. The La Paz of the novel seems to be a large village or small town, devoted entirely to the pearl trade. As such, the Salazars, the premier pearl traders, are prominent citizens.



## Language and Meaning

The author, Scott O'Dell, deliberately avoids stereotyping and increases the reader's rapport with the main characters by using translations for common Spanish words. The word "mate" is substituted for "amigo," giving Gaspar Ruiz a piratical air. In most instances, "celebration" is used for a fiesta, and "corn cakes" is always substituted for tortillas. The body of water commonly called the Sea of Cortez, after the Spanish explorer, is given its local name, the Vermillion Sea. By using English words closer to the actual meaning for the speakers, O'Dell allows the reader to understand the characters more fully. This is especially true of the protagonist, Ramun Salazar.

O'Dell shows great sensitivity in conveying most aspects of Hispanic culture. The collective nature of Mexican village life is clearly indicated when the entire village celebrates the discovery of the pearl, knowing they will all benefit from it. The Hispanic culture of *machismo*, or manhood, is a primary theme in the novel. Ramun is intensely aware of the honor and respect he owes his father. When he finds the Pearl of Heaven, he tells no one until Mr. Salazar returns. Then, he hands over the priceless gem without a thought, accepting that it belongs to his father, as head of the family.

O'Dell shows less sensitivity in portraying the culture of the Indian characters in *The Black Pearl*. Several characters, including the Indian sailor and the Salazar family servants, are referred to only by their ethnic status. The portrayal of the Indian sailor sniveling in the bottom of the boat for little reason is especially unflattering. It seems unlikely that Ramun would think of servants he had known all his life as nameless "Indians," but that is how O'Dell chooses to portray them. Perhaps more understandably, O'Dell has chosen to omit the fact that many pearl divers were Yaqui Indian slaves, who were kept in shackles at night to prevent their escape and received only a bare minimum of food for the fabulously valuable pearls they found.

The author often uses the number four in *The Black Pearl*. Four symbolizes balance and stability, or security. It is four days after his initial voyage with his father that Ramun convinces Soto Luzon to teach him to dive. On the fourth day of diving with Luzon, Ramun finds the Pearl of Heaven. Mrs. Salazar dreams of buying a red carriage with four white horses with the money from the pearl. The four pearl dealers of La Paz are unable to reach an agreement to buy the Pearl of Heaven. Four days after the big storm, the funerals are held. The repetition of the number four adds to the aura of a fable being retold in the novel.

## Structure

*The Black Pearl* has the quality of a fable, told and retold many times until it is familiar. The immediacy of the first person narrative is somewhat muted by the slightly remote, formal language and the formal structure. Employing a structure common to fables and legends, the end of the story is revealed in the first chapter. Often, a sentence at the end of the chapter reveals the major events of the following chapter. Thus, the entire narrative lacks suspense but depends on the gradual unfolding and elaboration of

numerous complications. What happens is less important than the meaning of the events in the novel.

*The Black Pearl* begins with the revelation that only two men have actually seen the Manta Diablo, and only one of them lived to tell about it. Since the speaker is Ramun Salazar, the reader is assured from the first chapter that Ramun will survive. Once the novel progresses to the point that Ruiz is revealed as the second man, the reader knows that he must die.

After the initial chapter revealing the conclusion of the novel, the entire story is told in a single flashback. There are a total of eighteen numbered chapters, each focusing on a single scene. The chapters flow in chronological order, although there are often time gaps of several days between chapters. The first and last chapters function as prologue and epilogue, with the climactic events occurring in Chapter 17.



## Quotes

"Your father is a rich man. My father was a poor man whose name I do not know. From the time I could walk I have done something and in my life I have done many things and what I have done I talk about truthfully. So guard your tongue, mate." - Gaspar Ruiz the Sevillano, Chapter 3, pg. 20

"Yes, the shark you saw this morning and many small fish. They are all friends and they listen and when he comes back they tell him everything, everything." - Soto Luzan, Chapter 5, pg. 33

"Some say that he takes the shape of an octopus and seeks out those pearlers who have done him a wrong or spoken ill of him. It is also said that he takes the shape of a human and goes into La Paz and seeks his enemies there in the streets and sometimes even in the church." - Soto Luzan, Chapter 5, pg. 33

"The shells were the largest I had ever seen. They were half the length of my arm and thick through as my body and covered with weed that looked like a woman's hair. I choose the nearest one, which seemed to be easier to get at than the others." Chapter 6, pg. 38

"My father stared at me. 'It is a joke,' he said. 'There is nothing in all the seas of the world like this.' He looked at the pearl. 'You have made it. You have taken blister pearls and glued them together and polished them carefully on a wheel. You are a very clever young man, Ramun.'" Chapter 7, pg. 46

"If the flaw does go deep,' my father said, 'then it is not a great pearl. Which would you rather have, the Paragon of Pearls or just one that is good?'" Chapter 8, pg. 48

"And there were also a band of Indians from the wild barrancas of the Sierra Morena dressed in rabbit skins. Their presence pleased Father Gallardo. 'The pearl has worked a miracle,' he said. 'For many years I have tried to coax these savages into my church but failed.'" Chapter 10, pg. 57

"...the fleet had warning,' I said. 'It has put in at Pichilique or one of the safe coves. There are many between here and Cerralvo.'" Chapter 11, pg. 63

"The Madonna has watched over the fleet' he said. 'and it is safe. There are no coves here at hand, so it will be afternoon before the boats can reach the harbor. Go now to your homes with hope, and with faith in our Madonna, and wait.'" - Father Gallardo, Chapter 11, pg. 65

"I first saw the outstretched wings and then he passed the boat and I saw the amber eyes turn and look at me as they had once before. They said as clearly as if the words were spoken, 'The pearl is mine. Throw it into the sea. It has brought you ill fortune and ill fortune will be yours until you give it back.'" Chapter 16, pg. 85



"Outside, the sun now lay golden on the roof tops and the big bells were still ringing over the town. They rang in my heart, also, for this new day was the beginning day of manhood. It was not the day I became a partner in the House of Salazar nor the day I found the Pearl of Heaven. It was this day." Chapter 18, pg. 95

# Adaptations

Most of O'Dell's fiction for young adults takes place along the North American Pacific Coast or among the islands nearby. Several of his books focus on young people in these areas, and although they do not form a series, they all examine the processes of maturation and cultural adaptation.

United International's 1976 film version of *The Black Pearl* deviates substantially from O'Dell's work. In the movie, the pearl is sold to buy food and clothing for the villagers. O'Dell was unhappy with this change because he felt it weakened the spiritual theme of his story.



## Topics for Discussion

1. Ramon states that the day the pearl was returned to the Madonna, not the day he found the treasure, marked the "beginning of his manhood." What has he learned that makes him feel this way?
2. Considering that an entire fleet of pearlers has been destroyed by the storm at Punta Maldonado, how do you explain the attitude of resignation the villagers of La Paz show toward the disaster?
3. Why does Ramon suddenly decide to join the Sevillano in killing the Manta Diablo? In what way does the Sevillano influence Ramon's decisions and actions throughout the novel?
4. At first, Ramon believes that the Manta Diablo is simply a fictitious creature invented by parents to frighten children. Later he becomes a believer.  
What does the change reveal about him?
5. Why does Ramon's father refuse to bargain over the Pearl of Heaven? Why does he reject a great sum of money and donate the pearl to the church? How does his gift to the church bring about positive change in La Paz?
6. Why is Ramon impatient with his father when he gets his first chance to go out with the fleet?
7. The statue of the Madonna is described as being neither old nor young, Indian nor Spanish. What does O'Dell suggest with this description?
8. Both Ramon and the Sevillano plan to steal the Pearl of Heaven from the Madonna. Are their motives similar?
9. How does the Sevillano explain the destruction of the fleet? Do you think he is correct? Why or why not?



## Essay Topics

Does Ramun feel he has attained full adulthood by assuming a partnership in his father's pearl business? Why or why not?

The first chapter states that only two people have actually seen the Manta Diablo. They are Ramun Salazar and Gaspar Ruiz. Which one is still alive at the end of the story?

Why does Ramun long to dive for pearls? Why is his father hesitant to teach him?

Research La Paz, Mexico in the library or on the Internet. What is the name of the sea that separates Baja California from Mexico? What does La Paz mean? Do pearl divers still work the waters near La Paz?

What did Ramun's mother tell him about the Manta Diablo when he was a child?

What does the old Indian pearl diver, Soto Luzon, believe about the Manta Diablo?

Research the Manta Ray or Giant Manta in the library or on the Internet. Are mantas carnivores or vegetarians? How many eyes do they have? How many teeth do they have? Are the teeth large or small? Are there any documented records of Giant Mantas attacking humans?

Why does Ramun's father give the pearl to the Catholic Church?

After the loss of the pearl fleet and his father's death, what does Ramun believe about the relationship between the Pearl of Heaven and the Manta Diablo?

Why does Ramun try to return the Pearl of Heaven to the Manta Diablo?

In your opinion, is Gaspar Ruiz a good man or a bad man? Why?

How does Ramun learn the true reason for his father's death?

How does Ramun's understanding of the Manta Diablo change after Gaspar Ruiz's death?

At the end of the novel, does Ramun return the Pearl of Heaven to the Manta Diablo? Why or why not?





## Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Many comparisons and contrasts may be drawn between *The Black Pearl* and Herman Melville's classic sea novel, *Moby-Dick*. Examine the plots, characters, and themes of each and explain the similarities and differences you see.
2. Compare *The Black Pearl* to a familiar legend or myth. Show how the novel follows the traditional pattern and how it departs from it.
3. Compare *The Black Pearl* with John Steinbeck's novel *The Pearl* which is based on the same story. Explain the differences in theme between the two books.
4. O'Dell's Mexican pearlers reflect a culture very different from that of the contemporary U.S. Explain the differences in values and beliefs that are visible in the novel.
5. Research the area of Baja (pronounced "Ba-ha") California and report on its culture and people. Does O'Dell give us an accurate portrait or not?

## Further Study

"Interview with Scott O'Dell." *Psychology Today* (January 1968). Focuses upon O'Dell's views on the nature of the juvenile reader.

Townsend, John Rowe. *A Sense of Story: Essays on Contemporary Writers for Children*. New York: Lippincott, 1971.

Contains a book-by-book discussion of O'Dell and his sources for fiction.

The essay considers *The Black Pearl* as a minor work.

Wittle, Justin, and Emma Fisher. *The Pied Pipers*. New York: Paddington, 1974. Includes an extended interview with O'Dell, dealing primarily with his opinions on bringing up children today.



# Copyright Information

## Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Editor

Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Cover Design

Amanda Mott

Cover Art is "Pierrot," 1947, by William Baziotès Oil on Canvas, 42 1/8 x 36 Donated by the Alisa Mellon Bruce Fund, ©, 1996 Reproduced with Permission from the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Includes bibliographical references and index

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for the works of authors of popular fiction. Includes biography data, publishing history, and resources for the author of each analyzed work.

ISBN 0-933833-41-5 (Volumes 1-3, Biography Series)

ISBN 0-933833-42-3 (Volumes 1-8, Analyses Series)

ISBN 0-933833-38-5 (Entire set, 11 volumes)

1. Popular literature—Bio-bibliography. 2. Fiction—19th century—Bio-bibliography. 3. Fiction—20th century—Bio-bibliography. I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952-

Z6514.P7B43 1996[PN56.P55]809.3—dc20 96-20771 CIP

Copyright ©, 1996, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing Corp., P.O. Box 830, Osprey, FL 34229-0830

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1996