The Pearl Study Guide

The Pearl by John Steinbeck

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Contents

Introduction

Whether by prayer, quest, or lottery ticket, humans have long expressed their dreams of a better life. Many are the tales about this phenomenon and, more often than not, the tales end in tragedy for the pleasure seeker. This longing for something better is the theme of John Steinbeck's 1947 *The Pearl*.

Steinbeck was disillusioned in the aftermath of World War II. He realized that none of his heroes— the GI, the vagrant, or the scientific visionary— could negotiate survival in a civilization that created the atomic bomb. Repentance, as attempted by his characters in his novel *The Wayward Bus* (1947), was not enough. Fittingly, he reflected his disillusionment through a legend about a man who finds the Pearl of the World and is eventually destroyed by greed.

The legend tells of an Indian pearl diver who cannot afford a doctor for his son's scorpion sting. In this anxious state, he finds the Pearl of the World and is able to get medical help for his boy Calculating the profit from the gem, the diver dreams of a better life—a grand wedding, clothes, guns, and an education for the boy. But his dream of leaving his socio-economic station leads to ruin. As he attempts to escape those that want to take the pearl from him, he is tracked by professional hitmen and tragedy ensues. No pearl is worth the price Kino and his wife pay, so they throw the pearl back. Their story is a warning to restless dreamers yearning for an easy or magical solution to their problems.

Overview

Whether by prayer, quest, or contest, humans have long expressed their desire for wealth and dreams of a better life. Many are the tales about this phenomenon and, more often than not, the tales end in tragedy. This longing for something better is the theme of The Pearl.

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The Pearl opens in Kino's home in La Paz, Mexico. The sun is beginning to lighten the day, as the "tiny movement" of a scorpion catches Kino's and his wife Juana's eyes.

The scorpion is heading towards their son, Coyotito.

Kino slowly reaches out to grab the scorpion, while Juana whispers magic to protect Coyotito, but the scorpion strikes anyway. The swelling of Coyotito's flesh marks the beginning of a series of events that will not only destroy the family's home, but will take them away from their family and community.

Kino and Juana take their wounded baby to see a doctor in a "city of stone and plaster." Since Kino and Juana are desperate to find help for their baby, they swallow their pride and appeal to the town doctor, who is a member of a race that has "beaten and starved and robbed and despised Kino's race."

The doctor, a fat man whose eyes rest in "puffy little hammocks of flesh," refuses to help Coyotito, saying that he is a doctor, "not a veterinary." Kino shows the doctor's servant his money, but it is not enough to interest the doctor. In frustration, Kino strikes the doctor's gate with his bare fist and splits open his knuckles.

Although Coyotito is beginning to heal, Juana and Kino are determined to find a way to secure the doctor's help. Juana prays to find a pearl with which to hire the doctor to cure

the baby. Kino is singing the "Song of the Pearl that Might Be" as he dives into the ocean in search of oysters and pearls.

He finds an isolated oyster, cracks it open, and discovers what soon becomes known as the "Pearl of the World." The family's bad luck seems to be changing, for the swelling is also going out of Coyotito's shoulder.

News that Kino had found the Pearl of the World travels so quickly through the city that many people are becoming jealous of Kino before he and his family have even had time to celebrate. Kino tells his brother, Juan Tomas, that now he and Juana will be married in a church, the family will have new clothes and a rifle, and that Coyotito will learn to read.

The local priest pays Kino a visit and reminds him to give thanks to Him who "has given thee this treasure." Kino feels alone and unprotected in the world. Then the doctor arrives to "help" cure Coyotito.

Both Kino and Juana are reluctant to let the doctor near their child, but the doctor claims that the poison of the scorpion goes inward and can wither a leg or blind an eye. Kino does not want to risk harm to Coyotito, so he allows the doctor to give Coyotito a white powder in a capsule of gelatin. The baby grows sicker; in a few hours the doctor returns to give Coyotito ammonia, which helps the baby's stomach.

Kino tells the doctor he will pay him after he sells his pearl. The doctor sees Kino's eyes look toward the pearl's hiding place in the floor. After the doctor leaves, Kino finds a new hiding place for the pearl.

He tells Juana he is afraid of "everyone" now.

After Kino stabs a night prowler, Juana begs him to return the pearl to the ocean, calling the pearl evil. Kino replies that Coyotito "must go to school. He must break out of the pot that holds us in."

It is not easy to sell the pearl, however, as the pearl buyers all work for the same employer and have conspired to offer Kino 1,000 to 1,500 pesos for the pearl that is probably worth at least 50,000 pesos. Kino, angered, says he will go to the capital to sell the pearl.

Kino is attacked again that night, and Juana tries again to persuade Kino to get rid of the pearl. Kino tells her that he is a man and that no one will take their good fortune from them.

Early on the morning they are to leave for the capital, Juana tries to throw the pearl back into the ocean. Kino strikes her face, kicks her, and rescues the pearl. Then Kino is attacked again, and ends up killing his attacker. Kino and his family flee for their lives.

Their canoe has been splintered and their home set on fire, so the family seeks temporary refuge in Juan Tomas's home. Juan tells Kino he should sell the pearl and

"buy peace for yourself." Kino refuses. "The pearl has become my soul," he says. "If I give it up I shall lose my soul."

Kino's family leaves during the night, carefully covering their tracks behind them.

Despite their care, they know that inland trackers are pursuing them. They travel as rapidly and stealthily as they can until nightfall, when Kino tells Juana and Coyotito to hide in a cave. Kino hopes to steal a rifle from one of the trackers before the moon rises.

Coyotito cries out, waking two of the trackers and causing the watchman with the rifle to shoot. Kino leaps on the man and kills him, but something is wrong.

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Kino and Juana return to La Paz, Kino with a rifle, and Juana with their dead baby wrapped in a blood-crusted shawl. They pass Juan Tomas. They pass their ruined canoe and make their way to the water.

Then Kino returns the pearl, which is now "gray and ulcerous," to the ocean.

Author Biography

Steinbeck was the son of flour mill manager and Monterey County Treasurer, John Ernst, and a school teacher, Olive Hamilton, who lived in the Salinas Valley of California. Like other families in the valley, the Steinbecks thought themselves rich because they had land; unfortunately, they could hardly afford to buy food. There were four children but John Emst Steinbeck, bom in 1902, was the only boy. As a youth he spent much of his time exploring the valley which would become the backdrop to his fiction.

After graduating from Salinas High School in 1919, Steinbeck enrolled at Stanford University and attended intermittently until 1925. He worked to pay his tuition and was forced to take time off to earn money for the next term. This proved invaluable; he worked for surveyors in the Big Sur area and on a ranch in King City. This latter location became the setting for *Of Mice and Men*. Often times he worked for the Spreckels Sugar Company, thereby, receiving firsthand experience of contemporary labor issues.

The most important learning experience, however, was a summer class in biology in 1923 at Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove. Steinbeck's exposure to biology led him to develop general theories about the interrelationship of all life. Edward F. Ricketts, a marine biologist, whom he met in 1930, would help him with this. Steinbeck adopted his idea that people could only be fully human once conscious of "man's" place within the entirety of creation. Humans were but one animal in life's web. From there, Ricketts and Steinbeck diverged as the latter mixed socialism with biological theory to grow his literary vision: man should act in concert with others to live happily and for the good of all creation. Essentially, Steinbeck's theory was a biological twist to the growing movement of 1930s

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Keeping with his theory, Steinbeck fictionalized human society by observing its groupings rather than by selecting an individual. Observations of group behavior showed how humans could intelligently guide their own adaptation and natural selection. Typically, his characters begin in harmony with nature but then evil, in the form of corrupt politics or greed, upsets their order. Salvation is possible when the individual sees the rationality of cooperation and agrees to act, or adapt, to being part of a group, or phalanx. Failing to work together leads to tragedy. This theory would see Steinbeck through his greatest writing. Shortly thereafter, his inspirational friend, Ricketts, died in a train accident. In 1947, his parable. *The Pearl*, was published.

Steinbeck secured fame and fortune with the immensely popular novel. *Of Mice and Men* (1937). He followed this with his best known novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1940. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. He died of heart failure in 1968. He had three wives (Carol Henning, Gwyn Conger, and Elaine Scott) and two children (Tom and John).

About the Author

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Plot Summary

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Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The introduction speaks of the story of a pearl, how it was found and lost again. It speaks of Kino the fisherman, his wife Juana and their baby Coyotito. In addition, like all stories told many times, it only has good and bad, black and white and good and evil, nothing in between.

Kino -a young pearl fisherman- wakes to a new day before the sun rises. First, he hears the roosters singing, the pigs looking for food and the birds among the cactus. Then he opens his eyes and sees the light at the door, the box suspended from the ceiling holding his infant child Coyotito and his wife Juana lying beside him, eyes open. Then he listens to the music inside his head. His people were once great song creators, and this one, sweet and clear he calls the Song of the Family. He watches his wife get up in silence, check on Coyotito and rekindle the fire, gets up and goes outside to watch the sunrise in the Gulf. He hears the sound of the batter and cooking of the tortillas, the Song of the Family now behind him, watches an ant, plays with a dog, looks at the neighboring huts, similar but different. He feels the morning is perfect, and that what he sees and hears is all there is.

Kino goes back into the hut and Juana gets up from beside the fire, puts the baby back in the box and braids her hair with two green ribbons. Then Kino eats his tortillas and drinks some pulque, content with the pleasant routine, always without words.

As a line of light goes through a crack in the wall and hits the hanging box, Kino and Juana freeze. They notice that a scorpion descends from the roof to the baby's box, tail pointing up. After a tense moment, Kino senses a new sound in his head: the Song of Evil, wild, secret and dangerous. He starts to move very slowly, eyes fixed in the animal and then stands still waiting for it to move. At that moment, the baby rattles the rope and the scorpion falls. Kino catches the scorpion and crushes it, but not before it stings the baby in the shoulder. Juana reacts immediately. She gets the screaming baby, bares the wound, suctions the poison and spits it.

Coyotito's cries attract the neighbors, led by Kino's brother Juan Tomás, his fat wife Apolonia and their four children. They pile on the entrance, the ones up front informing the rest. When Juana stops suctioning, the red swollen zone is bigger, a hard bump. Everybody knows the effects of a scorpion sting: the swollen wound, the fever, the dryness of the throat, the stomach cramps and then possibly death.

Many times before Kino has wondered at Juana´s iron temper, that makes her bear fatigue and hunger even better than him, but now she does something even more surprising; an old determination in her voice, she asks for the village physician. The neighbors, surprised, point out that the doctor wouldn't come to a brush house in the outskirts when he has more work than he can do with the rich people in the stone and

plaster village. Then Juana arranges her shawl to carry the baby and sets out to go to the doctor. Kino follows her, followed in turn by his brother and sister in law and the rest of the fishermen village's inhabitants. The small procession gets to the end of the brush houses and enters the stone and plaster village, of bright outer walls and fresh inner gardens. It goes through the square and in front of the church, growing all the time, the newcomers informed matter-of-factly that the baby was stung by an scorpion and his mother and father are taking him to the doctor. The four church portal beggars join after a swift analysis of Kino and Juana´s clothes, eager to see the drama. They know everything about the village and know the physician, his ignorance, cruelty, hungers and sins. They want to see how would the fat, lazy physician react to an indigent baby stuck by a scorpion.

The procession reaches the big door, and Kino hesitates for a moment. The physician is of a different race, one that during four hundred years beat, stole and terrorized his own, and he knocks on the door with a mixture of rage and fear, the Song of the Enemy ringing in his head. The door is opened by an Indian servant who refuses to speak the tongue of the ancients and bolts it again to go find his master. He finds him in his high bed, drinking chocolate surrounded by big dark furniture and religious pictures and in bad humor. The physician protests at having to cure an insect bite on an Indian baby and sends the servant back to the door, to find out if Kino has enough money to pay for the treatment.

The servant opens again the door and in the ancient tongue asks for the money. Kino gives him a small piece of folded paper holding eight miserable deformed pearls. Once again the door is closed but not for long. Finally, it closes on Kino, as the servant, full of shame, tells him the doctor is out of the house. The also ashamed multitude disperses, the beggars back to the church portal and the neighbors not to see Kino's public humiliation. Kino, his silent wife and baby by him, strikes the door once, with such force as to make his hand bleed.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The preface speaks of the origins of the story as a folk tale, a tale of extremes with the value of a parable. The first chapter introduces us to all of the characters and describes the situation that unchained all subsequent events. Kino, a young pearl fisherman, lives with his wife Juana and their baby Coyotito in a brush house on the outskirts of a stone and plaster village. This particular morning, the usual family routine is disrupted when a scorpion descends from the roof and stings Coyotito. Juana reacts promptly and applies the traditional remedy: sucking the poison and spitting it, but unsure of its effects, she demands that the village physician see the child. It is unthinkable that he will come to a poor hut, so Juana, followed by her husband, his brother, the rest of the neighbors and various people from the stone part of the village, takes the baby to his house. Kino is warned by his inner Song of the Enemy but he cannot contradict his determined wife and suffers a public humiliation as the doctor -through his Indian servant - refuses to see him with a lame excuse, knowing he can't pay. In fury and frustration, he beats the closed door so his hand bleeds.

Kino is first depicted as a silent man, observant of the age-old ways and a keen observer of the world around him. He speaks little but all the time has music in his head, the ancient voice of his people, pearl diving Indians in Baja California, Mexico. The ancient music sounds through the book, in the form of the Song of the Family, the Song of the Enemy, the Song of the Pearl and many variations according to the outside action. Kino is perfectly contented with the familiar routine, but can react very swiftly when he sees his child in peril, overcoming his fear to crush the obstacle.

Juana is also perfectly adapted to the routine. She is in charge of domestic matters like kindling the fire, cooking and tending to the baby and does so softly singing and with a smile, obediently and patiently. She too can react swiftly but does so in a more practical way, taking the poison out of the baby. Juana has an iron temper that Kino recognizes and admires, and even though Kino goes in front, she leads the procession to the doctor's house. That is the best treatment she can think of for her ailing firstborn, better than the proven traditional remedy. Coherent with this duality, many times in the book she mixes religious invocations with traditional magic exorcisms.

Kino and Juana perform a seamless dance of domestic life and protection of their offspring, acting and reacting in complementary ways, together and in silence. For her, Kino overcomes his disgust at having to ask anything of the physician, and is ready to surrender all his meager fortune of dirty malformed pearls.

Kino and Juana belong to a community that's a character in itself, described as the neighbors, the pearl fishermen of the other huts. In the way of a Greek chorus, the neighbors move and talk collectively. In the first chapter they appear at the first sign of trouble and counteract Juana´s impossible wish of summoning the physician. Then they go behind the family, a source of strength that gives a personal quest a collective character. They never heard of the doctor curing one of them, but they need to see if this happens. When it doesn't, they retire so as not to shame one of them. Distinctive in the neighbor's crowd are Kino's elder brother Juan Tomás and his wife Apolonia. Juan Tomás is the voice of reason, he who Kino will consult, and also the depository of the people's memory, the one who remembers what happened before.

As the procession leaves the huts and goes into the village the scenario changes and new characters appear. The four beggars at the church portal reunite all the crooked ways of town folks, in opposition of the rustic simplicity of the fishermen. They know human nature and its little miseries. It is they who describe the true character of the doctor; unknown to Juana, who is searching for an ideal, and to Kino, who rejects him out of pure instinct. The church beggars predict the outcome of the procession but cannot resist seeing it with their own eyes.

In his first appearance, the physician is presented as uncharitable and despotic, not interested in anything that does not directly benefit him. He speaks through his native servant, who is torn between the need to obey his orders and sympathy for Kino and his family. His house also speaks for him, as distant from Kino's reality as could possibly be. While Kino's hut has no door, the doctor's house has a big wooden gate, and it is this symbol of their differences Kino strikes with his fist in the final scene.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Kino, Juana and Coyotito leave the yellow village and go to the yellow sand beach, where the fishermen's blue and white canoes lie. They are ancient canoes, handed down from generation to generation of Kino's people, together with the secrets of their construction and maintenance.

The morning is sunny, but a copper mist over the Gulf blurs all contours, so no outline is clear. Gulf people might trust things of the spirit and the imagination, but they hardly ever trust their eyes to show clear profiles and distances.

The family gets to Kino's canoe, the only valuable thing he owns in the world. It was brought from Nayarit by his grandfather, who gave it to his father who gave it to Kino. It is at the same time his property and the source of nourishment and he touches it tenderly. He prepares the tools of his trade, the basket, immersion stone and two ropes, while Juana settles the baby on a blanket and covers his shoulder with a brown seaweed poultice. The stomach cramps have not begun yet, and that remedy is probably better than any the doctor might have prescribed, but Juana is still worried. Together, they launch the canoe into the water and paddle to the oyster bank, to join the other fishermen who went out some time before.

The oysters have been there for centuries, the bottom that made the King of Spain rich. Some of them hold the accidental treasure of a pearl, a grain of sand covered in cement to protect the flesh of the oyster. Kino stripes and descends to the bottom aided by the stone, the basket in the other hand. When the water clears, he slowly begins to tear oysters from the bottom and putting them in the basket. In his head, he listens to the Song of the Sea Bottom, the rhythm that of his heartbeats, the melody of the water, the animals and fish. He knows that on the canoe, Juana works the magic of prayer to get the luck necessary to heal his child, and the first song is mixed with the Song of the Pearl That Might Be. He sees an enormous oyster lying alone under a stone, and through its open lips, he glimpses a phantom brightness. Without hurry, he gets the oyster and holds it against his chest. He violently kicks the immersion stone and goes back to the surface.

On the canoe, Juana perceives his emotion as he gets the basket onboard. Kino looks at the big oyster and he hesitates to open it, but Juana, her hand over Coyotito's head, encourages him. He forces the lips open with his knife and there it is, a pearl "perfect as the moon", big as a gull's egg. The music of the Possible Pearl sounds clear and strong in Kino's head and he sees dream forms in the iridescent surface, the perfect curve lying on the torn flesh of the hand he beat on the doctor's door. At that moment, Juana observes that the swell in the baby's shoulder has receded and calls her husband.

His wounded hand tight around the pearl, filled with emotion, Kino gets rigid and screams. Alarmed, the other fishermen paddle swiftly over in their canoes.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Kino and Juana go back to the poor part of the village, the beach in front of the fishermen huts where lie the traditional canoes, both pride of ownership and means of subsistence. Juana applies another traditional remedy to the baby's swollen shoulder -a seaweed poultice- and they set to the oyster bank as any other day. Kino dives and he catches a very big one, hesitates to open it but finally does to find the Pearl of the World. At the same time, Coyotito appears cured. Kino expresses his triumph over fate in a scream, to the surprise and alarm of his fellow fishermen.

After being shown that they can't aspire to other fate, Kino and Juana go back to the usual fishing routine. Juana applies the seaweed more out of instinct than really believing on the benefits of a remedy that costs nothing. They cannot directly wish for Coyotito to get better but they secretly hope to find a pearl good enough to pay the physician.

Like the Gulf itself with its copper illusory light, they can't see clear outlines to the situation, but that's what they've known all their lives and they accept it. As he dives, Kino is full of hope of finding the perfect pearl and full of fear for wishing so intensely. Juana in turn prays and wishes for some luck. When Kino discovers the pearl she at once looks at the baby to see the effects of such luck and is amazed to discover he is almost cured, forgetting her own very practical previous efforts.

They don't comment the discovery among themselves, only through Coyotito's recovery, but Kino's first cry attracts his fellow fishermen. It is only fair that they be the first to know of the realization of a collective dream.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The news that Kino found the "Pearl of the World" spreads over the brush houses even before he gets home, and then goes on to the stone and plaster village. The priest in his garden remembers some reparations to be done on the church, wondering if he has married Kino or christened his child. The clothes sellers look at their unsold clothes. The physician tending to an old lady claims Kino as a client. He remembers the place and the person he lived in Paris with and sees himself there again, a bottle of wine on the table. The church beggars laugh a little, knowing nobody is more generous in charity than a poor man suddenly rich. The pearl buyers in their little offices shout and fight until they get the lowest price a fisherman can stand, even risking that he gives his pearls to the church, then sit alone playing with the pearls and wishing they were theirs. Now they dream of touching such a pearl and with some capital, start again, free to the single big buyer who keeps them separate to feign concurrence. All sort of people, with things to sell and favors to ask feel related to the pearl, and Kino is suddenly an obstacle, the public enemy, and a dark malign cloud falls over the village.

Kino and Juana, however, are happy and touched and believe everybody shares their happiness. At sunset, they sit on the outside of the hut, surrounded by their friends and neighbors, the pearl in Kino's hand. His brother Juan Tomás asks what will he do now that he is a rich man, and Juana hides her emotion in her shawl. Kino looks in the surface of the pearl and sees the images of everything he ever considered and dropped as impossible. He will marry Juana in church, she with a new shawl and skirt and shoes, he with new white clothes, a black felt hat and lace shoes and Coyotito in a blue USA sailor suit and a pilot cap. They shall all have new clothes, he a new harpoon and a rifle. At the thought of the rifle, his imagination lets loose and to Juana's admiration he goes on to say that Coyotito will go to school, to learn to read and make numbers, to free them all. Then Kino closes his hand on the pearl, afraid of what he has said without knowing what will happen. The neighbors fall silent, knowing that time is now divided into before and after the pearl. If all that happens, they will remember the moment he became a big man, and if it fails, they will remember the moment reason left him.

It is almost completely dark when the priest comes to the hut, to remind Kino of his obligation to thank He who brought such fortune. He remarks on Kino's name, mentioned in books and Kino thinks of the day Coyotito will know what is in books or not. The priest retires happy with the news of the planned marriage, but in Kino's head the Song of Evil sounds in opposition of the Song of the Pearl. The neighbors go home and Juana starts to prepare dinner. Kino looks out of the door without seeing, feeling alone and helpless, but feels behind him the warmth and security of the family sounding around Juana. Kino is now afraid of the wrath of the Gods. He knows that once a plan is made it becomes real but other forces can attack it. He knows also the Gods don't like plans nor success, unless it is obtained by accident. He is determined to protect himself and begins to build a shell before the peril comes.

Two men come behind a lantern, the doctor and the servant who opened the gate in the morning. The physician says he was out then, but now comes to see the child. Kino blocks the door and says the child is almost well, but the doctor talks about apparent curations in the case of scorpion stings and later poisoning. Kino is enraged but also afraid, trapped between his sure ignorance and the possible knowledge of the other and decides he can't take the risk. He lets the men enter the hut and signals Juana to allow them to see the baby. The physician looks at the wound and then shows Kino the blue in Coyotito's eyeballs, muttering that the poison is inside him. Kino doubts but the trap is set. The physician gives the baby a white powder in a capsule, and retires announcing that he will be back in an hour, to see whether his medicine acted against the poison and he can save the baby. Kino buries the pearl in a corner of the hut and joins Juana and the baby by the fire.

In his house, the physician looks at the clock as he is served a light meal. In the huts, the neighbors air the subject for the first time. They imitate the size of the pearl and decide to watch and see if the riches alter Kino and Juana. They all know why the doctor came.

In Kino's hut, he has finished eating his frijoles and tortillas, when Juana calls him: Coyotito is having stomach cramps, very ill. Uncertainty fills him as he remembers the doctor's white powder, and the Song of Evil resounds in his head. The news of the baby's illness get to the neighbors and they go back to the hut, to help if possible and to console if not. The physician comes back running and gives Coyotito water with ammonia to make him vomit. Kino suspiciously eyes the open bag, but the cramps abate and the baby falls to sleep. The doctor says he has won over the poison and asks Kino when can he pay for the consultation. Kino says he will after he has sold his pearl. The physician feigns surprise to know Kino has a pearl, and offers to keep it in his safe box. He watches Kino closely, because he knows the pearl must be buried somewhere there. Kino refuses, but can't help looking to the spot where the pearl is hidden under the floor.

Everybody retires and Kino is uneasy and afraid. He buries the pearl in a new hole under his mattress and the family goes to sleep. He wakes up from a dream of Coyotito reading, the Song of Evil in him, and stays quiet, ears alert. From the corner of the hut comes a muffled sound and then silence. Beside him, Juana signals a warning and the sound comes again: the murmur of a foot on the earth and fingers digging. For a moment, Kino is afraid, then angered. He springs, knife in hand, to furiously attack the presence in the corner, fails, strikes some cloth and is hurt as somebody flees. Juana rekindles the fire and lights a small prayer candle. She cleans his forehead and the tension gets her. Shouting, she proposes to destroy the pearl, the incarnation of evil. However, Kino is decided. The pearl is their opportunity to send their son to school, and in the morning, he will sell it and everything bad will vanish. He looks at the fire and notices he is still holding the knife. He cleans the bloody blade on the ground.

Dawn arrives and Kino gets the pearl out. He looks at it to the light of the candle, and its music is that of hope, of the bottom of the sea. It closes the door to hunger, remedies

illness and protects against insults. He smiles and Juana with him, and they start the day with hope.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Back on shore, the village takes on a different, dark voice as the news spread. Evil forces rooted in the bottom of each person who wants something surface as they imagine such a change in luck, and begin to see Kino as an obstacle.

Kino, forced by his brother to declare his intentions, begins to enunciate his small everyday dreams (new clothes, an harpoon, a sailor suit for the baby), goes on to the things he has conscientiously renounced to because of lack of money (to marry Juana in church) and, after declaring he will have a rifle, unlashes his imagination. He goes on to declare that his son will go to school, learn to read and get enough knowledge to free his people, an obvious reaction to the humiliation received in the morning. Juana doesn't ask for anything, and looks at Kino admired of his courage and imagination.

The chorus of neighbors now sees that time will be divided by this moment, and project the way they will tell the tale depending on whether this strike of luck transforms Kino in a wise man or a fool, but always remarking their own role of first row spectators. They don't ask anything either, but then begin to appear those who wouldn't speak to Kino before, symbols of opportunism and ambition.

First, the priest, with references to Kino's name (after philosopher and theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas) and veiled hints to the gratefulness due to higher powers. The reference to books impresses Kino and reassures him on his dream of an education, while Juana is content with his public affirmation of the plan of marrying her.

Second comes the physician, now a greedy and unscrupulous character. He overcomes Kino's resistance and mistrust by stressing on the symbols of his knowledge, the black bag and his servant. He does not hesitate to poison the baby himself to appear as its savior, coming back an hour after with an antidote consisting in making it vomit, to the fury of Kino and the adoration of Juana. His ultimate goal is to seize the pearl and he tricks Kino to hint at its hiding place. Then leaves with the promise of being paid for his consultation when Kino sells the pearl.

Later in the night, the evil comes in its darkest form- that of an unidentified shadow digging inside the hut. With it comes the first hint of Kino's transformation. He no longer is enraged inside and hurts himself, now he draws others blood.

Seeing Kino bleeding, Juana identifies the pearl as the source of all their troubles and she is altered too. Shouting, she proposes to destroy it before it destroys their family, But Kino remembers his dreams of an education for his son and orders her to be still. As the sun rises, the fears of the night disappear and Kino convinces her there is hope for a better future.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

In the morning, the whole La Paz knows this is the day when Kino will sell his pearl.

Not only the neighbors, but the Chinese shop owners, the church boys, the nuns, the children and the church door beggars, ready to be there and get their tenth part. It is also known by most of the pearl buyers, each waiting alone in his office, sitting in front of a tray covered in black velvet, rolling pearls between his fingers. People in the village believe the pearl buyers act on their own, and once upon a time so it was. Now they are all agents of a single buyer, and each knows what price to offer, and how will the others act. Their compensation is a salary independent of the amount paid, but their pride and joy is to buy at the lowest possible price.

The sun is intense and the Gulf mist is suspended hiding the view of the distant mountains north of the village. The canoes are not at sea; the other fishermen do not want to miss what there is to see when Kino sells the pearl. They sit talking about what they themselves would have done if they had found the pearl. One would have donated it to the Holy Father in Rome, another would have paid masses, another distributed the money among the poor in the village and a fourth thinks of all the charities, benefits and salvation that can be obtained with money. They all hope that the sudden fortune and its parallel hate, coldness and greed will not change Kino, a well-regarded man, his wife and the baby. They are all dressed and ready to go with Kino and Juana to sell the pearl.

For Kino and Juana, this is the most important morning; comparable only to the day the baby was born, the day they will use to reference all the others. They dress in their best clothes, Juana in her wedding blouse and skirt, Coyotito in the frock reserved for his christening, Kino in clean white clothes, his hat carefully set on his head, and the pearl in a leather pouch in his shirt pocket.

They set for the village, Kino in front and his brother Juan Tomás at his side, then Juana carrying the baby and last the rest of the neighbors, and as they enter the stone and plaster village, more people joins the solemn procession. Juan Tomás cautions Kino against being deceived because they don't know the prices paid in other places. He remembers the story of the time before Kino was born when the fishermen gave their pearls to an agent to sell in the capital and the agent disappeared, and yet another time until they dropped the idea. Kino remembers the priest remarking in a sermon that each man has his place in the Universe's castle and should keep there. Both brothers have their eyes in a slit in the gesture their people has used for four hundred years, a solid wall behind which they kept whole.

The solemn procession goes into the stone and plaster village, joined by the church beggars, the tavern's clients and their owners. In the street of the pearl buyers, those

are alert in their offices, because the news of the pearl's beauty has reached them. A big quiet one, the sort that acts friendly, waits at his desk, decorated with a flower. He goes to the door and offers help to the approaching Kino, all the while mechanically playing with a coin in his hand, hidden from view. Kino and his brother enter, and after a modest introduction, Kino dramatically gets the pearl out of its pouch and leaves it on the tray. The buyer inspects the pearl and the hand with the coin looses precision, but the face shows no expression.

After some inspection, a disdainful smile appears in his face. He qualifies the pearl of a curiosity, too big and ordinary, and offers one thousand pesos. Kino protests that it is worth fifty thousand, accuses the man of cheating and the multitude groans softly to the buyer's alarm. He sends a servant to get other three pearl buyers. The neighbors mutter that they also think the pearl is weird and Kino should accept the offer, more than what he had only yesterday. However, Kino is firm and hard, the Song of Evil inside of him. The three other buyers appear. One refuses to bid, the other shows Kino the surface under a magnifying lens and the third offers even less than the first. Kino, enraged, puts away the pearl once again and refuses to accept even fifteen hundred pesos offered at the last minute. He will sell it somewhere else, maybe even in the capital. He retires in big furious steps, followed by Juana running behind.

At dinner, the neighbors converse. Some believe the pearl buyer's tale and think Kino should have accepted the offer, because now he risks not being able to sell in the capital nor negotiate again with the buyers he challenged. Others are proud of Kino and believe his courage will benefit all.

In his hut, Kino hides the pearl under the fire and wonders if he made the right decision. He never left the village and is afraid of such a long journey, but the world as he knows is lost and he must go get another. His elder brother comes and Kino asks for advice. Juan Tomás knows the pearl buyers cheat on the fishermen, but thinks that challenging them is challenging the whole system. In addition, he fears that if the pearl is so valuable the game might not be over. He thinks Kino must go to the capital, but cautions him of the people he doesn't know, of the friends who will help him only as long as they are not afraid or in peril. However, he blesses Kino.

Kino keeps meditating, keeping the sounds of the night around him and inside his head. Juana silently observes him, softly singing the Song of the Family with the baby in her arms. Then Kino feels the night calling him and goes outside, knife in hand. Juana hears a struggle and a blow and with teeth bare goes out, a stone in her hand, to find Kino with a long gash in the face. She gets him in, cleans his wound and once again, begs him to get rid of the pearl, break it or throw it back into the water. However, Kino is determined to behave as a man: in the morning, they will get the canoe and go to the capital. She agrees to accompany him at first light. They go to get some sleep.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The next day, Kino goes to sell the pearl and confronts the Establishment. Unknown to the fishermen, the pearl buyers all respond to one boss, and the apparently independent bids are in reality well coordinated to the common objective of paying the minimum.

This time, however, the buyers' desire to lower the price takes them too far, and despite a well orchestrated display they fail to convince Kino of their good faith. Before he fully knows the consequences of his decision, he leaves without selling the pearl, determined to take it to the distant capital. The violence continues that night, with another attack on Kino, this time outside of his hut, and his renewed decision to leave despite his many fears. Juana oscillates between begging him to destroy the pearl and fierily going out with a stone to defend him, and in the end agrees to go with him.

Once more acting as a collective body, the fishermen, Kino included, prepare to go to the village and sell the pearl. They dress in their best clothes and nobody thinks of going diving, the events on shore being far more important. As the procession starts with Kino once again at the head, Juan Tomás assumes his role of counselor. He wonders how to detect if they are taken advantage of, and remembers an old story of the fishermen trying to by pass the local buyers, with disastrous results. Kino points the part played by the priest in reinforcing the idea that every man should stick to his assigned portion of the Universe and the brothers recognize the speech as repetitive. Once more, the church beggars join the procession, this time hoping to directly benefit.

Then appears another collective character, that of the pearl vendors. They are different individuals but act coordinately, each in his assigned part. Their only motivation is to pay the lowest possible price, but they misread Kino. When offered what the neighbor's chorus thinks is a big sum for somebody who had nothing the day before, he refuses and gets more stubborn every minute. It doesn't occur to him to negotiate and can't even consider the second offer. He reacts without thought for the consequences, at the last minute fleeing in rage, followed by the silent Juana.

Back at the huts, the chorus divides between those who think Kino did wrong to refuse what was offered and those who think that challenging the buyers is good for everybody. In his hut, Kino realizes the journey he has set into and is afraid, but once more, he is determined. He converses with his brother, who is also ambivalent. On the one hand, he knows the buyers are cheaters, but on the other, he doubts there are any better elsewhere, and he fears for his brother away from the protection of his peers, voluble as they may be.

In the night, an ever-intuitive Kino senses another attack and gets it, this time outside of the hut. When he goes out, Juana is at first terrified but then becomes an animal mother defending her cubs and goes out ready to kill. She finds Kino hurt, and once again pleads to destroy the pearl. Kino refuses. He wants them both to go to the capital and invokes his condition of man as protection. When she points out that men can be murdered he makes her shut up. Obediently, Juana agrees to go with him.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Before sunset, the moon rises and Kino opens his eyes in the dark. To the light of the moon, he sees Juana get up from his side, the pearl from its hiding place and silently leave the hut. The rage fills him and he silently follows her to the beach, He catches her by the water, in the precise moment when she raises her arm to throw the pearl into the water. He gets it from her, hits her in the face and when she falls, kicks her on the side. She looks at him sheepishly, without resisting or protesting and his rage extinguishes and is replaced by loathing.

Kino turns back up the beach and through the line of hedges and senses the attack. He stabs a dark image with the knife, falls and feels frenetic fingers search his clothes. The pearl he let go in the fight shines softly in the path.

Juana gets up from the rocks, and kneels for a while before cleaning her hurt face in salt water before going up the beach behind Kino. She isn't angry. Kino is a man and to her, that means he is half god and half crazy, the differences between men and women something known, accepted and needed. To the intermittent light of the moon, her back bent in pain she goes past the hedge, sees the pearl shining on the sand and gets it. While she considers going back to the surf she sees Kino lying nearby beside a dead man and understands the old life is definitely gone. Her pain and slowness disappear, she gets the corpse out of the way, cleans her man's wounds, gives him back the pearl and points that now that he's killed, they have to flee before daylight. Kino orders her to get the baby and provisions while he launches his canoe, He finds it broken, a big hole in the bottom and feels the Song of Evil fill the night. Killing a boat, an evil beyond comprehension, turns him into an animal who lives only to preserve himself and his family. No longer confused, he goes back to his hut, the pearl inside his shirt and his knife hanging from his neck.

It is almost dawn. Kino sees first a small light and then big flame, and runs to find his hut in fire and a terrified Juana fleeing with Coyotito. Remembering the dead man on the path Kino fears the light. Dragging Juana, he seeks the shadows and hides in the hut belonging to his brother Juan Tomás. From inside it they see the hut collapse, and hear Juan Tomás' wife, Apolonia, cry their death. When Juan Tomás comes into the hut, Kino tells him of the dead man and the broken canoe, and begs to be hidden until sundown. Juan Tomás accepts, and orders his wife to close the door and be silent.

All day long, they hide in the darkness of the hut, listening to the neighbors talk about them and looking at them search for their bones in the ashes. Juan Tomás goes out and mingles, telling people that Kino is certainly at sea, and, after a big wind sweeps the Gulf, that he is probably dead. All day, he gathers from the neighbors provisions for his brother, and even a big work knife heavy as a small axe.

Near sundown, the two brothers talk. Kino will go north, where he heard there are towns. His brother cautions him to avoid the coast, because there will be searches. Kino says he will keep the pearl, because now it is both his life and his misfortune. The family formally parts at the hut, the two brothers embrace deeply and kiss goodbye.

Before the moon is up, Kino and Juana go quietly in the dark, the baby covered and held on her back by the shawl.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The violence continues to spiral. While it is still dark, Juana seizes the pearl and runs to the beach to throw it into the water. Kino, full of rage, follows her and strikes her in the face. She accepts it all as part of her fate as woman and wife, and as part of his nature as a man. When she sees the pearl fallen in the sand, she picks it up. Kino is in turn attacked and kills a man. At this point, Juana sets aside her doubts and convinces him that fleeing is the only way out. She takes the necessary practical steps: hides the body, goes to get the child and provisions while Kino gets the canoe. There are unpleasant developments everywhere. The canoe has a hole in the bottom, the ultimate attack, and the hut has been razed and burns to the ground. The scared family takes refuge at Kino's brothers hut while the neighbors think them dead. Their only hope now is to go north, away from the coast, and they set out at sundown.

Before Kino wakes, Juana goes silently to carry out her wish, still hoping that everything will go back to normal once the pearl disappears. Her instincts to preserve the family are stronger than the obedience she usually has to her husband. But Kino sees her and hits her hard. His rage is such as to beat his own wife, perhaps because of disobeying him more than because she gets between him and his dreams, She accepts the punishment as part of his condition of man, ready to be killed if he wants to, but he stops and goes back, the pearl in his hand. After a while Juana follows and when she sees the pearl again considers destroying it, but only until she sees Kino wounded on the floor, a dead man beside him. Now her practical sense takes over and she assumes correctly that once a man is killed, there is no turning back. Once again, she defends her family, forgetting her wounds, hiding the corpse, convincing Kino of the necessity to go away and going to get Coyotito to flee.

However, the violence is already all around them. The canoe is broken, the ultimate offense on a man who depends on her for his survival. Their hut is razed and burnt, all their belongings disappeared and them obliged to hide and play dead. There are no discussions; Kino and Juana once more act in unison. The fishermen community protects them, knowingly or not. As they hide in Kino's brother's hut, the neighbors readily think them dead, and through Juan Tomás they unknowingly send provisions and a new knife. Juan Tomás himself counsels on the direction to take, and spreads the tale of their disappearance and possible death at sea. The brothers part as if they will never see each other again. Without other option, Kino, Juana and Coyotito go away after sundown.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Kino and Juana with Coyotito in her arms walk out of the village, avoiding the houses at the center of town, where they would certainly be noticed. They slip through the edge of town and looking at the stars Kino finds the sand road north, to Loreto, sanctuary to the Miraculous Virgin. The wind is blowing hard and Kino is happy to realize that no footsteps will be found in the morning. They go fast and in silence, Juana a few steps behind, running to keep the pace, Kino guided by the ancient knowledge of his people to overcome his fear of darkness. When the moon appears, the wind dies, and they follow the tracks of a cart, so that the first vehicle in the morning would cover their tracks. They walk all night, the bad spirits of the night and the sounds of animals around them. Kino holds his big knife tight and the Song of the Pearl sounds triumphal in his head, mixed with the serene Song of the Family.

At dawn break Kino looks for a little clearing in the bush to spend the day. Juana feeds the baby and he goes back to the road to sweep the tracks with a twig. A two wheeled cart goes down the road and he verifies the footsteps are covered. He goes back to Juana who feeds him and then sleeps, but Kino keeps awake, mechanically observing the soil.

When she wakes, the sun is high and the air is dry and hot. Kino shows his woman the ways of the forest, but she wonders if the night attackers will hunt them. Kino is sure they will try to find them to get the pearl, and also that its value is the cause of the attempted theft. He looks at the pearl seeking a vision. But when he mentions the rifle he wants he sees a dark bleeding body on the floor, mentions the marriage and sees Juana struck and running to the house in the middle of the night, says that their son will learn to read and sees Coyotito feverish because of the medicine. The Song of the Pearl is now sinister, mixed with the Song of Evil.

They go deeper into the low bush; now Kino sleeps, and Juana stays awake. Her face swollen from Kino's blow, she keeps absolutely still. When Coyotito wakes, she plays with him and even smiles, but then Kino wakes uneasy, an animal light in his eyes. He tells Juana and the baby to be silent and, hidden, goes back to the path.

Down the road, Kino spies three figures coming, one on horseback and two scouts on foot, moving slowly, looking at the ground. He recognizes the trackers as furtive chasers, used to find game in the stone mountains. The man on horseback is dark; his nose covered by a blanket and carries a rifle across the saddle. Kino realizes he is now the prey and prepares his knife. He knows that if the trackers find the place where he covered the footsteps he has to jump on them and get the rifle. From his hiding place, he sees the feet of the men and the hooves and hears every sound they make. The group stops on the spot where Kino swept his tracks, but after a slow moment goes on down the path, not realizing how close he is.

Kino knows they will be back sooner or later. In panic, he returns to Juana and the child, this time unable to hide his tracks. For an instant, he doubts whether he shouldn't let them catch him. Juana screams that once they get the pearl, the men won't let him live for fear of being accused of theft, and neither will they let her and the baby live. That makes Kino decide they will go west, in the direction of the mountains. They gather their bags and start through the bush, not bothering to cover their footsteps. The sun high, they run for the heights as all hunted animals.

The land is dry, broken rock covered with cactus and the stone mountains ahead seem cold and welcoming. Kino flees but he knows what will happen. Sooner or later the scouts will realize they lost the track, go back and discover the place where Kino and Juana rested. They will now follow, in their last job, because the horseman will not take them back. The Song of Evil sounds secret and poisonous.

The family ascends the ever-bigger rocks and takes a rest at the first elevation. Looking back, Kino sees no trace of the men, and he proposes to Juana to hide and then go to Loreto while he takes the trackers to the mountain. She firmly refuses, and her attitude infuses him with a new force and the panic disappears. They start again and move in zigzag, stepping on the naked stone, sometimes going back to confuse their tracks. They go in the direction of the only crevice dark enough to be suspect of holding some water and a way through. They finally get to a small sand and stone platform, the lower level of a series of thin courses of water descending the mountain. It is a place of life and death because of the water, with vegetation and many animals that drink and hunt.

Completely exhausted, they drink and rest, but when Kino looks back he sees the scouts and the man with the rifle already on the slope. He helps Juana hide with the baby in a shallow stone cave in an upper level, climbs to the upper fountain and then goes back to the cave, stepping on the rock to leave no tracks. They plan to go back to the plains and hope the men keep ascending past them.

It is already dark when the three men get to the pond and settle to eat and rest for the night. Kino observes from above and when one lights a cigarette notes the position of the three, two asleep and the third with the rifle. He tells Juana of his plan to go for the one with the rifle and overcomes her objections. He instructs her to observe in silence and continue the journey should anything happen to him. She bids him farewell and watches him prepare, take off his white clothes and hang his knife on his back so as to have both hands free. Then he is gone. Juana observes from the edge of the cave, the baby on her back, as she mutters a combination of prayer and enchantment.

Kino creeps slowly on the rock. He tries to make no sound, guided by the Song of the Family in his head. Inch by inch he moves to a few feet of the guard and gets the knife hanging from his neck, ready to attack before the moon rises, but the moon appears and he has to hide back behind a bush. Kino must jump, but at that moment, a muffled cry is heard from above and a second man awakes. They discuss if it sounds like a baby or a coyote cub, and the sentinel points the rifle in the direction of the cry.

Kino has already jumped when the shot sounds, a killing machine. He slashes the sentinel's throat and breaks the second one's head with the gun. The third man starts to climb to the water and Kino shoots him. When the man falls on his back, shoots again between his eyes. At that moment, Kino breaks from his deadly concentration and recognizes another acute and painful sound coming from the stone cave, ever more hysterical: the cry of death.

At the end of sunset, the first children in La Paz spread the news that Kino and Juana are back in town and everybody goes out to see them. The sun on their backs, they walk side by side, Kino with a rifle across his chest and Juana with her shawl hanging in a little blood stained bundle over her shoulder. Her face is hard and tired, her eyes look fixed inside herself. His lips are pursed and his jaw rigid, fear around him. They both look outside of human experience, like someone who went through pain and out.

They walk across the stone and plaster village like there was nobody there, and this time nobody follows them. They walk through the huts, by the neighbors and by Juan Tomás, the Song of the Family a battle cry inside Kino's head.

Without a glance to the broken canoe, they get to the edge of the water. Kino drops the rifle and gets the pearl from under his clothes. In its gray surface, he sees evil, the light of the fire, the frantic eyes of the man he killed and Coyotito in the cave with his head broken by a bullet. He hears the Song of the Pearl, distorted and mad.

Kino offers the pearl to Juana, but she sweetly refuses it. He throws the pearl very far into the water, and together they watch it sink. The pearl goes in the green water, lies in the sandy bottom and isn't there the next moment. Then the Song of the Pearl becomes a whisper and disappears.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In the final chapter, the scene moves from the coast to the road north of the village that leads to the mountains and the sanctuary town of Loreto. The family flees in silence from the unknown pursuer they sense is on their wake. They are now worried with covering their tracks and they show a cunning unknown to their past as coastal people.

In the midday heat, Kino sees for the first time the face of his enemy and knows he is being hunted as an animal. What was before a dark menacing form is now a dark man and two furtive chasers. He doesn't recognize the man but he senses that his only hope is to attack first, and even plans the order: first, the leader clad with the rifle, then the trackers. However, incredibly, the searchers momentarily loose the track and he desists, even wondering if it might not be better to surrender.

Back to Juana, she once more shows her gasp of the situation to be more accurate and points out there is no way out since they would be witnesses and their pursuers will kill them all. Now capable of understanding an evil previously unimaginable Kino knows the man with the rifle will also kill the trackers and makes a last suggestion to save his wife and child. Nevertheless, Juana refuses to get sanctuary without her husband. They go

higher and the terrain grows even more unfamiliar and difficult. Juana tends to the baby and goes on without a protest. Kino makes an effort to hide and confuse the tracks but knows they are easy prey for their pursuers.

The terrain is hostile and they don't know how to move in it. They are very far of their previous life as coastal folk and have to rely on their instincts to find the way and replenish the water bottle. The night finds Kino, Juana and Coyotito hidden in a rock cave like the hunted animals they have become, watching the three men rest at a pond below them. In a last desperate effort, they agree that Kino will creep down to kill the men, something totally unthinkable a mere three days before. The hitherto pacific Juana now points out the difficulties like seizing the rifle and hiding his white clothes from view. Kino, who tends to react by force before reasoning, listens to his woman and they work the difficulties out. Like a silent night animal, Kino starts to descend and go near the sentinel.

In the subsequent fight, they all are overtaken by their animal nature. Naked Kino the killer male slays the three chasers, Juana becomes a screaming beast after her wailing son is mistaken for a little coyote ("Coyotito" in Spanish) and casually shot.

The epilogue closes the narrative in the manner it began, like the end of an old folk tale. The transfigured Kino and Juana go back to the village, their dead son on her shoulder, the once coveted rifle in his hand. For once, the chorus of neighbors is silent and frozen, impressed by their hard and distant expression. Kino and Juana go across the village oblivious to the neighbors, their razed house and their destroyed canoe, tokens of life, as they once knew it. They don't stop until they reach the shore and then he sets down the rifle and gets the pearl out. He offers it to Juana but she refuses and it is Kino himself who throws the fatidic pearl in the water. The Song of the Pearl, once mad and distorted, turns into a murmur and disappears as it reaches the bottom.

Characters

Apolonia

A woman with a big jiggling stomach, Apolonia is the wife of Juan Tomas. She has four children and her family is a little better off than Kino's.

She helps them when the robbers burn down the hut. As the nearest female relative to Kino's family she must lead the mourning. Her presence of mind after discovering Kino and Juana are alive, is crucial to their remaining undiscovered.

Coyotito

Coyotito is Kino and Juana's son. When he is stung by a scorpion, the resulting medical emergency prompts the parents to reach beyond their station in life. The mother will not let her only child languish and demands they go to the Doctor. His refusal of admittance leads them to pray for the means—not to heal the child—to gain the Doctor. Their prayers are answered and they have a Pearl with which they can buy a better future for the child. However, the death of the baby, whose cries could have been those of a coyote pup, finally ends Kino's fantasy, no rise in future prospects was worth the loss of his baby.

The Doctor

The "lazy" Doctor of the village is a man who thinks only of Europe and dreams, with "eyes rolled up a little in their fat hammocks," of returning there. It is to this colonial Doctor that Kino goes to seek help for his baby However, because his pearls at that time were so poor, the Doctor would not look at the boy of a "little Indian." His attitude towards Kino, not the Indians, changes when he hears that Kino has a great Pearl—the same poor man who had come to him. "He is a client of mine," says the Doctor who then dreams of returning to Paris with the proceeds from the sale of the pearl. He then makes a house call and cures the boy. He appears to be kindly and generous, but he watches Kino closely for indications of the Pearl's hiding place. Seeing one, he sends some men back in the dead of night to steal the pearl. The Doctor represents quackery. He uses the people's lack of choice and power against them and, thereby, furthers their ignorance.

The Gate Keeper

The Doctor's servant is a man of Kino's race. He tries as much as possible to do the Doctor's bidding and thereby distinguish himself from his kind. His efforts go so far as a refusal to speak in the old language. When Kino comes to the Doctor for medical help, it is the Gate Keeper that refuses him. Kino offers worthless pearls as payment but the

Gate Keeper declares the Doctor has gone out. "And he shut the gate quickly out of shame." The Gate Keeper, though economically in a better position, still feels the shame of his people's oppression but does nothing to alleviate them. Instead, he enjoys the power he gets from his position. Later, when Kino has the Pearl, this servant is responsible for telling the Doctor that Kino is the same man who had been at the gate—thus betraying his people again.

Juan Tomas

Kino's brother and nearest neighbor, Juan looks out for Kino. He stands by him when he goes into town for the Doctor and to sell the pearl. When the robbers burn down Kino's hut, he hides the family and enables them to escape by borrowing needed items.

Juana

Kino's wife, Juana, is even more simple than Kino. Her reactions are those of the instinctual mother, and her life is devoted to her duties to her husband and child. "She could stand fatigue and hunger almost better than Kino himself. In the canoe she was like a strong man." She says Hail Marys and utilizes ancient magic to ward off evil. Her prayers bring the pearl into existence. With the Pearl in hand, however, Coyotito is fine. Her thoughts about the Pearl thus turn practical. They can be married in the church and have nice clothes, but they do not need to have everything. Realizing that Kino wants everything, she begins to see their possession of the Pearl of the world as a harbinger of evil. She begs Kino to throw it away, even becomes so bold as to attempt it herself. For this, Kino hits her.

She performs her duties and follows Kino. Simple as she is, her mind has awakened to the real danger. Her boy survives the scorpion but they may not survive Kino's pearl. As soon as Kino said he was a man and would do the bidding of the Pearl, she went along. "Juana, in her woman's soul, knew ... that the sea would surge while the man drowned in it. And yet it was this thing that made him a man, half insane and half god, and Juana had need of a man; she could not live without a man." She, therefore, silences her doubt. "Sometimes the quality of woman, the reason, the caution, the sense for preservation, could but through Kino's manness and save them all." That may be, but Juana, until the bitter end, does her best to maintain their confinement in ignorance and just barely survives.

Kino

The protagonist of the fable is a Mexican-Indian named Kino. He is a primitive character who will fail to benefit from the opportunity chance has afforded him to become enlightened Kino has been perceived as colonial subject, simpleton, and oppressed man. His people were not always subjugated; at one time, they had control over their destiny, created songs, and lived in peace with their surroundings But Kino represents his a subsequent generation—one profoundly affected by oppression and exploitation—

and when the Doctor comes to him, Kino stands "in the door, filling it, and hatred raged and flamed in back of his eyes, and fear too, for the hundreds of years of subjugation were cut deep in him " Kino is aware of his subjugation but he has no way of dealing with it. He is like a caged animal and exhibits the signs of stress that accompany confinement. Unfortunately, he is not a great man about to lead his people out of the dark.

Kino is an average man in his community with a quiet life diving for pearls that he sells to his colonial overlords. After his son is stung by a scorpion and the doctor refuses to treat him, he goes as usual to the pearl beds hoping that he will find a pearl so magnificent that he will be able to rise in social and economic standing. He discovers the talisman he feels he needs for such a rise in fortune; however, harassment from his oppressor and his own stubbornness foil his ability to take advantage of the Pearl.

Kino hides the pearl and attempts to sell it himself. In conversations with his brother he stops just short of revealing that the pearl buyers have been cheating the people Everyone could have benefited from his find but he decides to risk his life to sell the pearl for a lot of money in the city. Yet when he is prevented in going to the city because of vandalism and violence, he is profoundly changed. The damage done to his boat, his escape route, is the last straw. "The killing of a man was not so evil as the killing of a boat." Seeing this assault, "[h]e was an animal now, for hiding, for attacking, and he lived only to preserve himself and his family." Yet he maintains some humanity for it never occurred to him, due to tradition, to steal someone else's boat.

The Pearl Buyer

There is only one Pearl Buyer in La Paz but there are many fingers to this one grasping hand. His representatives sit in separate offices giving the appearance of a competitive market. Each pearl buyer's goal is to buy for the main owner at the lowest price. It is each "man's function to break down a price, [and] he must take joy and satisfaction in breaking it as far down as possible ... a pearl buyer was a pearl buyer, and the best and happiest pearl buyer was he who bought for the lowest prices." Keeping these sentiments enables the pearl buyers to forget that there is really only one and, therefore, they are better able to fool the people. On the day that Kino comes to sell his pearl, all the buyers know in advance what the price will be. Kino approaches one of the pearl buyers; he is interchangeable with any other pearl buyer as the embodiment of the real Pearl Buyer. This "stout slow man" perfectly symbolizes the closed market in his habitual action of juggling a coin on his hand. "The fingers did it all mechanically, precisely," but when confronted by the pearl of the world the system breaks down. The fingers fumble the coin just as the stacked market bids far too low for the Pearl. The greed of the Pearl Buyer, who assumes Kino will take what he offers, causes them to lose the Pearl altogether.

The Priest

The Catholic Priest is a "graying, aging man with an old skin and a young sharp eye. Children he considered these people, and he treated them like children." He is another symbol of the powers keeping Kino's people down. He encourages his congregation to be submissive to authority. Hearing about Kino's luck, the priest tries to recall whether he has done service to that family and calculates how far the Pearl might go toward repairing the church. He does not remember Kino as a man but as one of his children. The priest reminds Kino of his duty to the church.

The Trackers

Like the Gate Keeper, these two men are Indians who are in the employ of the Europeans. They are regarded as subhuman and not too far above bloodhounds. They find Kino's marks and lead the Watcher to within feet of his hiding place. Kino kills them easily after killing the Watcher.

The Watcher

The merchant of the city has employed a man with a gun, horse, and two professional trackers to find Kino and the Pearl.

Setting

The Pearl is set in and around La Paz, Mexico, a coastal town marked by economic, social, and racial divisions resulting from colonial domination of the local native population. Kino attempts to escape with his family to the capital city and seeks refuge in a cave in the wilderness, but his attempt to flee is thwarted, and he returns to La Paz, where he renders the pearl to the sea.

Social Sensitivity

Written in the mid-1940s, The Pearl addresses numerous social issues that gained prominence at that time and that remained among the chief concerns of late twentiethcentury society. Among them are a growing awareness of the more sinister aspects of colonialism and the domination of native peoples by European settlers, the powerlessness of the economic underclass, and the illusory nature of the "American Dream" of financial prosperity.

Uneducated in the methods of western medicine and the victims of racial prejudice, Kino and Juana are turned away when they seek the help of the doctor in treating Coyotito's sting. The doctor, a representative of the colonial elite, compares the family to animals in a blatant expression of his racial contempt. In The Pearl, Kino's racial and economic powerlessness is further demonstrated in dealings with the priest and the pearl dealers, both of whom attempt to take advantage of his ignorance.

The Pearl also offers commentary on the blind pursuit of material wealth. Kino's obsession with attaining the best price for the pearl ultimately leads to the loss of his own innocence, to the death of his child, and to the destruction of the few possessions the family had to begin with. In other words, Kino' greed has left them spiritually, physically, and materially ruined, a situation that reflects the emptiness and alienation that many mid-century writers began to associate with modern American society and its emphasis on personal wealth.

Steinbeck also depicts Kino and Juana's growing isolation from their family and community as they are compelled to flee to the city to find a buyer for the pearl. An episode of domestic violence is portrayed when Juana attempts to get rid of the pearl.

Ultimately, the parental devotion that led to their desire for material wealth and enhanced social status backfires— leading to the death of their child and turning Kino into a wife-beater and murderer. The pearl, symbolizing the pursuit of wealth above all else, may be seen to drive a wedge between the couple and their community, to disrupt family relations, and to upset nature in the premature death of their child. In a negative expression of Steinbeck's literary vision of cooperation and natural harmony, Kino and Juana end unhappily through their failure to act in concert with others and for the good of all nature.

Literary Qualities

Kino's story is an allegory: his journey affords him a small amount of personal growth and a variety of lessons on which to reflect. An allegory may take one of many forms. One form of allegory is that of a type of fiction more or less symbolic in feature intending to convey a meaning that is not explicitly set forth within the narrative. Allegories usually involve a journey that a character makes toward spiritual growth. The plot of Steinbeck's story is simple: a man finds the "pearl of the world" but he does not gain happiness and throws it back.

Within this narrative are many hidden meanings. The story tells us that humanity is in the dark and needs to wake up. Therefore, the opening shows Kino waking in the night, which is allegorical, but because the cock has been crowing for some time we know that he has been trying to gain a consciousness—literally wake up—to his people's plight.

Another message is that journeys should be made in communion, not just the company, of another. Kino should be in a leadership position among his people because of his fortuitous discovery, but he is not leading them. He tries to sell the pearl, which could have ruptured the economic system and provided economic opportunity for his people. Instead he falls prey to doubt and decides to go for the big city leaving his people ignorant of his mission.

Kino decides to make his own way and is followed by his wife. He returns with her, but they are still alone and everything is the same as before.

The novel is full of symbolism of the talismanic, allegorical, and ironic kind. The pearl itself is a symbol of escape for the poor man, but it also symbolizes the effects of greed on man. Worse than that, Steinbeck sets up the pearl to embody the whole of the European conquest of the Americas.

He does this by saying that the pearl bed in which it was found is the same pearl bed that raised the King of Spain to be the greatest in the world. Historically, then, this pearl bed represents the gold, silver, and raw resources that Spain extracted from the New World at the height of that nation's empire. Now, this same pearl bed lures in a victim of that colonialism to dream of an easy escape from poverty.

The pearl is a talisman: an object that comes to be interchangeable with a person or an idea. At one point Kino views the pearl as his soul and vows to keep it. For Kino, the success of the Pearl's sale will indicate his success. The pearl stands opposite to the canoe that at once stands for his family and is a sure bulwark against starvation. When he makes it known that he will pursue wealth by venturing on his own to the great city, his canoe is sabotaged. This is a crime greater than homicide for it is a direct assault on Kino's family—worse than burning down the house.

Irony arises in the name of the village: La Paz or peace. The town is only peaceful because the majority of the people are demoralized. Their peace is one of an oppressed people. The pearl stirs up this peace and only bloodshed restores calm.

The Indians are constantly presented as innocent primitives further duped by the superstition of the Catholic Church. They are also, and Kino is especially, compared to animals. In their daily habits of fishing and gathering they are like the hungry dogs and pigs described as searching the shore for easy meals. More exactly, Kino howls, the trackers sniff and whine, and the baby yelps—a sound reminiscent of its namesake, the Coyote. Animals have roles in the story as well. The Watcher's horse raises the European above the Indians; this advantage is used to conquer the hemisphere.

While the story has its symbols and large allegorical sentiments, every facet of the tale is transcribed into metaphor. Even the minds the Indian people are as "unsubstantial as the mirage of the Gulf." Further, they are clouded as if the mud of the sea floor has been permanently disturbed to block their vision. Even the city as seat of the colonial administration is given metaphorical animation: "A town is a thing like a colonial animal. A town has a nervous system and a head and shoulders and feet."

In a moment of foreshadowing, Kino watches as two roosters prepare to fight. He then notices wild doves flying inland where later Kino will prepare to fight his pursuers.

Juana is like an owl when she watches Kino sneak down the cliff. Earlier, when the watering hole was described, feathers left by cats that had dragged their prey there are noticed. Those with feathers die. On the other hand, Kino is no longer an animal.

Instead, when Kino kills the men who are tracking him he is a machine. He is efficient and without noise, like the cats playing with their doomed prey. He is killing to survive. The metaphor that is mixed in with this scene of tension and action is in keeping with the style of the rest of the work while also lending it a realistic dimension.

Themes

Good and Evil

Kino's belief that evil is in the night is not unusual. But one of his many foibles is that he sees

Knowledge and Ignorance

The Doctor, the Priest, and the Pearl Buyer do their part to keep the peasants ignorant and docile. They use whatever methods the can to accomplish this—financial instability, religious ceremonies and threats of eternal damnation, or lack of economic choice. When the Pearl is discovered, however, each power controller makes the mistake of thinking he knows how to have his way with the finder. Due to this mistake, they do not allow any knowledge to escape but they alienate Kino from them. In other words, by insisting that he stay ignorant of their ways they harbor resentment and defiance. Kino is ignorant, not mentally deficient. They answer his reticence with force and are met with force.

The doctor uses an overbearing self-confidence to trick Juana and Kino into thinking their child might be still at risk from the sting of the scorpion. Kino suspects the white powder may be fraudulent but he certainly will not risk his son's life and deny the doctor. He believes in the doctor because the doctor treats the Europeans who are stronger than the Indians. They are strong in part, he reasons to himself, because of the doctor. What choice does he have but to give way? The priest is not much different. He views the Indians as children and keeps them that way by educating them only enough to be scared of the evil they will face without his help. Religions, especially Catholicism, used the devil as a tool to bring the conquered into submission. Religious reasoning was also used on slaves to make them submissive. On the one hand, the people learn enough from the priest to blend his prayers with their ancient superstitions. On the other, they are not any better for the interaction.

Lastly, the pearl buyers are the best at the charade; they have the Indians at their mercy economically. The pretense of an open market and the price wars they fake lead the Indians to think they are getting a fair shake. In this way, the Indians also believe that they are active participants in the economic order. The Indians are illiterate and cannot know how the modern world works. They are kept ignorant to be exploited.

Individual vs. Society

Kino and his people have lost their ability to function as an effectual group. The only time they come together is to form an audience to be witness to what will happen to Kino. Before European rule, they were able to act as a functional society, going so far as to create songs—which they no longer do. Then social mechanisms have been worn

down by the new religious institution and, more crucially, by the new economic system. These two institutions encourage the Indians to behave as individuals who will compete with each other in making ends meet alone. Social and tribal sharing is discouraged at every turn. The narrative dramatizes this by depicting the absence of cordial social interaction amongst the Indians.

Conversely, the pearl buyers act in concert for the benefit of one man and to exert their control over the gullible Indian populace. By this comparison, Steinbeck is criticizing the market system in a way that is consistent with his other literary works. Steinbeck feels capitalism leads to monopolies. Steinbeck is also criticizing his own theories of the phalanx. In his writing before the war, he believed that only by voluntary cooperation could people live happily and at peace. The war, however, showed him that people are easily tricked, bought, or coerced into working for a group when the alternate choice is to be a part of an oppressed class. The latter group, Kino's, is unable to pull together because they have been divided by their oppression.

They attempted to break the monopoly a few times when they sent single men to the big city but those men never returned. They did not try with a group of men who could have defended themselves. Kino will try this route of solitude and he will be defeated. He should have taken his brother or another man in a canoe to the city. Instead, he went with his wife and child over land and paid an ultimate price.

Style

Allegory

An allegory takes many forms. One form of allegory is that of a type of fiction more or less symbolic in feature intending to convey a meaning which is not explicitly set forth within the narrative. Allegories usually involve a journey that a character makes toward spiritual growth. Kino's story is an allegory: his journey affords him a small amount of personal growth and a variety of lessons to meditate on. The plot is simple: a man finds the Pearl of the world but he does not gain happiness and throws it back. Within this narrative are many hidden meanings. The story tells us that man is in the dark and needs to wake up. Therefore, the opening shows Kino waking in the night, which is allegorical, but because the Cock has been crowing for some time we know that he has been trying to gain a consciousness—literally wake up—to his people's plight.

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Symbolism

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Historical Context

America after World War II

The Peace Treaty signed on February 10, 1947 officially ends World War II. America emerges as a world superpower. It is capable of an incredible industrial capacity and, in addition, America commands the most powerful military in the world: the greatest navy, the largest standing army, the best Air Force, and the only nuclear arsenal The United States military becomes even stronger when Congress passes a law unifying the Air Force, Army, and Navy under one secretary of defense. Adding another weapon to America's might, Congress creates the Central Intelligence Agency.

Culturally, American literature, music, art, movies, and eventually television gain popularity around the world. The isolationism of the pre-war days is gone and the city of New York emerges as a world center. Visitors to the city experience the tastes and sights of the capital of American publishing, the infant television industry, and the glamour of Broadway shows. They view Abstract Expressionism, maybe bump into a Beat Poet, and revel in the sound of Bebop or blues.

Supply and Demand Economics

With the end of the war, the rationing of goods ends and people demand to be supplied with goods that were unavailable during the war. Industry scurries to provide these goods. One immediate demand is housing. The soldiers coming home are taking advantage of the GI Bill of Rights to attend college. They use the same rights again to procure financing for adding their tract house to that other New York invention—the suburban sprawl. The military industrial complex quickly re-tools to offer pre-fabricated housing components, appliances, and civilian cars and trucks. All of this consumption, however, wreaks havoc on economic forecasts. Price controls are abandoned too quickly and inflation rises. As men re-enter the work force, pressure to raise wages increases and strikes happen frequently.

President Harry Truman's popularity declines drastically with inflation's rise and the liberal coalition formed under Roosevelt—which had brought together business and government so effectively to fight a war—unravels. Fortunately, the worldwide demand for goods is so great and the capacities of America and Canada so vast that boom times are bound to come Republicans aim to push back the New Deal legislation at a time when the Marshall Plan was being hammered out to help resuscitate Europe. The Democrat coalition begins splitting apart over the thorny issue of civil rights. The Southern Democrats strengthen their alliance with the Republicans to weaken the New Deal and delay action on civil rights legislation

Despite a presidential veto, the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947 (the Taft-Hartley Act) passes. This law outlaws 'closed shop' agreements—where the employer

hires only those persons who belong to a specific union. Further, the law demands that workers must first vote by secret ballot before striking. Perhaps most fundamentally, the law made labor unions liable to court action for contractual violations brought on by strike actions.

The Cold War

Tense relations developed between the United States and their Russian allies late in the war as they raced to see who would dominate Japan. But it is not until after the war that the growing tensions would come to be known as the Cold War. In 1947, American Bernard Baruch uses the term to label the conflict between Russia and the United States that is just short of war. The Cold War results in technological races, political influence in lesser countries (from Central America to the Middle East), and curious exchanges at the United Nations. Both nations break the sound barrier in 1947. With the detonation of a Soviet atom bomb in 1949, an arms race begins. Later, Sputnik would cause a furious investment in math and sciences so that America arrives at the Moon first.

Disturbing domestic legislation is enacted early in the Cold War. Truman hands down Executive Order 9835, which requires the Department of Justice to compile a list of subversive organizations that seek to alter the United States "by unconstitutional means." The list includes a whole range of groups like the Ku Klux Klan, the Communist Party, the Chopin Cultural Center, the Committee for the Negro in the Arts, the League of American Writers, the Nature Friends of America, and the Yugoslav Seaman's Club. Truman's order seeks investigation of those persons affiliated with those groups who might have infiltrated the United States government. Of the 6.6 million persons investigated, as a result of this program, not one case of espionage is uncovered. However, this activity paves the way for such later witchhunts as Mc-Carthyism in the 1950s.

Critical Overview

The long term critical reputation of John Steinbeck rises and falls on the relevance and apparent ability evinced in his greatest two novels, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. However, his endurance as a great Amencan writer is also found in his lesser works such as The Red Pony and The Pearl. The latter, Steinbeck called, "a black and white story like a parable" and the felicity with which he crafted the work claims its readers to read it again and again. Indeed, for many critics this story has revealed the bedrock of Steinbeck's personal and political philosophy.

John S. Kennedy was one such early friend who summed up Steinbeck's literary philosophy as a "reverence for life." That was the reason for his popularity, said Kennedy, he wrote of "life and living." This critic was not about to simply say Stem-beck was a naturalist or social realist and, thereby, repeat again that he was a champion of the working man. In fact, Kennedy refutes these claims. Steinbeck was too sentimental in his regard of humanity to be a realist. Thematically, Kennedy rather likes Steinbeck's work until he comes to Harris Morns provides a close reading of Steinbeck's use of allegory and symbolism and chronicles the publication history of the fable. The title, for example, went from being "The Pearl of the World" to 'The Pearl of La Paz " The overstatement of irony involved in a title "The Pearl of Peace" was unnecessary and finally the title shortens to its present form. Moms makes a great deal of Steinbeck's role as a modern fabulist who wrapped his tales in realism knowing the modern world would view any imitation of Aesop as childish. Therefore, he "overlays his primary media of parable and folklore with a coat of realism, and this was one of his chief problems." Then, through a discussion of the use of animal allusions, night, day, and the journey, Morris finds that the effort to overlay realism actually exaggerates the allegorical tendencies while undermining the "realistic aspects of the hero."

For Todd M. Lieber, Steinbeck has remained true to his basic themes throughout his work and he does not see anything new in this parable. Instead, Lieber is interested in Steinbeck's reliance on talismanic symbols to bring his characters to his larger theme of "becoming aware of the individual's relation to the whole." Talismans are objects "that men believe in or go to for some kind of non-rational fulfillment." Throughout Steinbeck's works, characters come to identify with places and with objects as a part of their becoming conscious; "identification results when man transfers part of his own being to his symbols, when an object becomes suffused with human spirit so that a complete interpenetration exists." This is done most successfully in the parable where the pearl becomes an "emotional prop" and "a principle of right action in the world." Lieber views Steinbeck in some awe as a writer able to "penetrate to the sources of human thought and behavior and present in the form of some objective correlative the archetypal and mythopoeic knowledge that lies deep in the mystery of human experience." The talisman psychology being one of those correlatives.

A very different approach was that of Peter Lisca who notices Steinbeck's disillusionment with the "Kiwannis, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce definition of noble character." He sees that Kino finds himself possessed of the means to buy into

that world but he also finds "his house burned down, his wife physically beaten, his only son killed, and the lives of three men on his soul" Rather than continue toward dissipation, Steinbeck has the man and wife make a true escape. Kino had been seeking to escape the low-level economic and social position but willingly returns to that same "repressive society" though "at a higher level." Lisca decides, as Steinbeck perhaps intended, that the "primitive" man's position is the right one to occupy. From there, they see the basic violent and destructive logic of those who repress them. "They return to their village, throw the Pearl of Great Price back into the sea, and return to the edge of unconsciousness, an unthinking existence governed by the rhythms of sun and tide."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Elyse Lord teaches writing at the University of Utah. In the following essay, she argues that, while The Pearl literally dramatizes the plight of a man who is caught between the material world and the spiritual world, the novel insists upon a more symbolic reading, too.

Perhaps the most outspoken critic of The Pearl has been Warren French, who criticized author John Steinbeck for using a traditional tale (the legend of the Indian boy who accidentally finds a large pearl) to make his "cautionary points" about the dangers of materialism. According to French, Kino's struggles would be more meaningful to readers of the *Woman's Home Companion*, where the story was first published, than to Mexican listeners of the original folk tale. French's criticisms are only partially valid.

Kino's discovery that the economic value of the pearl is controlled by a few powerful men can be read as a critique of a capitalistic economic system that embraces material values. Naively, Kino believes that he will be a rich man because he has discovered the "Pearl of the World." He plans to finance a church wedding, to purchase clothes, a rifle, and an education for Coyotito. Yet, when he tries to sell his pearl in La Paz, he receives an offer of only 1,500 pesos. So Kino sets out for the capital in order to find traders who will pay him the full value of the pearl. By challenging the status quo in La Paz, he sets off a chain reaction of events that will force him to reevaluate what he defines to be "valuable."

Juana is less naive about the value of the pearl than Kino is, at least initially. She is quick to grasp that the pearl, if given more value than, say, human relationships, can bring both greed and misery. "This thing is evil," she cries. "This pearl is like a sin1 It will destroy us. . Throw it away,

Kino." Kino refuses to throw away the pearl, because he wants to use the pearl to purchase social status and freedom from oppression for his family and community.

The novel also contrasts the value of the pearl with the value of Kino's family, specifically of Coyotito. The narrator says that for Kino and Juana, the morning that Kino will sell his pearl is "comparable only to the day when the baby had been born." Because the statement follows a paragraph foreshadowing that the pearl will destroy the family, because the reader is likely to believe that there is no greater moment than the birth of a child to a father, the narrator's observation seems ironic. How can one compare the monetary value of the pearl with the value of one's family? It is no coincidence that Coyotito sacrifices his life when Kino insists upon keeping the pearl. Coyotito's sacrifice (death) provides further evidence that French is right. Steinbeck is critiquing materialism and its values.

After Kino has killed a man and the family has been forced to flee, Juana says, "Perhaps the dealers were right and the pearl has no value. Perhaps this has all been an illusion " On a material level, she may be conceding that the pearl really does not

have any monetary value. On a spiritual level (if one defines spirit to be a human being's essence), Juana may be suggesting that, even if the pearl's monetary value is 50,000 pesos, it is still of no value to the family, which craves spirit, not matter. Juana's questioning of the value of the pearl mirrors the questioning of the value of the pearl that occurs throughout the novel. Again, this is consistent with a reading of the story as a critique of materialism

When Juana suggests the pearl may have no value, Kino replies, "They would not have tried to steal it if it had been valueless." In this ironic moment, both the narrator and readers will see that Kino's logic is flawed. He is assuming that thieves steal valuable things, which may or may not be true, and which is only relevant if someone is willing to pay the thieves for their stolen items. Kino must become more sophisticated, more aware of the evil that man is capable of, more aware of the forces that render him and his family helpless.

Again, Kino's naive nature provides support for French's criticism that the novel makes "cautionary" points that are more meaningful to readers in the United States than in Mexico. Contemporary readers in industrial societies are probably more likely to see the irony in Kino's logic than readers from less-industrialized countries. Contemporary readers who have a basic understanding of economic principles are also more likely to see that Kino's major conflict is whether or not he will accept or reject the social, economic, (and by extension, materialistic) values that currently determine his choices in life.

However, at this point, the novel begins to resist French's literal reading. By not recognizing the impact of the forces of capitalism upon their lives, by not recognizing their own powers, Kino and Juana unwittingly bring about then: own downfall. They lose their home and their canoe. They are forced to flee La Paz, to leave behind their families and friends.

The lessons that Kino and Juana will learn now take the form of an allegorical journey (An allegory is a story in which the objects, people, or actions represent a meaning that can be found outside of the story.) Because Kino and Juana have not recognized their own power (they have, for example, relinquished their own very capable authority as healers to the less capable doctor), because they have not shown an awareness of the material values and powers that are dominating their lives, they are thrust into a dark (and very symbolic) night in order to be educated.

The responses of readers to the symbolism of Kino's and Juana's journey and to the symbolism of Kino's and Juana's education will take a variety of forms. The suggestive symbols in the novel, particularly the symbols of the pearl and of the journey, ask readers to move beyond French's tidy interpretation of the novel into a more psychological and fluid realm.

Not surprisingly many critics do view the return of the pearl to the ocean at novel's end to be a rejection of the material world in favor of the spiritual world. However, this interpretation largely ignores the symbolism of the pearl, which is linked in many ways

throughout the story to Kino. Most strikingly, the pearl has, as Kino tells his brother, Juan Tomas, become his soul. "If I give it [the pearl] up I shall lose my soul," he says.

To follow the logic of this symbolism, when Kino rids himself of the pearl, he is ridding himself of his soul. How will readers respond to this?

Peter Lisca offers one interpretation. Kino's definition of the soul, says Lisca, is "not the usual religious definition of 'soul,' but human consciousness and potential, those qualities that cause man to separate himself from the rest of nature." When Kino renounces the pearl, he therefore "refuses the option of attaining his soul (a distinct identity) ... preferring to undefine himself ... thus going back to the blameless bosom of Nature in a quasi-animal existence." Other interpretations are possible, even suggested. The novel gives readers room to decide for themselves.

Jungian critics (followers of the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung), with their interest in archetypes (images that occur in the unconscious minds of all humans) offer a satisfying complement to French's interpretation of the novel. Because the Jungians believe in the notion of "universal" symbols, and because they find these symbols in The Pearl, they equate Kino's family's journey with the symbolic journey of the soul. More specifically, they suggest that both Juana and Kino undergo initiations into adulthood, and that these initiations would be recognizable, as symbols, to cultures in Mexico, in the United States, and in many other countries.

As Deborah Barker points out, Joseph Campbell has documented that the archetypal hero's journey often takes the familiar pattern of departure, initiation, and then return. The initiation may involve a symbolic death, which then requires a symbolic rebirth. In the context of The Pearl, the loss of his son, home, and canoe would symbolize Kino's death, while the return of the pearl to the bottom of the sea would symbolize rebirth. This pattern of departure, initiation (symbolic death, symbolic rebirth), and return recurs throughout stories around the world.

According to Barker, Juana's initiation is a little different from Kino's. Juana undergoes a "rite of disenchantment" through her journey. At the start of the story, says Barker, Juana appears as a "submissive figure trailing after her husband with a devotion nearly dog-like." At the conclusion of the story, Juana has been elevated to a status equal to Kino's as the two return to town "side by side." In other words, Juana, as archetype, leaves La Paz as a young girl, is initiated into the "disenchantments" of womanhood, and then becomes a woman transformed. Barker reads Juana's journey primarily as a soulful one, in keeping with the notion that the meaning of the story is not solely thematic, but can be found in its images and in the patterns of its images. Again, these images recur in other stories throughout the world, thus Barker would probably disagree with French's suggestion that the novel holds localized appeal to readers of the *Woman's Home Companion*.

Another Jungian approach to The Pearl reads the characters in the story as symbolizing different aspects of the human psyche. Jung was concerned not just with archetypes, but with the ongoing struggle between the conscious and the unconscious. To a Jungian

psychologist, harmony is achieved only when one is able to successfully confront the reality of one's unconscious.

Joseph Timmerman provides an example of a Jungian interpretation of the novel that is concerned with the ongoing struggle between the conscious and the unconscious. Timmerman reads Kino's journey as a confrontation with his own shadow (the part of his unconscious that is socially unacceptable, his darker side.) In order for Kino to access his shadow self, he must listen to the female part of his unconscious (known as his anima). Juana, who is portrayed as intuitive and wise, symbolizes Kino's anima. Juana (Kino's anima) helps Kino to express his unconscious desires, as when she forces him to, in Timmerman's words, "brave the civilized world of the doctor." As the novel progresses, she becomes Kino's "guiding power," as his anima would.

Keeping the novel's rich symbolism in mind (from this very brief discussion), one is perhaps better prepared to appreciate the themes in the novel without feeling bound by them. A thematic analysis reveals that the novel does dramatize man's struggle to know what to value, a struggle that is complicated by his trapped position between the material and the spiritual world. While this reading is consistent with the reading that Steinbeck is critiquing materialism, it can not be taken as the "definitive" interpretation of the novel. The novel contains another symbolic level that will resonate within each reader's unconscious.

When Steinbeck wrote in his preface, "If this story is a parable [an allegory that makes a moral point], perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it," he was not making an idle suggestion. Meaning in The Pearl, as some of the psychoanalytical readings have already demonstrated, extends far beyond the realm of a materialist critique.

Source: Elyse Lord, in an essay for Novels for Students, Gale, 1999.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Karsten examines two of Steinbeck's major themes and their manifestations in The Pearl.

Before advancing to thematic material, it may be well to establish immediately what we hold as the structure of the novel. Although the structure could be shown schematically, let us use words. Each chapter contains a central incident which has both cause and effect, tying together the action. In Chapter I the central incident is accidental, the scorpion's stinging Coyotito, and results hi the need to find a pearl with which to pay for a doctor's treatment. The discovery of the pearl, the fruit of purposeful action for something good and the central incident of Chapter II, has the effect of making Kino everyone's enemy, the townspeople's becoming a threat to Kino and his family. Chapters III and IV have as central incidents the attacks upon Kino for possession of the pearl. These attacks are both physical as well as emotional (the doctor's "treatment" of Coyotito) or intellectual (the pearl buyer's attempt to take advantage of Kino's ignorance), and they arise from a human evil, greed. These incidents result in the growing conflict between Kino and Juana over the pearl. In Chapter V the turning point is reached in the central incident of that chapter, the destruction of what we call existence for Kino, caused by purposeful action for an evil goal. The effect of this incident is Kino's forced emigration from the community. The central incident of the final chapter is the death of Coyotito, again, as in the first chapter, an accidental incident, which results in Kino's return to the community and the destruction of the pearl.

With this structure in mind, let us turn now to the central theme. Just as the pearl is an "accident," so is man's existence, and that existence has meaning within human relationships, basic of which is the family. Just as the Pearl is good or becomes invested with evil because of the ways men use it, so man himself appears, becomes, emerges as good or evil because of the ways men use other men, nurturing or destroying the human relationship between them, validating or invalidating the meaning of their existence.

We have attempted to trace two manifestations of this theme through the novel The first follows Steinbeck's use of music as a symbolic representation of the theme paralleling the basic story. The second manifestation is found in Steinbeck's use of description to suggest the relationships between Kino and his community and between the community and the town as social embodiments of the theme again paralleling the basic story.

Steinbeck has established three main songs that are named: the Songs of the Family, of Evil, and of the Pearl. Schematically, these three melodies can be envisioned as originating on three separate planes, with the Song of the Family in the middle and the Song of Evil on a parallel plane, but imminent. From a plane below both, the Song of the Pearl is created and, as the story itself progresses, moves forward to become one with the Song of the Family, then to transcend it and join with the Song of Evil....

As symbolic representation, the musical parallel must now be related to the central theme. Within the human relationship where Kino's life has meaning, the Song of the Family is warm, clear, soft, and protecting. Herein the Song of the Family represents completeness. It continues to have these qualities as long as the Song of the Pearl does not overwhelm it. As Steinbeck writes, "they beautify one another." When the human relationship is threatened and destroyed (the crisis: Juana attempts to toss away the pearl, Kino strikes her, Kino is attacked and commits murder, Juana realizes the irrevocable change and accepts it to keep the family together, and the change is manifested in the destruction of the old ties of boat and home, and the pearl becomes both life and soul for Kino), the Song of the Family is interrupted and then becomes secondary to the Song of the Pearl. But because life's meaning is now dependent upon the pearl rather than upon human relationships, the Song of the Pearl becomes the Song of Evil opposed to the Song of the Family, which is now harsh, snarling, and defensive—a fierce cry until the Song of the Pearl is stilled and the human relationships are restored within the original community.

Through the suggestive power of Steinbeck's description, the second manifestation of the theme becomes clear: the close harmony in the human relationships within Kino's community and the parasitic relationship between that community and the town....

Even in what might be termed indirect description, Steinbeck has pictures of the parasitic relationship between the community and the town. In the first instance of metaphors from the animal world, Steinbeck reports how an ant, a social animal working for the good of its colony, has been trapped by an ant-lion, living near the ant colony to prey upon it for his individual needs. In the same way the individuals of the town have built "traps" to take advantage of the ignorance of the Indians and to prey upon them for whatever they have of wealth, labor, or services. Next the author cites the example of the hungry dogs and pigs of the town which scavenge the beach searching for dead fish or seabirds, the latter here representing the Indians who live off the sea and who for all general purposes are dead because they have no power to resist, while the former represent the greedy townspeople. In a third metaphor Steinbeck describes the fish that live near the oyster beds to feed off the rejected oysters and to nibble at the inner shells. Perhaps this is the most forceful of the metaphors, for the author seems to be saying that the Indians, the rejects of modern society, thrown back after having been despoiled of their wealth by that society, are the prey of the townspeople who live nearby and who scavenge even upon the hopes, dreams, and souls of these people. Finally in the metaphor of the large fish feeding on the small fish, Steinbeck supplies a simple restatement of this parasitic relationship between the town and the community, and perhaps a picture of the inevitability of such a relationship in nature. .

In Kino's community all have a sense of responsibility to one another and a respect for the humanity of each. Coyotito's scream attracts the neighbors' sympathetic attention as well as curiosity, and the neighbors accompany Kino to the doctor's when the community makes one of its few incursions into the town. Upon the doctor's refusal to treat the child, the neighbors will not shame Kino and abandon him so that he will not have to face them. The discovery of the pearl brings them again, this time to share the joy and dreams; yet, they are more concerned for Kino than they are interested in the

pearl. The neighbors again come to Kino when the doctor appears to inflict temporary illness upon Coyotito. They also go with Kino when he attempts to sell the pearl as a necessary sign of friendship; and both before and after the visit, Juan Tomas emerges from the group to represent the thinking of the community. During the crisis, Kino could escape; but he will not commit sacrilege against the community by taking another's boat. Although the neighbors demonstrate concern at the fire and grief over the supposed deaths of Kino and his family, Kino's relationship with the community has been destroyed because of the murder; and he must leave to protect the community and his brother ("I am like a leprosy.")

The town, on the other hand, is like a separate organism, walled off from the life of the community, yet living only to drain off that life....

In general, the townspeople as presented in the novel suggest the characteristics of parasitism, especially the retreat from strenuous struggle, the passive mode of life. In addition, the pearl buyers, as agents of a single unnamed, never introduced individual, show another characteristic, that of retreat from independent endeavor. Finally, the doctor symbolizes the unmistakable degeneration that results from parasitism.

Up to this point in the story, we can easily see that Kino's community nurtures human relationships and validates the meaning of existence for its members, whereas the town, as far as the community is concerned and Kino in particular, has consistently sought by its manipulation of men to invalidate the meaning of existence, and it succeeds by forcing Kino to leave the community. From this point the images became animalistic, because the human relationships that gave meaning to Kino's existence as a man have been left behind. The pursuers personify the animostity of the town, which in its greed and as an example to others seeks now to destroy utterly the outsider who has defied it. Their destruction and the consequent salvation of the family, although at the sacrifice of one of its members, re-establish the humanity of and the meaning of existence to Kino and Juana only because they return to the community to begin life again by destroying the pearl.

Besides the central theme as noted above and these various expressions of it, Steinbeck has included additional themes. Let us conclude with a discussion of one of these, the treatment of man and woman in their basic roles and essential natures. Immediately we see expressed, in the reactions of Kino and Juana to the scorpion's attack, the author's statement of these roles. Kino, full of rage and hatred, acts as the avenger of the family, since, as protector, he was unable to act before the scorpion struck; Juana, on the other hand, full of caution, fulfills the role of comforter and healer for the family. And we must note that each has acted separately, not simultaneously, on instinct—first Kino, then Juana, while Kino stands by helplessly having already played his part.

Later, after the pearl has been found, it is Kino who envisions the future in the pearl, who sees what it will provide for the family, and who soon becomes tenacious of what he hopes can be his. Juana quietly watches this tenacity increase to the point of

obsession and urges the healing of the family by casting away the source of infection—the pearl.

The tension caused by the growing conflict between the two roles, Kino now as provider and Juana as preserver, begins slowly during the first attack upon Kino. It has its first expression in Juana's remarks that the pearl would destroy them all, even Coyotito. But she relaxes, and the tension subsides as she realizes that they are "in some way one thing and one purpose." With the second attack in the night the tension increases. Juana strives to preserve the family, but Kino, resolute in his plan for the future, opposes her with his whole being, indeed with the very essence of manhood, in the words "I am a man." Juana is driven, although instinctively as a woman to heal the family, nevertheless in reality to act for the man to protect the family. This appropriation of the man's role by Juana, her rebellion against Kino's decision not to destroy the pearl and her attempt to do so herself, has its counterpart in the interruption of the Song of the Family. ..

The unfortunate conflict in roles has made both Kino and Juana aware of each other in a new way, and this awareness is reflected in a change in Juana's role during the flight and the final return to the community. For she becomes a sharer in, rather than a follower of, Kino's planning. When the trackers make their appearance, it is Juana who goads Kino into overcoming his "helplessness and hopelessness." And again a little later when Kino suggests he go on alone while Juana and Coyotito lie hidden in the mountains, Juana says that they will stay together, and Kino submits to her strength and resolve. After the final, terrible moment of the flight, as husband and wife face the tragedy of Coyotito's death, they find renewed strength in one another. With that strength they share the difficulties of the return to the town, walking side by side, and of the re-establishment of a meaningful existence within the community

Source: Ernest E Karsten, Jr, "Thematic Structure in *The Pearl*,'" in *English Journal*, Vol. 54, No 1, January, 1965, PP 1-7-

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Morris examines the relationship between realism and allegory in The Pearl.

[Nothing] more clearly indicates the allegorical nature of The Pearl as it developed in Steinbeck's mind from the beginning—as the various titles attached to the work—*The Pearl of the World* and *The Pearl of La Paz*. Although the city of La Paz may be named appropriately in the title since the setting for the action is in and around that place, the Spanish word provides a neat additional bit of symbolism, if in some aspects ironic. In its working title, the novel tells the story of The Pearl of Peace. When this title was changed to The Pearl of the World for magazine publication, although the irony was partially lost, the allegorical implications were still present. But Steinbeck had apparently no fears that the nature of the tale would be mistaken when he reduced the title to merely The Pearl...

Steinbeck knew that the modern fabulist could write neither a medieval Pearl nor a classical Aesopian Fox and Grapes story. It was essential to overlay his primary media of parable and folklore with a coat of realism, and this was one of his chief problems. Realism as a technique requires two basic elements' credible people and situations on the one hand and recognizable evocation of the world of nature and of things on the other. Steinbeck succeeds brilliantly in the second of these tasks but perhaps does not come off quite so well in the first. In supplying realistic detail, he is a master, trained by his long and productive journeyman days at work on the proletarian novels of the thirties and the war pieces of the early forties. His description of the natural world is so handled as to do double and treble duty in enrichment of both symbolism and allegory. Many critics have observed Steinbeck's use of animal imagery that pervades this novel with the realistic detail that is also one of its strengths....

Kino is identified symbolically with low animal orders' he must rise early and he must root in the earth for sustenance; but the simple, pastoral life has the beauty of the stars, the dawn, and the singing, happy birds. Yet provided also is a realistic description of village life on the fringe of La Paz. Finally, we should observe that the allegory too has begun. The first sentence—"Kino awakened in the near dark"—is a statement of multiple allegorical significance. Kino is what modern sociologists are fond of calling a primitive. As such, he comes from a society that is in its infancy; or, to paraphrase Steinbeck, it is in the dark or the near-dark intellectually, politically, theologically, and sociologically. But the third sentence tells us that the roosters have been crowing for some time, and we are to understand that Kino has heard the cock of progress crow. He will begin to question the institutions that have kept him primitive: medicine, the church, the pearl industry, the government. The allegory operates then locally, dealing at first with one person, Kino, and then with his people, the Mexican peasants of Lower California. But the allegory works also universally, and Kino is Everyman. The darkness in which he awakes is one of the spirit. The cock crow is one of warning that the spirit must awake to its own dangers. The allegorical journey has often been called the way into the dark night of the soul, in which the darkness stands for despair or

hopelessness. We cannot describe Kino or his people as in despair, for they have never known any Me other than the one they lead; neither are they in hopelessness, for they are not aware that there is anything for which to hope. In a social parable, then, the darkness is injustice and helplessness in the face of it; in the allegory of the spirit, darkness concerns the opacity of the moral substance in man.

The social element is developed rapidly through the episode of Coyotito' s scorpion bite and the doctor's refusal to treat a child whose father cannot pay a substantial fee Kino's helplessness is conveyed by the fist he crushes into a split and bleeding mass against the doctor's gate. This theme of helplessness reaches its peak in the pearl-selling attempt When Kino says to his incredulous brother, Juan Thomas, that perhaps all three buyers set a price amongst themselves before Kino's arrival, Juan Thomas answers, "If that is so, then all of us have been cheated all of our lives." And of course they have been Kino is, then, in the near dark; and, as his misfortunes develop, he descends deeper and deeper into the dark night of the soul. The journey that the soul makes as well as the journey that the living Kino makes—in terms of the good and evil that invest the one and the oppression and freedom that come to the other—provides the allegorical statement of the novel.

In the attempt to achieve believable situations, create three-dimensional characters, Steinbeck met greater difficulties that he did not entirely overcome. The germ anecdote out of which he constructed his story gave him little more than the bare elements of myth....

[In] Steinbeck's source [are] all the major elements of his expanded version: the Mexican peasant, the discovered pearl, the belief that the pearl will make the finder free, the corrupt brokers, the attacks, the flight, the return, and the disposal of the pearl. But there are also additions and alterations. The episodes of the doctor and the priest are added; the motives for retaining the pearl are changed. While the additions add perhaps some realism at the same time that they increase the impact of the allegory, the alterations tend to diminish the realistic aspects of the hero.

In these alterations, employed perhaps to add reality to a fable, Steinbeck has diminished realism. Narrative detail alone supplies this element. The opening of chapter three, like the beginning paragraph of the book, is descriptive.... Symbol, allegory, and realistic detail are again woven satisfactorily together. The large fish and the hawks symbolize the doctor, the priest, the brokers, and the man behind the brokers, in fact all enemies of the village people from tune prehistoric. Allegorically these predatory animals are all the snares that beset the journeying soul and the hungering body. Realistically these scenes can be observed in any coastal town where water, foul, and animal ecology provide these specific denizens.

Somewhere in every chapter Steinbeck adds a similar touch.... All these passages operate symbolically as well as realistically, and some of them work even allegorically.

Kino's flight may be seen as a double journey, with a third still to be made. The journey is one half spiritual—the route to salvation of the soul— and one half physical—the way

to freedom from bodily want. The Indian boy of the germ-story had quite falsely identified his hold on the pearl with a firm grasp on salvation, a salvation absolutely assured while he still went about enveloped in flesh and mortality: "he could in advance purchase masses sufficient to pop him out of Purgatory like a squeezed watermelon seed." Kino also holds the pearl in his hand and equates it with freedom from want and then, mystically, also with freedom from damnation: "If I give it up I shall lose my soul." But he too has mistaken the pearl. The chances are very much more likely that with freedom from want his soul will be all1 the more in danger from sin. The Indian boy becomes free only when he throws the pearl away, only when he is "again with his soul in danger and his food and shelter insecure." The full significance of Kino's throwing the pearl back into the sea now becomes clear: the act represents his willingness to accept the third journey, the journey still to be made, the journey that Dante had still to make even after rising out of Hell to Purgatory and Paradise, the journey that any fictional character has still to make after his dream-vision allegory is over. Kino, Dante, Everyman have been given nothing more than instruction. They must apply their new knowledge and win their way to eternal salvation, which can come only with their actual deaths.

Kino is not defeated. He has in a sense triumphed over his enemy, over the chief of the pearl buyers, who neither gets the pearl nor kills Kino to keep him from talking. Kino has rid himself of his pursuers; he has a clear road to the cities of the north, to the capital, where indeed he may be cheated again, but where he has infinitely more opportunity to escape his destiny as a hut-dwelling peasant on the edge of La Paz. He has proved that he cannot be cheated nor destroyed. But his real triumph, his real gain, the heights to which he has risen rather than the depths to which he has slipped back is the immense knowledge that he has gained about good and evil. This knowledge is the tool that he needs to help him on the final journey, the inescapable journey that everyman must take.

A final note should be added concerning some parallels between Steinbeck's novel and the anonymous fourteenth century Pearl.

The importance of the medieval Pearl for a reading of Steinbeck's novel is centered in the role of the children in each. Coyotito can, in several ways, be identified with Kino's "pearl of great value." The pearl from the sea is only a means by which Coyotito will be given an education. For the doctor, who at first refused to treat Coyotito, the child becomes his means to the pearl, i.e. the child is the pearl to him. But more important than these tenuous relationships is the fact that with the death of Coyotito the pearl no longer has any significance. The moment the pursuer with the rifle fires, Kino kills him. Kino then kills the two trackers who led the assassin to him and who were unshakable. This act gives Kino and his family unhindered passage to the cities of the north, where either the pearl might be sold or a new life begun. But the chance shot has killed Coyotito, and though Kino and Juana are now free, they return to the village near La Paz and throw the pearl back into the sea. Thus the sole act that has altered Kino's determination to keep the pearl which has become his soul is the death of his child; and, as I read the allegory, Kino and Juana turn from the waterside with new spiritual strength, regenerated even as the father in the medieval Pearl.

However, I do not think that anything overmuch should be made of [the] similarities. Possibly the mere title of Steinbeck's allegory brought memories to his mind of the fourteenth century poem. He may have gone back to look at it again, but he may have satisfied himself with distant evocations only. For myself, whatever likenesses I find between the two works serve only to emphasize the continuing tradition of true allegory and the modern writer's strong links with the past.

Source: Harry Moms, "*The Pearl. Realism and Allegory*," in *English Journal* Vol 52, No 7, October, 1963, pp. 487-505.

Compare and Contrast

1947: Jackie Robinson becomes the first black American to play baseball in the major leagues when he joins the Brooklyn Dodgers. Rookie of the year and lead base stealer in the National League, he is a hero to blacks and a symbol of integration.

Today: Affirmative Action is all but discontinued while blacks retain their predominate role as sports heroes.

1947: Its troops tired of harassment by Jewish settler militias, Britain turns over the "Palestine problem" to the United Nations which allows the creation of the State of Israel months later.

Today: There is still no peace in Palestine.

1947: Britain releases its colonial jewel, India. In the aftermath, three nations are born: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Today: Raising the nuclear stakes worldwide, India and Pakistan have conducted nuclear tests and declared themselves nuclear states. Diplomats from China to Moscow fear an arms race.

1947: The Cold War begins leading to tense relations between the two largest nuclear powers.

Today: The Cold War is over but war hawks on both sides continually threaten to restart the arms race.

What Do I Read Next?

Another compelling fable by a famous author is Animal Farm. Published in 1945 by George Orwell, this satire is a story about farm animals who attempt to take over a farm and operate it collectively. They chase off the exploitative humans but end up under a dictatorship of pigs.

Also published in 1947 was Steinbeck's novel, *The Wayward Bus*. Like The Pearl, this allegorical tale concerns characters who must shed the evil they have contracted. They are not even as successful as Kino and Juana.

Steinbeck again returned to myth when he created the family saga of the Trask family of the Salinas Valley. East of Eden is their story as a modernization of the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Steinbeck regarded the novel as his crowning achievement but his critics have been a bit reluctant to say the same of this overt allegory.

Ernest Hemingway's short novel of 1952, *The Old Man and the Sea*, is a story about a Cuban fisherman named Santiago. He has not caught anything for weeks and then he snags a great big fish. His battle to hold onto the fish leaves him too tired to do anything but tie the fish to the boat. Sharks eat away its flesh leaving him a worthless skeleton and a good story.

Fable telling has never fallen out of style but lately old tales have been retold according to ideologies, re-translations, or rediscoveries. Angela Carter reworked several fairy tales into a collection called *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Her versions of several well-known tales are realistic, feminist, and a heroine replaces the hero.

Topics for Discussion

1. Consider the following quote from The Pearl: "An accident could happen to these oysters, a grain of sand could lie in the folds of muscle and irritate the flesh until in self-protection the flesh coated the foreign body until it fell free in some tidal flurry or until the oyster was destroyed." Augment this description with that of a biology text or book on marine life and interpret Steinbeck's pearl as a trope for human development.

2. Pretending that you are Kino or Juana (knowing only what they know), come up with a plan to relieve the deplorable situation of the community. Be sure to stay true to the characters as they are presented.

3. There are many references throughout the story to colonialism and race. Also, Kino embodies the trope of the noble savage, and all the dialogue is stereotypically that of the newly colonized (despite the fact that we know the Indians speak an indigenous language and the Europeans speak Spanish). Are these necessary components to the story? Whether you answer yes or no, why do you think Steinbeck made use of those additional tensions?

4. Comment on the significance of the following line from the story: "The thin dog came to him and threshed itself in greeting like a wind-blown flag, and Kino looked down at it and didn't see it."

5. Find out more about Steinbeck's literary theory. Does he uphold or betray that theory in this story?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Examine The Pearl and The Red Pony as parables. How does Steinbeck use this literary technique to develop both novels? How do they reflect the writer's personal and political philosophy?

2. Examine the use of allegory, symbolism and fable in Steinbeck's works. Explain the use of these in his writing using The Pearl as an example.

Further Study

Carlos Baker, "Steinbeck at the Top of His Form," in *New York Times Book Review*, Vol 97, November 30,1947, pp 4,52.

In this favorable review, Baker finds parallels between *The Pearl* and the "unkillable folklore of Palestine, Greece, Rome, China, India," and western Europe.

Debra K.S. Barker, "Passages of Descent and Initiation* Juana as the 'Other' Hero of *The Pearl*," in After *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Essays on John Steinbeck*, edited by Donald V. Coers, Paul D Ruffin, and Robert J. DeMott, Ohio University Press, 1995, pp. 113-23.

Barker argues that Juana undergoes a trial "equal to or perhaps more momentous" than Kino's as she evolves from the role of "Helpmate" to that of "The Sage."

Warren French, "Dramas of Consciousness," in *John Steinbeck*, Twayne Publishers, 1975, pp. 126-30.

French defines parable, and maintains that The Pearl does not fit the definition of a parable because it contains too many loose ends.

—, "Searching for a Folk Hero," in *John Steinbeck's Fiction Revisited*, Twayne Publishers, 1994, pp 106-12. French describes the novel as offering a "high-minded lesson for materialistic cultures that certainly could not have been true,"

Maxwell Geismar, "Fable Retold," in *The Saturday Review*, Vol 30, November 22, 1947, pp 14-15.

Geismar criticizes the novel as a work of propaganda rather than art

Sunita Jain, "*Steinbeck's The Pearl* An Interpretation," in *Journal of the School of Languages*, Vol 6, Nos 1-2, 1978-1979, pp. 138-43.

In this positive review, Jam interprets the central drama in the story to be "Kino's education into manhood through the knowledge of good and evil."

Ernest E. Karsten, Jr, "*Thematic Structure in The Pearl*," in *English Journal*, Vol. 54, No 1, January, 1965, pp 1-7 Karsten relates the novel's themes to its organization, focusing his analysis on the Songs of Family, of Evil, and of the Pearl, on the theme of human relationships, and on the essential roles of men and women

Sydney J Krause, "*The Pearl* and 'Hadleyburg': From Desire to Renunciation," in *Steinbeck's Literary Dimension; A Guide to Comparative Studies Series II*, edited by Tetsumaro Hayashi, The Scarecrow Press, Inc , 1991, pp. 154-71 Krause says that critical responses to the novel depend on how one interprets its conclusion, which he sees optimistically as revealing how Kino's weaknesses have become his strengths.

Krause classifies the novel as belonging to the "pessimistic-naturalist" tradition of Twain's "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg "

Howard Levant, "The Natural Parable," in *The Novels of John Steinbec*k, A *Critical Study*, University of Missouri Press, 1974, pp 185-206.

Levant analyzes Steinbeck's narrative methods, focusing on the novella's simple structure, which, he believes, provides a necessary balance to Steinbeck's complex material

Peter Lisca, "The Pearl," in *The Wide World of John Stem-beck*, Rutgers University Press, 1958, pp 218-30 Lisca offers an interpretation of *The Pearl* as both a "direct statement of events," and "as a reflection of conscious or unconscious forces dictating the imagery in which it is presented."

—, in *John Steinbeck: Nature and Myth*, Thomas Y Cromwell, 1978.

Critical look at Steinbeck's theoretical use of biological theory and mythical components in his fiction.

Michael J Meyer, "Precious Bane- Mining the Fool's Gold in *The Pearl*," in The Short Novels of John Steinbeck, Critical Essays with a Checklist to Steinbeck Criticism, edited by Jackson J Benson, Duke University Press, 1990, pp 161-72.

Meyer analyzes critical responses to the novella, in particular how they interpret the ambiguity in the tale, then offers his own interpretation the parable acknowledges that only on his way toward death is man able to "discover who he really is "

Harry Moras, "*The Pearl*. Realism and Allegory," in *English Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 7, October, 1963, pp. 487-505. Morns investigates the appearance and reception of allegory in the past four hundred years of literature, responds to those who criticized the novella because it is an allegory or because it is anti-matenalist, and concludes that Kino is a remarkable hero because he is an allegorical Everyman.

Orville Prescott, "Books of the Times," in *New York Times*, November 24, 1947, p 21.

Prescott praises *The Pearl* for its simple style and powerful emotional impact, and compares it to Kipling's Mowgh story, "The King's Ankus "

John Steinbeck, "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech," in Faulkner O'Neill Steinbeck, edited by Alexis Gregory, Helvetica Press, Inc, 1971, pp 205-08.

In this speech, Steinbeck considers the human need for literature, and agrees with Faulkner that the "understanding and the resolution of fear are a large part of the writer's reason for being "

John Steinbeck and Edward F Ricketts, in *Sea of Cortez*. *A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research*, Viking, 1941 This work is the result of a marine expedition that Steinbeck

undertook with his friend Ed Ricketts in 1940 It provides more insight into Steinbeck's biological theories. The expedition takes place in the Gulf of California where a story like *The Pearl* might easily take place.

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John S. Kennedy, "John Steinbeck. Life Affirmed and Dissolved," in *Steinbeck and His Critics A Record of Twenty-five Years*, edited by E W Tedlock, Jr. and C.V. Wicker, University of New Mexico Press, 1957, pp. 119-34.

Todd M. Lieber, 'Talismanic Patterns in the Novels of John Steinbeck," in *American Literature*, May, 1972, pp 262-75.

Peter Lisca, "Escape and Commitment-Two Poles of the Steinbeck Hero," in *Steinbeck; The Man and His Work*, p. 322.

Harry Morns, "The Peart Realism and Allegory," in English Journal, Vol. LH., No 7, October, 1963, pp. 487-505.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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