

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

John
STEINBECK



The Pearl



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The Pearl: Intro

Read each statement and circle “A” for agree or “D” for disagree. Explain your reasoning.

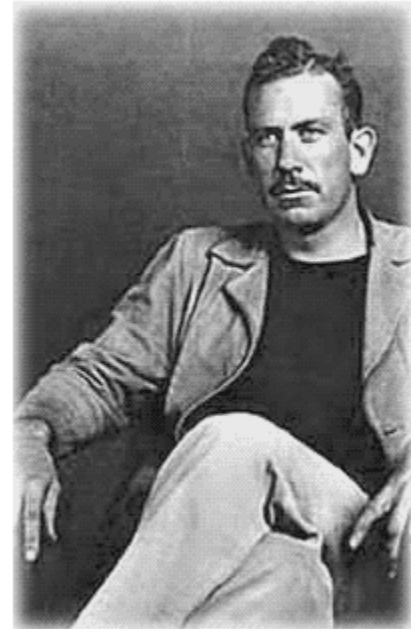
1. A D There are unwritten rules that dictate how people should act.
2. A D Good luck can bring happiness.
3. A D There are unwritten rules that dictate how successful, powerful, or popular you can become.
4. A D Money can provide happiness.
5. A D We control our own lives.
6. A D Fate, destiny, or another force we cannot control determines our lives.
7. A D All good things that happen come with a price.
8. A D One single choice can have a huge impact on the outcome of your life.
9. A D Greed is an unavoidable human condition
10. A D We choose our morals.

The Pearl – Background Information

Author: John Steinbeck (1902-1968) was born in Salinas, California the son of poor parents. Although he was educated at Stanford University and became a celebrated writer, he never forgot his origins. Growing up in working class towns, he became an excellent observer of human nature and later wrote about the people he lived around workers including Mexican-American and migrant workers. He discovered the harsh reality that these people were often treated poorly and without respect and had little means of defending themselves. As a result, many of the characters he wrote about were down and out, isolated and oppressed. They represent the “struggle” theme of his novels--principally the struggle between the poor and the wealthy, the weak and the strong, good and evil, and between cultures or civilizations. These themes are all evident in *The Pearl*.

Origins: In 1940, Steinbeck set out on a sailing expedition to study marine life in the Gulf of California, hoping to find universal patterns in marine species that would help him understand life in general. During this trip, Steinbeck heard about the legend of a Mexican fisher boy who had found an enormous pearl that had brought him much misery.

Steinbeck developed this legend into the novel *The Pearl*. As you read *The Pearl*, watch for details about the plant and animal life in the Gulf and the many metaphors, images and themes Steinbeck uses which are connected to these details.



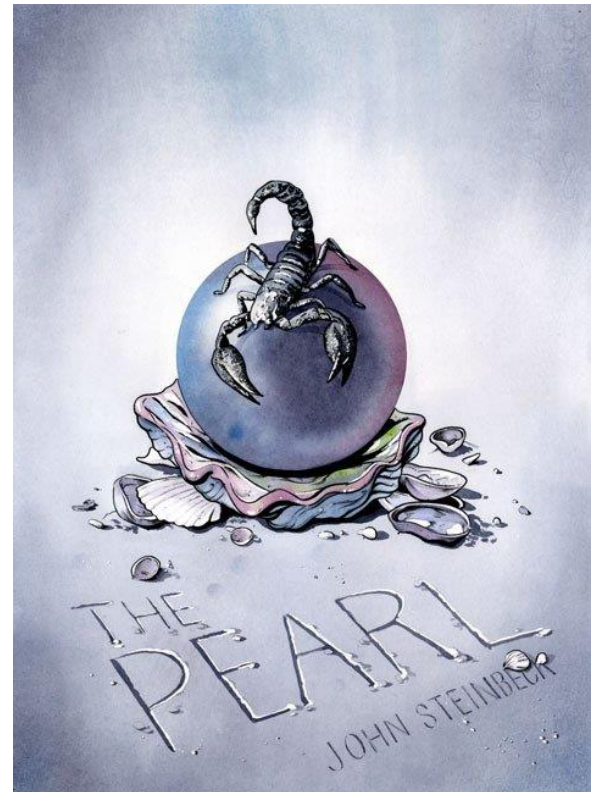
Historical Background and Social Culture:

At the time the story takes place, the Indians of Mexico had already been under the domination of people of Spanish descent for 300 years.

The governing class was primarily made up of those of Spanish descent and the Roman Catholic Church who, together, kept the Mexican Indians at the bottom of the social hierarchy or social ladder. In most cases, the Indians were not allowed to attend school or own land. (Keeping people uneducated and dependent keeps them oppressed). Although Spanish culture and Catholic rituals were forced upon the Indians, they fiercely held onto many of their spiritual beliefs, cultures, and customs of their various tribes.

WATCH FOR EVIDENCE OF THIS IN THE NOVEL!

Style: The Pearl is a short novel or **novella** which is told in the form of an **allegory** or **PARABLE**--a short, simple work with little dialogue illustrating a lesson or a larger truth often on the subject of good and evil. In a PARABLE, good and evil are clearly defined--everything is black and white, there are no shades of gray. For instance, the good characters have names, and the bad characters have no names. The characters and action symbolize certain universal ideas or concepts and the readers attach their own meaning to these symbols.



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Chapter 1

1. In a short paragraph, summarize the **exposition** in the first chapter. Remember to give details from the text.

2. What evidence showed that Kino was content with his life even though he and Juana were very poor?

3. What sudden event disrupted the serenity of Kino and Juana's life?

4. How did each of our characters react to this event?

Juana:

Kino:

5. What did Juana's **decision** to take Coyotito to the doctor **reveal** about her **character**?

6. Why do the townspeople follow them?

7. What are your impressions of the doctor? Why do you feel that way?

8. Complete a graphic organizer that shows several important differences between the doctor's lifestyle and Kino's lifestyle.

Doctor's Lifestyle	Kino's Lifestyle

9. What is the major **conflict** of the book, as established in the end of Chap. One? How does Kino feel about this conflict?

10. What **point of view** is the story being told from? How can you tell? Is the point of view effective? WHY or WHY NOT?

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Chapter 2

1. Why is Kino's canoe the one thing of value Kino owned?

2. What do you think finding the pearl will mean for Kino and his family?

3. How did Kino react when he found the pearl? Why?

4. When Kino brought the large oyster to the surface, Juana sensed his excitement. She pretended to look away because she felt it was bad luck to want something too much. Do you agree with this response? Do you think Juana's feelings were the result of superstition or were they understandable?

5. What does Juana pray for? Why? Is she more religious or more superstitious? Use two examples of Juana's actions from Chap. 1 and 2 to provide evidence.

6. Reread Steinbeck's description of the oyster bed in chapter two to find a **simile** in his description of the frilly pearl oysters. Write the simile, and tell what is being compared.

Pay attention to the following:

- Juana's natural instincts
- How a pearl is formed
- Superstitions
- Difference between need and greed

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Chapter 3

1. In the opening what is the town compared to? Why do you suppose he makes this comparison?
2. How does the news of the pearl affect a) the priest, b) the shopkeepers, c) the doctor, and d) the beggars.
3. Why did Kino become every man's enemy after the discovery of the pearl? How did his discovery affect the town in general?

*Read the following passage from chapter. 3, then respond to the questions below:

[After a robber tries to steal the pearl and injure Kino in the process, Juana says] "Kino, this pearl is evil. Let us destroy it before it destroys us. Let us crush it between two stones. Let us
- throw it back in the sea where it belongs. Kino, it is evil, it is evil!"
"No," Kino says. "I will fight this thing. I will win over it. We will have our chance...No one shall take our good fortune from us."

4. What are the pros and cons for destroying the pearl? Think carefully about all reasons.

PROS:

CONS:

5. What causes Kino's hatred of the Doctor to melt into fear?
6. How have Juana and Kino changed in this chapter?
7. How did the references to songs and music in this chapter reflect the events that occurred?
8. When Kino dreams of what the pearl can do for him, he thinks about owning a rifle. What event or events might be **foreshadowed** with Kino's wish for a rifle?