

The Pearl Guide

***The Pearl* by John Steinbeck**

Below are the Essential Questions, Theme Topics (Motifs), Thematic Questions, and Key Literary Terms that we will use for our analysis of *The Pearl*. These questions, theme topics, and terms will guide our discussion and analysis during this unit, so it is important for you to be familiar with them as you read. Use this overview to help guide your annotations and read through the background information before you read the novel.

Essential Questions

- How does parable transcend time and place to employ a universal theme?
- What makes a theme universal?
- Why are symbols useful to writers and their audience?
- How can writing be used to effect change in society?

Theme Topics (Motifs) from *The Pearl*

During your reading and annotating of *The Pearl* look for and mark passages that make a point or statement about these possible theme topics:

_ **Money, Possessions, Greed:** Look for passages/quotes dealing with the quest for money and the desire for things of the material world, as well as references to the steps

which people will take to attain those things. Also, look for passages/quotes that imply

that money can buy happiness.

_ **Social Oppression:** Look for passages/quotes dealing with the oppression of the Mexican Indians in the portrayal of the doctor, the priest, the pearl buyers, and the trackers. Watch for details which show how Kino and his people are treated disrespectfully, taken advantage of, and discriminated against.

_ **Man as a part of nature:** Look for passages/quotes which illustrate similarities between humans and other species through comparisons. NOTICE the frequent images

Steinbeck uses and think of how these passages reflect or foreshadow (give hints about

future events) HUMAN events.

_ **Kino's songs:** Look for passages/quotes with references to the "music" Kino hears--

the three types of songs he hears and their significance. Pay particular attention to WHEN and UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES he "hears" a particular song.

_ **Good vs. Evil:** Look for passages/quotes that reflect images and ideas of darkness/light,

good- evil, brightness- dimness, day- night, black- white, etc.

_ **Appearance vs. Reality:** Look for passages/quotes that refer to **things not being what they seem**. Consider looking for passages/quotes about visions, haze, mirages, dreams, vagueness, ghostly gleams, illusions, etc.

Thematic Questions

- How does oppression manifest in both the community and individual?
- How can society's wrongs be righted?
- How much control does an individual have over his/her "success" in life?
- How can we determine if something or someone is what or who they appear to

be?

Can money or desire change an individual?

Is money necessary to be “successful” in life?

What is the difference between good and evil? Are there any shades of gray?

Honors English I

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*Remember that a Literary Theme is

_ the controlling idea of a story

_ an arguable comment or statement an author makes about the nature of humankind or

society

_ a truth that can be taken from the specifics of the story and applied to society in general

_ some human truth that the author wants the reader to understand about life, the human experience, or human nature

Key Literary Terms: theme, motif, characterization, conflict, symbolism, parable, allegory, setting, metaphor, simile, personification, figurative language, imagery, Freytag’s Plot Pyramid

***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 (comparisons), images and themes Steinbeck uses which are connected to these details.

Setting: The events of *The Pearl* take place sometime around the 1900 on an estuary (mouth of the river) somewhere on the coast of Mexico in the town of La Paz. On a map the long peninsula which descends from California is called BAJA CALIFORNIA. It is part of Mexico and is separated from the rest of Mexico by the Gulf of California, also known as the Sea of Cortez. Honors English I *The Pearl*

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.

Point of View: *The Pearl* is told by an all knowing OMNISCIENT third-person narrator who is observing the characters and their actions from outside the story.

Comment: The reader is told in the preface, "*In the town they tell the story of the great pearl--how it was found and how it was lost again...If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it.*" Thus begins Steinbeck's novel of good and evil, *The Pearl*. It is the timeless tale of the Mexican-Indian fisherman Kino, his wife Juana, and their infant son, Coyotito. It tells of how Kino finds the Pearl of the World and dreams of breaking out of the trap of poverty and ignorance that oppresses him and his family. The violence that follows his dreams, but brings him a greater understanding of himself and the realities of the world in which he lives. As you read, consider what meaning you take from Kino's story.

Other Well-Known Novels By Steinbeck:

Tortilla Flat (1935)

The Red Pony (1937)

Of Mice and Men (1937)

The Grapes of Wrath (1939)

Cannery Row (1945)

East of Eden (1952)

The Winter of Our Discontent (1961)

Travels With Charley (1962)

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***The Pearl* – Literature Guide**

As you read *The Pearl*, complete the following questions. These questions will help you remember and reflect on

important plot and literary elements/techniques from the reading, so that your analysis is more in-depth. The

story is simple, but because it is an allegory, there is deeper meaning at every turn.

Read between the lines and

analyze characters, setting, imagery, symbols, etc. *The Pearl* is a short novella and reading it several times before

the start of the school year will offer you a more in-depth understanding.

Chapter 1 (pg. 3-13)

1. Where does the story open?

The story opens in Kino's hut, located on the beach. The beach is on the Gulf of Mexico, but this information is not revealed until Chapter 2.

2. Who are the main characters introduced at the beginning of this chapter?

Kino, his wife, Juana, and his infant son, Coyotito

3. Where does Coyotito sleep?

In a hanging box

4. What did Kino's "people" do?

They were makers of great songs. Everything they saw, thought, did, heard or experienced became a song.

5. What is the Song of the Family?

The sounds of the family waking – Juana talking to Coyotito, Juana fanning the fire into flames, and the rhythm of the grinding stone that Juana used to work the corn for morning cakes.

6. What kind of morning did Kino think it was?

"It was a morning like other mornings and yet perfect among mornings."

7. What is the Whole?

It is the safety and warmth provided by the familiar routines of Kino's family.

8. How is Kino described?

“Kino was young and strong and his black hair hung over his brown forehead. His eyes were warm and fierce and bright and his mustache was thin and coarse.”

9. What draws Kino’s attention to Coyotito’s hanging box?

A tiny movement – a scorpion was climbing down the rope that suspended the box.

10. What is the Song of Evil? What brings the Song of Evil?

“The Song of Evil is the music of the enemy, of any foe of the family, a savage, secret dangerous melody....” The scorpion brings the Song of Evil.

11. What contradiction does Juana display when the scorpion appears?

She repeats an ancient magic to guard against evil, while muttering a Hail Mary between clenched teeth. It is the contradiction between pagan and Christian religious rituals.

12. What harm comes to Coyotito? Why is Kino unable to stop it?

Kino reaches for the scorpion and when it poses to sting, Coyotito shakes the rope to the box, and the scorpion falls on the baby and stings him.

13. What does Kino do to the scorpion?

He beats and stamps it until it is only a moist place in the dirt.

14. How does Juana react to Coyotito’s injury?

She immediately begins to suck the poison from the puncture wound.

15. What is the danger of the scorpion’s sting?

The poison from the sting may make an adult gravely ill, but it could cause death in a baby.

16. What surprising thing did Juana request after Coyotito was stung? Why was it surprising?

She asked Kino to go get the doctor. It was surprising because “To get him would be a remarkable thing. The doctor never came to the cluster of brush houses.”

17. What does Kino do about Juana’s request? How does Juana respond?

Kino tells Juana, “The doctor would not come.” Juana tells Kino they will go to the doctor.

18. What “skill” did the beggars have?

They were experts in “financial analysis.” That is, they were able to determine people’s status of wealth or poverty by observing them.

19. What did the beggars decide about Kino and Juana?

They decided that they were too poor, and the doctor would not see them.

20. What did the beggars know about the doctor?

“They knew his ignorance, his cruelty, his avarice, his appetites, his sins.”

21. Why does Kino hesitate when they reach the doctor’s residence?

Because the doctor was of a race which for nearly four hundred years had beaten and starved and robbed and despised Kino’s race; all of the doctor’s race spoke to all of Kino’s race as though they were simple animals.

22. What are some indications that the doctor leads a wealthy lifestyle?

He wears a dressing gown of silk from Paris. The gown is tight, which means he’s eating well and gaining weight. He has a silver tray with delicate china on it. The décor of the room indicates a wealthy lifestyle as well.

23. When the doctor learns of Coyotito’s injury, what is his reaction? What does this indicate about his attitude toward Kino’s race?

He reacts with anger, then he reacts with greed. He says, “Have I nothing better to do than cure insect bites for ‘little Indians’? I am a doctor, not a veterinary.” Then he demands, “Has he any money?...See if he has any money!” The doctor believes Kino’s people are animals, and they are worthless unless they can pay for his services.

24. When Kino offers pearls as payments for the doctor’s service, what happens?

The doctor’s servant is gone for a short moment, and then he returns to tell Kino, “The doctor has gone out. He was called to a serious case.”

25. What is ironic about the servant’s comments to Kino?

The doctor has not really gone out, and the servant’s choice of words is ironic. What could be a more “serious case” than a poisoned child?

26. How does Kino react to the doctor’s behavior toward his family?

He strikes the gate with his fist.

Chapter 2

1. What do people of the Gulf trust?

“...things of the spirit and things of the imagination, but they do not trust their eyes to show them distance or clear outline or any optical exactness.”

2. What is the one thing of value Kino owns? Why is it so valuable?

His canoe; “it is the bulwark against starvation.” It is his means of income and keeping his family fed and sheltered.

3. How does Juana treat Coyotito’s scorpion sting?

She makes a poultice out of brown seaweed and presses it to the baby’s swollen shoulder.

4. Does her remedy work?

The remedy is “as good a remedy as any and probably better than the doctor could have done. But the remedy lacked his authority because it was simple and didn’t cost anything.” The remedy might work, but Juana is skeptical because a doctor didn’t apply it. As yet, Coyotito hadn’t experienced the stomach cramps typical for scorpion poisoning, so her remedy might be working.

5. For what does Juana pray?

She didn’t pray directly for Coyotito’s recovery. She prays for Kino to find a pearl large enough to pay the doctor for his services to cure the baby.

6. What is the “accident” that happens to oysters?

A small grain of sand gets in the folds of muscle and irritates the flesh until in self-protection the flesh coats the grain of sand. The coated grain of sand becomes a pearl.

7. About what had Kino’s people made songs?

Everything that happened or existed; they made songs to the fishes, to the sea in anger or in calm, to the light and dark, to the sun and moon.

8. What song was in Kino as he held his breath underwater?

The Song of the Pearl That Might Be, part of the Song of the Undersea

9. How long can Kino hold his breath underwater?

Over two minutes

10. What attracts Kino’s attention to the ancient oyster that lying by itself?

A ghostly gleam

11. Why is Kino reluctant to open “the” oyster until he’s opened all the other oysters?

He doesn’t dare to hope that the oyster contains a pearl. The ghostly gleam he saw could have been an illusion, or a reflection of the shell. His people, the people of the Gulf are used to disappointment, and this pearl offers hope.

12. What does Juana tell Kino to do with “the” oyster?

She tells him to open it.

13. What has Kino found in the oyster?

He has found “the greatest pearl in the world.”

14. What do Kino and Juana discover right after they discover the pearl?

They find that the seaweed poultice has taken the swelling out of Coyotito’s shoulder, and the poison was receding from his body.

Chapter 3

1. Throughout the novel, there are various types of animal imagery. What is characterized as an animal at the beginning of this chapter? When is this imagery first used in the novel?

“The town is a thing like a colonial animal.” The image the author gives demonstrates how the townspeople “digest” the news of Kino’s discovery. The animal imagery is first used when Kino’s people are characterized as animals by the doctor in Chapter 1.

2. As the news of Kino’s prize travels through the village, who learns of the “Pearl of the World”?

The priest, the shopkeepers, the doctor, and the beggars in front of the church

3. What is the doctor’s reaction to the news of Kino’s pearl?

He says that Kino is a client of his, and he is treating Coyotito for a scorpion sting.

4. What does the doctor’s reaction to Kino’s good fortune reveal about his character?

It emphasizes his greediness. He wouldn’t have anything to do with Kino or his family when they came to him for help when Coyotito was injured, because he knew they couldn’t pay for his services. Now that he knows about Kino’s pearl, he’s willing to treat Coyotito.

5. How do people react to the news of Kino’s pearl? What does the news of the

pearl stir up in the town?

“Every man suddenly became related to Kino’s pearl, and Kino’s pearl went into the dreams, the speculations, the schemes, the plans, the futures, the wishes, the needs, the lusts, the hungers, of everyone, and only one person stood in the way and that was Kino, so that he became curiously every man’s enemy.” The pearl stirs up something black and evil in the town – the poison sacs of the town began to fill with venom. People became immediately envious of Kino’s good fortune, and tried to figure out a way to get the pearl for themselves.

6. What comment on human nature does the author make with the villagers’ response?

People are basically greedy. Even people who are used to having nothing and are happy can be changed by the possibility of wealth.

7. What do Kino and Juana assume about the villager’s response to Kino’s prize?

They assume that everyone would be happy for their good fortune.

8. What music does Kino experience after finding the pearl?

“The music of the pearl had merged with the music of the family so that one beautified the other.” The pearl is something good for the family.

9. What does Juan Tomas ask Kino about his discovery? What is Kino’s response?

Juan Tomas asks, “What will you do now that you have become a rich man?” Kino tells Juan Tomas that he and Juana will be married in the church, they will have new clothes, he might buy a rifle, and Coyotito will go to school.

10. Why does the idea of Kino’s son attending school cause such a stir among the villagers?

Kino says, “...these things will make us free because he will know – and through him we will know.” Kino’s people had been oppressed for hundreds of years, and one reason that this oppression continued is because they are illiterate and uneducated. The possibility of Coyotito becoming educated creates hope.

11. What happens to time as a result of the pearl?

Time will be measured based on the pearl. Everything will be in terms of happening before or since the discovery of the pearl.

12. Who comes to visit Kino? Why?

The priest comes to visit Kino. He reminds him to be generous to the church with his newfound fortune.

13. How is the priest like the rest of the village in his request?

He wants to benefit from Kino's discovery of the pearl.

14. What faint song does Kino hear when the priest visits? What does this mean?

Kino begins to hear the song of evil, of the enemy. Kino knows, perhaps only on a subconscious level, that people want to get the pearl away from him.

15. What animal imagery is used for the Song of the Family in this chapter? Why do you think the author uses this image?

The Song of the Family is characterized as like the purring of a kitten. This image conveys the warmth and security Kino feels within his family. A kitten only purrs when it feels safe and is content or happy.

16. Shortly after the priest and the neighbors leave, Kino senses danger. Who appears at this time?

The doctor appears with two assistants.

17. What lie does the doctor tell Kino and Juana?

"I was not in when you came this morning. But now, at the first chance, I have come to see the baby." Of course, he was home when they visited that morning, and he has only come after hearing about Kino's pearl.

18. Even though Coyotito appears to be recovering from the scorpion's sting, how does the doctor make Kino and Juana believe his services are still necessary?

He tells them that a scorpion's poison can lay dormant, and then cause serious damage such as a blind eye or withered leg. He tells Kino, "I know the sting of a scorpion, my friend, and I can cure it." He tells Kino that the poison has "gone inward and it will strike" Coyotito soon. One sign of this is Coyotito blue eyelid.

19. What remedy does the doctor give the baby? What suspicion does Kino have about this remedy?

The doctor gives Coyotito a gelatin capsule of white powder, and says that if the poison is going to strike, it will do so within the hour. During that hour, Coyotito begins to convulse and vomit. The doctor returns and treats him with a few drops of ammonia diluted in water. The baby's spasms subside and it appears the doctor has cured him from the poison. Kino believes that the capsules contained something that caused Coyotito's convulsions, and the doctor was only trying to get some of Kino's money from the pearl.

20. What question does the doctor ask when he is done treating Coyotito? What offer does he make to Kino?

He asks when payment will be made for his services. Kino tells him about the pearl (about which the doctor already knew, of course), and promises to pay the doctor after he has sold it. The doctor offers to keep Kino's pearl in his safe. Kino refuses the offer and says the pearl is safe.

21. What did the doctor hope to reveal with his offer? Is this information revealed?

"He knew the pearl would be buried in the house, and he thought Kino might look toward the place where it was buried." Yes, the information is revealed when "Kino's eyes flick involuntarily to the floor near the side post of the brush hut."

22. After everyone has left the hut, Juana asks Kino, "Who do you fear?" What is his response?

Kino says he fears everyone.

23. While they are sleeping that night, what happens in Kino and Juana's hut?

Kino awakens and hears "the whisper of a foot on dry earth and the scratch of fingers in the soil." An intruder comes, and quietly tries to dig up the pearl.

24. Is the intruder successful?

No, Kino attacks him in the dark and tries to stab him. Kino's head is smashed in the scuffle and the intruder escapes.

25. Who is the most likely person to have sent the intruder? How do you know?

The doctor sent the intruder. It must have been the doctor, because the intruder tries to dig in the place where Kino glanced when the doctor asked him if the pearl was safe.

26. How is Kino characterized during the fight?

He is "like an angry cat, leaped striking and spitting for the dark thing...." Again, the author uses animal imagery for description.

27. What is Juana's response to the stranger's intrusion and attack on her husband?

She cries, "This thing is evil. This pearl is like a sin! It will destroy us. She asks her husband to throw the pearl back into the sea and says, "It has brought evil. Kino, my husband, it will destroy us."

28. What statement does Juana make that serves as foreshadowing?

"It will destroy us all. Even our son."

29. What promise does Kino make to Juana about the pearl? How is the pearl

described at the end of the chapter?

Kino promises that they will sell the pearl and the evil will go with it, and only the good will stay. The pearl is a “guarantee of the future, of comfort, of security. Its warm luccence promised a poultice against illness and a wall against insult. It closed a door on hunger.”

Chapter 4

1. What is the name of the town that “keeps track of itself and of all its units”? What does this mean?

La Paz. It means that everyone in this small town knows everyone else’s business.

2. What did the pearl buyers know?

They already knew that Kino was coming to sell his pearl that day.

3. What supposition is made about the pearl buyers? What is actually the case? When are the pearl buyers happy?

It is supposed that the pearl buyers act alone and compete against one another for business. In actuality, one major buyer employs them all. The “best and happiest pearl buyer was he who bought for the lowest price.”

4. What do the neighbors hope for Kino?

They hope that the pearl does not destroy him and his family. They don’t want wealth to change Kino, they hoped that wealth would not graft onto him the evil limbs of greed and hatred and coldness.

5. What was expected of the neighbors when Kino goes to town to sell his pearl?

It was expected that they would join him – “it was an historic moment, they would be crazy if they didn’t go. It would be almost a sign of unfriendship.”

6. What does Juan Tomas warn Kino against as he leaves to sell the pearl? Why is his warning ironic?

Juan Tomas tells Kino, “You must be careful to see they do not cheat you.” This is ironic because, in the next line Juan Tomas admits, “We do not know what prices are paid in other places.” Since they do not know what the pearl’s market value is, they cannot know if they are being cheated.

7. Why did Kino’s ancestors give up trying to get better prices for their pearls in the capital?

Because when they sent their pearls men to sell them on their behalf, the men would disappear with their pearls and they would end up with nothing.

8. Why does Kino believe that selling the pearl at the capital is against religion? What is really true about this belief?

Because the priest has said so – the priest gives a yearly sermon about how each man or woman is a soldier sent by God to guard his own part of the universe. Each person is supposed to remain faithful and not go running about. The men who tried to sell their pearls at the capital were “running about” and not guarding their post, and that is why they lost their pearls. The belief is based in blind faith. Kino believes the priest because he was raised to do so, but in reality, the priest is contributing to the oppression of Kino’s people by perpetuating this belief.

9. What sign does the pearl buyer give of his astonishment at Kino’s pearl?

He gives no visual sign or facial expression that Kino can distinguish, but under the desk, the pearl buyer drops a coin he has been turning between his knuckles.

10. What is the pearl buyer’s initial appraisal of the pearl? What offer does he make?

The pearl buyer tells Kino that the pearl is too large to sell, because there is no market for such things. He tells Kino it is like fool’s gold, and it is only a curiosity. The pearl buyer offers Kino 1,000 pesos for the pearl.

11. Does Kino accept the offer? What does Kino believe the pearl is worth?

No. Kino accuses the buyer of trying to cheat him. Kino thinks the pearl is worth 50,000 pesos.

12. How does the author characterize the feelings Kino has while dealing with the pearl buyer?

The animal imagery is used again. Kino “felt the creeping of fate, the circling of wolves, the hover of vultures. He felt the evil coagulating about him, and he was helpless to protect himself.”

13. How does the pearl buyer “prove” his original offer was fair? How do you know he was really trying to cheat Kino?

The other pearl buyers support the idea that the pearl is valueless, but they probably arranged this ahead of Kino’s arrival, so that they could get the great pearl for the least amount of money. The pearl buyer reveals himself when he is reluctant to let Kino leave with his “worthless” pearl, and he makes another offer of 1,500 pesos.

14. What do the neighbors say about the pearl buyers’ business dealings with Kino? Why is this ironic?

The neighbors believe the pearl buyers must have been truthful with Kino because they each determined the pearl to be valueless. When Kino offers the theory that they could have arranged the collusion before his arrival, they say, “If that is so, then

all of us have been cheated all of our lives.” That comment is ironic because, in fact, these people have been cheated all of their lives.

15. With what problem regarding the pearl is Kino now confronted?

Since he has defied the pearl buyers, he has no way to sell the pearl locally.

16. What do the less fearful neighbors say about Kino’s actions with the pearl buyers?

They said, “Kino is a brave man, and a fierce man; he is right. From his courage we may all profit.” They realize that Kino’s confrontation with the pearl buyers may lead to fairer dealings in the future.

17. Who said, “We do know that we are cheated from birth to the overcharge on our coffins”? What does he mean?

Juan Tomas said it because the pearl buyers cheated Kino, and their people have been cheated for generations.

18. Why does Juan Tomas fear for Kino?

He says that Kino has not only defied the pearl buyers, but the whole structure of how Kino’s people make their living. He says, “You have defied not the pearl buyers, but the whole structure, the whole way of life, and I am afraid for you.”

19. Kino is under the impression that his friends will protect him if necessary, but what does Juan Tomas tell him?

His friends will protect Kino “only so long as they are not in danger or discomfort from it.”

20. What happens during the night at Kino and Juana’s hut?

More intruders attack Kino.

21. What does Juana ask Kino after the attackers are gone?

She asks him, again, to destroy the pearl or throw it back in the sea before it destroys them.

Chapter 5

1. What is Juana doing at the beginning of the chapter? What is she planning to do?

At the beginning the chapter, Juana is moving around the hut and she moves the fireplace stone (where the pearl is hidden). She is planning to throw the pearl back into the sea.

2. Who stops Juana from throwing the pearl? How?

Kino stops her by wrenching her arm, and striking her in the face. After she falls, he kicks her in the side.

3. What do Kino's actions demonstrate about what the pearl has done to him?

The pearl has become everything to Kino – he would murder his wife rather than lose the pearl.

4. What animal imagery is used when Kino attacks Juana?

Kino bares his teeth and, "hissed at her like a snake." Juana stares back at him, "like a sheep before the butcher."

5. What happens to Kino after he attacks Juana? Why?

When he is walking up the beach, he is tackled and searched by attackers. They are trying to find the pearl.

6. When Kino told Juana, "I am a man," what did that mean to her?

It meant that he was half insane and half god.

7. When Juana walks back in the darkness after Kino attacks her, what things does she find?

First, she finds the pearl that was knocked from Kino's hand when he was attacked. Then she sees two dark figures lying in the path. One figure is Kino; the other is an attacker whom Kino has killed.

8. What does Juana know after she sees that Kino has killed a man?

She knows that their old life is gone forever.

9. When Kino starts to regain his senses after the attack, what is his first concern? What idea does this emphasize (see #3)?

His first concern is that he has lost the pearl. Again, the pearl has become everything – Kino is not so concerned that he has committed murder, as he is that he's lost the pearl.

10. Why does Kino still think he can return to the village and retain his old life? Can he?

He thinks people will believe that he struck to save his life. He cannot return to his old life – it's gone. Juana reminds him about how the pearl buyers treated him and how some of the neighbors treated him after his defiance of the buyers. Too many people are against them now because of the pearl.

11. After Kino decides that he will take his family and leave, what does he discover?

He discovers that his canoe has been vandalized, and a large hole is knocked into the bottom.

12. When Kino discovers his broken canoe, he thinks, "This was an evil beyond thinking. The killing of a man was not so evil as the killing of a boat." Why does he believe this?

Because a boat cannot protect itself, and a wounded boat does not heal. Also, the boat is a man's way of making a living, and when his boat is damaged, a man has not protection against starvation. The broken canoe also demonstrates the evil in man. The men in the village were so envious of Kino, they could no longer allow him to have a normal life among them.

13. What thought never occurs to Kino after he discovers his broken canoe? What does this say about him?

It never occurs to Kino to take another man's canoe. He cannot conceive of treating another man the way he has been treated. This may mean that he still has as his basic humanity. – he hasn't lost everything to the pearl (yet).

14. What happens to Kino and Juana's hut as they're preparing to leave?

Their hut is ransacked and then set on fire.

15. According to Juana, who is responsible for destroying their hut?

"The dark ones." Kino and Juana don't know who is against them – the intruders and attackers could be anyone, but the one thing Kino and Juana know about them is that they are evil or "dark."

16. To what does Juan Tomas attribute Kino and Juana's misfortune?

He blames the pearl. He says, "there is a devil in this pearl. You should have sold it and passed on the devil. Perhaps you can still sell it and buy peace for yourself."

17. What request does Kino make of his brother? Does Juan Tomas agree?

Kino asks Juan Tomas to hide his family, and Juan Tomas agrees to do so.

18. What promise does Kino make to his brother?

Kino says, "I will go tonight and then you will be safe." Kino doesn't want to be a danger to his brother or his brother's family.

19. How does Juan Tomas account for the disappearance of Kino and his family?

He tells people different things. To some he says Kino and Juana have gone south

along the shore to escape evil. To others he says Kino must have gone by sea. To the neighbors he says that if Kino went to the sea, he must have drowned. He tells people his wife is ill with grief over the loss of Kino and his family.

20. What does Kino tell Juan Tomas about the pearl?

Kino tells him he still has it, and he will keep it. He says, "I might have given it as a gift, but now it is my misfortune and my life and I will keep it."

21. Why can't Kino give up the pearl?

Kino's original plan when he found the pearl was to provide more for his wife and son. He was unselfish in this plan, and possibly he's still not willing to give that up. At this point, however, he's lost so much because of the pearl, he isn't willing to give it up. He feels that it must be worth all that he's lost. He says, "This pearl has become my soul. If I give it up I shall lose my soul."

Chapter 6

1. What change occurs in Kino as he and Juana are escaping?

Something ancient stirs in him, and some animal quality about him makes him cautious and wary and dangerous.

2. What music or song does Kino hear as they walk?

The music of the pearl intertwined with the quiet melody of the family.

3. Why does Kino believe they are being followed?

He still believes they will be tracked for the pearl, as well as for the murder he committed.

4. How does Kino convince Juana that the pearl buyers were wrong in their statement that the pearl was worthless?

He tells her that they would not have tried to steal it if it was worthless.

5. What contradictions does Kino see on the surface of the pearl?

He thought the pearl would allow him to buy a rifle, but he only sees the man he killed. He thought the pearl would allow he and Juana to have a church wedding, but he sees himself beating his wife for the pearl. He thought the pearl would allow him to educate his son, but he sees his son sick with fever from the doctor's medicine.

6. What happens to the music of the pearl for Kino?

The music of the pearl becomes sinister, and intertwines with the music of evil.

7. Who do Kino and Juana encounter as they are trying to escape?

They are being followed by three trackers, two on foot and one on horseback carrying a rifle.

8. What animal imagery is used to describe the trackers?

“They were as sensitive as hounds.” Later, when it appears the trackers have found a sign of Kino’s trail, they “whined a little, like excited dogs on a warming trail.”

9. Where do Kino and Juana decide to go in an effort to escape the trackers?

They try to lose the trackers in the mountains. The author uses the animal imagery yet again when he writes, “And Kino ran for the high place, as nearly all animals do when they are pursued.”

10. What do Kino and Juana argue about during their escape?

Kino tries to get Juana to take the baby and go in a different direction than Kino. Juana is determined and refuses to leave her husband.

11. Where do Kino and Juana go in the mountain range?

They travel toward a dark and shadowy cleft. The cleft would provide a source of water, and if there were any passage through the mountains, it would be through the cleft.

12. Do the trackers lose Kino and Juana’s trail in the mountains?

No, they are far behind, but they are still on their trail.

13. Since the trackers will follow them into the mountain range, Kino decides his family will climb to the lowlands again. What concern does he have about doing this?

He is afraid that the baby may cry.

14. As the trackers camp for the night, what does Kino decide? When must he carry out his plan?

Kino decides to attack the trackers during the night. If he can get to the one with the rifle first, he will kill him and use his rifle to kill the other two trackers. He must carry out his plan before the moon rises, or the trackers will spot him.

15. What form of protection does Kino use to ambush the trackers during the night?

He removes his white clothing because it will show up in the moonlight. His own

brown skin is better protection for him in the darkness.

16. What drives Kino down toward his enemy?

The Song of the Family becomes “as fierce and sharp and feline as the snarl of a female puma.” Again, the author uses the animal imagery to describe Kino’s feelings.

17. Why can’t Kino carry out his plan?

The moon rises.

18. What do the trackers hear? What do they think they hear?

The trackers hear Coyotito crying. They think it is a coyote and her litter.

19. What does the tracker do about the sound? How does Kino react?

The tracker decides to shoot in the direction of the sound. Kino leaps at the tracker and stabs him in the neck, killing him. He uses the butt of the rifle to smash the head of a seated tracker, and shoots the third tracker while he’s trying to escape.

20. What does Kino hear after he kills the trackers?

“...the keening, moaning, rising hysterical cry from the little cave...the cry of death.”

21. What event happened to everyone in La Paz?

The return of Kino’s family to the village

22. What is Juana carrying when she and Kino walk into the village?

She carries her shawl like a sack over her shoulder. In it was a small, limp heavy bundle, and the shawl is crusted with dried blood. The specific contents of the shawl are not revealed for another page and a half, but the bundle is the dead body of Coyotito.

23. To where do Kino and Juana walk?

They walk to the shore, to the edge of the Gulf.

24. What does Kino see in the surface of the pearl when he removes it from his clothing?

He sees evil faces, the frantic eyes of the man he killed, and he sees his infant son lying in a cave with the top of his head shot away.

25. What happens to the pearl?

Kino throws it into the ocean with all his might and it disappears.

26. Why do you suppose the author uses so much animal imagery throughout this novel?

Perhaps it is to show how men act like animals when they become greedy.

27. What events foreshadowed the novel's conclusion?

Juana repeatedly told Kino that the pearl was evil and the pearl "would destroy us. Even our son." Juan Tomas told Kino that the pearl had the devil in it and he should get rid of it. Kino never really had a chance to hang on to the pearl. There were other comments made throughout the novel about the poverty that Kino's people lived in and would always live in – losing the pearl was inevitable because those in power would never give up their power to one of Kino's race.

28. What does the pearl represent in this novel?

The pearl could represent many things. First, it represents hope, because it allows Kino the opportunity to provide things for his family he could never have provided before finding the pearl. Second, it represents greed. The pearl changes the personalities of everyone who comes in contact with it, and they can only think about how to benefit from the pearl. Characters like the doctor and the priest behave differently toward Kino's family because of their avarice for the pearl. Of course, Kino is the greediest of all, when he ultimately forsakes his family in order to protect his precious pearl. Third, the pearl represents evil. When it causes Kino to murder four men, it causes the loss of morality in Kino.

Character List

Kino - The protagonist of the novella. Kino is a dignified, hardworking, impoverished native who works as a pearl diver. He is a simple man who lives in a brush house with his wife, Juana, and their infant son, Coyotito, both of whom he loves very much. After Kino finds a great pearl, he becomes increasingly ambitious and desperate in his mission to break free of the oppression of his colonial society. Ultimately, Kino's material ambition drives him to a state of animalistic violence, and his life is reduced to a basic fight for survival.

Juana - Kino's young wife. After her prayers for good fortune in the form of a giant pearl are answered, Juana slowly becomes convinced that the pearl is in fact an agent of evil. Juana possesses a simple faith in divine powers, but she also thinks for herself. Unfortunately for her and her child, Coyotito, she subjects her desires to those of her dominant husband and allows Kino to hold on to the pearl.

Coyotito - Kino and Juana's only son, who is stung by a scorpion while resting in a

hammock one morning. Because Coyotito is an infant, he is helpless to improve his situation and thus at the mercy of those who provide for him. Kino and Juana's efforts to save him by finding a big pearl with which they can pay a doctor prove to do more harm than good.

Juan Tomás - Kino's older brother. Deeply loyal to his family, Juan Tomás supports Kino in all of his endeavors but warns him of the dangers involved in possessing such a valuable pearl. He is sympathetic to Kino and Juana, however, putting them up when they need to hide and telling no one of their whereabouts.

Apolonia - Juan Tomás's wife and the mother of four children. Like her husband, Apolonia is sympathetic to Kino and Juana's plight, and she agrees to give them shelter in their time of need.

The doctor - A small-time colonial who dreams of returning to a bourgeois European lifestyle. The doctor initially refuses to treat Coyotito but changes his mind after learning that Kino has found a great pearl. He represents the arrogance, condescension, and greed at the heart of colonial society.

The priest - The local village priest ostensibly represents moral virtue and goodness, but he is just as interested in exploiting Kino's wealth as everyone else, hoping that he can find a way to persuade Kino to give him some of the money he will make from the pearl.

The dealers - The extremely well-organized and corrupt pearl dealers in La Paz systematically cheat and exploit the Indian pearl divers who sell them their goods. They desperately long to cheat Kino out of his pearl.

The trackers - The group of violent and corrupt men that follows Kino and Juana when they leave the village, hoping to waylay Kino and steal his pearl.