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**THE PEARL**  
**By John Steinbeck**  
**Compiled by Schools Net Kenya**

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### **The Pearl: An Overview**

The Pearl is a novella by American author John Steinbeck, first published in 1947. It is the story of a pearl diver, Kino, and explores man's nature as well as greed, defiance of societal norms, and evil. Steinbeck's inspiration was a Mexican folk tale from La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico, which he had heard in a visit to the formerly pearl-rich region in 1940. In 1947, it was adapted into a Mexican film named *La perla* and in 1987 into a cult Kannada movie *Ondu Muttina Kathe*. The story is one of Steinbeck's most popular books and has been widely used in high school classes.

### **Summary**

The Pearl, which takes place in La Paz, Mexico, begins with a description of the seemingly idyllic family life of Kino, his wife Juana and their infant son, Coyotito. Kino watches as Coyotito sleeps, but sees a scorpion crawl down the rope that holds the hanging box where Coyotito lies. Kino attempts to catch the scorpion, but Coyotito bumps the rope and the scorpion falls on him. Although Kino kills the scorpion, it still stings Coyotito. Juana and Kino, accompanied by their neighbors, go to see the local doctor, who refuses to treat Coyotito because Kino cannot pay.

Kino and Juana leave the doctors and take Coyotito down near the sea, where Juana uses a seaweed poultice on Coyotito's shoulder, which is now swollen. Kino dives for oysters from his canoe, attempting to find pearls. He finds a very large oyster which, when Kino opens it, yields an immense pearl, which Kino therefore dubs "The Pearl of the World". Kino puts back his head and howls, causing the other pearl divers to look up and race toward Kino's canoe.

The news that Kino has found an immense pearl travels fast through La Paz. The doctor who refused to treat Coyotito decides to visit Kino. Kino's neighbors begin to feel bitter toward him for his good fortune, but neither Kino nor Juana realizes this feeling they have engendered. Juan Tomas, the brother of Kino, asks him what he will do with his money, and he envisions getting married to Juana in a church and dressing Coyotito in a yachting cap and sailor suit. He claims that he will send Coyotito to school and buy a rifle for himself. The local priest visits and tells Kino to remember to give thanks and to pray for guidance. The doctor also visits, and although Coyotito seems to be healing, the doctor insists that Coyotito still faces danger and treats him. Kino tells the doctor that he will pay him once he sells his pearl, and the doctor attempts to discern where the pearl is located (Kino has buried it in the corner of his hut). That night, a thief attempts to break into Kino's hut, but Kino drives him away. Juana tells Kino that the pearl will destroy them, but Kino insists that the pearl is their one chance and that tomorrow they will sell it.

Kino's neighbors wonder what they would do if they had found the pearl, and suggest giving it as a present to the Pope, buying Masses for the souls of his family, and distributing it among the poor of La Paz. Kino goes to sell his pearl, accompanied by his neighbors, but the pearl dealer only offers a thousand pesos when Kino believes that he deserves fifty thousand. Although other dealers inspect the pearl and give similar prices, Kino refuses their offer and decides to go to the capital to sell it there. That night, Kino is attacked by more thieves, and Juana once again reminds Kino that the pearl is evil. However, Kino vows that he will not be cheated, for he is a man.

Later that night, Juana attempts to take the pearl and throw it into the ocean, but Kino finds her and beats her for doing so. While outside, a group of men accost Kino and knock the pearl from his hand. Juana watches from a distance, and sees Kino approach her, limping with another man whose throat Kino has slit. Juana finds the pearl, and they decide that they must go away even if the murder was in self-defense. Kino finds that his canoe has been damaged and their house was torn up and the outside set afire. Kino and Juana stay with Juan Tomas and his wife, Apolonia, where they hide for the next day before setting out for the capital that night.

Kino and Juana travel that night, and rest during the day. When Kino believes that he is being followed, the two hide and Kino sees several bighorn sheep trackers who pass by him. Kino and Juana escape into the mountains, where Juana and Coyotito hide in the cave while Kino, taking his clothes off so that no one will see his white clothing. The trackers think that they hear something when they hear Coyotito crying, but decide that it is merely a coyote pup. After a tracker shoots in the direction of the cries, Kino attacks the three trackers, killing all three of them. Kino can hear nothing but the cry of death, for he soon realizes that Coyotito is dead from that first shot. Juana and Kino return to La Paz. Kino carries a rifle stolen from the one of the trackers he killed, while Juana carries the dead Coyotito. The two approach the gulf, and Kino, who now sees the image of Coyotito with his head blown off in the pearl, throws it into the ocean.

## **Setting**

Steinbeck began writing the story as a movie script in 1944, and first published it as a short story called "The Pearl of the World" in *Woman's Home Companion* in December 1945. The original publication is also sometimes listed as "The Pearl of La Paz". He expanded it to novella length and published it under the name *The Pearl* by Viking Press in 1947. As he was writing the novella version, he was

frequently travelling to Mexico where the film version, co-written with Jack Wagner, was being filmed. The film was also released by RKO in 1947 as a co-promotion with the book.

The Pearl was loosely adapted in 2001 for a film directed by Alfredo Zacharias and starring Lukas Haas and Richard Harris which was released directly to video in 2005.

## **The Pearl Character List**

### **Kino**

A prototypical Mexican-Indian who works as a pearl diver, he begins the story as a devoted father and husband to Coyotito and Juana, respectively. Kino is the central character of the story, an 'Everyman' who finds himself becoming increasingly violent, paranoid and defiant as he faces opposition from others after he finds the pearl, and resorts to assaulting Juana and murdering those who threaten him.

### **Juana**

The mother of Coyotito and the wife of Kino, Juana is, as her name suggests, the representation of woman for Steinbeck in the story. She dutifully supports her husband, despite his worsening treatment of her, but warns him against the dangers that the pearl can bring to the family. Juana remains steadfast throughout the story and devoted to maintaining her family. She even refuses to obey Kino when he suggests that they take separate paths to avoid the trackers.

### **Coyotito**

The infant son of Kino and Juana, after he is stung by a scorpion, the doctor refuses to treat him because his parents have no money. Although Juana seemingly cures him with a seaweed poultice, he receives treatment from the doctor only after Kino finds the pearl. When Kino and Juana are hunted by trackers after escaping La Paz, one of the trackers shoots Coyotito in the head as they hide in a cave.

### **The Doctor**

A fat, complacent man who is not from the same race as Kino and Juana, he refuses to treat Coyotito for a scorpion sting when Kino and Juana cannot pay enough. However, once he learns that Kino has found the Pearl of the World, he treats the healed Coyotito after leading Kino and Juana to believe that Coyotito may suffer unseen consequences from the bite. Seemingly interested in stealing

the pearl, the doctor is not of the same race as Kino and Juana, and longs for his days in Paris.

Juan Tomas

The brother of Kino and the husband of Apolonia, he warns Kino against the disastrous consequences that he faces from finding the pearl. Juan Tomas hides Kino and Juana in his house after Kino murders a man in self-defense.

### **Apolonia**

The fat wife of Juan Tomas, Apolonia allows Kino and Juana to hide in her house after Kino murders a man in self-defense.

## **Book Summary and Analysis by Chapters**

### **Chapter 1**

Kino awakes and watches the hanging box where his infant son, Coyotito, sleeps. He then watches his wife, Juana, who has also awakened and rests peacefully. Kino thinks of the Song of the Family, a traditional song of his ancestors, as the dawn comes and Juana begins to prepare breakfast. Kino's ancestors had been great makers of songs, and everything they saw or thought had become a song. Juana sings softly to Coyotito part of the family song. Kino looks at them and thinks that "this is safety, this is warmth, this is the Whole."

Kino sees a movement near the hanging box where Coyotito sleeps. A scorpion moves slowly down the rope supporting the box. Kino thinks of the Song of Evil, the music of the enemy, as the Song of the Family cries plaintively. Kino stands still, ready to grasp the scorpion, but Coyotito shakes the rope and the scorpion falls on him. Kino reaches to catch it, but it falls onto the baby's shoulder and strikes. Kino grabs the scorpion and kills it as Coyotito screams in pain. Juana begins to suck the puncture to remove the poison.

Having heard the baby's screams, Kino's brother, Juan Tomas, and his fat wife Apolonia enter with their children. Juana orders them to find a doctor. The doctor never comes to their cluster of brush houses, so Juana decides to go to the doctor herself. The event becomes a neighborhood affair, for Juan Tomas and Apolonia accompany them and even the beggars in front of the church follow Juana as she marches toward the doctor. Kino feels weak as he approaches the doctor's home, for the doctor is not of his race and thus believes that Kino's people are simple animals.

Kino tells the doctor's servant that his child was poisoned by a scorpion. The doctor is a fat man who longs for civilized living. Although the doctor is at home, he refuses to treat Coyotito unless he knows that he has money. The servant asks if Kino has money, and when he can only offer small seed pearls, the servant tells Kino that the doctor has gone out. Kino strikes the gate with his fist, splitting his knuckles.

### **Chapter 1 Analysis**

The Pearl takes place among an impoverished Mexican-Indian community in La Paz. Although the story involves essentially only this couple, Steinbeck uses Kino and Juana as symbolic of the community in which they live. Steinbeck constructs Kino as an everyman with concerns typical of persons of all social stations. As shown by his encounter with the scorpion, Kino is a devoted father

who dotes on his infant son and adores his wife. Quite importantly, as the story begins Kino is perfectly content with his situation, despite his lack of material possessions and difficult existence. As Kino watches his family, he believes that this is the "whole," the entirety of everything he really needs. This is significant, for this early contentment contrasts with the later panic that Kino and Juana will feel once they receive hope for a better future. Juana, whose name even translates into 'woman,' symbolizes a feminine ideal that complements Kino's masculine prototype.

Nevertheless, despite the serene description with which Steinbeck begins *The Pearl*, he also establishes that this existence is a precarious one; Coyotito's encounter with the scorpion illustrates this possibility of danger that the family faces at all times and brings into focus the magnitude of their poverty, showing that their poverty places a tangible price on their existence that Kino may not be able to pay. The scorpion is a symbol of the furtive dangers that threaten Kino and his family, able to strike furtively at any moment. It is therefore analogous to the other enemies that will threaten Kino and Juana: the scorpion secretly enters the house and strikes at them indirectly, instead of presenting a direct and open challenge to them.

The critical situation that Kino's family faces is significant to show the great importance of the fortune that Kino will receive, for it provides not only the possibility of material goods but may buy the life of his child. Kino's encounter with the doctor sharply illustrates this, as the doctor essentially allows Coyotito to die because Kino cannot pay for treatment.

Although Kino and Juana are representative of the larger community in which they live, this community itself becomes significant in terms of the development of the story. This village takes on a character of its own; this is shown in particular when Juana and Kino visit the doctor and their neighbors follow in a near procession. These nameless villagers serve as a form of chorus on the action of the story, commenting on the developments and judging the decisions and events that occur to Kino. The idea of community is also significant in terms of the various songs that Kino remembers. These songs are entirely symbolic, meant to place Kino in the larger, less personal context as a member of a community with a sense of heritage and to reinforce his status as an everyman. The two songs that Kino remembers during this chapter, the Song of the Family and the Song of Evil, also place the story in a context with diametric opposites; the story is largely a parable with defined parameters of good and evil.

Steinbeck uses the doctor who refuses to treat Coyotito as a symbol of the forces of oppression that Kino and Juana face. The doctor represents the societal system that places a monetary value on human life, as well as the obstacles that Kino

and Juana face. The racial divide between the doctor and Kino plays a considerable role in his refusal to treat Coyotito; although this aspect of the story is not omnipresent, this presents an additional element of adversity that Kino and Juana must endure.

In this chapter, Steinbeck foreshadows eventual changes in Kino's character when he smashes his fist on the doctor's gate. This event shows that Kino reverts to violence and anger when confronted with adversity, yet when he does so he hurts only himself.

## **Chapter 2**

Kino and Juana walk slowly down the beach to Kino's canoe, the one thing of value that he owns. The canoe is old, bought by Kino's grandfather, and is the source of food for Kino. It is their most important possession, for "a man with a boat can guarantee a woman that she will eat something." Coyotito still suffers from the scorpion bite: the swelling on his shoulder continues up his neck and his face is puffed and feverish. Juana makes a poultice from brown seaweed. This poultice is "as good a remedy as any and probably better than the doctor could have done."

Kino and Juana get into the canoe so that Kino can find pearl oysters that may pay for the treatment for Coyotito. Kino dives for pearl oysters, where he thinks of the Song of the Pearl That Might Be and the Song of the Undersea. Kino works steadily under the water until he sees a large oyster lying by itself with its shell partly open, revealing what seems to be a massive pearl. Kino forces the oyster loose and holds it tightly against him.

When Kino comes up for air, Juana can sense his excitement. Kino opens the various oysters he had caught, leaving the largest one for last. He worries that the large pearl he saw was merely a reflection, for "in this Gulf of uncertain light there were more illusions than realities." Finally, Kino opens the oyster to see a rich, perfectly curved pearl. Juana lifts the poultice of seaweed from Coyotito to see that the swelling has begun to recede. Kino puts back his head and howls, causing the men in other canoes to look up and race toward Kino's canoe.

## **Chapter 2 Analysis**

Steinbeck continues to detail the extreme poverty in which Kino and Juana live; not only can they not afford their own canoe so that Kino may perform his job as a pearl diver, they must use a canoe that is several generations old. This is important, for it gives greater weight to the discovery of the pearl, which could raise them from a meager existence into some sense of security.



The canoe is a symbol of Kino's heritage, a relic passed down from his grandfather, but it also represents Kino's role as a provider for his family. Steinbeck generalizes the statement that a man with a canoe can ensure that his wife will never go hungry to illustrate Kino's status as an everyman and to emphasize the distinct roles and duties of a husband and father.

The life that Kino and Juana lead is also an antiquated one; when the doctor refuses to treat Coyotito, Juana relies on primitive methods to cure her son. Steinbeck does not offer a sharp critique of these methods. Instead, he finds them more than adequate to the task and perhaps better than the treatment that the doctor might offer. In this novel, Steinbeck gives greater emphasis and value to traditional behaviors and even primitivism over modern conveniences and, in particular, those who have those luxuries.

Kino's occupation as a pearl diver demonstrates the small chance that he and his family have for success. Pearl diving is a largely fruitless task that relies on the small chance for finding suitable oysters undersea and generally offers only the bare sustenance that maintains Juana and Kino. In effect, pearl diving is an act of desperation that further bolsters descriptions of Kino's poverty. It is the only hope that Kino and Juana have.

Nevertheless, Kino immediately realizes that he has found an impressive pearl when he finds the oyster during his dive, leaving this large oyster as the final one to be opened. This creates a sense of tension and anticipation, as Kino realizes the significance of the pearl he has found. Steinbeck even bolsters the idea of fortuitous chance by juxtaposing the discovery of the pearl with Juana's realization that Coyotito has been cured, thus linking these two events, both of which provide great hope for Kino and Juana. However, even upon the discovery of the pearl Steinbeck foreshadows the later difficulties that might occur. Kino reverts to animalistic behavior once he finds the pearl, literally howling in joy. The pearl causes Kino to revert to instinctual behavior, a change that will have dangerous and disastrous consequences.

### **Chapter 3**

The news of the pearl travels fast through Kino's small village. Before Kino and Juana return home, the news had already spread that Kino had found "The Pearl of the World," as it comes to be known. The local priest learns, as well as the doctor who refused to treat Coyotito. When the doctor learns, he tells the patient that he is treating that he must treat Coyotito for a scorpion sting. All manner of people grow interested in Kino, and the news stirs up something infinitely black

and evil. The pearl buyers consider how they might deal with Kino and offer him the lowest possible price.

However, Kino and Juana do not know the anger and bitterness they have engendered. Juan Tomas asks Kino what he will do now that he has become rich, and Kino answers that he and Juana will be married in the church. Kino envisions how he will be dressed, and sees Coyotito in a yachting cap and sailor suit from the United States. Kino then imagines buying a rifle. Thinking of the rifle breaks down barriers for Kino, as he imagines the whole lot of things that he might have. He thinks that Coyotito will go to school and learn to read. He claims that "my son will make numbers, and these things will make us free because he will know—he will know and through him we will know."

The priest visits Kino and Juana, and tells them that he hopes that they will remember to give thanks and to pray for guidance. The doctor also visits, and although Kino tells him that Coyotito is nearly well, the doctor claims that the scorpion sting has a curious effect that comes later and if he is not treated he may suffer blindness or a withered leg. Not sure whether or not the doctor is telling the truth, Kino nevertheless lets him see the baby. The doctor takes a bottle of white powder and a gelatin capsule, and gives Coyotito a pill. The doctor tells them that the medicine may save the baby from pain, but he will come back in an hour to check on him. After the doctor leaves, Kino wraps the pearl in a rag and digs a hole in the dirt floor where he conceals the pearl.

When the doctor returns, he gives Coyotito water with ammonia and tells Kino that the baby will get well now. Kino tells the doctor that he will pay him once he has sold his pearl. The neighbors tell the doctor that Kino has found the Pearl of the World and will be a rich man. The doctor suggests that Kino keep the pearl in his safe, but Kino says that he has it secure. The doctor realizes that Kino will likely look to the place where it is stored, and sees his eyes move to the corner where he had buried it. After the doctor leaves again, Juana asks Kino whom he fears, and he answers "Everyone."

That night, Kino thinks that he hears noises in his hut. He grabs his knife and strikes out in the dark. The person scurries out. Juana tells Kino that the pearl is evil and will destroy them. She tells him to throw it away or break it, for it will destroy them. Kino says that the pearl is their one chance, and that the next morning they will sell the pearl.

### **Chapter 3 Analysis**

As the titular object of the novel, the pearl that Kino discovers can symbolize several different ideas or themes. In this chapter, Steinbeck equates the pearl

with hope for the future, for it is the means by which Kino and Juana will be able to provide for Coyotito and give him a better life. The pearl also represents a sense of freedom by enabling Kino to educate Coyotito and give him the ability to choose his own profession and way of life apart from the deterministic poverty of his parents. Although the story takes place in Mexico, Steinbeck equates this with the American dream of fortune and prosperity; Kino imagines Coyotito dressed in clothes from the United States.

The discovery of the pearl causes a sharp change in the villagers' reactions to Kino and Juana, for the once unimportant couple become renowned and notorious in La Paz. The pearl gives Kino great importance within La Paz, as demonstrated by the visit from the local priest and the doctor who had just recently refused treatment to Coyotito. However, with this newfound interest in Kino comes the impending feeling of hatred and hostility for him; the discovery causes an anonymous bitterness toward Kino for his great luck, a feeling that he and Juana cannot realize. The hostility directed toward Kino and Juana takes two forms; the first is a general jealousy from the community toward Kino for his luck, while the second is a more specific greed shown by those who wish the pearl for themselves. Steinbeck illustrates this avarice through both the priest and the doctor. In the former case, the priest gives attention to Kino merely as a means to gain some of the money to the church, shamelessly asking Kino to monetarily compensate God for the good fortune he has received.

In the latter, the doctor's newfound interest in Kino stems from a manipulative and dangerous greed. His visit to Kino reveals that he not only wishes to secure part of Kino's new fortune through the salary the doctor might receive for treatment but, as shown by the doctor's attempt to locate the pearl in Kino's hut, that he intends to steal the pearl. Steinbeck makes clear that the doctor does not visit Kino to cure his son; in fact, he indicates that the doctor's treatment of Coyotito might even be superfluous. The suspicious designs of both the doctor and the priest indicate that the danger that Kino faces is not from jealous neighbors who might use the pearl to escape their own poverty, but rather from those whose economic situation is secure and who merely desire greater luxury. Steinbeck thus uses the community reaction to the pearl as social commentary that critiques the ruling class for avarice and exploitation.

The manipulative behavior of the doctor foreshadows greater calamities that Kino and Juana will suffer, which Steinbeck also shows through the anonymous thief who attempts to steal the pearl that night. However, Kino's and Juana's problems are not merely external forces, but are equally internal. Throughout the chapter, Kino and Juana evolve significantly. At first, neither can vocalize the changes that the pearl will make for them, but once they think of the tangible consequences for their newfound fortune they begin to articulate previously

impossible and unimaginable dreams. However, Kino and Juana diverge in their later reactions to the pearl. Juana disavows the consequences of the fortune they will receive, finding the scorn and danger that others present to be an insurmountable evil. Kino uses the animosity and danger as reason for suspicion and paranoia, as shown when Kino strikes randomly with his knife when he fears an intruder. He lapses into the instinctual animalism demonstrated in the previous chapter, a quality that will play a significant role in the tragedy to come.

Steinbeck also foreshadows the trouble that Kino will find with the pearl buyers. In his description of the pearl buyers, Steinbeck claims that, although there are many of them, they are essentially one. This aligns with the idea of segments of the community as a collective that permeates *The Pearl*; as Steinbeck describes the town, it is like "a colonial animal" with its own emotion, essentially a person in itself. The neighbors who comment on the action are not individuals, but rather symbols of their class. Even Juana and Kino exist less as fully-formed individuals and as archetypal representations of man and woman. The pearl buyers, anonymous except for their identity as part of a class, symbolize the ruling elite of La Paz who can exploit Kino.

#### **Chapter 4**

In La Paz, the entire town knew that Kino was going to sell the pearl that day. Kino's neighbors speak of what they might do with the pearl. One man says that he would give it as a present to the Pope, while another said he would buy Masses for the souls of his family for a thousand years, while another thought he would distribute it among the poor of La Paz. Everyone worries that the pearl will destroy Kino and Juana.

Before leaving to sell the pearl, Juan Tomas warns Kino and Juana to get the best price for the pearl, and tells him how their ancestors got an agent to sell their pearls, but this agent ran off with the pearls. Kino had heard the story told as a warning of punishment against those who try to leave their station. Kino and Juana, followed by neighbors, reach the offices of the pearl buyers.

The pearl dealer inspects the pearl and tells him that his pearl is like fool's gold, for it is too large and valuable only as a curiosity. Kino cries out that it is the Pearl of the World, and no one has ever seen such a pearl. The dealer offers a thousand pesos, to which Kino says that it is worth fifty thousand and the dealer wants to cheat him. The dealer tells Kino to ask the others around him. Kino can feel the evil around him as other dealers inspect the pearl. One dealer refuses the pearl altogether, while a second dealer offers five hundred pesos. Kino tells them that he will go to the capital. The dealer offers fifteen hundred pesos, but Kino leaves with the pearl.

That night, the townspeople argue whether Kino should have accepted the money, which was still more than he would have ever seen. Kino buries the pearl again that night, and remains terrified at the world around him. Juan Tomas tell Kino that he has defied not only the pearl buyers, but the whole structure of life, and he fears for his brother. Juan Tomas warns him that he treads on new ground. Juan Tomas reminds Kino that his friends will protect him only if they are not in danger, and tells him "Go with God" before he departs.

In the middle of the night, Kino feels a sense of evil from outside of his brush house, and he prepares to wield his knife. Kino steps outside to see if there are prowlers. Juana can hear noise from outside, so she picks up a stone and steps out of their hut. She finds Kino with blood running down his scalp and a long cut in his cheek from ear to chin. Juana once again tells Kino that the pearl is evil and they must destroy it. Kino insists that he will not be cheated, for he is a man.

#### **Chapter 4 Analysis:**

Steinbeck begins the chapter with the reactions of the people of La Paz, who propose what they might do if they were to find a pearl of such great value. Their reactions reveal a sense of animosity toward Kino, for the great plans for charity that these people suggest contrast with the seemingly self-interested ideas that Kino proposed in the previous chapter. This is important to show the undercurrent of criticism for Kino. Steinbeck suggests the jealousy that people have for his good fortune. Additionally, the idealistic and charitable ideas that people propose reveal a simplistic attitude toward receiving such a great fortune; as Steinbeck has shown and will continue to show, Kino and Juana do not face easy decisions with regard to their newfound fortune, and in fact may be in serious danger.

The pearl dealer, who symbolizes the ruling elite classes, proves to be another example of a manipulative professional man akin to the priest and the doctor. He shamelessly attempts to cheat Kino out of his money, offering a price that seems far too low for such a pearl; although there remains the possibility that the pearl may be an oddity with little practical value, the numerous attempts to steal the pearl, perhaps instigated by the pearl dealers, suggest otherwise. Kino's refusal is no small feat; as Juan Tomas declares, he has defied the structure of life around him. This places the parable in a larger political context, suggesting that a hierarchy around Kino works to exploit him and others of his station and resists any attempts to shift this social order. This idea is bolstered by the story concerning the pearl agent in which punishment is inflicted upon those who attempt to secure a better station for themselves.

However, although Kino repudiates the idea that punishment should be inflicted on those who reach for higher social status, Steinbeck has conflicting ideas concerning this idea. Although Steinbeck is quite sympathetic to Kino and Juana, casting them as the protagonists of the story in comparison to the greedy, manipulative and one-dimensional villains such as the doctor and the pearl buyers, the very structure of the story seems to suggest that Kino and Juana will pay a great price for their aspirations. For finding the pearl and attempting to sell it, Kino and Juana are physically threatened, suffer a silent condemnation from their neighbors, and are besieged by opportunists, while they were content in their poverty, a situation which Kino thought was "the whole."

Steinbeck continues to demonstrate that the pearl has more detrimental consequences for Kino and Juana than benefits. Only two days after having found the pearl, Kino has suffered two robbery attempts and has been assaulted once. These threats against Kino strengthen his resolve, however, causing him to obstinately fight for the pearl and revert to brutal behavior. The attacks against Kino are an affront to his masculinity, as shown by his constant avowal that he is a man and thus cannot be cheated. This helps to illustrate the definition of masculinity that Steinbeck deals with throughout *The Pearl*. While earlier the idea of masculinity meant providing for one's family, for Kino it now encompasses receiving just and respectful treatment.

Juana serves as the lone voice of reason, continuing to warn Kino of the disastrous consequences of the pearl. As Kino becomes more and more consumed by his paranoia and impulses, it is Juana who remains maintains a realistic appraisal of the effects of the pearl. For Juana, the pearl represents a great evil and suffering, a sharp change from the sense of hope and freedom that it originally symbolized. The irony of this situation is notable: the pearl that would secure prosperity and stability for Kino and Juana instead offers them only pain and danger.

## **Chapter 5**

Kino senses movement near him, but it is only Juana who arises silently from beside him. Kino sees her near the hanging box where Coyotito lay, and then watches her go out the doorway. Kino begins to feel a great sense of rage as he hears her footsteps going toward the shore; Juana is going to throw the pearl back into the ocean. Kino chases Juana, then strikes her in the face with his clenched fist and kicks her in the side. He then turns away from her and walks up the beach. Juana knows that when Kino said that he is a man, he meant that he was "half-insane and half-god" and knows as a woman that "the mountain

would stand while the man broke himself; that the sea would surge while the man drowned in it."

While walking on the beach, men accost Kino in search of the pearl, which is knocked from his hand and lands on the pathway. Juana soon sees Kino limping toward her with a stranger whose throat has been slit. She finds the pearl for Kino, and tells him that they must go away before daylight. Kino says that he struck to save his life, but Juana says that this does not matter. He orders her to get Coyotito and all of the corn they have. Kino finds his canoe with a splintered hole in the bottom. He rushes home to find Juana and Coyotito, but Juana tells Kino that their house was torn up and the floor dug, and someone set fire to the outside.

Juana and Coyotito go to Juan Tomas and Apolonia. When Kino tells about the man he has killed, Juan Tomas says that it is the pearl and he should have sold it. Kino begs his brother to hide them until nightfall. Kino tells Juan Tomas that he will head north. Kino says that he will not give up the pearl, because "if I give it up I shall lose my soul."

## **Chapter 5 Analysis**

Steinbeck builds a sense of paranoia and imminent tragedy for Juana and Kino during this chapter, in which anonymous enemies threaten their safety. The men who attack Kino are never named and their origins are never revealed; although Kino suspects that they are the agents of the pearl dealers. This anonymity is significant, for the men who assault Kino symbolize a more generalized 'evil' than the specific villainy of the pearl dealer or the doctor.

This continues the string of various calamities that occur to Juana and Kino; they lose their boat and their home while defending themselves. These two losses are significant, for the canoe symbolizes the ability that Kino has to provide for and protect his family and the home symbolizes the idea of the family that once gave Kino great comfort. By this point in the story, Juan Tomas joins Juana in warning Kino of the problems of the pearl, but Juana's predictions of disaster have already been partially fulfilled. When Juan Tomas tells Kino "go with God" when Kino prepares to venture to the capital, this statement has a sense of impending doom; Steinbeck makes it very clear that a tragic end for Kino and Juana is imminent.

Steinbeck also makes the explicit point that the greatest damage caused by the pearl is the change that it effects within Kino. The caring father and partner of the first chapter at this point in the story attacks Juana when she attempts to take the pearl. Juana realizes the change in her husband from a normal man to one

with a questionable grip on sanity. It is ironic that, when Kino declares that he is a man, he begins to act "half insane and half god," thus negating the qualities that define him as a man. Steinbeck creates a tone of futility about Kino's enterprise; as the rational and level-headed Juana realizes, Kino is a man raging against an obstacle as insurmountable as a mountain or a storm, and his struggles will only cause him to destroy himself.

Kino even finds himself capable of murder to defend himself; whether Kino is capable of a more cold-blooded killing still remains questionable. Kino's comment that the pearl has become his soul is the defining statement of his condition. It shows that Kino has ceased to be in some level human; he cannot consider normal human needs and emotions, but defiantly focuses on the pearl.

The reaction of the community to the tragedies that occur to Kino and Juana is significant. While the neighbors followed every detail of Kino's life once the pearl promised to bring him fortune and renown, during this time his neighbors remain silent. Only Juan Tomas and Apolonia hide Juana and Kino but do so reluctantly. While Kino's neighbors have commented on all of the events in previous chapters, they do not manifest any reaction to the attacks on Kino and Juana.

## **Chapter 6**

As Kino and Juana travel northward, Kino feels a sense of exhilaration along with his fear. They walk all night and rest during the day so that they may not be found, and attempt to cover their tracks so that they cannot be followed easily. Kino warns Juana that "whoever finds us will take the pearl," but Juana wonders whether the dealers were right and the pearl has no value. Kino says that they would not have tried to steal it if it were not valuable. Kino repeats what they will have once they sell the pearl: the church wedding, the rifle, education for Coyotito.

When they stop to rest during the day, Juana does not sleep and Kino stirs as he dreams. When they hear noises from the distance, Kino orders Juana to keep Coyotito quiet. While Juana hides, Kino moves through the brush to see what he heard, and notices in the distance three bighorn sheep trackers, one of whom is on horseback. Kino realizes that if the trackers find them, he must leap for the horseman, kill him and take his rifle. As the horseman passes by Kino, he does not notice him. Kino and Juana both realize that if the trackers find them, they will kill them to get the pearl.



Kino and Juana escape into the mountains, not bothering to cover their tracks. Kino orders Juana and Coyotito to leave him, for he can go faster alone, but she staunchly refuses. Kino and Juana take a zigzag path in order to thwart the trackers, and eventually find a small stream and the entrance to a cave. Kino tells Juana to hide in the cave, and he fears that Coyotito will cry, alerting the trackers.

While hiding in the cave, Kino finds that the trackers are by the stream. So that he will not be seen, Kino takes off his white clothing and stealthily creeps near them as they rest. The trackers can hear Coyotito, but think that it is merely a coyote pup. As the tracker prepares to shoot what he thinks is a coyote, Kino approaches the trackers and pounces on them. He grabs one of the trackers' rifle and shoots him between the eyes, and stabs another with his knife. The third tracker escapes up the cliff toward the cave, but Kino shoots him. Kino stands silently and hears nothing but the cry of death. Coyotito has been shot.

Kino and Juana arrive back in La Paz; he carries a gun while she carries her shawl with a limp, heavy bundle. Their return to La Paz becomes a notable event: "there may be some old ones who saw it, but those whose fathers and whose grandfathers told it to them remember it nevertheless. It is an event that happened to everyone." Juana appears hardened and tight with fatigue. Kino thinks of the Song of the Family, which has become his battle cry. As they return to La Paz, nobody speaks to them and even Juan Tomas cannot bear to say a word. Kino and Juana approach the gulf, and in the surface of the pearl Kino remembers seeing Coyotito lying in the cave with his head shot away. Kino throws the pearl into the ocean.

## **Chapter 6 Analysis**

The final chapter focuses primarily on the hunt for Kino and Juana as they try to escape La Paz and reach the capital so that they can sell the pearl. Steinbeck creates the sense that Kino and Juana are followed at all times. Pursued by bighorn sheep trackers, Juana and Kino are literally hunted like animals. The division between man and animal is an important motif throughout this chapter. It primarily relates to Kino's descent from those human qualities he once displayed.

Steinbeck illustrates this through a number of events, such as when Kino attacks the trackers. In this instance, Kino moves from being capable of murder for self-defense to a more cold-blooded killing. Kino kills the three men out of fear and instinct and not because of any tangible threat they pose to him.

Steinbeck also shows the loss of human qualities within Kino when he crawls naked to find the trackers so that his white clothes will not expose him. He loses

the final vestiges of humanity and society to become even more animalistic. This descent is particularly ironic when considering the death of Coyotito. Kino behaves as an animal so that he can protect himself and his family, but Coyotito dies when the child is mistaken for a coyote pup.

Coyotito plays a significant role in this chapter as a reminder of the serene domestic environment that Kino and Juana once had and as a danger for them. In the savage wilderness where Kino and Juana find themselves, Coyotito serves as their one reminder of society and civilization. Coyotito also represents the hope that Kino and Juana have for the future; it is the infant child who will benefit most from the pearl, according to his parents' plans, and he thus symbolizes the advantages that the pearl may bring..

Once again, Steinbeck keeps the adversaries who pursue Kino and Juana anonymous in order to preserve their symbolic connotations. The bighorn sheep trackers may not even be pursuing Kino and Juana; they are more important for how Kino and Juana perceive them than their actual personalities. Whether or not they are actually a threat, Kino is so assured that they are dangerous that he murders them before they have a chance to strike.

In contrast to the savage and brutal Kino, Juana becomes stronger through the suffering she faces. She reveals herself to be dedicated to her husband even at the most dire moments, demanding that he not break up their family despite the practical advantages. Furthermore, it is Juana who remains awake at night, guarding Kino and Coyotito as Kino sleeps. Steinbeck juxtaposes Kino with Juana; while the man becomes more instinctual and animalistic, the woman retains her particularly human qualities. While Kino becomes suspicious and paranoid, when he looks "for weakness in her face, for fear or irresolution . . . there is none."

The return of Kino and Juana to La Paz is anticlimactic, yet contains some degree of ironic horror. Kino returns to La Paz with the one possession that he desperately wanted, a rifle, but has lost his child and rejects the pearl. His rejection of the pearl fully demonstrates the horror that the pearl has wrought upon him. Steinbeck constructs Kino's return to La Paz as an event that brings Kino back to the family-centered ideals with which he began the story, but his recollection of the Song of the Family has a significant undercurrent of defiance and anger. His family has been destroyed, yet he clings to that ideal, for it is all that remains for him.

The Pearl is therefore a parable with an uncertain meaning at best and a morbidly determinist one at worst. The story does seem to warn against attempting to improve one's social situation, recalling Juan Tomas' story of the

pearl agent who stole the townspeople's pearls. Although it seems to indict Kino for his attempts to gain the fortune that the pearl offers, it offers equal if not greater censure to the elites of La Paz who attempt to exploit Kino and thwart his attempts to sell the pearl. Even if Steinbeck does not intend the story to be a critique of Kino for his behavior, the story has a decidedly deterministic viewpoint that implies that Kino and Juana could do nothing to improve their situation.

Perhaps the most valid critique that Steinbeck offers in the pearl concerns the effects that the newfound chance for riches has on Kino, who replaces human, civilized values with an obsessive preoccupation with the pearl and suspicion of those around him. Steinbeck criticizes the idea that the pearl has become Kino's soul, demonstrating that there are far greater losses that Kino can face. Yet where the story remains problematic is that the hope that the pearl brings is never tangible; calamities occur nearly immediately for Juana and Kino, making the pearl into a simple curse for the family. Kino does not choose to sacrifice his fortune; he chooses to repudiate his pain.

When Kino throws the pearl into the ocean, he discards a meaningless object. The pearl has no value in the sense that, without Coyotito, the pearl has no power to provide for a better future for Kino and Juana, who could gain only simple material items from their fortune. Kino's repudiation of the pearl is an empty event, for he does not make a meaningful sacrifice. He instead rids himself of an unwanted object that causes him pain. As a parable, *The Pearl* is an empty one, merely choosing to heap tragedy upon its protagonists and forcing them into pain and agony without offering them an alternate option or any possibility for hope.