

Approved for use in all levels of English I

Summary of the Work:

The Pearl tells the story of an Indian pearl diver in La Paz, Mexico, in the late 19th Century who cannot afford a doctor for his son's scorpion sting. He finds an unusually large pearl dubbed The Pearl of the World and is able to get medical help for his child from a disreputable doctor. With the prospect of selling the pearl Kino dreams of a better life—a wedding with new clothes, a gun, and an education for his son, Coyotito. His plans to sell the pearl and leave his life of poverty are thwarted by unscrupulous townspeople. His mission becomes an obsession and leads to tragedy. Kino and his wife, Juana, discover that no pearl is worth the price they pay. Ultimately, there is not an easy or magical solution to their problems.

Rationale:

Kino's struggle to provide health care for his family against great odds echoes the headlines of today's newspapers. Steinbeck takes the reader along with Kino as he attempts to provide a better present and future for his wife, Juana, and his baby son, Coyotito. The novella is a dramatic and moving depiction of human nature as well as the effects of greed on society.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

- Perkins, George. Ed. *Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, 834. Harper-Collins. NY. 1991.
- Benet, William Rose. Ed. *Reader's Encyclopedia*, 768, 961. Thomas Crowell. NY. 1965.
- Seymour-Smith, Martin. Ed. *Novels and Novelists*, 221. St. Martin's Press. NY. 1980.
- "John Steinbeck." *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale 2008. <http://galenetgroup.com/servlet/BioRC>
- "John Steinbeck." Nobelprize.org. Nobel Foundation. 1962.
- Wilson's Fiction 04/01/01
- Wilson's Junior High School 09/01/01
- Wilson's Senior High School 11/01/97

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1940.
- Steinbeck won the Nobel Literature Prize in 1962.

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 1010
- Readability Level: 6.5

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption: 1968

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Kino's racial and economic powerlessness is shown in the dealings with the townspeople, who take advantage of his ignorance. Kino's obsession with finding the best price for the pearl ultimately ruins him and his family. This situation presents the question that looms in our society today – what price are we willing to pay for the pursuit of material goods and personal wealth?

Connection to the Curriculum:

The Pearl, a six-chapter novella by John Steinbeck, is appropriate for the sophomore English curriculum. The deeply affecting story of Kino's pearl and the ramifications of his discovery is chock-full of stylistic, symbolic, and thematic devices students need to identify and apply in order to fully analyze the longer novel form. This accessible introduction to Steinbeck, studied in longer form during the junior year, gives students a taste of the award-winning novelist's work.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)