

The good earth



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This paper analyses the book *The Good Earth* written by Pearl S. Buck. The book highlights the rise and fall of Wang Lung. Lung is portrayed as a hardworking individual, because he manages to buy land from The House of Hwang. Notably, Lung's wife is held as a slave at The House of Hwang, but he manages to free her after purchasing the land. In their marriage, they manage to raise three sons and three daughters. Unfortunately, their first daughter becomes mentally handicapped due to the effects of severe and devastating famine, and Lung decides to call her Poor Fool to exemplify his pity for her. This continued hardship necessitates them to move to the city in search of better living standards. In the city, life becomes harder at the beginning, which forces his wife and children to start begging. Due to the abject poverty, Lung develops a sense of homesick and longs to return to his land. The difficult life forces the entire family to start stealing whatever they could find just to be able to survive (Buck, 2004).

Luckily, Wang Lung unwillingly joins a mob that was looting a rich man's property and manages to find the rich man himself. The wealthy owner decides to transfer his entire wealth to Lung in exchange for safety. His wife also manages to receive some jewels from a hiding place. Lung uses the money to take his family home where he starts a new life. He manages to buy another piece of land from The House of Hwang, new farm tools, and an ox. He also manages to hire new workers to be responsible for his land. As Lung becomes more and more prosperous, he manages to send his two sons to school. He also brings to their home a concubine named Lotus before his wife dies. With time, Lung and his family move to the city where he rents the old House of Hwang. Lung eventually grows old with age and he demands

peace from his first two sons and their two wives who are always having disputes. His third son is also forced to leave the family due the frequent disputes, and, thus, he joins the army. At the end of the novel, Lung overheard his sons' plans of selling their land and tries to discourage them from implementing their plans. They lie to him knowingly because they know that eventually their plans will come to fruition when their father dies.

The Protagonists Cultural Characteristics and Behavior

According to this novel, the main protagonist is Wang Lung, who is defined by the following characteristics: he is a village farmer and hardworking and dedicated husband and father to his family. In essence, one learns that Lung's life is changing from the poor to the rich one. Through his hard work and dedication, he manages to transform his life and the life of his family from abject poverty to a prosperous life. He also manages to move to the city from his small village called Anhwei in search of a better life. His hard work and dedication in life is exemplified when he manages to buy another piece of land for his family, acquire new farm tools, and rents the old House of Hwang for his family. Lung hires workers to take care of his land and him.

Lung is faithful and loyal to his wife, O-Lan. This is because he never abandoned her, even during the time of hardship and suffering. He remained loyal to his wife during the times of famine and prosperity until old age when she deceases.

Lung is a person of high moral standards. This is seen when he discourages his sons from stealing right from their early age. This is because he fears that they may grow to become thieves if they continue with their habit of

stealing. This is also true due to his unwillingness to join a group of men who were looting property from a rich man.

Moreover, Lung is a traditionalist. This is seen through his beliefs that land is a source of happiness and wealth. Due to his faith in these beliefs, he manages to become wealthier and prosperous by acquiring a new piece of land for himself and his family.

Lung is also a humble man. His sense of humility is observed clearly when he pities his daughter who becomes mentally handicapped due to the effects of severe malnutrition which was caused by the devastating famine his family. He is also a kind caring man especially when it comes to issues dealing with women. This is seen from his desire to help other people. For instance, he stops caring about his own life and buys a concubine of which he is ready to take care.

The National Cultural Characteristics of the Society

The national cultural characteristics of the society are both economical and social. Economically, this society practices farming as a means of earning a living. This is seen due to their emphasis on the value of land. First, the society practices trade. This is because Lung hauls merchandise at night and buys a plot of land, and his fellow countrymen in the metropolitan city engage in various business activities. The father of the wife of Nung En also practices trade, as he engages in the business of merchandise.

Secondly, the society is situated in a developing nation. This is due to the infrastructure that is being developed. Examples include the newly built-train

that transports people to the South of the state. Socially, this society alienates women and condemns them to the role of slaves and everything that is connected to that notion. Women are forcefully captured and forced to work on the estates of wealthy individuals.

It is a lawful society. The people fear and respect the rule of law. This is seen when Lung and his fellow citizens haul their merchandise at night for fear of being caught by law machinery. This society also values education. This is seen when Lung works hard and manages to send his sons to school where they are able to learn new ways of life and transform into useful members of the society.

It also practices slave trade. Throughout the novel, one can encounter various people who are held as hostages in The House of Hwang. The wife of Wang Lung is held as a slave. There is also Cuckoo who becomes the servant of Lotus was also a slave in The House of Hwang. Pear Blossom was also bought as a slave when she was a young girl. All these people, therefore, make one realize that the society practiced slave trade.

The Setting of the Story

This story is centered in both the rural environment and in the urban one, however, the most part of the activities in this novel happen in the rural places. The story begins when Wang Lung moves from his small native village known as Anhwei, which is located in Shangai, to the big southern city. There are many factors that make Anhwei to be situated in the rural setting and this includes the following. The infrastructure of Anhwei village is not well developed. The only means of transport available for Lung and his

family is train. Their migration to the city takes place when railroads were being constructed in the 19th century. There is virtually no widespread development in this village during this time, and, therefore most social amenities and facilities that people of urban areas enjoy are not found in this village.

This village is located in a rural area due to the alienation of the women in this novel. Generally, women were not respected as members of the society. Due to lack of civilization, men made them their slaves and they had to do all kinds of house chores without any form of payment. This greatly contributed to the infringement of their basic human rights such as freedom of movement, freedom of speech, and freedom of association. They were denied all these types of freedom by the society. This society also practiced farming and this mostly takes place in the rural areas. Lung with his family and the hired workers work in the plot of land in long-established ways because they depended on the land for their livelihood.

This society is characterized by some form of conservatism. Lung and his family have strong faith in the traditions and beliefs of the society. They believe that their actions along with meteorological factors greatly impact the success which they make from their farms. The practice of conservatism is also seen when Lung refuses to cut his braid despite the changing times. Lung ultimately decides to remain loyal and faithful to his traditions above all despite the pressure that comes with the development and civilization of the society.

The story is also urban-centered because it talks about Lung's life when he moves to the city. The difference between the rural area and the urban area is very wide. For example, while in the city, Lung comes into realization of the changing fashions and methods of living in the city. This becomes more evident when Lung visits The House of Hwang to take his wife, O-Lan home. He is foolishly ignorant about the customs of the house and intimidated by the pomp and finesse of the place. The house is well organized, spacious, and decorated beautifully, unlike his rural house. Lung becomes also embarrassed, because he ignorantly carries his market-bought food to the great house. This openly points out the vast difference in terms of traditions in the urban area as opposed to those of the rural ones.

In conclusion, this book highlights the story of Wang Lung who rises from poor man to wealthy one. He was a poor farmer who barely owned anything, but through his hard work, determination and partly fortune, he acquires a big plot of land. He is also able to employ workers to be responsible for his land and property. The book also highlights the changing times for Wang Lung and his family. It narrates the life of Lung from his marriage, when he moves from his native village, Anhwei, to the big city.

The book *The Good Earth* also points out the difference in culture between the rural areas and the urban areas of China. This is evident by the change in lifestyles and traditions of the people who live in these areas, notably, the family of Wang Lung who resides in the rural area and the members from The House of Hwang who live in an urban place.