

# Symbolism in john steinbeck's the pearl



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## Symbolism in *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck

Novels were created to show a very simplistic view in great depth. *The Pearl*, by John Steinbeck, takes a novel to its most unadulterated form. Steinbeck does this by conveying life symbolically. Through symbols, Steinbeck offers the reader a more clear look at life and its content.

Kino plays a role of a young diver who lives in a small village on the coastline of Mexico. Kino is thought of as, "a wise, primitive man" (French 128) who is hungry for fortune because of the great pearl, which he discovers. As Steinbeck unfolds *The Pearl*, he presents Kino as a, "angry, frightened, but resolute man, determined to keep what he has earned" (Beachler 62). He has earned "Pearl of the World," (Steinbeck 27) a legendary item of considerable wealth. "Kino, on the other hand sees the great pearl as providing the opportunity to pay for a church wedding, new clothes, a rifle, and schooling for his son" (Warren 28). From these wants and needs, Kino symbolizes "clearly good and innocent" (McCarthy 108), but Kino changes in his desperate attempt to bring about wealthy reforms. Even his conscience, which is symbolized by the music in Kino's head, tries to warn him about his greed. This music symbolizes one's own conscience in the real world. By the end of this relentless parable, the reader sees the irony in the fact that even a good person can be led astray by his feeling of inner responsibility to provide for his family (Warren 128). Kino's actions, which are being motivated to raise Coyotito, his son, in greatness leads to the death of Coyotito, which is Kino's greatest loss (McCarthy 108). Through these symbols which Kino represents, the reader can witness how many desires in life can lead to disaster.

Coyotito is a product of Kino. This ties him into the story as one of the main characters even though Steinbeck speaks of Coyotito few times in the novel. Steinbeck uses Coyotito as a symbol of unchanging innocence being betrayed by his own flesh and blood (Baechler 62). Steinbeck is keen to use such a symbol in a book titled *The Pearl* because Coyotito's innocence is parallel to the innocence of an actual pearl in the sense that a pearl is secure in its shell until something comes along and destroys the pearl's home and blemishes its beauty and simplicity. Again, Steinbeck uses a fairly obvious symbol to illustrate one of life's truths: Being good and innocent does not matter in this fierce world.

The certain "Pearl of the World" (Steinbeck 27) which Kino has stumbled upon is hard to grasp for "It is far too reasonable to be true" (Baechler 62). Steinbeck obviously believes in citing the ideal scenario and then strive to become as far idealistic as possible. Actually, the tangible pearl exhibits the irony of good fortune in that what should have been the possession of a lifetime for Kino and his family, turns out to be a disaster, producing much suffering, despair, and ending up with death as a seal (Baechler 62). The pearl also illustrates the madness and the unique content of life. The Pearl may be read as a parable in which people can take their own meaning as well as predict their own ending to the novel (French 126). The reader can see parable qualities of *The Pearl* by looking at the moral fiction of Kino or man in general, searching for the wealth, the security, and the freedom in life which is expressed in the novel (McCarthy 108). The moral fiction and its contents are found under the category of the book's characteristics. The big characteristics of *The Pearl* are the appealing characters and the obvious

allegory of man as a whole in relation to Kino and to his reaction (French 126).

Category: English