

The pearl: kinos personality



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According to Webster's Dictionary, the word protection is defined as : the act of protecting : the state of being protected ; and the word greed is defined as : a selfish and excessive desire for more of something (as money) than is needed. Throughout The Pearl, Kino changes immensely, some for the better, but mostly for the worse. Protection and greed are the two most predominate traits shown by Kino in the novella. In John Steinbeck's, The Pearl, a novella showing Kino's personality symbolizes protection and greed. Essentially Kino and the pearl are one in the same. Both innocent and willing until the corruption of wealth and mans greedy ambitions destroy it all, showing that man creates his own fate by what he chooses to do and the same goes for his consequence. At the same time Kino also works on a symbolic level by representing protection and hope because he is man and care taker of his family and eventually a greed that will lead to the destruction of his family. When Kino is faced with the evil scorpion he goes into protective mode and "[He] had it in his fingers, rubbing it to a paste in his hands . . . His teeth were bared and fury flared in his in his eyes and the song of the enemy roared in his eyes" (6). Kino is showing an animal like characteristic, a bear trying to secure its cubs. He represents protection because he will kill anything that poses a threat to any of their lives. In order to save Coyotitos' life, Kino discovers the greatest pearl in the world, "[he] held it tightly against his breast. He kicked his foot free from the rock loop, and his body rose to the surface . . . " (18). Tying himself to the rock loop and searching the ocean floor for oysters shows that he has hope in himself to find a pearl for Coyotito. His mind set symbolizes hope directly because he risks his life on taking a chance for some thing that may not even be there. Although he has had difficulties throughout the day, he has an abundant

amount of desire because in his great pearl he sees "[They] will be married - in the church. . . . [they] will have new clothes. . . . Perhaps a rifle. . . . [Coyotito] will go to school" (24-25). The fortune that Kino has come upon reviles his slightly greedy, but hopeful mind set he can let run free. Kino and the pearl are symbols of hope and faith for a better life, whatever may be needed or wanted in their life could be fulfilled by the two of them. In order to provide the best he can for his family Kino has to continue to the rock for them, he has to continue to love, have hope, and protect them. Kino now symbolizes greed which leads him to behave with violence; it also leads to Coyotito's death and ultimately to Kino's detachment from his cultural and his society. When he hears an intruder, someone there to take his future away, "[His] hand [creeps] into his breast where his knife hung on a string, and then he sprang like an angry cat, leaped striking and spitting for the dark thing he knew was in the corner of the house. . . . [he] struck as it with his knife and missed, and struck again and felt the knife go through the cloth. . ." (37). His greediness has lead him to murder someone because they wanted a piece of it too. The symbolism between Kino and greed shows how the pearl has gone to his head and how it is slowly going to bring down his family. The power of the pearl has put fear into Juana and as she tries to rid them of its power ". . . [Kino] leaped at her and caught her arm and wrenched the pearl from her. He struck her in the face with his clenched fist and she fell among the boulders, and he kicked her in the side" (59). Overcome with anger at his wife for trying to throw out their life he resorts to beating her. His heart and mind represent anger and violence to the people in his life who dare to try and take his money away from him. So overcome with the thoughts of a better life for them all Kino turns into a full flesh killer

"[he has] become as cold and deadly as steel. Deliberately he threw the lever of the rifle, and then he raised the gun and aimed deliberately and fired" (87). Cold and deadly as steel, a pearl is both of these things as well, a pearl has no remorse, or any feelings for that matter much like him. Kino is signifying a full on murderer now, he will do anything to rise to the top. With the murder of three men and his son Kino does eventually realize what he has become and he is able to free himself from the enticing wealth of the pearl. Nevertheless, man controls his life not fate, it can be in the form of violence, ambition, and greed, that eases the families final outcome, as the greed of all lead to a series of conflicts over the pearl. Kino finds himself caught between the destiny handed him by fate and the destiny he has created.