

A theme of greed in
the pearl by john
steinbeck



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When wanting spirals into destruction, a family is broken apart, shattered by a rare discovery. A pearl that seems so pure, so innocent that it seems as if nothing evil can come from it. The Pearl by John Steinbeck appears to be a story about a man and his quest to save his son and create financial stability for his family. However, the real plot behind The Pearl tells the story of a man how the sudden experience of wealth corrupts his soul and causes him to turn on those he loves. The main theme of The Pearl is greed and how it breeds nothing but pain to those who are affected by it, it can be seen throughout the entire story, from when Kino beats his wife Juana, the priests swarming his house when they discover his new discovery, to the way someone who is supposed to be as selfless as a doctor treats patients he deems lesser. Steinbeck does a magnificent job showing that no one is immune to the desires of greed. The biggest symbol of greed in The Pearl is the pearl itself. The pearl at first appears to be a savior to Kino and his family. However, it quickly becomes apparent that it will bring nothing but suffering to Kino and his family.

To begin with, The Pearl brings out the greed in everyone it touches and causes Kino to beat his wife Juana. On page 61 of The Pearl, it states " Her arm was up to throw when he 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." This quote occurs after Juana attempts to take the Pearl from Kino while he is sleeping and cast it into the ocean, but before she can Kino sees her and takes the pearl away from her right before hitting her. This evidence shows that Kino who was seen as a man that was incorruptible and loves his family more

than anything changes when the pearl becomes part of his life. Kino is consumed by the desire of money and is so blinded by the illusion of a bright future produced by the pearl that he doesn't realize the danger it's putting his family in. Instead of realizing and listening to his wife, he beats her when she takes circumstances into her own hands. When an individual like Kino feels that money and goods will bring him happiness in his life, he becomes more and more determined to get it and is even willing to destroy and betray those that are significant in his life to do it.

Furthermore, the desire to be successful and happy naturally exists in all people. Success is often associated with the acquisition of wealth and material goods. In the Pearl, the doctor is a dominant character as he is the first person Kino goes to when Coyotito is harmed and he represents the colonial beliefs that oppress Kino's people. He epitomizes the Colonials arrogance, greed, and patronization and how the heart of colonial society feels toward the natives. In The Pearl page 11, it states " It is a little Indian with a baby. He says a scorpion stung it.' The doctor put his cup down gently before he let his anger rise. ' Have I nothing better to do than cure insect bites for ' little Indians'? I am a doctor, not a veterinary.' ' Yes, Patron,' said the servant. ' Has he any money?' the doctor demanded. ' No, they never have any money. I, alone in the world am supposed to work for nothing - and I am tired of it. See if he has any money!" This quote transpires right after Coyotito is bitten by a scorpion and rushed to the physician. He as a doctor is obligated to perform to save human life, but when confronted with someone whom he considers below him, the doctor feels no before-mentioned obligation. His cruel unwillingness to heal Coyotito for the scorpion wound

because Kino doesn't have the money to pay him, therefore, shows the human expense of political victory embedded in the desire for financial gain. Then on page 22, it states " And when it was made plain who Kino was, the doctor grew stern and judicious at the same time. ' He is a client of mine,' the doctor said. ' I am treating his child for a scorpion sting.' And the doctor's eyes rolled up a little in their fat hammocks and he thought of Paris. He remembered the room he had lived in there as a great and luxurious place." This quote occurs when the doctor receives the news that Kino found the pearl of the world. Even though at first he didn't want to treat Coyotito because Kino didn't have money, that quickly changes after learning that Kino has found a great pearl. This shows how greed and money can corrupt people, from not wanting to do what they made an oath to do because they believe they were more above somebody, to doing it only because it benefits themselves.

To continue, *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck, the author shows how sudden fortune can bring out the worst in everyone. This is shown on page 21 " It came to the priest walking in his garden, and it put a thoughtful look in his eyes and a memory of certain repairs necessary to the church. He wondered what the pearl would be worth. And he wondered whether he had baptized Kino's baby, or married him for that matter." This quote occurs right after Kino found the pearl and the neighborhood found out. Also on page 28 " the priest gasped a little at the size and beauty of the pearl. And then he said: ' I hope thou wilt remember to give thanks, my son, to Him who has given thee this treasure and to pray for guidance in the future.' Kino nodded dumbly, and it was Juana who spoke softly. ' We will, Father. And we will be married

now. Kino has said so.' She looked at the neighbors for confirmation, and they nodded their heads solemnly. The priest said, ' It is pleasant to see that your first thoughts are good thoughts. God bless you, my children.' He turned and left quietly" This quote happened after the priest found out that Kino found the pearl of the world. Since the church is in bad condition and could use some improvements, when the priest learns of the pearl, he starts to think of how he could use a portion of the profits. Wondering the cost of the pearl, the priest begins to question if he had given any religious services for Kino and his family, such as marriage or baptism. This shows how the town priest superficially represents pure virtue and goodness, but he is just as involved in utilizing Kino's wealth as everyone else, believing that he can find a way to convince Kino to give him some of the wealth he will make from the pearl.

To conclude, in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, a young man named Kino, his wife, Juana, and their infant child, Coyotito, find a pearl so majestic that many people will attack Kino to get it. The pearl causes Kino to be overcome with greed and desire and brings hardship to him and his family. The pearl brings much darkness, but a slight amount of gain, the pearl extracts the opportunity for a better life, causes the destruction of Kino's property and family and evokes the death of Coyotito. Money, turning the best of people corrupt. Desperate and greedy, tempted by the circles of gold and pieces of paper. Greed is only achieved through an individual's selfish desires which creates conflicts in personal relationships and society. Author John Steinbeck does a magnificent job showing that no one is immune to the desires of greed and it is shown throughout the book.