

The pearl



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Javiera Ramirez Does this novella dramatize the plight of a man who was caught in between the material and the spiritual world In this novella, The Pearl, by John Steinbeck; the plight of a man, called Kino, caught in between the material and spiritual world is dramatized. The plot explains how Kino fell for his inner conflicts, trying to decide if the new material world he found along with the pearl is more important than his spiritual world, which is constituted by his family, his culture, his beliefs and what he thinks is right. Both these worlds are in constant conflict with one another, driving Kino to the point of not knowing the difference between wrong and right, and forcing him to pay a price for his actions. Starting this novella, the reader has a privileged view of Kino's spiritual world.

The reader can appreciate how influenced his life is by his beliefs and culture, and most of all, superstition, which appears to be present at every chapter of the book. A symbol of this spiritual world is: Kino's canoe, which was given to him by his father. It represents a way of making a living "both money and food" that has been taught for generations in his family, it represents his link to his cultural tradition. On page 19, the reader can see how Kino is really attached to his culture, "And every year Kino refinished his canoe with the hard shell-like plaster by the secret method that had also come to him from his grandfather.

From this quote, the reader may infer that the author expresses Kino's attachment to his spiritual world through metaphors, using simple objects, and evoking a feeling of tradition. Other examples of Kino's spiritual world are: the songs he hears throughout the book, his family, friends, and even the priest, who is a major symbol of Kino's beliefs. A

clear example of Kino's appreciation for his family is on page 7, where the author writes: "Kino could see these things without looking at them. Juana sang softly an ancient song that had only three notes and yet endless variety of intervals. And this was part of the family song too."

It was all part. Sometimes it rose to an aching chord that caught the throat, saying this is safety, this is warmth, this is the Whole. From here, the reader can infer that Kino feels safe with his family; in fact, it might be the only real company he has besides his brother Juan Tomas.

Around the middle of chapter one, however, Kino's spiritual world is threatened by evil, represented by a scorpion that brings the destruction of innocence to Kino's surroundings by biting Coyotito, Kino's son. With the doctor refusing to attend the baby because Kino has no money to pay him, feelings of hopelessness start to rise in Kino's and Juana's minds. Immediately, superstition shows its importance, as Juana starts to pray for Kino to find a pearl that might be enough for them to pay Coyotito's treatment. At this point, the sea represents destiny, fate, something neither Kino nor anyone can control, and the finding of the pearl represents luck, a gift from the gods that may, or may not, bring successfulness; as the author writes: "Pearls were accidents, and the finding of one was luck, a little pat on the back by God or the gods or both," on page 21.

At first the pearl appears as a happy accident, fulfilling the prophecy of the "Pearl That Might Be" song, but as time passes and the town finds out about the pearl, the object begins to make everyone who beholds it, including Kino, greedy, bringing even more disgrace into Kino's life.

Greediness becomes, then, one of the main themes of this novella, as Kino declares that: "???" This pearl has become [his] soul??!" and that "???" If [he] gives up, [he] shall lose [his] soul,???" on page 73. The reader may infer that the pearl has become so important to Kino that he considers it as a part of himself and is not willing to dispose of it, showing a naive part of his personality.

In the other hand, Juana is less naive about the value of the pearl. She quickly figures out that, if given more value than relationships with humans, the pearl can bring both misery and greed. "???" This thing is evil,???" she states. "???" This pearl is like a sin! It will destroy us. Throw it away, Kino,???" on page 43. Kino resists throwing away the pearl, because he wants to use it to acquire freedom from ignorance for his family and community, and social status. The novella also compares the pearl's value with the significance of Kinos family, especially Coyotito's importance. The author states that for Juana and Kino, the morning that they would sell the pearl would be "???" comparable only to the day when [Coyotito] had been born,???" on page 48.

In this quote the conflict between the material world and the spiritual world is clearly visible. The reader may infer that it wasn't an accident that Coyotito had to sacrifice his life when Kino insists upon keeping the pearl. Coyotitos death provides further evidence of how the author continually criticizes materialism. The author suggests that for Kino to realize the evilness inside the pearl, something of great value had to be lost, such as the life of Coyotito. Since these worlds are in constant conflict, and apparently the spiritual path cannot be followed by ambitious people, these two worlds have nothing in common, in fact, they are complete opposites.

At one side the spiritual world can be appreciated, which is where Kino and his family have developed for their whole life. An environment of calmness, understanding, security, love, and traditions; that at the same time is incapable of giving Coyotito the knowledge that Kino craves for his son, and his community. Staying at his spiritual world means tranquility, but also ignorance and powerlessness. It means to give up higher expectations of life. In the other hand, however, it is the exact opposite. The material world offers new opportunities, such as social and economic wealth, and the path towards knowledge, something Kino had wanted all along. But the prize for greediness is high, as the author portrays it as Coyotito's death.

When Kino was trying to escape, after killing a man, and having his house and canoe destroyed (representing the corruption of his spiritual world), he ends up killing three other people, the trackers, in the mountains; but Kino will learn that fate cannot be avoided, as on page 92 the author writes: "And then Kino's brain cleared from its red concentration and he knew the sound" the keening, moaning, rising hysterical cry from the little cave in the side of the stone mountain, the cry of death. But it appears to be too late. The baby is dead and there is nothing he can do about it. The reader may infer that the author's point in this conflict is for the readers to realize that greed can destroy life as it is known.

Another important factor in this story is Kino's constant inner conflicts about the pearl. He is aware of the evil the pearl carries with it, but at the same time still clings to it blinded by the promises of bright futures and a better life for his family. Kino copes with his conflicts as best as he can, trying to find middle ground between the material and spiritual worlds, but

he is soon to know that after such greedy acts from his side, there is only one option, punishment. Coyotito's death brings Kino to reality, he has done horrible things, and the reader may also guess how guilty he feels, after all Juana warned him all along. When Kino and Juana return to the village, on page 93, with the dead baby wrapped in Juana's shawl, the author writes: "The people say that the two seemed removed from human experience; that they had gone through pain and had come out on the other side; that there was almost a magical protection about them."

From here the reader may infer that both are devastated, they lived through pain and but won't ever be able to get over it. Another point is that in this scene, Juana and Kino walk side by side, signaling that they are equal now, after going through that much pain. In conclusion, this novella teaches an important lesson in the form of a man trapped in between his inner conflicts of not knowing what is right for his family.

Kino goes through countless experiences, each more terrible than the previous, teaching him that the prize for greediness is higher than what he expected. After the conflict of Kino's spiritual and material worlds, he realizes that there is no monetary value able to purchase the feeling of having a family there for you, unfortunately though, he had to learn the hard way and regret it for the rest of his life.