

The pearl (book report)

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The Pearl By: John Steinbeck Book Report THE PEARL John Steinbeck was born in February 1902 in Salinas, California and died in December 1968. Steinbeck enrolled in Stanford University however he never graduated. After an unsuccessful try to establish himself in New York he returned to California to do what he did best: write. Steinbeck's first novel was published in 1929 but his first critical success was achieved with *Tortilla Flat* which won the California Commonwealth Club's Gold Medal and which deals with the humorous adventures of young men in Monterey during the Great Depression.

Steinbeck writing can be catalogued as social novels in which he develops the theme of economic problems in rural life.

After his first success he moved on to write more serious fiction, where he emphasizes on the aggressive social criticism, for example: In *Dubious Battle* (1936) where he deals with the disorders caused by fruit pickers on plantations in California. After this came *Of Mice and Men* (1937), a series of short stories collected in *The Long Valley* (1938). However his best work was published in 1939. *The Grapes of Wrath* dealt with Oklahoma farmers who moved to California to earn a better living and so became migratory workers.

Among others Steinbeck's later works were: *East of Eden* (1952), *The Winter of our Discontent* (1961) and *Travels with Charley* (1962).

Steinbeck's work finally, made him win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962 for *Of Mice and Men* and a Pulitzer Prize for *The Grapes of Wrath*. It is worth to mention also that one of his good works is *The Pearl*, a story which this report is going to be about. *The Pearl* is a novella that tells the story about a

poor diver named Kino who finds the largest pearl anyone has ever seen. He wishes to use the money to pay for a doctor to treat his son's scorpion sting. However, his dream for a better life for his family leads to greed, obsession and finally, inevitable tragedy. The story takes place in a small Mexican town called La Paz.

In this town the Mexican community sees itself under discrimination by the colonist community. And we can see this throughout the story. However the Mexican community is always united and live each day in harmony. Kino, the novella's protagonist, is a young Mexican-Indian pearl diver married to Juana; they have a baby named Coyotito. Their lives seemed peaceful, but their tranquility was threatened when a scorpion bit Coyotito. Juana told Kino to go to town and get the doctor.

They decided to go with Coyotito to the doctor. Many members of the village follow them to see what will happen. At the doctor's house, the doctor's servant told Kino and Juana that the doctor was not at home, even though the doctor was at home for he didn't want to help Coyotito since Kino was not able to pay him. Moreover he had prejudice against Kino's race. Kino then went to work diving in the Gulf for oysters with his canoe, he was determined to find a pearl he could pay the doctor with; meanwhile Juana cures Coyotito in the canoe by applying brown seaweed to his shoulder, which was swollen from the scorpion's bite.

As Kino was collecting oysters on the ocean bottom, he spotted a larger-than-usual oyster, collected it, and returned to the canoe.

Kino didn't want to open the oyster immediately, but Juana suggested him to open it. Finally he did and found a pearl the size of a sea gull's egg. Juana gazed at the pearl. Kino was very happy about the pearl and yelled loudly enough that he attracted the attention of the other oyster divers, who raced toward his canoe. Before Kino reached home with his great pearl, the news of his discovery had already reached his village and the town.

Everyone imagined what he or she would do with the pearl, including the doctor who now says that the baby is a patient of his. The priest arrived at Kino and Juana's hut and told Kino that he needed to give thanks for finding the pearl. The doctor visits Kino and Juana and tricked them into allowing him to treat Coyotito even though Kino knew that Coyotito was already cured; in fact what the doctor did was to make Coyotito sick so that he could then cure the baby and get paid more. Coyotito got sick, and the doctor returned and gave the baby a different medicine.

When the doctor asked Kino for payment, Kino said that his planned to sell the pearl the next day. The doctor offered to keep the pearl for Kino, but Kino refused.

However the doctor tricked Kino into revealing where he has hidden the pearl. That night, Kino heard someone in the hut, got his knife and attacks the intruder. Juana sensed that the pearl is evil and begged Kino to throw the pearl back into the sea, but Kino refused, believing still that the pearl will give them better lives than then ones the already have. On the day that Kino was to sell the pearl, the other divers didn't go diving.

Kino and Juana began the trip to the pearl buyers, followed by the entire village. The first pearl buyer to whom Kino offered the pearl offered Kino a small amount of money for it, saying that the pearl was too big and no one else would buy it.

Other pearl buyers arrived to where they were and the three of them have already planned together what each would offer Kino. Kino, realized that the pearl buyers worked together to get the pearl for the least amount of money, and said that he would go to the capital to sell his pearl.

That night, Kino heard noises outside the hut again and went outside to check. Juana listened inside to the attack and rushes out, but it is too late; Kino was bleeding and the attackers escaped. Again, like the previous night, Juana begged Kino to throw the pearl back into the sea, but Kino again refused because he sees the pearl being sold and the money being used to fund Coyotito's education.

Later, Juana woke up in the dark, took the pearl from the hut, and went to the beach. Kino followed her and catches up with her at the beach just as she was ready to throw the pearl into the water.

He hit her and saved the pearl from going into the water, but he is then attacked by some figures he couldn't identify. The pearl fell from his hands. Juana found Kino lying unconscious and a dead stranger next to him.

When Kino wakes up Juana returned the pearl to him from where she found it. They decide to flee the village for he had killed a man. Juana left to gather their belongings while Kino went to check on their canoe and found that a

large hole has been smashed into its bottom. As they approached their hut, they saw it was burning.

Taking Coyotito, they went to Kino's brother's hut and spent the day hiding there.

Kino's brother, Juan Tomas, let the other villagers think that Kino and his family ran away. However, Kino still believed that the pearl was not evil but instead offered a more promising future for him and his family. Kino, Juana, and Coyotito left their village and headed toward Loreto. Kino made sure that they left no tracks but knew that they were followed because of the pearl's great value. One day he sees trackers who were following them. Once the trackers passed by the hiding place, Kino and his family headed toward high mountains.

Finally Juana and Coyotito hid in a cave while Kino fought with the trackers before they could attack his family. He killed one man with his knife grabbed the gun the dead man was carrying and shot a second man. The third man tried to escape but Kino also aimed at him and shot. Then came silence and then he heard Juana crying. Unfortunately the bullet had reached the cave where Juana and the baby were hiding, killing Coyotito.

Later that day late in the afternoon, Kino and Juana walked side by side into town, with Juana carrying the dead Coyotito.

People watched in silence as the two walked silently. Kino and Juana reached the beach where Kino threw the pearl as far out into the sea as he could.

Main Characters: Kino: He was a poor Mexican fisherman who tried to give his family all what they needed. He followed his ideals and wishes and kept
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firm on to them. However this fondness to his dreams drew him to obsession leading to what he most feared: the destruction of his family's welfare.

He then represents the pearl's "victim". Juana: She is Kino's wife. A strong and brave woman who respects his family, specially his husband.

This is why she cares for them and tries to aware Kino from the pearl becoming the pearl's "enemy". Juana is the strong character of the story since she is the one firm to reality and not to dreams that would damage her family and gives the rest of his family hope. Doctor: He represents discrimination against Kino's race.

He is a selfish man who thinks only about the profits situations may bring to him. He judges his patients and attends only those who he thinks are worth their services and so refused to help Kino at the beginning of the story.

But since he always takes advantage of situations when the pearl is found does anything to get a benefit from it. Priest: He is the influence in Kino's thinking and in some way acting. He persuades that he must give thanks for finding the pearl which means the finding of the pearl is a good thing which would bring him welfare.

This makes Kino fonder of the pearl. However, through the reading we can realize he is also selfish since he wants Kino to donate something to the church. Community: They are the support, at the beginning of the story but become in sort of a way Kino's enemy towards the end.

We can see this because at the beginning they follow Kino to the doctor and then accompany him when he found the pearl and when they received the

visits of the doctor and the priest. However, later, they begin to suspect about the pearl and so they become Kino's enemy for he is very attached to the idea of the pearl being something good. As a character in the story its role is to represent unity and the social view of the pearl in the story: first good and then bad.

We have Kino's view, Juana's, the doctor's and the priest's and the community's view.