

The Pearl

John Steinbeck

Suggested Discussion Questions

1.- The story begins with a little prologue where he writes, **“If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it.”** What do we learn about the pearl’s symbolism from the reactions it evokes in the townspeople and main characters?

2.- How does Steinbeck establish the atmosphere with his use of language? Think of the descriptions that open chapter one.

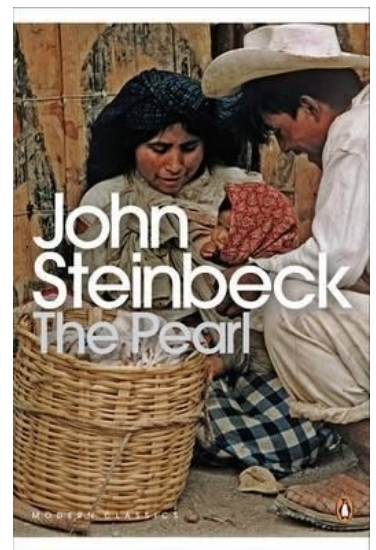
3.- **Foreshadowing** is a literary device in which a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. Foreshadowing often appears at the beginning of a story, or a chapter, and it helps the reader develop expectations about the upcoming events. Discuss Steinbeck’s use of foreshadowing in *The Pearl*.

4.- After diving into the water, Kino returns to the canoe with an especially large shell. Kino is reluctant to open it. **“In this Gulf of uncertain light there were more illusions than realities.”** Discuss several roles of illusions or mirages in the novel. Why are they significant? What is the bigger message we should take from them?

5.- How does Steinbeck infuse the story a sociopolitical context?

6.- How does Steinbeck inform us about the peasant culture’s fears, superstitions and ultimate fatalism brought on by the “Pearl of the World”?

7.- Is the pearl itself really evil? Make an argument one way or the other. Consider the symbolism of the pearl throughout the parable. What does it represent?



8.- Compare and contrast Kino and Juana (individually and as a couple) in the beginning and the end. How do the characters change or remain the same? How are they alike or different? Consider how Juana offers great contributions to the story as a wife and mother and Kino as a husband and father.

9.- One important element of *The Pearl* is the contrast between fate and human agency, between the destiny that is made for us and the destiny that we make ourselves. How do these forces interact in Kino's story?

10.- How does Kino break away from the traditions of his native lifestyle? Discuss Kino's life of tradition prior to discovering the pearl and how it differs afterward. Does the pearl break his connection with native tradition or reinforce it?