

## **The Pearl** – Active Reading Guide

### **Chapter 1**

Of the 650 species of scorpions, about 40 live in the United States. Scorpions range from one to eight inches in length and have a venomous stinger that is supplied by poison glands. The sting of the scorpion is often fatal to children and can be fatal to adults. The poison attacks the nervous system.

1. What does the fact that there “is no need for Kino and Juana to speak” tell you about their relationship?
2. When the scorpion attacks Coyotito, Juana mutters a Hail Mary and then whispers “the old magic again.” What do these two acts tell you about Juana?
3. Why is it surprising that Juana would request a doctor?
4. What do you think Juana’s shawl represents?
5. Why does the doctor refuse to treat Coyotito?

**The mood of a literary work is the emotion it conveys. The plot, descriptions, and setting contribute to the mood.**

*Kino heard the little splash of morning waves on the beach. It was very good – Kino closed his eyes again to listen to his music. Perhaps he alone did this and perhaps all of his people did it ... In Kino's head there was a song now, clear and soft, and if he had been able to speak it, he would have called it the Song of the Family.*  
(pp.1-2)

6. What mood does the passage evoke in the reader?

## **Chapter 2**

1. What do the hungry dogs and pigs at the beginning of the chapter represent?

2. What can you conclude about Kino and his people based on the songs they sing as they fish?

3. Why does Kino open the great oyster last?

4. How does Steinbeck describe the pearl? How does Kino feel as he sees it?

5. What do you think Kino should do when he realizes the pearl's value?

6. Find an **example** in Chapters 1 – 2 of the following types of figurative language:  
( Write the quotation and include the page number.)

simile

personification

alliteration

### **Chapter 3**

Steinbeck uses words from chemistry to describe the formation of the pearl. A *residue* is the part remaining as a solid on filter paper after the liquid passes through. *Precipitate* means to separate a solid from a solution. A *distillate* is the product obtained when vapors are reduced from a gas to a liquid.

1. Why are people suddenly interested in Kino?
2. How do Kino's dreams reveal his poverty?
3. Why doesn't Kino recognize the priest's "song of evil"?
4. How is Kino changing?
5. Since Kino knows that Coyotitio is well, why does he let the doctor treat him?

6. What do you think Kino's disturbing dream means?

7. How is Kino different after he finds the pearl?

**Parable – A parable is a brief story that explains a moral lesson, a lesson about right and wrong and the way that people should live.**

In parables, characters represent specific traits. As a result, they tend to be one-dimensional.

Explain what trait each of these characters from The Pearl represents.

|            |            |                   |
|------------|------------|-------------------|
| Kino       | Juana      | Coyotito          |
| the priest | the doctor | the pearl dealers |

The Pearl of the World is so named because

## **Chapter 4**

One of the most important marine pearl fisheries on the North American continent is located in Baja, California. The central point is La Paz, the setting for the novel. Large pearls are so rare that a single one can sell for more than forty thousand dollars.

1. How does the town react to Kino's good fortune?
2. What does Steinbeck suggest the relationship of wealth and destruction is?
3. Why does Kino dress with such care to see the pearl dealers?
4. Why does the pearl dealer try to devalue Kino's pearl?
5. What does the first dealer's hand suggest about his character?
6. What does the pearl dealer's coin represent?
7. What does Kino mean at the end of the chapter when he says, "I am a man"?

**Conflict – A conflict is a struggle between opposing forces.**

Complete the chart below.

| Conflicts between characters | Conflicts between characters and outside forces | Inner conflicts |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
|                              |                                                 |                 |

## **Chapters 5-6**

Coyotito's name means "little coyote". The tracker mistakes Coyotito's cry for that of a coyote pup. Kino and his family have become like hunted animals, running for their very lives.

A peso is the monetary unit of Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, the Dominican Republic, Chile, and other Latin American countries.

1. What does the canoe represent?
2. Why do you think Juana calls the intruders the dark ones?
3. How does Juan Tomas protect Kino and his family?
4. What does the pearl come to represent?
5. Why do the trackers hunt Kino?
6. When Kino and Juan return to the village at the end of the story, why do they walk side-by-side rather than Juana behind Kino?

**Theme – The theme is the central message or insight about life revealed in a literary work. You can discover the theme by looking closely at the plot, characters, and conflicts.**

Here are three themes Steinbeck develops in The Pearl. Complete the chart by finding evidence that supports each theme.

| Theme                                                     | Textual Evidence |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Nature must be left untouched to preserve its balance.    |                  |
| Human wishes are nothing but vanity.                      |                  |
| Wealth destroys happiness if it becomes an end to itself. |                  |