

THE PEARL

by John Steinbeck



THE AUTHOR

John Steinbeck (1902-1968) was born in Salinas, California, and grew up in the region made so memorable in the greatest of his novels. He entered Stanford University in 1919, but never graduated, supporting himself through the decade of the twenties with odd jobs, including writing for a newspaper. In 1929, he published his first novel, *Cup of Gold*. Two novels about migrant workers in California, *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) and *To a God Unknown* (1933) followed, though none of the three was successful in the eyes of critics or the public.

He finally achieved commercial success with the publication in 1935 of *Tortilla Flat*. The late thirties witnessed the release of what many consider his finest fiction, including *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), for which he received a Pulitzer Prize. A ceaseless experimenter with writing techniques and genres, he tried his hand at movie scripts, comedies, plays, travelogues, and a non-fiction work on marine biology. After the Second World War, he returned to long fiction with the semi-autobiographical *East of Eden* (1952). He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, despite the scoffing of critics who considered him a populist rather than a serious writer. He died in 1968.

Steinbeck always considered himself a man of the people, and he identified much more readily with the migrants about whom he wrote so frequently than with the intelligentsia who criticized his writings as too elementary in structure and language. He was a convinced supporter of democracy and an enemy of fascism, though conservatives thought him too much of a socialist and leftists argued that he should be more vociferous in his condemnation of the evils of the capitalist system. He did admit that he had probably been insufficiently outspoken during the McCarthy era, but he was never able to satisfy those who wished to force his politics into their mold.

The Pearl (1945) was originally published in the magazine *Woman's Home Companion*. It is described in the introduction as an old fable retold by the author and takes the form of a parable, which according to Steinbeck means that "everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it." Like Steinbeck's major works, the story focuses on the poor and downtrodden who are oppressed by the powerful members of society, but it is more than simply a social critique. The novella is powerful because it delves deeply into human nature and explores what is really important

about being a human being. It also addresses important moral issues like temptation, greed, and the attraction of wealth and its consequences.

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel begins with a brief introduction, setting forth the tale that follows as an oft-told story that may be a parable, open to whatever meaning the reader chooses to give it.

CHAPTER I

The story begins before dawn, when Kino the fisherman awakes to find his wife already with her eyes open. Their infant son, Coyotito, is peacefully sleeping in his cradle. As Kino goes outside to watch the sun rise over the Gulf of California, which separates his home in Baja California from the west coast of Mexico, he thinks of a song in his mind - the Song of the Family. As Juana lights the fire and prepares breakfast, Kino admires the beauty of what seems to be a perfect day. After eating his simple breakfast, Kino sees a scorpion making its way down the rope to the baby's hanging box, and the Song of the Enemy rings in his ears. He moves slowly toward the poisonous creature while Juana whispers magic spells and mumbles Hail Marys, but before he can get there, the baby shakes the rope, the scorpion falls into the cradle and stings him, then Kino grabs it and crushes it to death. Juana immediately picks up the baby and begins to suck the poison from the puncture wound made by the scorpion. She then orders the neighbors to fetch the doctor, but they say he will not come because he only cares for the rich families in the nearby town of La Paz. She then picks up the baby, determined to take him to the doctor herself, followed by Kino and the curious neighbors. When they arrive in La Paz, they are observed by four beggars who know all the gossip of the people. They know that the greedy, lazy European doctor will have no time for the poor native fisherman and his sick child. The doctor demands money, and all Kino can give him is eight misshapen seed pearls; when he hears this, the doctor tells his servant to pass the word to Kino that he is out on an important case. Kino smashes the iron gate in anger, bloodying his hand in the process.

CHAPTER II

When Kino and Juana return to their home by the beach, Juana makes a seaweed poultice and puts it on the baby's wound before they prepare to go out for the day's fishing. She had prayed, not for healing for the baby, but for a pearl that would pay the doctor to cure him. When they reach the oyster bed, Kino dives and begins to rip up oysters and put them in his basket, singing in his mind the Song of the Pearl That Might Be. After two minutes underwater, he sees an unusually large oyster, which he carefully detaches and brings to the surface. As he opens the oysters and discards the empty ones, his eyes turn repeatedly to the big one. When he opens it, he finds a perfect pearl as big as a seagull's egg, the greatest pearl in the world. When Kino and Juana turn to Coyotito, they see that the scorpion's poison has left his body.

CHAPTER III

Before Kino and Juana even arrive at their house made of brush, news of their find spreads through La Paz and people are imagining how the discovery of this fantastic pearl might benefit

them. The priest thinks of a church roof in need of repair, merchants consider clothing they might now be able to sell, the doctor now considers Coyotito his patient, the beggars dream of unprecedented alms, and the pearl buyers scheme how they might make a profitable transaction. Kino's neighbors, however, are happy for him and when his brother asks what he will do with his newfound wealth, Kino responds that he and Juana will get married now that they can afford it, and wear new clothes to the wedding. He then dreams of a new harpoon and a rifle, which he could not have afforded before. Furthermore, Coyotito will go to school and learn to read, write, and do numbers.

That night the priest pays a visit, followed later by the doctor, who warns Kino that, though the baby appears to be better, scorpion bites can have harmful effects over time that only he knows how to cure. Kino suspects he is being taken advantage of, but because he fears that the doctor may be speaking the truth, he lets him in. The doctor gives Coyotito some medicine, tells the parents that the poison will attack in an hour, and promises to return then. The neighbors know what the doctor is doing, but they say nothing. When they leave, Kino buries his pearl at the corner of his brush house. Soon the baby becomes ill; Juana says the doctor was right, but Kino suspects that the "medicine" actually caused the reaction they are witnessing. Later the neighbors and the doctor return and the doctor administers a different medicine. The baby calms down immediately, then the doctor claims to have cured the child and demands to know when his bill will be paid. Kino says he will pay him after he has sold his pearl, and the doctor offers to keep the pearl in his safe so no one will steal it. By this time Kino fears everyone, so he moves the pearl to a different hiding place. In the middle of the night, he hears scratching near the corner of the house. He strikes out with his knife and receives a blow to the head. Juana, while nursing his wound, warns him that the pearl is evil and must be destroyed or thrown back into the sea. Kino, however, assures her that once he sells the pearl in the morning the evil will be gone and only the good will remain.

CHAPTER IV

The next morning all of La Paz is talking about the impending sale of Kino's magnificent pearl. The pearl buyers, who in reality are agents for one man and therefore do not really compete with one another, have already planned how they will obtain the great pearl for the lowest possible price. Kino and his family dress up for the occasion, and the neighbors follow them into La Paz for the big event. Juan Tomás, Kino's brother, warns him not to get cheated, but they are uncertain how to do this because they don't know how much merchants in other places pay for such gems. They consider hiring an agent, but those who had done so in the past had been robbed of their pearls. The first merchant they visit tells them that the pearl is too large to be anything other than a curiosity, that no one would want to buy it, and offer Kino a thousand pesos. Kino knows it to be worth at least fifty times as much and indignantly refuses the offer. Three other dealers soon arrive, having colluded beforehand, they offer even less, and Kino leaves with his pearl in his pocket despite the fact that the first dealer raises his offer to fifteen hundred pesos. He decides to go to Mexico City to sell his pearl, but his brother warns him that merchants there may be even worse, and he will have no one to support him. That night Kino is attacked outside his house by someone trying to steal the pearl. As Juana helps him inside, he tells her that they must leave for the capital in the morning.

CHAPTER V

In the middle of the night, Juana quietly gets up, takes the pearl from its hiding place, intending to throw it into the sea. Kino hears her, follows her to the beach, and seizes the pearl just as she is about to throw it away. He then punches and kicks her, overcome with anger. On his way back from the beach he is attacked again and he strikes out with his knife, inflicting a fatal wound on his attacker. The pearl falls to the sand in the scuffle, but Juana retrieves it. When she sees that the stranger who attacked Kino is dead, she hides the body and insists that they must leave before dawn. She goes back to get the baby and some food while he returns to the beach to prepare their canoe for the journey. He finds, however, that someone has staved in the bottom of the boat, leaving a great hole in their most valuable possession. He then sees smoke rising above the trees. Juana runs toward him clutching the baby and tells him that the strangers had dug up the floor of the house, searched through their possessions, and then burned the brush house that was the only home they knew. They quickly hide in the nearby home of Juan Tomás. The next night they leave, intending to travel north.

CHAPTER VI

They walk all night, avoiding populated areas, then hide during the day. Soon three trackers appear, looking carefully for any sign of them. They pass by, but Kino knows they will return and decides that he and his family must flee to the mountains. They head westward as fast as they can go, caring nothing for concealing their path. Knowing that the trackers will eventually find their trail, Kino tells Juana to hide while he leads their pursuers deeper into the mountains, after which she can take the baby to safety where he can join them later. She refuses, insisting that the family must stay together.

They now try again to conceal their tracks and head for a likely source of water as the sun begins to set. When they reach it they refill their water bottle and rest briefly, but Kino can see the trackers in the distance. After he makes tracks intended to deceive their pursuers, they hide in a cave. When the men reach the pool, two sleep while the third keeps watch. Kino decides to jump the watchman and seize his rifle. Just before he arrives, the moon comes up and the baby begins to cry. Knowing he has no choice, Kino leaps on the trackers, killing all three with knife or rifle in the process. Then he hears a loud moan from above; Juana is wailing because, in the midst of the conflict below, a stray bullet has silenced Coyotito. When Kino and Juana return to La Paz, everyone sees that they have experienced some great horror and steps aside to let them pass. They go through the town, past their burned house and broken canoe, and down to the sea, where Kino throws the pearl back from whence it came.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Kino - A young pearl diver who finds a fabulously valuable pearl. He dreams of changing his life and that of his family, but the pearl winds up destroying them.
- Juana - Kino's wife, a patient and loving mother and a strong woman in the face of hardship.
- Coyotito - The infant son of Kino and Juana, he is killed by a stray rifle shot while the family is fleeing a band of trackers.

- The Doctor - A European who cares only for the rich and treats the natives like animals, he refuses to help Kino and Juana when their baby is stung by a scorpion, but later gives the baby medicine to make him sick, then cures him and demands payment.
- The Priest - He is more interested in obtaining some of the money Kino gets for the pearl to fix the roof of the church than he is in the welfare of Kino and his family.
- Juan Tomás - Kino's brother who warns him not to be cheated by the pearl merchants. He and his wife Apolonia take in and care for Kino's family after their house is burned.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“As with all retold tales that are in people's hearts, there are only good and bad things and black and white things and good and evil things and no in-between anywhere.” (Introduction)

“If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it.” (Introduction)

“Have I nothing better to do than cure insect bites for ‘little Indians’? I am a doctor, not a veterinary.” (Doctor, ch.I, p.14)

“There was no certainty in seeing, no proof that what you saw was there or was not there. And the people of the Gulf expected all places were that way, and it was not strange to them.” (ch.II, p.19)

“She had not prayed for the recovery of the baby - she had prayed that they might find a pearl with which to hire the doctor to cure the baby, for the minds of people are as unsubstantial as the mirage of the Gulf.” (ch.II, p.20)

“But the pearls were accidents, and the finding of one was luck, a little pat on the back by God or the gods or both.” (ch.II, p.22)

“It was the greatest pearl in the world.” (ch.II, p.25)

“The essence of pearl mixed with the essence of men and a curious dark residue was precipitated. Every man suddenly became related to Kino's pearl, and Kino's pearl went into the dreams, the speculations, the schemes, the plans, the futures, the wishes, the needs, the lusts, the hungers, of everyone, and only one person stood in the way and that was Kino, so that he became curiously every man's enemy.” (ch.III, p.29-30)

“It is said that humans are never satisfied, that you give them one thing and they want something more. And this is said in disparagement, whereas it is one of the greatest talents the species has and one that has made it superior to animals that are satisfied with what they have.” (ch.III, p.32)

“This thing is evil. This pearl is like a sin! It will destroy us. Throw it away, Kino. Let us break it between stones. Let us bury it and forget the place. Let us throw it back into the sea. It has brought evil. Kino, my husband, it will destroy us.” (Juana, ch.III, p.50)

“We do know that we are cheated from birth to the overcharge on our coffins. But we survive. You have defied not the pearl buyers, but the whole structure, the whole way of life, and I am afraid for you.” (Juan Tomás, ch.IV, p.70)

“I will fight this thing. I will win over it. We will have our chance. No one shall take our good fortune from us. Believe me. I am a man.” (Kino, ch.IV, p.74)

“Kino looked down at her and his teeth were bared. He hissed at her like a snake, and Juana stared at him with wide unfrightened eyes, like a sheep before the butcher.” (ch.V, p.76)

“The killing of a man was not so evil as the killing of a boat. For a boat does not have sons, and a boat cannot protect itself, and a wounded boat does not heal.” (ch.V, p.80)

“This pearl has become my soul. If I give it up I shall lose my soul.” (Kino, ch.V, p.87)

“Kino ran for the high place, as nearly all animals do when they are pursued.” (ch.VI, p.99)

“The music of the pearl drifted to a whisper and disappeared.” (ch.VI, p.118)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In the introduction to John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the author describes the story as an old fable that he is retelling. Fables make extensive use of symbolism to teach moral lessons. The central symbol in the fable is the marvelous pearl discovered by Kino the fisherman. What does the pearl symbolize? Support your conclusion with specific quotations from the novella.
2. In the introduction to John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the author writes, “As with all retold tales that are in people's hearts, there are only good and bad things and black and white things and good and evil things and no in-between anywhere.” In other words, fables tend to simplify the complexities of human experience. Is this an accurate description of Steinbeck's novella? Are all characters and all choices purely black or white, good or evil? Why or why not? Be sure to include specific examples to support your answer.
3. In the introduction to John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the author suggests that the story may be a parable and writes, “If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it.” To what extent is the story sufficiently ambiguous that each person can read into it his or her own meaning? If this is the case, what factors contribute to this ambiguity? Cite specific incidents, symbols, and quotations to support your arguments.

4. John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* continues to be popular reading, not only because of its simplicity, but also because of its insights into human nature. Discuss the view of human nature portrayed in the story and evaluate it on the basis of biblical teaching on the subject.
5. John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* is a fable intended to teach moral lessons. What does the story teach about the destructive power of wealth, both in the lives of those who have it and those who do not? Use specific incidents and quotations from the novella to support your arguments.
6. John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* has much to say about the importance of the family. Does the author consider the family to be more important than anything else in a person's life? Why or why not? What happens when other things intervene and take priority over the family in a person's life? How do conditions in contemporary society underscore the truth of the lesson taught in Steinbeck's simple tale?
7. Many commentators have noted that John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* can be read as a critique of the American Dream despite the fact that it takes place in Mexico. To what extent do Kino's ambitions after he finds the great pearl correspond to the essence of the American Dream? How does the author argue that such goals are in the long run empty and indeed harmful to human happiness?
8. John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* have both been described as critiques of the American Dream. Compare and contrast the ways in which the two books communicate the ultimate emptiness and destructiveness of the belief that wealth will lead to happiness? Be sure to include details from both books in your analysis.
9. In both John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the protagonist throws away an object desired by all because it has become an instrument of evil. Do the great pearl and the Ring of Power symbolize the same kind of evil, or do the authors have different forms of evil in mind? Support your arguments with specifics from both works.
10. In both John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, an object of great value becomes a source of temptation, both to those who possess it and those who do not. Compare and contrast what the two works of literature have to say about the nature of temptation and the proper response to it. Be sure to relate both to the teaching of the Bible on the subject.
11. In both John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the protagonist strikes out violently against the person closest to him when he thinks that person is trying to take his treasure from him. Compare and contrast the scenes where Kino beats Juana and Frodo becomes angry with Sam. Be sure to consider both the causes and the outcomes of the two conflicts in your analysis.

12. In both John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the central characters press forward because of hope despite facing desperate circumstances. The fact that their hope turns out to be futile in one case and is realized in the other tells much about the respective worldviews of the two authors. Compare and contrast the role of hope in the two stories, both as a motivator for the characters and as an indicator of the worldviews of the authors. Be sure to cite specifics from both works in your analysis.
13. Songs play a central role in the societies of the protagonists in both John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Analyze the roles played by songs in the two stories. What roles do they play in the cultures of native Americans on the one hand and hobbit and elves on the other? How do they help to shape the characters and the narratives in which they play a part? Why are the songs in one subconscious while in the other they are sung aloud?
14. In two of John Steinbeck's short novels, *The Pearl* and *Of Mice and Men*, a central character is destroyed in one way or another because he is naive about the ways of men and society. Compare and contrast the ways in which Kino and Lennie are brought low because of their naivete. What is the nature of the social criticism in which the author engages through these two characters?
15. John Steinbeck was very concerned about the problem of social inequality and the oppression of the poor by the rich. Compare and contrast the social critiques found in *The Pearl* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. In what ways do the settings - colonial Mexico and the United States during the Great Depression - shape the nature and content of the social criticism found in the novels?
16. Both John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* are stories of young men who are almost destroyed by the acquisition of sudden and unexpected wealth. Compare and contrast the impact of wealth on Kino and Pip, both in their own attitudes and in the attitudes toward them of the people around them. Be sure to use specific examples and quotations from both novels in your analysis.
17. John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* are both powerful critiques of European colonialism and its destructive influence on native cultures. In both novels, Christianity is pictured as on the side of the oppressors. How legitimate are the criticisms of the church found in these books? Do the authors misrepresent Christianity? Are the primitive cultures really as pure and innocent as they are pictured?
18. To what extent is John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* a critique of European colonialism? Is the author's main target the arrogance of colonial rule, or is he more interested in discussing human nature as a whole? Give arguments on both sides in the process of coming to your conclusion.
19. Many critics have compared John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* to Jesus' parable of the Pearl of Great Price in Matthew 13:45-46. Discuss the legitimacy of this comparison. Consider both what the pearls represent and how the stories indicate the proper way of handling them.

20. James 4:1-3 speaks of the destructive power of lust, which leads to quarreling, fighting, and murder. To what extent is John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* an illustration of the truth of James' warning? Does Steinbeck draw the same conclusions as those drawn by the brother of Jesus? Why or why not? Be sure to cite specifics from the novella in constructing your argument.
21. The last of the Ten Commandments says, "You shall not covet." The destructive power of covetousness is clearly pictured in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, especially in the lives of those who do not possess the valuable gem. But what about Kino? Is he a covetous man? If not, why not? If so, how does covetousness lead to his downfall?
22. Some readers have criticized John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* because they think it argues against ambition. Does the novella teach that trying to better oneself is harmful and that people should not seek to alter their lot in life? Why or why not? Cite specifics from the book to support your conclusion.
23. In I Corinthians 7:21-24, Paul argues that a Christian should not seek to alter his condition in life. Many have criticized John Steinbeck in *The Pearl* for teaching the same thing. Are the two writers in agreement on the subject of seeking to improve one's lot in life? Why or why not? Be sure to cite details from the novella in developing your arguments.
24. In John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, Kino's wife Juana prays to pagan gods and to the Virgin Mary. Clearly both practices are unbiblical, but what is the author saying by this manner of describing Juana's devotional life? Is this related to his attitude toward European colonialism? What does this suggest about Steinbeck's own view of God and Christianity?
25. As John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* moves toward its conclusion, the protagonist Kino is increasingly described in animalistic terms. What is the author saying about the effect of greed and ambition on a person's character? Does his portrayal of Kino's decline correspond to what the Bible says about the consequences of sin? Why or why not? Be sure to cite specific quotations from both the novella and the Bible in support of your argument.
26. In John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, to what extent are Kino and his wife Juana foils for one another? How do the contrasts in their characters and their attitudes toward the pearl serve to emphasize their differences rather than their similarities? With which character does the author agree? Which do you admire most, and why?
27. In John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the protagonist who discovers the great pearl desires simple things - a church wedding, new clothes for himself and his family, an education for his infant son, and a rifle. Are his desires wrong? Is the author suggesting that legitimate desires can lead to evil consequences? Under what circumstances is this true? Be sure to incorporate biblical teaching into your analysis.
28. John Steinbeck was accused by many in his day of being a socialist. Does his novella *The Pearl* justify this criticism? To what extent may the story be read as an attack on the capitalist system? Be sure to consider both the role of European colonists in the story and the attitudes of the native population, including the protagonist and his family.

29. According to Karl Marx, religion was “the opiate of the masses,” used by oppressors to keep the proletariat in submission by promising them happiness in the afterlife if they behaved themselves in this one. John Steinbeck was accused by many in his day of being a socialist. To what extent does his novella *The Pearl* justify this criticism? Does he picture religion as a malignant force in the lives of the natives, no more than a tool of the colonial powers to keep the poor in their oppressed condition? Use specific quotations from the novella to support your analysis.
30. In John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, two key events in the story occur as a matter of chance - the scorpion bite and the discovery of the pearl. What role does the author believe chance plays in human affairs? To what extent is the outcome of the tale based on fate and to what extent is it the result of human decisions? Use specific examples to support your arguments.
31. The Apostle Paul, in I Timothy 6:10, writes, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.” How does John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* demonstrate the truth of Paul’s warning? Choose three examples of people in the story who are drawn into evil by the love of money and show how their lust for material wealth produced sinful choices in their lives, hurting themselves and/or others.
32. John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* may be read as a story of a fall from innocence where an earthly paradise becomes a dangerous and destructive environment. Compare and contrast the arc of the story with the narrative of innocence and fall found in the early chapters of Genesis. How innocent was the original environment in which Kino and Juana lived? What caused their “fall”? Does the story contain any hint of redemption? If so, what is it? If not, why not?
33. Is the world of John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* one in which divine agency is at work? Why or why not? Give evidence from the novella to support your conclusion.
34. Discuss the view of women presented in John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*. Given that the events occur within a primitive society, how does the author view the position occupied by women like Juana and Apolonia in the family and societal structures in which they live? How does Juana in particular display both strength and weakness in the context of those structures?
35. Discuss the ending of John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*. What is the significance of the fact that Kino throws the pearl back into the sea? Is this an admission of failure or an act of redemption? Why do you think so? Support your conclusion with specifics from the story.
36. In John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, why does Kino refer to his discovery as “The Pearl of the World”? What is the significance of this form of identification? How is this played out as the story moves toward its conclusion?
37. In John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, to what extent is Kino responsible for the destruction of his family and to what extent may it justifiably be blamed on others or on fate? What does this say about the author’s view of human free agency?

38. In John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the protagonist discovers a valuable treasure, the Pearl of the World. Only when the pearl has caused him to lose everything of value to him does he understand what his true treasures are. What is the author saying about what is really valuable in human life? Evaluate his conclusion in the light of Jesus' comment on real treasure in Matthew 6:19-21.
39. In John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the author makes considerable use of animal imagery. Ants, for instance, appear three times in the novella and are used as a metaphor for human beings. Examine each of these incidents and discuss what they tell you about Steinbeck's view of human nature and man's relationship to God and other people. Evaluate these ideas in the light of Scripture.
40. Some critics of John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* have portrayed Kino as a Marxist hero fighting against the oppression of the capitalist bourgeoisie. To what extent is the novella susceptible to this interpretation? If one understands the story in these terms, what is the significance of the fact that Kino appears to lose his struggle?
41. In John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, would the protagonist have been better off had he never found the pearl in the first place? Would he have been better off had he allowed himself to be cheated by the pearl buyers and taken a mere pittance for his treasure? Why or why not? Support your answers with specifics from the novella.
42. John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* ends with Kino and Juana returning home to bury their dead son and dispose of the pearl that was the cause of all their misfortune. Use what you know about the characters, their society, and the author to speculate about what happens to them when they return to their village. Support your continuation of the story using evidence from Steinbeck's novella.
43. In the second chapter of John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the narrator describes the way in which the natives view the world when he says, "There was no certainty in seeing, no proof that what you saw was there or was not there. And the people of the Gulf expected all places were that way, and it was not strange to them." In other words, they didn't trust their senses as sources of ultimate truth. If that was indeed the case, what did they view as the basis for truth? Did Steinbeck agree with this worldview or not? What evidence can you cite to support your conclusion?
44. In chapter three of John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, the narrator says, "The essence of pearl mixed with the essence of men and a curious dark residue was precipitated. Every man suddenly became related to Kino's pearl, and Kino's pearl went into the dreams, the speculations, the schemes, the plans, the futures, the wishes, the needs, the lusts, the hungers, of everyone, and only one person stood in the way and that was Kino, so that he became curiously every man's enemy." What is the "essence of men" to which this quotation refers? What insight into human nature does this provide, and how is that insight worked out as the story progresses?

45. The Apostle Paul, in Philippians 4:11, says, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.” In the third chapter of John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, the narrator says, “It is said that humans are never satisfied, that you give them one thing and they want something more. And this is said in disparagement, whereas it is one of the greatest talents the species has and one that has made it superior to animals that are satisfied with what they have.” Why does Steinbeck praise what Paul implicitly criticizes? Does the story he tells support his assertion that lack of contentment with one’s life is a good thing, in fact something that separates man from animals? Why or why not?
46. In chapter four of John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, Kino’s family tries to convince him to sell the pearl despite the fact that he is being cheated. In his refusal, he repeatedly asserts, “I am a man.” What is his view of manhood? Does it correspond with what the Bible teaches about the nature of manhood? Use quotations from both the novella and Scripture to support your arguments.
47. In the fifth chapter of John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, the narrator says, “The killing of a man was not so evil as the killing of a boat. For a boat does not have sons, and a boat cannot protect itself, and a wounded boat does not heal.” What values in Kino’s society lead to this conclusion? Does Kino really believe this? Use specific incidents from the story to support your conclusion.
48. In chapter five of John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, Kino says, “This pearl has become my soul. If I give it up I shall lose my soul.” What does this say about Kino’s condition at that point in the story? What does it say about the symbolism of the pearl? Did Kino indeed lose his soul when he threw the pearl into the sea? Why or why not?
49. In John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, the perception of the pearl by Kino and Juana changes as the story progresses. How does it change, and why? How do these changes relate to changes in the characters themselves as the novella moves toward its conclusion?
50. Two novels by John Steinbeck, *The Winter of Our Discontent* and *The Pearl*, deal with the harm that wealth or the desire for it can do in the lives of simple, decent people. The stories take place in very different settings, yet the moral dimensions of the tales are in some ways similar. Compare and contrast the views of wealth and its dangers as presented in the two novels.