

The Pearl Book Notes

The Pearl by John Steinbeck

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Contents

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| The Pearl Book Notes..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Author/Context..... | 3 |
| Plot Summary..... | 5 |
| Major Characters..... | 7 |
| Objects/Places..... | 9 |
| Quotes..... | 10 |
| Topic Tracking: Evil..... | 11 |
| Topic Tracking: Family..... | 13 |
| Topic Tracking: Superstition..... | 15 |
| Prologue..... | 17 |
| Chapter 1..... | 18 |
| Chapter 2..... | 20 |
| Chapter 3..... | 21 |
| Chapter 4..... | 23 |
| Chapter 5..... | 25 |
| Chapter 6..... | 27 |

Author/Context

John Ernest Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902 in his childhood home of the Salinas Valley in California. In this environment, Steinbeck developed an appreciation for the sights, sounds, and smells of the natural world. The connection between man and nature and the inevitability of man meeting his determined fate are two common themes in his novels.

As a child, Steinbeck grew up in a supportive middle-class family. Although his mother, once a schoolteacher, would have preferred her son to make his way in a dignified profession, Steinbeck's father gave the writer a small allowance from his own salary so that his son could pursue his writing career.

Steinbeck went to Stanford intermittently for five years without ever earning a degree, and during that time, he worked odd jobs, often involving physical labor. He liked these jobs because it brought him into contact with men of courage, strength, and honesty. He admired them for these qualities and their lack of hypocrisy.

At the age of twenty-seven, Steinbeck published his first novel, *Cup of Gold*, in 1929. From that point came thirteen novels, two collections of short stories, dramatizations of two of his novels, a play in story form, a documentary, and two volumes of reportage, as well as a journal of travel and scientific research. His novels include: *To a God Unknown* (1932), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *The Red Pony* (1937), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), *Of Mice and Men* (1940), *The Moon Is Down* (1942), *Cannery Row* (1945), *The Wayward Bus* (1947), *The Pearl* (1947), *East of Eden* (1952), *Sweet Thursday* (1954), and *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961).

The Grapes of Wrath won a Pulitzer Prize in 1940, and Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. After Steinbeck won the Nobel Prize, he ceased to write any significant fiction, but he did write journalistic pieces, including *America and Americans* (1966).

Despite winning the Nobel and Pulitzer Prizes, critics weren't sure what to make of Steinbeck because his style seemed to change with every novel. Some considered these changes an example of his versatility as a writer, while others viewed it as immaturity and an inability to establish his own style.

"Those who have written about Steinbeck have disagreed far more widely -- and deeply -- than they have about any other important writer of our time. . . . There is at least one notable characteristic of Steinbeck's writing on which otherwise conflicting critics agree: he is a man in whom the faculty of pity is strong and close to the surface. . . . It may turn out . . . that the essence of Steinbeck-man and Steinbeck-writer lies in these two quite uncomplicated truths: he earnestly wishes to make people understand one another and he is able, like Blake, to 'seek love in the pity of others' woe.'"

Steinbeck died at his home in New York City in December of 1968.



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Plot Summary

Kino, a young pearl diver in La Paz, enjoys his simple life until the day his son, Coyotito, is stung by a scorpion. The wealthy town doctor will not treat the baby because Kino cannot pay the doctor's fee, so Kino and his wife, Juana, are left only to hope their child is saved. That day Kino goes diving, and finds a great pearl, the Pearl of the World, and knows he is suddenly a wealthy man. The word travels quickly about the pearl and many in the town begin to plot ways to steal it.

While the townspeople plot against Kino, he dreams of marrying Juana in a church, buying a rifle, and sending Coyotito to school so that he can learn to read. Kino believes that an education will free his son from the poverty and ignorance that have oppressed their people for more than four hundred years.

The doctor comes to treat Coyotito once he learns of Kino's pearl, and although the baby is healed by Juana's remedy, the doctor takes advantage of Kino's ignorance. He convinces Kino that the child is still ill and will die without the care of a doctor. The doctor then manipulates Kino into unwittingly revealing where he has hidden the great pearl. Kino moves the pearl when the doctor leaves. That night, an intruder comes into Kino's hut and roots around near the spot where Kino had first buried the pearl.

The next day, Kino tries to sell the pearl in town. The pearl buyers have already planned to convince Kino that the great pearl he has found is worth very little because it is too large. This way they can purchase the pearl for a low price. But when the buyers try to cheat Kino, he refuses to sell the pearl and plans to travel to another city to sell at a fair price. His brother, Tom Juan, feels Kino's plan is foolish because it defies his entire way of life and puts his family in danger. Kino is now on his own, although he doesn't know it yet.

Juana warns Kino that the pearl is evil and will destroy his family, but he refuses to throw it away because it is his one chance to provide a different life for his family. That night, Juana takes the pearl and tries to throw it into the sea, but Kino stops her and beats her. On his way back to their hut, Kino is attacked and he kills the man in self-defense. Juana goes to gather their things and escape and finds the floor of their hut completely dug up. While she's inside the hut getting the baby, someone lights it on fire.

Kino, Juana, and Coyotito hide with Kino's brother for a day before embarking on their journey to a new city under the cover of darkness. While they are resting during the day, Kino discovers that there are trackers following them. He knows that they will steal the pearl and kill his family if they catch them. To escape, Kino and Juana take the baby and run to the mountains where they hide in a cave at nightfall. The trackers camp just below the ridge where they are hiding. Kino sneaks down in the night to kill the trackers, but before he can attack them, Coyotito cries out. The trackers, thinking it's a coyote, shoot at the dark cave where Juana and Coyotito are hiding. As the shot is fired, Kino springs on the trackers and kills them all. Unfortunately, Coyotito was killed by the first gunshot, and Kino's journey with the pearl ends in tragedy.



Realizing that the pearl is cursed and has destroyed his family (as Juana forewarned), Kino and Juana return to La Paz and throw the cursed pearl into the sea.



Major Characters

Kino: Kino is a young pearl diver who feels his obligation to his family very strongly. He knows his place as the provider and works hard to supply for his family's needs. He finds The Pearl of the World and expects to use it to pay for his son, Coyotito's, education. He also dreams that with the pearl he can buy his family new clothes and a rifle for himself, but the pearl only brings him trouble. His neighbors turn on him and try to steal the pearl from him and he has to leave his home after killing an attacker. Although it was self-defense, he knows that his family is in danger. He and Juana run away with Coyotito, but trackers follow them. He knows that they are after the pearl and that they will catch his family, so he sneaks into their camp and kills them all. In the shooting that goes on in the camp, a stray bullet kills his son. He and Juana return to La Paz with their dead child and they throw the pearl into the sea.

Juana: Juana is Kino's strong, quiet wife who takes care of her family. The rhythm of her motions is the Song of Family for Kino. She obeys her husband in most instances, but when she realizes that the pearl is only bringing trouble to her family, she urges him to throw it away. He refuses, and while he sleeps, she takes the pearl to the beach and is about to throw it in, when Kino catches her and beats her for taking the pearl. She accompanies her husband out of La Paz and urges him again to get rid of the cursed pearl, but he won't until their son, Coyotito, is accidentally shot by a tracker's rifle. After the tragedy, Kino and Juana walk side by side back to La Paz and throw the pearl into the sea together.

Coyotito: Coyotito is Kino and Juana's first-born child who is stung by a scorpion and needs medical treatment. Unfortunately, the local doctor will not treat the baby because Kino has no money. When the doctor hears about Kino's pearl, he comes to treat Coyotito. Kino expects that the pearl will purchase great things for his family, the greatest being an education for his son so that they cannot be cheated by the merchants and the other upper class citizens of La Paz who have taken advantage of Kino's people for four hundred years. But that great dream is destroyed when Coyotito is killed by a gunshot while Kino is killing the trackers who are following them. Kino killed them to protect his family and the pearl and the dream of the future that the pearl provided, but his dream and his family are destroyed when Coyotito dies. Kino and Juana return to La Paz with Coyotito's small body and throw the pearl into the sea.

Minor Characters

Juan Tomas: Juan Tomas is Kino's older brother. Juan gives Kino advice about selling the pearl. He walks beside Kino when they travel to the pearl buyers. Later, he warns his brother that by refusing to sell his pearl to the buyers, Kino is defying their way of life and putting his family in danger. When Kino seeks refuge with Juan Tomas, he is granted it. Juan gathers supplies that Kino and Juana will need on their journey and protects his brother's family until they depart.



Apolonia: Apolonia is Juan Tomas' wife. She follows her husband as he escorts Kino into town to sell the pearl, and she raises a formal mourning when Kino's hut burns and no sign of them is found.

Doctor: The doctor is wealthier than the peasants of La Paz, and he scoffs at natives, like Kino and Juana, who seek his treatment without money. When Kino and Juana brought Coyotito to the doctor to heal the scorpion sting, he refused them. Later, when he heard that Kino had found the Pearl of the World, he came to their hut to treat the baby. He pretended not to know that Kino had found a great pearl, so that when Kino talked about it, he could watch to see if his eyes went to the spot where it was buried in the hut. Sure enough, Kino gave its location away and that night someone came to his hut to dig out the pearl, but Kino had since moved it. Kino stabbed at the intruder, but did not make a fatal swing and the intruder (possibly the doctor) hit him in the head and then escaped.

Trackers: Two trackers and a man with a rifle followed Kino and Juana out of La Paz. Kino saw them coming while Juana hid in the woods. When Kino realized that they were tracking him, he and Juana hurried up to the smooth rocks of the mountains so that they would be harder to follow. When night fell, the trackers were just below the cave in which Kino, Juana, and Coyotito were hiding. Kino sneaked down the sheer face of the mountain and into their camp and killed them all. In the chaos, Coyotito was shot and killed.

The Priest: The priest was the local religious authority, and when he learned of Kino's pearl, he hoped that he could convince Kino to use his wealth for the good of the church. He made a visit to Kino's hut that night to talk to Kino about his duty to give part of his wealth to God, who had ultimately created the pearl.

The Buyers: The pearl buyers of the town acted as if they worked for themselves, but they were actually all controlled by one man. The pretense of competition among the pearl buyers made it easier to cheat the Indians out of their pearls. By putting on a show of competing over the best price, the man in charge and the buyers were adept at ripping off the natives. When they told Kino that his great pearl was worth only a thousand pesos, he got angry and left to take the pearl to the capital. That night, Kino's family was attacked in their home, and he believed that the buyers were responsible for it.



Objects/Places

Scorpion: The scorpion introduces the Song of Evil for Kino because it threatens the safety of his family. When the scorpion stings Coyotito before Kino can get to it, it introduces pain and panic.

Song of Family: The Song of Family is the rhythm that Kino hears in the life of his family, and in their routines. It's the music of their life together and reflects their peaceful interaction with one another, even in silence.

Song of Evil: The Song of Evil is the thundering that he hears whenever something threatens his family. The Song of Evil plays when the scorpion threatens his son and the thieves attack his family.

Song of the Pearl that Might Be: The Song of the Pearl that Might Be is what Kino hears when he is diving for pearls. This is the sound of his own hope that he will find a great pearl that will provide his family with luxury and peace.

The Pearl of the World: Kino found a great and beautiful pearl, The Pearl of the World, and it created its own music in his life. He hoped to use the pearl to buy his family new clothes and a rifle for himself. He also wanted to send Coyotito to school so that he could learn to read and become educated. Coyotito could then know what was in the great books, and could no longer be cheated by wealthy, educated people. Despite the high hopes Kino had for his family after finding the pearl, it brought them only grief. Neighbors began trying to steal it in the night and Kino killed a villager who attacked him for the pearl. To protect his family, Kino is forced to escape the village. Trackers, lusting after the pearl, followed Kino and his family. Kino, knowing the trackers will kill him and his family, attacked. During the fight, Coyotito was shot by the tracker's rifle. The pearl that once promised peace and prosperity brought Kino and Juana only tragedy. They returned to La Paz and threw it back into the sea.

Kino's Canoe: Kino's canoe was the one thing of value he owned until he found the pearl. He inherited the canoe from his father and grandfather and took excellent care of it. Kino used the boat to provide for his family. After he found the pearl, someone put a hole in the bottom of his canoe, forcing Kino and Juana to escape La Paz on foot. Kino was sad at the loss of his boat because it was a part of his heritage.



Quotes

Quote 1: "And, 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. If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it." Prologue, pg. 1

Quote 2: "Sometimes it rose to an aching chord that caught the throat, saying this is safety, this is warmth, this is the *Whole*." Chapter 1, pg. 4

Quote 3: "rage and terror" Chapter 1, pg. 12

Quote 4: "But the pearls were accidents, and the finding of one was luck, a little pat on the back by God or the gods both." Chapter 2, pg. 22

Quote 5: "[i]n this Gulf of uncertain light, there were more illusions than realities." Chapter 2, pg. 25

Quote 6: "A plan is a real thing, and things projected are experienced. A plan once made and visualized becomes a reality along with other realities -- never to be destroyed but easily to be attacked." Chapter 3, pg. 37

Quote 7: "For his dream of the future was real and never to be destroyed, and he had said, 'I will go,' and that made a real thing too. To determine to go and to say it was to be halfway there." Chapter 4, pg. 69

Quote 8: "This pearl has become my soul. . . . If I give it up, I shall lose my soul." Chapter 5, pg. 87

Quote 9: "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." Chapter 6, pg. 114

Quote 10: "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." Chapter 6, pg. 116

Quote 11: "And the music of the pearl drifted to a whisper and disappeared." Chapter 6, pg. 118



Topic Tracking: Evil

Topic Tracking: Evil

Chapter 1

Evil 1: Evil is introduced in the form of the scorpion that stings Coyotito. Until that moment, Kino's home is peaceful, filled with the Song of Family. But when he spots the scorpion dangling above Coyotito's bed, Kino recognizes the strains of the Song of Evil that recur throughout the story. The Song of Evil comes when anything threatens the family, and Kino does all that he can to destroy the evil and hush the sinister melody of the Song of Evil so that the Song of Family can return.

Evil 2: Kino hears the Song of Evil again when he and Juana stand at the gates of the doctor's house. Kino knows that the doctor is of the race that has abused Kino's own people for four hundred years; despite the fact that they need the doctor's help, Kino knows that the doctor is still the enemy. He will try to cheat them or abuse them as his people have always done to Kino's own race.

Chapter 3

Evil 3: The buyers are out to take advantage of Kino and his pearl. Their goal is to cheat him and ruin his plans of happiness and peace for his family.

Evil 4: The doctor comes to take advantage of Kino's ignorance by making Coyotito sick and pretending that his illness is the result of the scorpion sting. Because Kino and Juana are uneducated, they are afraid to doubt the doctor's word, and he uses it to profit from their newfound wealth. He pretends as if he doesn't know of Kino's pearl, yet the only reason he has condescended to treat an Indian baby was to try and seek out where Kino might be hiding it. The pearl brings evil in the form of greed: many seek to take advantage of Kino's newfound wealth.

Chapter 4

Evil 5: The buyers work together to cheat Kino of his pearl and intend to give him very little money for it. They have planned to convince him that his pearl is worthless and pretend that they're doing him a favor by taking it off his hands. The buyers are aware of the pearl's tremendous value, and intend to con the "uneducated native;" he will trust them because they are the "experts."

Evil 6: Kino believes that his friends will help protect him from the evils that might befall him because of the pearl, but instead of finding protection with his neighbors, he is attacked. His pearl has turned friends into enemies; they are jealous and envy the pearl of the world that Kino has found.

Chapter 5



Evil 7: The pearl turns Juana and Kino against one another. The evil power of the pearl is strong enough to inspire violence between them. Juana and Kino are so close to one another that conversation isn't even needed, and yet the pearl is able to divide them. It has brought injury and danger, and now it pulls Juana and Kino away from each other.

Evil 8: Kino is forced to kill a man to defend himself and the pearl. Then Kino's hut is burned after someone searching for the pearl has ransacked it. Those who covet the great pearl destroy everything that Kino and Juana have in their attempts to find it. The Pearl is making everyone turn against them, and Kino and Juana know that they are no longer safe in their village, and must escape.

Chapter 6

Evil 9: Kino looks into the pearl expecting to see visions of the dreams he had the night after he found the pearl, but the only things he sees are the horrible things that have happened to his family since he found the pearl. He begins to realize the evil the pearl contains, but still refuses to give it up.

Evil 10: In a dream, Kino has a premonition of danger. He wakes and discovers trackers are following his family. He knows that they will find them and kill them for the pearl. He feels trapped because there is no way for them to escape the trackers.

Evil 11: In the struggle to protect his family and survive, Kino turns into a killing machine. He attacks, swiftly and brutally, killing all three men who were tracking his family in a quest to steal his great pearl. Kino has been forced to do terrible things to survive and to protect the pearl from being stolen. The pearl's value has made it evil.



Topic Tracking: Family

Chapter 1

Family 1: Kino hears the Song of Family in each routine of his life. Although their life is simple, the rhythm of their habits and the sounds of each part of their lives make up a song that is important to Kino. It fills his ears and he is content with the safe and sturdy song. Kino will protect this song and the family it represents because it is all he has and he loves it.

Chapter 2

Family 2: Kino inherited his canoe, his only thing of value, from his father and grandfather, and it makes him proud. It is his legacy and he takes great care of it because it is the tool he uses to provide for his family. The canoe is the only inheritance he has beyond the songs of his people, and Kino loves his canoe.

Chapter 3

Family 3: Kino cannot take a chance that the doctor is lying to him about Coyotito's health because he doesn't want his child to suffer. The doctor takes advantage of a parent's concern for his child to turn a profit. He knows that Kino will trust enough in the doctor's knowledge to allow him to treat Coyotito because Kino is unsure that the baby is healed.

Chapter 4

Family 4: Kino won't give up the pearl even though it's brought nothing but pain because he sees its value as a chance to provide for his son's education, allowing him to escape their simple life. Kino does not want those with a formal education to take advantage of Coyotito, like they do to other uneducated natives. He wants more for his son and his family than their simple life, and the pearl is the key to those aspirations.

Chapter 5

Family 5: The pearl that Kino expected to protect his family is now tearing it apart. Juana warns Kino that the pearl will destroy their family, but Kino refuses to believe it because he thinks that the wealth the pearl offers is the best way to protect his family. He thinks that by keeping the pearl, he is doing what is best for his family, but the pearl is only pushing him and Juana apart. If it is dividing them, it cannot protect the family from harm. It only makes life more precarious for them.

Family 6: Juan Tomas helps his brother in every way that he can, by diverting the neighbors and gathering supplies for Kino's journey. Juan knows that the pearl has brought evil onto his brother's family, and he does all the he can to help them escape from it, but he cannot convince Kino to get rid of the pearl.



Chapter 6

Family 7: As Kino, Juana, and Coyotito are making their escape, Kino believes that his family will triumph because they seem to be getting away. He begins to believe that everything will work out; the pearl promises security and peace, and they will escape the bad luck that has plagued them since he found the pearl. He believes that now his family will prosper.

Family 8: Kino considers giving himself up to the trackers because there is no way that he and his family can get away from them. The thought momentarily defeats him, until Juana reminds him that the trackers will kill her and Coyotito as well, and that prods Kino into action.

Family 9: In the midst of danger, their survival depends on keeping the baby quiet through the night. If he cries, their hiding place is given away, but if he can keep silent, perhaps Kino will be able to disarm the men and secure his family's escape.

Family 10: Juana was right from the beginning -- the pearl did destroy their son. The trackers who were following them kill Coyotito. Kino's insistence that the pearl would find peace and happiness for his family costs Coyotito his life and leaves a hole in their family that would not have been there had Kino never found the pearl.



Topic Tracking: Superstition

Chapter 1

Superstition 1: When Coyotito is in danger of being stung by the scorpion, Juana mutters an ancient magic incantation and then some Hail Marys to protect her son. The ancient, superstitious religion of the peasantry has been mixed with the Catholicism of the Western upper class. Juana appeals to native gods and the Western God, uncertain of which holds the true power. This mingling of a polytheistic religion with Roman Catholicism is common in native countries that are colonized. The natives combine the gods of their own religion with the figures of Catholicism. Elements of their original faith remain, such as incantations like the one Juana mutters.

Chapter 2

Superstition 2: Juana prays that Kino will find a pearl so that they can have Coyotito's scorpion sting treated by the doctor. She prays in an attempt to force from the gods the luck she and Kino need to take care of Coyotito. Finding a pearl of value is strictly luck. Pearls themselves are accidental, and finding a pearl is considered a gift from the gods or God.

Superstition 3: When Kino finds the large shell, he is reluctant to open it first because he doesn't want to show the gods or God that he wants the pearl so much. He believes that if he wants it too much, it won't happen, and so he waits to open the shell.

Chapter 3

Superstition 4: Kino worries that the gods will get revenge against him if he finds success. He knows that the gods hate when men plan for success, and now that Kino is making plans, he fears that something will come and rob him of this opportunity.

Superstition 5: Juana believes that the pearl is cursed because it has brought an intruder into their home. She warns Kino that it will destroy them all, including their son, if they don't throw it back into the sea, but Kino won't listen. His desire to use the pearl to educate his son and make a better life for his family is too strong. He ignores Juana's warning and keeps the pearl.

Chapter 4

Superstition 6: Juana still believes that the pearl is cursed, and she asks Kino to throw it back into the sea again, but he refuses. He insists that it is their only chance and he won't give it up. Juana, however, knows that the pearl will only bring more evil and disaster to them, and decides she must take matters into her own hands, and get rid of the pearl.

Chapter 5



Superstition 7: Juana decides that if Kino won't get rid of the cursed pearl, she will. She takes the pearl and tries to throw it back into the sea to protect her family from any more danger, but Kino stops her. Her fear of the pearl is well-founded; Kino beats her for trying to get rid of the pearl, further proving that the pearl is cursed and evil. It has made Kino attack and harm the one person he loves most.

Superstition 8: Juan warns Kino that the pearl is cursed and that he must get rid of it to pass the evil on to someone else. He hopes that Kino can sell it soon so that the evil of the pearl will not destroy his family before Kino can rid himself of it.

Chapter 6

Superstition 9: When Kino looks into the pearl and sees only the tragedies that have befallen his family, he begins to believe that the pearl is cursed, but he still cannot part with it.

Superstition 10: Kino and Juana throw the pearl back into the sea after Coyotito is killed by the trackers. The cursed pearl has brought about the death of their child and forced Kino to kill to survive and protect his family. The great pearl has brought nothing but misery to Kino and his family, and together they throw the cursed object back into the sea. As it sinks, the music of the pearl turns to a whisper and then disappears.

Prologue

The story of Kino and the great pearl is one that all of the villagers know by heart.

"And, 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. If this story is a parable, perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it." Prologue, pg. 1

This is Kino's story.



Chapter 1

Kino awakes in the early dawn and his wife, Juana, is awake beside him. He cannot remember waking when Juana wasn't already awake and looking at him. He hears the waves lapping the shore and feels the music of his life within him. The sounds of his world are songs that have existed in his people for hundreds of years, and among those ancient songs in Kino's head are his own songs, the Song of Family and the Song of the Pearl that Might Be. As Juana fixes breakfast for her husband, he stands at the door and looks out into the dawning morning. The motion of Juana's cooking and the sounds of her work inside the house make up the Song of Family for Kino. Behind him, he hears the creaking rope as Juana takes their baby, Coyotito, from the hanging box he sleeps in and wraps him in her shawl to carry him close to her breast. The sounds are so familiar to Kino that he doesn't even have to look to know what is happening. As Juana works, she hums an ancient song, and this melody is also part of the Song of Family along with every other sound of their home. That is the song that constantly plays in Kino's head. "Sometimes it rose to an aching chord that caught the throat, saying this is safety, this is warmth, this is the *Whole*." Chapter 1, pg. 4

Topic Tracking: Family 1

Kino is young and strong, and this is the only life he has ever known. Juana finishes cooking his breakfast and he squats by the fire to eat it. Their food is simple, as is their home and their life together. They don't speak because they have been together long enough that there is no need for words. She understands his sighs of satisfaction and that replaces conversation.

Kino notices a tiny movement on the rope over Coyotito's hanging box. A scorpion works its way down the rope toward the baby and the Song of Evil drums in Kino's ears. Juana whispers ancient magic and Hail Marys to ward off the evil as Kino moves toward the box to grab the scorpion. Just before he can get to the scorpion, Coyotito shakes the rope and the scorpion falls onto his shoulder and stings him. Juana tries to suck the poison out of the baby's shoulder while Kino pounds the scorpion to dust on the dirt floor of their hut.

Topic Tracking: Superstition 1

Topic Tracking: Evil 1

The neighbors come to Kino's hut because they hear Coyotito's cries. Juan Tomas, Kino's brother, and Apolonia, Kino's sister-in-law, are the first to the hut to see what the fuss is about. With the neighbors gathered round, Juana demands that someone go get the doctor from town to see to Coyotito. Knowing that the sting will make an adult very sick, the possibility that Coyotito could die from the sting is very real. But the doctor will not come, so Kino and Juana, hearing the Song of Family in their ears, go to him.



Their neighbors follow them into the city, and along the way to the doctor's house. At the gates of the doctor's lavish home, with its garden fountains and caged birds, Kino feels "rage and terror" Chapter 1, pg. 12 because he knows that the doctor is not of his race. The doctor is of the race that has beaten, cheated, and starved Kino's people for four hundred years, so although Kino and Juana need the doctor's help for Coyotito, the doctor is still the enemy, and the Song of Evil pounds in Kino's head again.

Topic Tracking: Evil 2

The fat, wealthy doctor sits in his house dreaming of his days in Paris, when he led what he considered a civilized life -- keeping a mistress and eating in restaurants. When his servant comes to tell him that one of the Indians needs treatment for his son's scorpion sting, the doctor refuses because he knows the Indians are poor. He will not help them if they cannot pay, and he knows without asking that they can't pay him. Kino has only a few seed pearls worth very little, and that will not pay the doctor's fee, so the servant closes the gates in Kino's face. The neighbors leave so that Kino can suffer his humiliation alone. In anger and frustration, Kino hits his fist against the iron gate and splits his knuckles.



Chapter 2

Kino and Juana return home and go out to gather pearls in Kino's canoe, the one valuable thing he owns. Kino's father and grandfather had handed that canoe down to him along with the secret way to refinish the plaster so that it remained sea worthy over the years. The canoe is his legacy, along with the ancient songs, and he is proud of it. He uses the canoe to hunt for pearls and provide for his family. When they go out onto the sea, Juana puts a seaweed poultice on Coyotito's shoulder.

Kino slips over the side of the canoe with the rope tied to a rock, which he will wrap around his ankle so that he doesn't float to the surface while he looks for pearls. There is another rope tied to a basket so that he can put the oysters in the basket and pull them up to the boat when he's finished diving. Under the water, he can hear the Song of the Pearl that Might Be as he gathers oyster shells and puts them into the basket. For centuries men had dived to the depths of the sea hoping that one of the shells will have gathered a grain of sand and coated it smooth with its cement secretions to make a valuable pearl. "But the pearls were accidents, and the finding of one was luck, a little pat on the back by God or the gods both." Chapter 2, pg. 22 While Kino dives, Juana prays that he will find a great pearl so that they can afford the doctor's treatment for Coyotito. Kino knows that above him, in the canoe, Juana is praying, trying to force the luck he needs to find the pearl.

Topic Tracking: Superstition 2

Topic Tracking: Family 2

In the shadowy water he sees a large shell sitting alone and as he approaches it; the shell closes, but not before he catches a glimmer within it. He goes to the surface with the shell in his hand. He brings the basket up behind him and begins opening the smaller shells. He isn't certain of what he saw within the oyster -- it could have been little more than a reflection of light. He is wary of getting his hopes up because "[i]n this Gulf of uncertain light, there were more illusions than realities." Chapter 2, pg. 25 He doesn't want to tempt Fate by being too eager because wanting something too much pushes the luck away. Kino knows that a certain amount of tact is required with God or the gods, but he can't wait anymore. He opens the shell and in it is the Pearl of the World. It is a round, perfect pearl like a gull's egg, and in it Kino can see dream forms hovering. Juana looks at Coyotito and sees that the swelling in his shoulder has gone down, and when she shows Kino, he howls out his emotion on the sea. The sound startles the other fishermen, and they speed toward Kino's canoe.

Topic Tracking: Superstition 3



Chapter 3

Word spreads quickly about Kino's good fortune among his neighbors and into the town. The news spread to the priest who thinks that it would be good to have that wealth for the church. Shopkeepers eye their men's clothing in hopes of making a sale. The doctor also hears of Kino's pearl, and when he realizes who Kino is, he says that Kino is his client. The thought of the pearl makes the doctor dream of Paris again. The buyers hear word of Kino's pearl and think of how they will offer him only the lowest price he can stand. Their job is to get the Indians to give over their pearls for less than their actual value by working together with the other pearl buyers in the city. Because there are three pearl agents, it seems that they are in competition for the pearls, but they all actually work for one man and in this way they are able to cheat the locals out of their pearls for very little money.

Topic Tracking: Evil 3

As people hear the news of Kino's pearl, everyone thinks about what all they could do with that pearl and they grow greedy. Kino is the only thing that stands between them and the pearl and so he becomes their enemy without his realizing it. That night with his neighbors gathered round, Kino looks into the pearl to see which of his dreams it will grant. He says that he and Juana will be married in the church; they will all have new clothes; and perhaps he will buy himself a rifle. But the grandest dream in the surface of the pearl is an education for Coyotito. If Coyotito could read what was written in the great books, then his family could not be taken advantage of anymore because of their lack of education. The neighbors listen to the plans of the pearl with reverence and realize that whether fortune or misfortune follow Kino and his family from now on, time will be dated according to the pearl.

The priest enters Kino's house and the Song of Evil follows close behind him. Kino is uncertain of who brought it, but he can hear the evil song softly behind the priest's questions about the pearl. Juana tells the priest that they are planning to marry, and he is satisfied that they will do good things with their newfound wealth. He leaves and the neighbors disperse to their homes for supper. Kino feels very alone and vulnerable because the pearl has pushed him toward a new experience; it has forced him to make plans. "A plan is a real thing, and things projected are experienced. A plan once made and visualized becomes a reality along with other realities -- never to be destroyed but easily to be attacked." Chapter 3, pg. 37 And Kino knows that the gods do not care for men's plans. They do not like men's success either, unless it is accidental, and they will take revenge against the man who is successful by his own design.

Topic Tracking: Superstition 4

The doctor comes to Kino's hut to care for Coyotito, pretending that he'd been out when they came to see him earlier. Despite Coyotito's improvement, the doctor insists that he might still be infected with the poison. Kino doesn't know if the doctor is lying or not, and he is unable to risk not accepting the doctor's advice, so he allows the man to give the



baby a dose of some white powder from his bag. The doctor tells Kino and Juana that the scorpion's poison will strike within the hour and he will come back later. The doctor returns to his home and eats supper while he waits for the powder to kick in. While the doctor is gone, Kino wraps the pearl in cloth and buries it in a corner of the hut near a post for safekeeping. Soon Coyotito suffers stomach cramps like those he might have had from the scorpion sting, had much poison gotten into his blood. Neighbors gather at Kino's hut again. The doctor returns eventually and gives Coyotito another potion to end the cramping. He asks Kino how he will pay for the treatment, pretending that he does not know about the great pearl. As the neighbors assure the doctor that Kino will be a rich man because of the pearl he found, the doctor offers to keep the pearl safe for Kino. Kino declines, but the doctor watches his eyes, expecting them to look toward the place where the pearl is buried. Sure enough, Kino's eyes flick toward the side post of the hut.

Topic Tracking: Family 3

Topic Tracking: Evil 4

When everyone leaves the hut, Kino digs up the pearl and buries it under his sleeping mat. He tells Juana that he is afraid of everyone and he feels an isolating hardness come over him; Kino is becoming wary of everyone. He awakes that night because someone is in the hut, and when he attacks the intruder who was digging near the side post of the hut, he is hit in the head. The intruder escapes, and Juana takes care of Kino's cut while a cold hatred builds in him toward those who try to cheat him. Juana warns Kino that the pearl is evil, and that it will destroy them. She tells him that they should throw it back into the sea before it brings any more evil to them, but Kino refuses. He insists that the pearl is their chance to give their son an education, to help him break out of the chains of ignorance that bind Kino's people. Juana insists that the pearl will destroy Coyotito as well, but Kino hushes her and tells her that they will sell the pearl the next day and the evil will leave them. As the morning creeps in, Kino digs up his pearl and looks into it. It holds within it the promise of peace and security, and he smiles. Because she loves her husband so much that he has become a part of her, Juana smiles with him, and the sun rises upon a day of promise for Kino and his family.

Topic Tracking: Superstition 5



Chapter 4

Kino and Juana prepare themselves to sell the pearl. They dress in their best clothes, and as they go into town, their neighbors follow. It is an historic moment in La Paz, and everyone wants to watch it unfold. The buyers are waiting for Kino and his pearl, already certain of what they will pay for it and how they will con him into accepting their meager offer. Juan Tomas, Kino's brother, warns Kino that he must not be cheated, and Kino agrees; he is aware of the potential for being taken advantage of in this situation.

When Kino shows his pearl to the first buyer, the man examines it and offers Kino a thousand pesos for it because he claims that it is too big to be worth much. He suggests that it is too clumsy to be valuable and is only a curiosity. Kino exclaims that the buyer is trying to cheat him, so the buyer calls on the other pearl agents to come in and estimate the pearl's value without hearing the first buyer's offer. The other men come in and claim that the pearl is worthless. When Kino grabs the pearl and prepares to leave, the first buyer raises his offer to fifteen hundred pesos. This does no good because Kino is now enraged. He tells the buyers and his neighbors that he will find a buyer for his pearl even if he has to go to the capital to do it. The buyers are angry that he didn't fall into their trap. Kino returns home with Juana and Coyotito.

Topic Tracking: Evil 5

Kino's neighbors are uncertain about his decision to sell the pearl elsewhere. Perhaps the buyers were being honest about the worth of the pearl. Or maybe they had worked out their scheme beforehand. No one knew. Kino buries the pearl under the fire stone in his hut and is afraid of what he has done. Knowing he must travel to sell the pearl, Kino will leave his old, familiar world and face a journey and a life that is new to him. Although he is frightened, he has to follow through with his plan. "For his dream of the future was real and never to be destroyed, and he had said, 'I will go,' and that made a real thing too. To determine to go and to say it was to be halfway there." Chapter 4, pg. 69 Juan Tomas (Kino's brother) comes in and tells Kino that he is afraid for him. Although the pearl buyers were trying to cheat him, Kino has defied not just the buyers, but his entire way of life. Juan is afraid for Kino because from that point on, his life is new and without a script, and that makes it dangerous. Kino insists that it will work out fine because his friends will protect him. Juan leaves and Kino sits silently listening to the sounds around him. Juana watches him with worry and sings softly her ancient song as if she is trying to ward off the Song of Evil that Kino hears.

Kino hears a noise outside and takes his knife with him to the doorway. Juana is afraid for him as he steps out into the black night. She hears a struggle and when she goes to the doorway, Kino lays there half-conscious and bleeding from a cut on his face. She takes him inside and cleans him up. Kino did not see who attacked him, and Juana is worried. She urges Kino again to throw the pearl away because it is evil, but he refuses to give up their one chance. She protests again, but he hushes her. He tells her that they will leave in the morning and go to the capital to sell the pearl. They go to sleep.



Topic Tracking: Evil 6
Topic Tracking: Family 4
Topic Tracking: Superstition 6



Chapter 5

Kino awakes in the middle of the night to find that Juana is not on their sleeping mat. She has moved the fireplace stone and is walking out the door when Kino rises to follow her. Fury builds in him at his wife's betrayal. When she reaches the beach and raises her arm to throw the pearl back into the sea, Kino attacks her. He grabs the pearl from her and hits her in the face and kicks her in the side. He looks down at her as if to hurt her again and she faces him, unafraid. His face fills with disgust and he turns to walk back to their hut with the pearl in his hand.

Topic Tracking: Evil 7

Topic Tracking: Family 5

Topic Tracking: Superstition 7

As Kino walks back to his hut, a man attacks him. Kino stabs the attacker with his knife, but the pearl is knocked from his hand. Juana tends her wounds at the sea and then walks back up the path. In the moonlight that gleams between clouds, she sees the pearl shining and picks it up. She considers taking it back to the sea again, but the moon peeks around the edge of a cloud again and she sees two men lying in the path. The attacker is dead, and Kino is barely conscious. He tells her that he was attacked and he killed only to defend himself, but they both know that it will not matter. They must leave and save themselves because their old peaceful life has ended. Juana goes to their hut to gather Coyotito and all the corn they have. Kino goes to put his canoe in the water, but a great hole has been made in the shell of the canoe. Kino hears the Song of Evil all around him. Now he and Juana must find other means of escape. It doesn't occur to him to steal one of his neighbors' canoes. He is hurrying up the path to his hut as the morning comes when he sees that it's on fire. Juana meets him on the path and explains that the floor of the hut had been dug up and while she was inside, someone torched the hut. She doesn't know who did it.

Topic Tracking: Evil 8

Neighbors run out of their brush huts quickly to see what is happening, and in the distraction, Kino and Juana make their way to the hut of Juan Tomas. Outside they can hear Apolonia wailing in mourning because everyone believes that the family has burned with their hut. Apolonia returns to her hut to put on her best head shawl for the formal lament, and Kino whispers to her to bring her husband and tell no one else where they are. When Juan comes in, Kino explains that he has killed a man in a fight and he and his family have no way to escape because his canoe has been ruined. Juan agrees to hide them for a day so that they can leave in the cover of darkness. He warns Kino that the pearl is evil and hopes that perhaps he can sell it and pass on the evil. Juan goes out of his hut with his neighbors and Kino and Juana can hear the neighbors raking the ashes for bones. When Kino's boat is found, Juan tells his neighbors that perhaps Kino went along the coast to escape the evil that the pearl brought. Juan tells other neighbors that perhaps Kino found another boat and went out onto the sea. A wind



blows up that day and convinces those who think Kino took the sea route of escape that Kino could not have survived the force of those winds on the water.

Topic Tracking: Superstition 8

Juan brings borrowed supplies from each of the neighbors he visits, and gives them all to Kino for his journey. Among the supplies is a heavy knife with a long blade that will work as a tool or a weapon. Kino keeps that close to him. Juan warns that there will be search parties along the south shore, and Kino decides that they will seek out the cities of the North. The wind that has blown up will cover their tracks, and they prepare to set out. Juan asks if Kino will not give up the pearl, and Kino says, "This pearl has become my soul . . . If I give it up, I shall lose my soul." Chapter 5, pg. 87

Topic Tracking: Family 6



Chapter 6

Kino, Juana, and Coyotito begin their dark journey. When they reach a place where the wind no longer reaches, they walk carefully in wagon ruts so that their footprints will not be obvious, and the first wagon that passes through will obliterate their tracks altogether. As they walk, meeting no one on the dark road, Kino hears the music of the pearl interweaving with the Song of Family in his head. He doesn't fear the night animals or their sounds because he carries the long knife that Juan gave him.

Topic Tracking: Family 7

As dawn presents itself, Kino finds a clearing away from the road where Juana and Coyotito can hide. He uses a tree branch to brush away the tracks from the road to the clearing so that they will not be found. During the day, Juana asks him if the buyers might not have been right about the pearl, and he suggests that if it weren't valuable, they wouldn't have tried to steal it. Although he doesn't know for certain who attacked him, he believes that the buyers did it. He looks into the pearl for assurance and talks of the rifle he will buy, but the pearl only reflects an image of the man he killed. He says that he and Juana will marry in a big church and the pearl shows him Juana with her face bruised from his fists. Then he says that Coyotito will learn to read, and the pearl reflects the baby's face swollen from the doctor's poison. The music of the pearl begins to mingle with the Song of Evil and the sinister melody plays on in his head.

Topic Tracking: Evil 9

Topic Tracking: Superstition 9

Kino naps for a short while and wakes with some premonition that danger is coming. He sneaks to the road and hides there to keep watch. Presently he sees the trackers, two on foot and a third man with a rifle on horseback. They are following the wagon ruts as if they could plainly see Kino's footprints. He knows that they are after the pearl. Kino plans how he must attack if they find his hiding spot near the road, and for a few tense moments, the trackers look around on the road near him. When they move on, Kino hurries back to the clearing and doesn't bother to cover his tracks. He knows that the trackers will circle back around to the swept path soon enough and recognize the sweep marks and displaced stones and other minute details that cannot be covered. He hurries to Juana and tells her that the trackers will find them. He considers letting them take him, but she reminds him that the trackers will kill them all. So together they flee toward the mountains hoping to lose the trackers over the smooth rock surface.

Topic Tracking; Evil 10

Topic Tracking: Family 8

As Kino and his wife approach the mountain, Kino suggests that Juana hide with the baby and let him lead the trackers into the mountains. She refuses to separate from him even for Coyotito's sake, and so they continue on looping back and forth, making their trail somewhat difficult for the trackers to follow. As the sun descends in the sky, they



reach a spring in the mountain, and above it is a shallow cave in the cliff where Kino wants to hide his family. The trackers can be seen far off in the distance, and Kino knows that they will make their way to the spring by nightfall. He helps Juana up the cliff with the baby on her back, and he tells Juana that she must keep Coyotito quiet if they are to survive the night. She assures him that she will.

Topic Tracking: Family 9

The trackers prepare their camp at the spring just below the cave. Kino knows that if he can kill the man with the rifle, he can kill the other trackers and save his family. Kino waits for the darkest part of night before the moon rises to make his attack. Only the man with the rifle stays awake and the end of his cigarette glows in the darkness. Kino can see the position of each man when the watchman lights a match for his cigarette. It is time to attack. He sheds his white clothes because they will be visible in the night and wears only the knife around his neck. Kino tells his wife that if he is killed, she should remain hidden until the men have passed and then strike out on her own for Loreto. Juana is afraid for him.

Kino begins his descent down the sheer face of the mountain, moving so slowly that the rifleman will not notice the dark shape that descends from the cave. When Kino reaches the ground, the moon is rising and he must wait for the moment to spring on the watchman with the rifle. As he waits, a cry comes from the cave above and wakes one of the sleeping men. The watchman says that it sounds like a baby, and the other man explains that sometimes coyote cries sound like babies. The cry comes again and the watchman cocks the gun and aims at the dark cave planning to silence the animal.

Kino leaps from his place and stabs the watchman through the neck and into the chest as the gun goes off. He wrenches the rifle away and hits the man who was barely awake with the rifle butt, crushing his head like a melon. The third man frantically tries to climb the cliff to escape, and with cold precision, Kino picks him off with the gun. The man lands in the pool of water and Kino stands over him and puts another bullet between his eyes. Now that the men are dead, Kino hears some sound trying to force its way into his head. "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." Chapter 6, pg. 114

Topic Tracking: Evil 11

Everyone in La Paz watches as Kino and Juana walk side-by-side into town. They seem to carry darkness with them in the rifle that Kino has across his arm and in the bundled shawl that Juana carries over her shoulder like a sack. The shawl is encrusted with dried blood, and her face is weary and tight. The neighbors, who rush to the street to see them, take a step back. Kino and Juana seem "removed from human experience; [as if] they had gone through pain and had come out on the other side; [and] there was almost a magical protection about them." Chapter 6, pg. 116



Kino's ears ring with the Song of Family as he and Juana walk through the town and to the edge of the sea. Kino holds the pearl up and looks into it. It reflects images of his burning hut, the eyes of the man he killed with the rifle, and Coyotito in the dark cave with the top of his head ripped away by a bullet. The frantic and lunatic music of the pearl swells in Kino's ears and he holds the cursed object out to Juana. She insists that he throw it. They watch the pearl splash into the Gulf and it settles to the bottom of the sea among the algae and seaweed. "And the music of the pearl drifted to a whisper and disappeared." Chapter 6, pg. 118

Topic Tracking: Superstition 10

Topic Tracking: Family 10