

The Black Pearl

Scott O'Dell

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Chapters contain: Vocabulary Words and Activities, Discussion Questions, Predictions, Supplementary Activities	
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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, visualization,
brainstorming, decision-
making

Comprehension

Predicting

Writing

Journal

Vocabulary

Word mapping, sorting

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, role play

Literary Elements

Characterization, story
elements, setting, conflict

Summary

Ramon Salazar grew up in La Paz in the part of Mexico called the Baja. As a child he was told tales of the Manta Diablo. Ramon's father was a well-known dealer of pearls in Mexico, and, on Ramon's sixteenth birthday, his father made him a partner in the business. Although Ramon was happy to be named a partner, he was disappointed that this would delay his father's promise to teach him how to dive for pearls in deep water when he was sixteen. But Ramon's father did give him permission to sail with the fleet.

On Ramon's first trip to the pearling beds, Gaspar Ruiz, the Sevillano, bragged about his many exploits. Whatever Ramon said, Gaspar turned it into an indirect insult. At the pearling beds, Ramon helped the crew by hauling up the loaded basket and stacking the shells.

When Ramon was working in the office one day, an Indian, Soto Luzon, came to sell a pearl. Ramon paid him more than it was worth in order to entice Soto to teach him to dive. He returned with Soto that day to Soto's lagoon where he spent three days learning to dive. On the fourth day, Ramon found the great Pearl of Heaven in the underwater cave of Manta Diablo. Soto was filled with fear and wanted nothing to do with the pearl. Soto insisted that they return to La Paz.

On the way home, a manta destroyed their canoe and forced them to swim to a town. Not wishing to anger Manta Diablo further, Luzon would not go any farther. Before Ramon left to walk the rest of the way home by himself, Luzon warned him to throw the pearl back into the sea or the Manta Diablo would take it back and take Ramon's life, too.

Home in La Paz, Ramon tried to act natural while he waited for his father's fleet to return, but rumor that a great pearl had been found caused a large crowd to form outside the offices of Salazar and Son. When Ramon's father returned, a parade formed to escort him home. Behind closed doors, the father examined the pearl and peeled it to remove a slight imperfection.

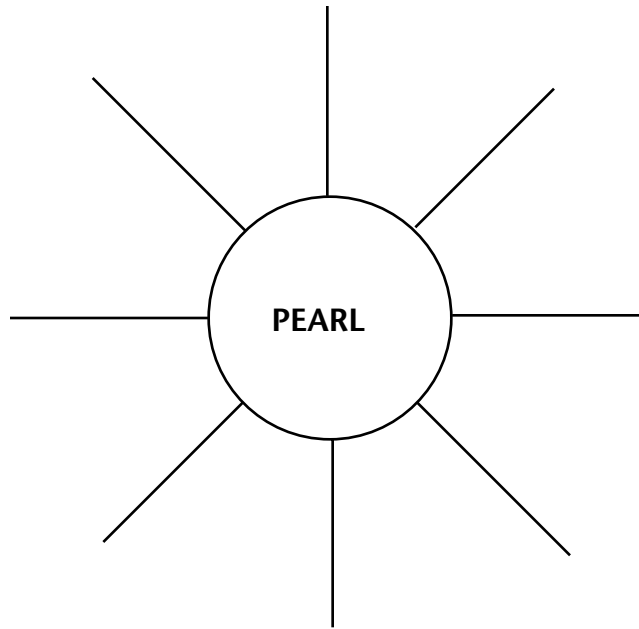
The four local pearl dealers made offers for the pearl, but they failed to meet Señor Salazar's price of twenty thousand pesos. Because of their taunts about the trip to Mexico City and his failure, Señor Salazar resolved, despite his wife's pleading, to give the pearl to the Madonna in the church. The townspeople and the church planned a celebration in which Ramon's mother refused to participate because she did not want to give the pearl away.

The day after the celebration the Salazar fleet left. That evening a chubasco, the most dreaded wind that blows, started and blew all night frightening everyone. In the morning, a vigil for the missing fleet began. Of the thirty-two men of the Salazar fleet, only Gaspar Ruiz, the Sevillano, survived.

Introductory Information and Activities

Initiating Activities:

1. Help students construct a concept map for **PEARL**. Write “**PEARL**” on the board and ask students what ideas spring to mind when they hear this word. Jot down the ideas without comment. Then help students organize the ideas into categories such as physical appearance, origin, produced by, used by, etc.



2. Write the words “*The Black Pearl* by Scott O’Dell” on the board. What do these words make you think of? Where do you think this story takes place?
3. Look at the cover of this novel. What is unusual about the illustration? Can you find any clues about the story? the characters?
4. Read the back cover. Predicting is a very important part of reading. What did you learn about the characters? What is the setting? When and where do you think this novel took place? What do you think is the problem of the story?
5. What questions do you have about this story? Does the back cover make you want to read the book?

Chapter 1 - Pages 7-9

Vocabulary:

solemnly 7

wither 8

nonetheless 9

ambergris 7

banished 8

sickle 7

summon 9

Vocabulary Activity:

Complete the following chart by providing the appropriate synonym (word that means the same) from the word box.

	Word or Phrase	Synonym
WORD BOX sent away call shrivel, dry up gravely, formally curved blade	solemnly	<u>(gravely, formally)</u>
	sickle	<u>(curved blade)</u>
	wither	<u>(shrivel, dry up)</u>
	banished	<u>(sent away)</u>
	summon	<u>(call)</u>

Discussion Questions:

1. Disasters which happened a long time ago are often not believed or feared as much by the young people who have not lived through them as by the adults who have. How was this so for Ramon? (*Page 8, He did not believe in the fierceness nor the size of the Manta Diablo that his mother told him about.*) Is there something that your mother cautions you about that you really do not consider too serious or something not very dangerous?
2. What did the Manta Diablo look like? (*page 8*) How was it like a dragon?
3. What do you think Ramon meant when he said, "My blood felt cold nonetheless, and my scalp tingled when she spoke because I liked to feel this way"? (*page 9*) Why would he like to be scared or frightened?
4. Why do you think Ramon's mother threatened him with the Manta Diablo?

Prediction:

Who is going to die in this story? Why?

Supplementary Activity:

Writing/Art: Pick something that frightens you, e.g. a thunderstorm, a dark alley, a big bully, a large dog. Make a jot sheet rapidly writing all the thoughts about this topic—no sentences—just words and phrases. Then go back and organize into sentences and a paragraph. Illustrate it. Share with a classmate. Place on a bulletin board, “My Manta Diablo.”

Chapter 2 - Pages 10-17

Vocabulary:

carats 12

baroque 13

amber 13

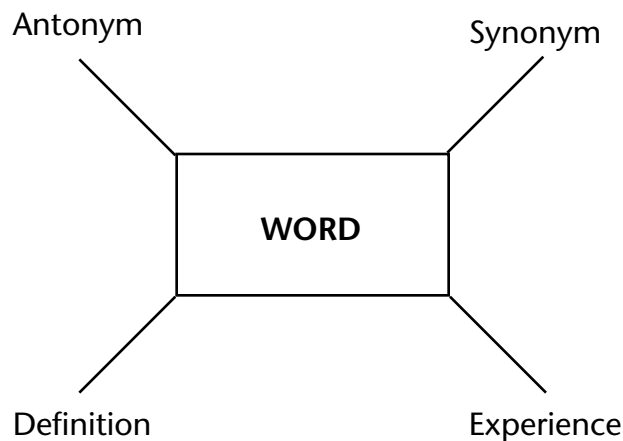
siesta 16

lamentations 17

heralds 17

Vocabulary Activities:

1. The students will use vocabulary words from the chapter to make crossword puzzles on graph paper. The students will write a question for each word (or a certain number of words) and develop an answer sheet. The teacher will check the answers and distribute the puzzles to other students.
2. The students will develop word maps. They will use color to distinguish antonyms, synonyms, etc.



Discussion Questions:

1. What was Ramon’s goal? (Page 11, *He wanted to learn to dive for pearls in deep water.*)

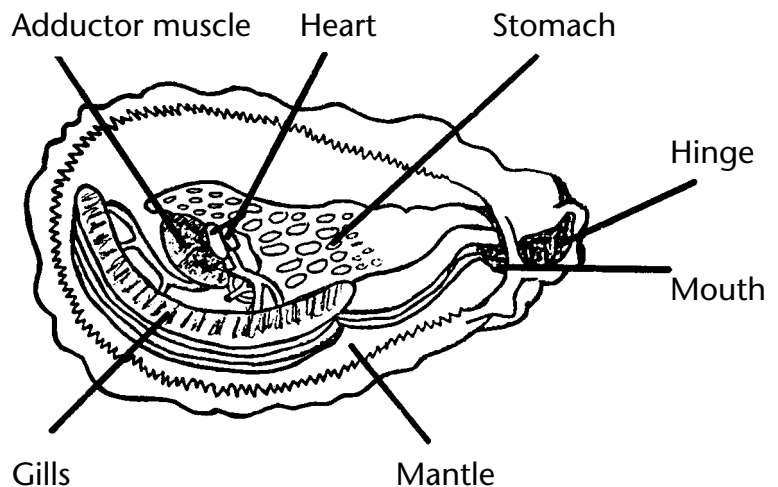
Supplementary Activity:

1. Science: Bring in an oyster in a shell. Pry it open and examine how it is attached, what it looks like, its frilled edges, its color, and what it feels like. Show how a piece of shell might be embedded in the tissue to begin forming a pearl. Explain that when man embeds a small bead of mussel shell in an oyster, it will form a cultured pearl about one in twenty times, but when it happens naturally, it is called a natural pearl. Imitation pearls are made by man taking a glass bead and coating it with pearl essence. These pearls can be identified by the little loose flaps of dried pearl essence surrounding the hole. One may also be able to see a bit of the glass bead which the pearl essence has not covered. Also, edible oysters do not produce good quality pearls.

Oyster Shell



Body of an Oyster



Research Questions:

- a) Location of pearl beds in the world.
 - b) Importance of the pearl as a gem.
 - c) How pearls are measured (size, shape, and weight).
 - d) What determines the value of a pearl.
2. Students will research the pearl industry and prepare questions for a jeweler. Ask the jeweler to speak to the class about pearls and to answer questions that they have developed in their research. Ask the jeweler to show how much a grain and a carat are.

Teacher Information:

Pearls are formed inside the shells of oysters. Color of pearls are black, pink, orange, gold, cream or white. Black pearls are really dark gray. Shape of pearls are often round (most valuable); button-shaped and drop-shaped are next. Irregular shaped are called baroques.