



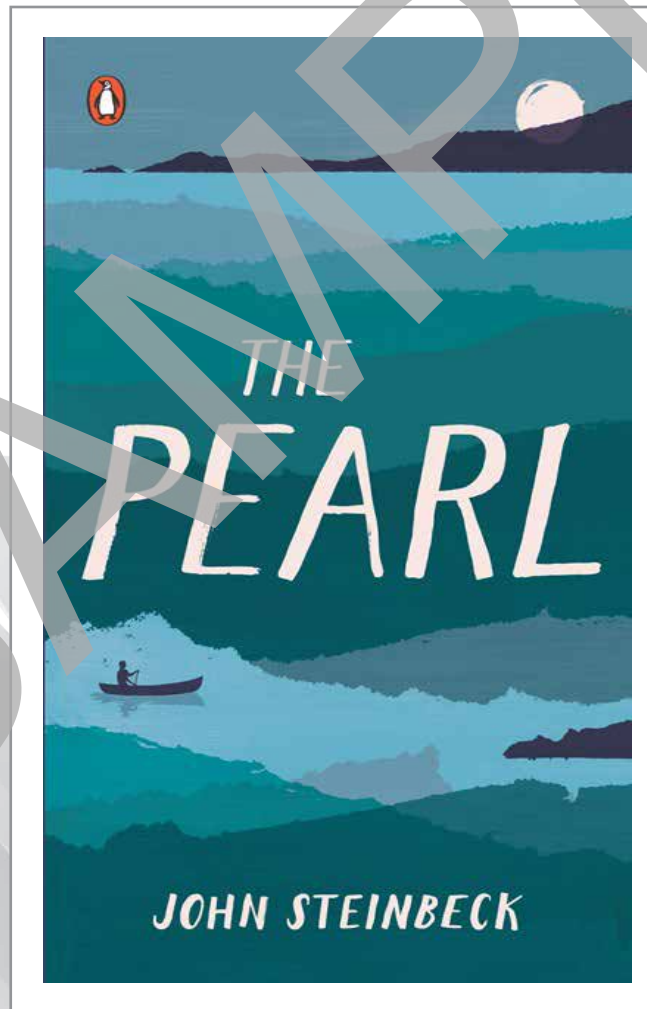
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# The Pearl

John Steinbeck



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The Pearl

John Steinbeck

## 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!

---

**ISBN 978-1-50204-071-8**

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2020 by Novel Units, Inc., St. Louis, MO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc.

Reproduction of any part of this publication for an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Conn Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

To order, contact your  
local school supply store, or:

Toll-Free Fax: 877.716.7272

Phone: 888.650.4224

3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

[sales@novelunits.com](mailto:sales@novelunits.com)

[novelunits.com](http://novelunits.com)

## Table of Contents

<b>Background Information</b> .....	3
<b>Summary</b> .....	4
<b>Six Chapters</b> .....	8
Chapters contain: Vocabulary Words, Prereading Activities, Questions for Discussion, Predictions, Supplementary Activities	
<b>Suggested Essay Topics and Project Ideas</b> .....	23
<b>Essay Evaluation Form</b> .....	24
<b>Values Clarification Activity</b> .....	25
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	26
<b>Assessment</b> .....	27

## Skills and Strategies

### Writing

Description, narrative,  
argumentative, letter

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion,  
presentation of reports

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot,  
conflict

### Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying  
and categorizing, evaluating,  
analyzing details, comparing  
and contrasting

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
inference

---

## Background Information

Most of John Steinbeck's novels take place in California, where he was born in 1902 in the fertile Salinas Valley. His mother, a school teacher, began reading famous literature to him while he was a young child, and this fostered his later interest in writing.

Although Steinbeck attended Stanford University for five years, he never obtained a degree. His pursuit of a writing career in New York City proved unsuccessful, but he continued to write when he returned to California, and finally published his first novel, *Tortilla Flat*, in 1935.

Other novels include *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Pearl*, *The Red Pony*, *Cannery Row*, *The Wayward Bus*, *East of Eden*, *The Short Reign of Pippin IV*, *Travels With Charley*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Steinbeck's novels get their realism from their author's practice of living and working with the people about whom he wrote. Before writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, for instance, Steinbeck literally became a migrant worker, roaming California in search of work, feeling the pangs of hunger, and living in the deplorable Hoovervilles.

Steinbeck's style might best be described as "lyric prose," rich with imagery that makes his stories come alive for the reader. He was a fine storyteller, a protagonist of social justice, and an expert at portraying the human comedy as well as its pathos. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962 for the total body of his works.

*The Pearl* is basically a retelling of an old Mexican folk tale. As noted in the short prefatory note, it is a story in which there are "only good and bad things and black and white things and good and evil things and no in-between anywhere." It is an excellent novel for students who are just beginning to analyze literature. The story is short and simple, and the themes and symbols obvious. *The Pearl* has been called a parable—and the moral point it makes is hard to miss. Students will be able to relate easily to Kino's search for happiness and his belief that wealth will bring him a perfect life. They will likely find it easy to identify examples from their own experiences to parallel the themes that humans are never satisfied with what they have, and that material wealth has a destructive quality.

Underlying the rather didactic theme of the evil of wealth is Steinbeck's more subtle addition to the old tale, his bid for social justice. Kino and his neighbors are exploited and victimized because of their lack of education. Spaniards reap the riches from the oyster beds, cheat the Indians by price-fixing, and keep them under control through the church.

---

## Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could be either an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions:

---

---

---

---

---

## Chapter One

### Vocabulary

parable (before 1)

scorpion 6

indigent 12

covey 1

plaintively 6

subsequent 14

fainted 5

lymphatic 8

suppliant 16

pulque 5

bougainvillaea 10

### Prereading Activity

Read the short prefatory note before page 1 aloud, and ask the following questions:

- Who will be the main characters in this story? (*Kino, Juana, Coyotito*)
- What is a parable? (*a story that teaches something*) What does the second paragraph say about parables? (*"...perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it."*)
- We are told that this story has "no in-between." Things are either good or evil. What stories did you read as a young child that were similar in this way? (*Answers will vary, but most fairy tales and folk tales clearly define good and evil.*)

Distribute copies of the Prediction Chart and explain to students how the chart will be used as they read the novel. Ask if anyone would like to make any predictions at this point. You might have them look at the cover picture and try to guess who the characters shown are and what they are doing. Read Chapter One, and then proceed to the questions and activities below.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Describe some of the sounds Kino heard when he first woke up.  
(*roosters, pigs, birds, waves*)
2. What sounds make up the Song of the Family?  
(*Juana making the fire, tending the baby, grinding the corn, singing*)
3. Find the phrase that tells what the Song of the Family means to Kino.  
(*"...this is safety, this is warmth, this is the Whole."*)
4. What terrible thing happened to Coyotito? What did Kino and Juana do?  
(*He was stung by a scorpion. Kino killed the scorpion while Juana tried to suck the poison out of the bite.*)
5. Why was it such a remarkable thing that Juana wanted the doctor for the baby?  
(*The doctor did not take care of Indians because they were too poor to pay.*)

6. What did the beggars know about the doctor and about Juana and Kino?  
*(They knew the doctor was cruel and greedy and that Juana and Kino were poor.)*
7. How had those of the doctor's race treated the Indians for four hundred years?  
*("beaten, starved, robbed, despised, and frightened" them)*
8. What does "this time he spoke in the old language" mean?  
*(The servant spoke native Indian, not the Spanish that the missions tried to teach the Indians.)*
9. What did the doctor tell his servant to say? *(that he was not in)*
10. Did Kino believe the servant? *(no)* How did Kino feel? *(ashamed but angry)* How did he react? *(He struck the gate with his fist.)*

### Writing Assignment

Reread pages 1-4. Then write a paragraph describing the sounds you hear when you first wake up in the morning. This is your "Song of the Family."

### Cooperative Activity

Divide students into small groups to discuss the following problem and formulate a solution.

- Kino and Juana were refused medical help for their baby because they had no money to pay for it. This happens in our country, too. Many people cannot afford to go to the doctor when they need to, or they don't have the money to pay for medicine they need to take. What do you think can be done about this problem?

### Whole-Class Activity

Have the students skim the pages of Chapter One and look for key words and phrases to help them compare the living conditions of Juana and Kino with those of the doctor. List their findings on a T-chart like the one below. (Some examples are given.)

Juana and Kino	the doctor
brush house sleeping mat bare feet corn cakes	stone and plaster houses caged birds bacon silk dressing gown