

## Summary

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- ✓ Word of Kino's discovery travels quickly. Even before Kino returns to his brush house, everyone in town knows that he has found "the Pearl of the World." Throughout town, people of every class—from the beggar to the businessman to the priest—dream of how Kino's pearl can help them. Like everyone else, the doctor who turned Kino away desires the pearl.
- ✓ Ignorant of others' jealousy, Kino and Juana delight in their good fortune, inviting family and friends to share their joy in their newfound treasure. When Juan Tomás asks Kino what he will do with his wealth, Kino details his plans: a proper marriage in the church, new clothing for the family, a harpoon, and a rifle, among other things. Kino's new boldness amazes Juana, especially when he expresses his desire for Coyotito to be sent to school and educated. Kino himself is surprised somewhat by his own resolute statement, and all of the neighbors stare at the mighty pearl with a mixture of hope and fear at the enormous changes that lie ahead.
- ✓ As dusk approaches, Juana revives the fire, and the neighbors overstay their welcome. Near dark, the priest comes to deliver a benediction. Once he has blessed the household, he asks to see the pearl. Dazzled, the priest implores Kino to remember the church in his new prosperity. Juana announces their intention to be married in the church, and the priest leaves them with a kind word. A sense of evil overcomes Kino in the wake of the priest's visit.
- ✓ The neighbors disperse to their own suppers, and Juana begins to prepare a meal of baked beans. Kino huddles beneath a blanket in the cold night, keeping the pearl close to his body. Plagued with continued ill feeling, Kino meditates on the former security of his family, and on the menacing uncertainty into which their newfound fortune has cast them.
- ✓ From the door of his brush house, Kino watches two men approach. The figures prove to be the doctor and his servant, who have come to examine Coyotito's

wound. Kino brusquely dismisses the doctor's attentions, but when the doctor makes a sinister insinuation about the lingering potential for infection, Kino relents and allows him to enter. Juana is extremely suspicious of the doctor, but Kino reassures her. When the doctor examines Coyotito, he contends that he has found evidence of complications and produces a capsule of medication that he proceeds to administer. Claiming that the poison will strike within an hour and that the medicine may prove lifesaving, the doctor declares that he will return in an hour to check on Coyotito's progress.

- ✓ As Juana stares at Coyotito with concern, Kino realizes that he has been careless in not guarding the pearl. Without delay, he wraps the pearl in a rag, digs a hole, and buries the pearl in a corner of the brush house, concealing the hiding place from view. As Kino eats his supper, a small black puppy lingers in the doorway and shakes its tail nervously. Afterward, Juana alerts Kino that Coyotito's condition is growing worse, and she sings soothingly in an effort to comfort the baby. When Coyotito becomes visibly ill, an evil feeling fills Kino once again.
- ✓ The neighbors learn quickly of the doctor's visit and Coyotito's subsequent decline, and they reconvene at Kino's house to provide support. The doctor reappears, and a swiftly administered potion sets Coyotito to rest. The doctor innocuously asks when Kino might be able to pay him. Kino explains that once he has sold his most valuable pearl he will be able to pay.
- ✓ Feigning ignorance about the pearl, the doctor offers to keep it in his safe, but Kino declines the offer, explaining that he intends to sell the pearl in the morning. The doctor expresses concern that the pearl might be stolen, and Kino inadvertently glances with fear at the corner where the pearl is buried. Later, when the doctor and neighbors depart and it is time to sleep, Kino paces about the house anxiously, listening vigilantly for threatening noises. In a fit of precaution, he digs up the pearl and reburies it beneath his sleeping mat.

Finally, Kino, Juana, and Coyotito curl up together on the mat and attempt to sleep peacefully.

- ✓ At first, Kino dreams of Coyotito's future success, but the evil feeling returns and quickly overtakes him. He stirs restlessly, waking Juana. He wakes and hears an intruder in the house, cowering and scratching in the corner, clearly in search of the pearl. Grabbing his knife, Kino leaps into the corner and struggles with the intruder, stabbing at him wildly. After a violent scuffle, the intruder flees, leaving Kino bloodied as Juana calls out to him in terror. Regaining her senses, she swiftly prepares a salve for Kino's bruised forehead.
- ✓ As she tends Kino's wounds, Juana rails against the pearl, calling it an evil plague upon them. Kino remains adamant about the pearl's virtue, insisting that it will be their road to salvation. Juana disagrees, declaring that it will destroy their entire family. As Kino hushes her, he notices a spot of blood on his knife, which he removes. With dawn approaching, he settles down to look at his pearl. In its luminescence, Kino sees his family's chance for the future, and smiles. Juana smiles with him, and they meet the day with hope.

## Analysis

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- ✓ Though *The Pearl*'s narrative seems to suggest that greed is the first step to destruction, in this chapter Steinbeck focuses not on greed but on ambition—Kino's desire to use the wealth offered by the pearl to better his life and the life of his family. Steinbeck portrays this kind of benevolent desire for advancement as a trait unique to humanity, one that has made humankind superior to all animals. Kino's neighbors have trouble figuring whether Kino's ambition will bring him success or suffering. They too are intoxicated by the awe-inspiring prospect of Kino owning a rifle or Coyotito receiving an education, but these propositions are so far removed from their sense of what is possible that they react to them with a natural suspicion. The neighbors are only

able to think about the pearl in terms of their preexisting narratives. Because they have an ancient legend about a great “Pearl That Might Be,” they believe that that legend has come to fruition in Kino’s pearl, which they dub the “Pearl of the World.” They do not conceive of the pearl as simply a valuable lucky break for Kino; for them, the pearl has deep moral and spiritual significance. By relating the stories the neighbors trade, Steinbeck shows how the human mind turns real experience into parable through the act of storytelling.

- ✓ For us, the neighbors’ suspicion of Kino’s good fortune seems justified, based on Steinbeck’s tentative tone and on his remarks that the gods disregard men’s plans and only allow men success if it comes by accident. Steinbeck asserts that when human agency actually does bring about success (through the exercise of a benevolent ambition like Kino’s, for example), “the gods take their revenge on a man.” In this way, Steinbeck completely negates the value system of the American dream. Hard work and openness to opportunity, the main components of the traditional American dream, are meaningless in a malevolent universe in which “the gods” conspire against every individual’s desire to improve his or her lot in life.
- ✓ Because his pearl is worth so much money, Kino believes it offers him a chance to realize his ambitious dreams and free himself from the shackles of colonialism. But what keeps Kino from fulfilling his ambitions is his lack of knowledge. Kino may be able to pay the doctor to heal his son, but he is ignorant as to whether he is making the right choice—perhaps the doctor is in fact poisoning his son. Kino is well aware of his predicament, and his desire for his son to obtain an education shows Kino’s recognition that education provides the only possible escape from colonial oppression. But in his single-minded pursuit of success and wealth for his son, Kino abandons the nurturing aspects of his fatherly duty. Kino leaves Juana alone to care for the ailing

Coyotito while he, Kino, focuses his attentions on finding a place to conceal the pearl.

- ✓ As Kino shifts his focus to providing for his son in material rather than emotional ways, he makes a corresponding shift from peaceful coexistence in his village to violent, paranoid suspicion of his neighbors. Now that Kino has acquired wealth, he is obligated to defend that wealth from potential usurpers. Ultimately, this shift in preoccupation demonstrates that wealth has a dehumanizing effect on those who possess it, such as the doctor and Kino, and on those who desire it, such as the intruder who comes to steal the pearl. The intruder is described in vague, inhuman terms that portray him as an unidentifiable mass of clothing. Kino even refers to him as “the thing,” as though he were a plague sent against Kino rather than another human being. At this point in the story, however, only Juana seems to recognize that the pearl is an evil instrument that will bring her family pain and heartache.