The Pearl Chapter 1 Study Questions (pg. 3-13)

1. What is a parable and why do you suppose Steinbeck calls our attention to this in his

Preface?

2. What do the names of the characters suggest about the setting for this story?

3. Who appears to be the protagonist in this story?

4. Who would you guess the antagonists will be?

5. On pages 3-4 Kino has arisen and the day has begun. What is this song he hears and what

does it suggest about how he is feeling this morning?

6. On page 5 (1st full paragraph) the song Juana sings is part of the family song and all of it, Kino perceives, is part of the Whole. What Whole?

7. While Kino’s environment is safe and pleasant, how does the picture of the ants and the

roosters underscore the struggle for the survival in nature?

8. On page 6, what new song comes to Kino? Why?

9. How does Juana’s reaction to the scorpion show two sides of the Indian culture?

10. When the narrator says, “Kino had wondered often at the iron in his patient, fragile wife”

(8) what does he mean?

11. How are the homes of the poor distinguished from the homes of the rich?

12. How is the doctor described?

13. What race do you suppose the doctor is of?

14. What does the doctor’s comment on page 13 reveal about his attitude toward Indians?

15. Contrast Kino’s life, which is a life close to nature, to the doctor’s life, which is a life amidst

civilization.

The Pearl Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. How is a canoe a bulwark against starvation?

2. How is a pearl formed?

3. What does Juana pray for? Why?

4. The Indians think of God or “the gods.” What does this reveal about their religious beliefs?

5. On what two discoveries does Chapter 2 end?

6. Why does Kino howl?

7. On page 15, Steinbeck tells us that because the mixture of air and water over the gulf creates

mirages, the Indians do not trust what they see with their eyes. How could this fit with the

theme of “appearance versus reality”?

The Pearl Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. In the opening what is the town compared to? Why do you suppose he makes this

Comparison?

2. How does the news of the pearl affect a) the priest, b) the shopkeepers, c) the doctor, and

d) the beggars.

3. In what sense (page 23) did Kino become “every man’s enemy”?

4. How is the news of the pearl compared to the poisonous sting of the scorpion?

5. What does Kino say he will do once the pearl is sold?

6. In the middle of page 27 Kino hears “the song of evil” faintly. Who do you think brings it in

to Kino’s house? Give a reason for your answer.

7. As the doctor approaches, why is Kino feeling rage?

8. On page 30 how does Kino feel trapped by his own ignorance?

9. What do you guess the doctor gives Coyotito?

10. What is suggested by the references to the fish and mice on page 32?

11. How does the doctor find out where Kino has hidden the pearl?

12. After the intruder is driven off, what does Juana say of the pearl? Why?

13. Why can Kino not do this?

14. Back on pages 28-29, why is Kino afraid of making plans?

The Pearl Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. In the first paragraph how has the wholeness of the town been disrupted?

2. Why is there no longer any real competition among the pearl buyers?

3. Why is this a big day for the entire village?

4. In earlier times how did the pearl divers try to get a better price for their pearls and what

happened to their effort?

5. What is suggested by the priest’s sermon?

6. What might lead Kino and his brother to believe this? What might lead them to be

suspicious of the priest’s sermon?

7. How does Steinbeck show us that despite what he says, the pearl buyer is impressed by the

size and beauty of the pearl?

8. How does the pearl buyer devalue the pearl?

9. What further strategy does the buyer use to try to convince Kino that the pearl has little

Value?

10. How is the village divided on Kino’s actions with the pearl buyer?

11. On page 52 it says, “(Kino) had lost one world and had not gained another.” What world

did he lose?

12. Why does it take much courage for Kino to make the decision to go to the city?

13. Why is Kino’s brother afraid for him?

14. Kino’s brother, Juan Tomas, is older and wiser. What insightful comment does he make

about their friends?

15. What does Kino say this time when Juana again says they should get rid of the pearl because it brings evil? What is implied in his answer?

16. At this point do you think Kino is right or is he just being stupid and willful?

17. What plans do they make for the next day?

The Pearl Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What does Juana try to do with the pearl? Why? What does Kino do?

2. What happens on the beach? What happens to the pearl?

3. Given a second opportunity after finding the pearl on the sand, why does Juana not get rid of

it?

4. Why will it not matter that Kino killed the man in self-defense?

5. As they head for home, what two discoveries do they make? What does this signify?

6. What is Juan Tomas’ opinion of the pearl at this point?

7. What is Kino’s final comment on the pearl? In what sense might this be true?

The Pearl Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. Why is Kino more convinced than ever that the pearl is of great value?

2. On page 66, Steinbeck says Kino was being moved by “some animal thing.” What does he

mean by this?

3. What awakens him from his sleep?

4. Who does Kino see in the road? Why does he say they will be back?

5. Why does Kino consider letting the trackers take him? What does Juana say that convinces

him not to?

6. Why does Juana reject Kino’s plan to separate?

7. How are the mountain pools places of both life and death for the animals in the area?

8. What plan does Kino make to get rid of the trackers? What happens to disrupt his plan?

11. In their return to the village, what is unusual in the manner that they are walking? What

might this signify?

12. On page 85 how is Kino described? How are both described?

13. In Chapter 1 when Kino first looked at the pearl he saw a church wedding for Juana and

himself. On page 86 what does he see in the pearl now?

14. What action do Kino and Juana take at the end of this story? Why?

15. If you assume that Kino threw the pearl back because he felt guilty, then what does the

pearl symbolize and what is the lesson that this parable is teaching?

16. If you assume that Kino threw the pearl back out of rage and frustration then what does the

pearl symbolize and what is the lesson to be learned?

17. Steinbeck is often associated with a movement in writing called naturalism. Naturalists

believed that man does not have free will; rather man’s fate is determined by large social and

economic forces he cannot control. If that is the case, what is the lesson to be learned?

18. What is the moral of The Pearl?