



## [The Pearl](#), by John Steinbeck

### In A Nutshell

John Steinbeck first heard the legend of the pearl while he was collecting marine biology specimens in the Sea of Cortez in 1940. His initial inclination was to make the story into a film, but fortunately for the world of literature, he wrote a novella instead. Published in 1947, *The Pearl* functions as a parable about greed and evil, telling a simple story to get a big point across. The story focuses on a poor man and his wife who find an enormous pearl, for which their entire village becomes greedy. Many read the text as a critique of the American Dream, which meant Steinbeck wasn't too popular among certain nationalistic, pro-capitalist crowds. Still, despite political bad-blood, the novel was a great success. Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962 for, among other things, his "keen social perception."

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### Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 Kino throws away the world's most valuable pearl. Smart decision? Poor decision? *Right* decision?
- 2 If this book critiques capitalism and the American Dream, why is it set in colonial Mexico?

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3 Why are the intruders, attackers, and trackers in the book faceless?

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