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Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Pearl
by John Steinbeck

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The Pearl

To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Date_____

[illegible]

Chapter 1

1. As Kino awakens, he becomes aware of his home, his wife, and his child. He thinks of this home feeling as the “Song of the Family.” Write a brief description of how you feel when you greet your family at the beginning of the day.
2. Kino and his family are descendants of the ancient Indians who inhabited Mexico before the rich Spaniards took over the country. Their family life includes songs and customs passed down to them from their ancient ancestors. “Juana sang softly an ancient song that had only three notes and yet endless variety of interval. And this was part of the family song too. It was all part. Sometimes it rose to an aching chord that caught the throat, saying this is safety, this is warmth, this is the *Whole*.”

When Juana sings her song, it is referred to as the “Whole,” meaning that it comes from the Indians’ ancient roots. Many families in America have roots which tie them to other cultures. The customs and beliefs of these other cultures are often part of modern family life. Can you think of any family traditions your family enjoys, which are rooted in another culture? If so, describe the tradition and how you feel about it.

3. Critics believe that the animals in this story support the theme that living creatures must struggle for survival. Review the descriptions of the roosters, the ants, and the dog. Consider the ways each of these animals tries to survive in the world. What non-human creatures are part of your daily life? If it is true that all creatures must struggle to survive, relate the ways these animals fight to survive.

Response Journal

4. Kino and Juana do not have a vocal conversation in the morning. “They had spoken once, but there is not need for speech if it is only a habit anyway. Kino sighed with satisfaction—and that was conversation.” Give an example of this kind of unspoken communication which exists in our modern lives.
5. Juana realizes her son is in danger, so she repeats an ancient magic prayer to protect him from evil, and then she says the “Hail Mary,” a Christian prayer. Critics believe this incident helps the reader to understand the two sides to the Indian culture. Relate an incident from life, a movie, a book, or a television program when a mother calls on any help she can find to save her endangered child.
6. Review the paragraph below, in which Kino’s wife is described. This description is contradictory because it says she is both fragile and like iron; both qualities are accurate. In literature this is called a paradox. Write a description of someone you know who exhibits at least two seemingly contradictory qualities.

“Kino had wondered often at the iron in his patient, fragile wife. She, who was obedient and respectful and cheerful and patient, she could arch her back in child pain with hardly a cry. She could stand fatigue and hunger almost better than Kino himself. In the canoe she was like a strong man.”

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7. Kino, his wife, and his neighbors all go to see the doctor. In the following passage, Kino is about to knock on the doctor's gate.

"Kino hesitated a moment. This doctor was not of his people. This doctor was of a race, which for nearly four hundred years had beaten and starved and robbed and despised Kino's race, and frightened it too, so that the indigene came humbly to the door. And as always when he came near to one of this race, Kino felt weak and afraid and angry at the same time. Rage and terror went together. He could kill the doctor more easily than he could talk to him..."

If you can understand how Kino feels about the doctor, write a letter to a classmate who does not get it.

8. Some critics believe that one of the themes in this story is that a simple life, close to nature, is happier than a life lived in civilization. Write a letter from the doctor's servant to Kino helping Kino to understand that the doctor is not a happy man despite his wealth and position.
9. When the doctor refuses to treat Coyotito, his (Kino's) neighbors feel Kino's shame. "They melted away. The beggars went back to the church steps, the stragglers moved off, and the neighbors departed so that the public shaming of Kino would not be in their eyes."

If this scene were to happen today, what do you think the spectators might do?

Chapter 2

10. “The uncertain air that magnified some things and blotted out others hung over the whole Gulf so that all sights were unreal and vision could not be trusted; so that sea and land had the sharp clarities and the vagueness of a dream.”

In your experience, have your eyes ever played tricks on you so that you thought you saw something, but it was not really there? How were you able to determine the truth of what you were seeing?

11. The canoe is essential to Kino’s ability to provide for his family. It is something he inherited from his grandfather. Families pass objects, professions, and wisdom from one generation to another. Write about something that is passed down in your family. In what way does it help you to feel connected to your ancestors?
12. Juana makes a poultice out of seaweed to help the baby’s swollen shoulder. The narrator comments that this remedy is a good “as any and probably better than the doctor could have done. But [it] lacked his authority because it was simple and didn’t cost anything.” In our modern world, many people believe doctors are unfamiliar with home or herbal remedies. Do you agree with this statement? If so, why?
13. “She [Juana] had not prayed directly for the recovery of the baby—she had prayed that they might find a pearl with which to hire the doctor to cure the baby, for the minds of people are as unsubstantial as the mirage of the Gulf.”

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How do you suppose the local priest might feel about Juana's prayer? Write a letter from the priest to Juana expressing his opinion.

14. Kino's people think of pearls as "accidents, and the finding of one was luck, a little pat on the back by God or the gods or both." To what extent do you believe that a person's good fortune is a gift from God? What do you think of someone who believes in more than one God?
15. Kino sees the pearl in the opening of the large oyster. But he waits to open it until he has pulled up his basket of other oysters. "It is not good to want a thing too much. It sometimes drives the luck away. You must want it just enough, and you must be very tactful with God or the gods."

In his heart, Kino knows he has found a pearl, but he is afraid to show his excitement. Have you ever experienced a similar feeling? Why do you suppose people feel this way?

16. One of the themes of this story is that things are not always what they seem to be. Kino seems to understand that in the following passage:

"Now Kino was reluctant to open it. What he had seen, he knew, might be a reflection, a piece of flat shell accidentally drifted in or a complete illusion. In this Gulf of uncertain light there were more illusions than realities."

Some critics believe this passage foreshadows the fact that the pearl may not bring Kino and his family the good fortune they expect. Can you think of an incident from a movie, book, life, or television program where sudden wealth hurts a person's life rather than helps?

Chapter 3

17. Kino and his wife seem to be unaware of the greedy emotions Kino's pearl sparks in the townspeople. Consider the ways the priest and the doctor react to Kino's discovery of the great pearl. "But Kino and Juana did not know these things. Because they were happy and excited they thought everyone shared their joy."

What advice would you give to Kino on how to handle the townspeople now that he is to be a wealthy man?

18. Kino looks into the pearl. He sees a church wedding, new clothes, a new rifle, and an education for his son. If you could look into the pearl, what four items would you see? Which of Kino's items do you think is the most valuable? Which of your items do you think is the most valuable?
19. The priest comes to Kino's home to remind Kino to give his thanks to God for this treasure. Kino hears the song of evil in his ears after the priest leaves. "But Kino's hand had closed tightly on the pearl again, and he was glancing about suspiciously, for the evil song was in his ears, shrilling against the music of the pearl"

Write an entry in Kino's diary describing his conflicting emotions after the priest leaves his home.

20. Review the following passage from the story: "But now, by saying what his future was going to be like, he had created it. A plan is a real thing, and things projected are experienced."

What plan do you envision for your future? To what extent do you believe that having a plan or goal for your future helps your dreams come true?

The Pearl

21. Kino does not trust the doctor. “Kino felt the rage and hatred melting toward fear. He did not know, and perhaps this doctor did. And he could not take the chance of pitting his certain ignorance against this man’s possible knowledge.”

Kino accepts the doctor’s diagnosis because he (Kino) does not have the education to understand his son’s illness. In your opinion, are we any better off in today’s modern doctors’ offices that Kino is in his brush house? Why or why not?

22. One of the themes in this story is that the struggle for survival is a natural process shared by humans and animals. Write a letter to Kino warning him of the struggles he will have to overcome if he becomes wealthy.
23. The doctor tricks Kino into revealing the pearl’s hiding place. If you were Kino where might you have hidden the pearl?
24. Juana wants to destroy the pearl because she thinks it has brought evil into their home. Write a letter from Juana to her husband explaining to him why she was happier before he found the pearl and what she fears they will lose from their lives if Kino insists on keeping the pearl.

Chapter 4

25. Kino and his family are part of the little town. As a member of a group, Kino and his family adhere to the rules that govern all of the lives of the people in the town. If Kino changes the pattern of his life, he also disrupts the lives of the townspeople. Can you think of an instance from life or the movies where a change in one person's life also results in a change for the whole community? Explain the incident.
26. Steinbeck explains why the pearl buyers try to lower a price even though the buyers all work for the same person, and there is no real competition among the buyers. He writes, "For every man in the world functions to the best of his ability, and no one does less than his best, no matter what he may think about it." Write a note to a classmate explaining why you agree or disagree with this statement.
27. The townspeople all hope that Kino's sudden wealth will not change him and "would not graft onto him the evil limbs of greed and hatred and coldness." Assume your best friend suddenly became very famous and wealthy. Fame and wealth can change people. What qualities in your friend would you hope might remain unchanged by good fortune?
28. Kino dresses carefully for his trip to town. He does not own any fine clothes, but he takes great care in how he wears his hat so that he conveys aggressiveness and vigor to the pearl buyers. "There is a great deal to be seen in the tilt of a hat on a man." Select an item of clothing students might wear today. Describe how the item is worn and what the students might be trying to convey to their teachers by wearing this item.

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29. Consider how you might feel if you were Kino and were told by a priest that God wants you to remain trapped in poverty because that is your station in life. Write a letter to the priest expressing to him your feelings on this subject.
30. The pearl buyer is beautifully described in this chapter. Some critics refer to this description as a study of evil. Select an evil character from a book, movie, or television program. Note how Steinbeck uses the coin to represent the pearl buyer's sly nature. Imitating Steinbeck's style, write a short paragraph describing the character's evil qualities.
31. Kino makes the decision to go to the capital to sell his pearl. This is a courageous decision. It requires a great deal of strength to face a strange new place and strange new people. Have you ever moved to a new community or a new school? In what ways does your life experience help you to understand Kino's courage?
32. Review the following excerpt from this chapter. Kino is talking to his brother Juan about Kino's decision to sell the pearl in the capital.

"I will go. I will go soon," said Kino.

"Yes," Juan Thomas agreed. "That you must do. But I wonder if you will find it any different in the capital. Here, you have friends and me, your brother. There, you will have no one."

"What can I do?" Kino cried. "Some deep outrage is here. My son must have a chance. That is what they are striking at. My friends will protect me."

"Only so long as they are not in danger or discomfort from it." said Juan Tomás.

Response Journal

In your experience, do you agree with Juan when he says Kino can only count on friends if they are not faced with danger? Write a letter to Kino either supporting or refuting Juan's statement.

33. Juana wants Kino to destroy the pearl because it is evil. She is afraid for Kino's safety. Kino insists that he must fight for his son's chance to receive an education. He says, "I am a man." Earlier in the story the doctor treats Kino and all of the Indians as if they are no better than animals. What is implied by Kino's statement that he is a man?

Chapter 5

34. In the following passage Steinbeck discusses why Juana stays by Kino's side even after he beats her:
- "It [I am a man] meant that he was half insane and half god. It meant that Kino would drive his strength against a mountain and plunge his strength against the sea. Juana, in her woman's soul, knew that the mountain would stand while the man broke himself; that the sea would surge while the man drowned in it. And yet it was this thing that made him a man, half insane and half god, and Juana had need of a man; she could not live without a man."

Complete the following dialogue between two students discussing this passage:

First Student: Juana is a fool to go back to Kino. I would never stay with a man who beats me.

Second Student: On the surface, I agree with you, but I think this passage is dealing more with the theme of the struggle for survival than it is with wife beating.

You: I understand what you are both saying. If you look at the images in the passage, they seem to be suggesting that...

The Pearl

35. In this chapter, the reader learns more about Juana. She emerges as more than just an obedient wife. Does this depth of character surprise you? How important is her strength to the plot of the story?
36. “The killing of a man was not so evil as the killing of a boat. For a boat does not have sons, and a boat cannot protect itself, and a wounded boat does not heal.” If you understand this passage and why ruining a boat is worse than killing a man, write a note explaining the meaning to a classmate who does not get it.
37. Kino needs a boat, but he does not even consider taking one of his neighbor’s boats. If Kino were a modern-day fugitive, in what ways might his actions be different? What can our modern world learn from Kino’s ancient Indian culture?
38. Juan, at the risk of his own family, hides Kino, Juana, and the baby. Kino needs to hide from the townspeople, who only a few days ago were his friends. Why do you suppose people behave this way and turn against their friends?
39. Juan goes outside to divert the suspicions and give the townspeople theories as to what happened to Kino. Do you think it is or is not believable that the townspeople fail to search for Kino in Juan’s home?
40. Some critics believe that the pearl has corrupted Kino so that he is willing to sacrifice his life and the welfare of his family for materialistic gains. Others think Kino’s decision to keep the pearl is also a decision to keep his dignity as a man. Do you agree with either of these possibilities? Can you think of another meaning? If you were Kino at this point in the story what would you do?

Chapter 6

41. In the following passage, Steinbeck describes a column of ants crawling over Kino's foot. "Then the column climbed over his instep and continued on its way, and Kino left his foot there and watched them move over it." An allegory is a story that has both a literal and a symbolic meaning. The literal meaning of this event is that ants crawl over Kino's foot. The symbolic meaning is that the ants are the trackers, who will overcome any efforts Kino makes to block their progress.

Assume Kino is aware of the symbolic importance of the ants crawling over his foot. Write a brief entry in his diary describing how he feels about the ants.

42. Kino tries to find his vision for his life after he sells the pearl, but the song of the pearl has changed. "The music of the pearl had become sinister in his ears, and it was interwoven with the music of evil." Kino needs to reevaluate his goals. Write a letter of advice to Kino telling him what you would do about the trackers?
43. At one point in the story, Kino volunteers to let the trackers take him so that Juana and the baby will be safe. Juana talks him out of this plan because she believes the trackers will kill them all anyway. Have you seen a movie or read a novel with a similar story line? Why do you suppose many stories center around a man sacrificing himself for his family?

The Pearl

44. Kino and Juana's relationship is very interesting. After she refuses to let Kino sacrifice himself, Kino takes strength from her. "He looked then for weakness in her face, for fear or irresolution, and there was none. Her eyes were very bright. He shrugged his shoulders helplessly then, but he had taken strength from her. When they moved on it was no longer panic flight."

Kino is stronger because he is not alone. How do you feel about tackling a difficult problem alone? What kind of support do you receive from those around you? Have you ever felt emotional strength from someone you thought was weak?

45. The pools by the lake are described as "places of life because of the water, and places of killing because of the water, too." If you can understand the meaning of this passage write a letter explaining it to a classmate who does not get it.
46. In this chapter, Kino kills the trackers. Do you think he was motivated to do this because of his lust for wealth or because of his desire to protect his family? Write a letter from Kino to his brother Juan telling him why he killed the men.
47. Kino and Juana's return to the town is an important event. Write a newspaper article of this event for the local paper. Be sure to include the normal who, when, what, where, why, and how, which are in most newspaper stories. Also include how the townspeople felt when they saw Kino and Juana again.

Response Journal

48. Assume you are a fisherman watching Kino throw the pearl back into the sea. Would you try to retrieve it if you knew of its history? Why or why not?
49. Complete the following dialogue among three students discussing the symbolic meaning of the pearl and the lesson to be learned by the story.

First Student: The pearl is valuable, so the lesson must be that wealth does not bring happiness.

Second Student: That seems too simple an answer. To me, this is a story of discrimination. The pearl represents the life the Indians want but are denied by the Spanish.

Third Student: Maybe it was just not in the cards for Kino to become rich, so when he tried to cheat fate he was punished.

You: I like your ideas. I think the pearl...

The Pearl

Test

1. Before finding the pearl, Kino feels
 - A. lonely and unhappy.
 - B. angry and resentful.
 - C. safe and secure.
 - D. bored and tired.
 - E. Both A and D

2. The scene with the little fish and the big fish represents
 - A. the struggle for survival.
 - B. appearance being different than reality.
 - C. cooperation meaning success.
 - D. that nature is harsh and cruel.
 - E. Both B and D

3. Which of the following does Kino *not* plan to do with the money he gets from selling the pearl?
 - A. He plans to have a church wedding
 - B. He wants to buy a rifle
 - C. He wants to get new clothes for himself and his family
 - D. He wants to build a new house for himself and his brother
 - E. He wants to send Coyotito to school to get an education

4. At the opening of Chapter 2, the comments on mirages suggest which of the following themes?
 - A. Struggle for survival
 - B. Appearance versus reality
 - C. Prejudice
 - D. Free will versus determinism
 - E. Both C and D

Response Journal

5. Which of the following are characteristics of an allegory or parable?
 - A. The characters are symbols.
 - B. A moral lesson about good and evil may be drawn from it.
 - C. The story has both a literal and symbolic level of meaning.
 - D. Both A and C.
 - E. A, B, and C

6. This book suggests that in this particular Indian village
 - A. the women are inferior to men.
 - B. the Indians are lazy and ignorant.
 - C. the Spanish treat the Indians unfairly.
 - D. greed and cruelty are common.
 - E. Both A and C

7. In this novel, the doctor is meant to symbolize
 - A. the man of science who approaches everything with reason.
 - B. the “good” man led wrong by the “bad” French woman.
 - C. a part of the Spanish establishment.
 - D. greed and selfishness.
 - E. Both C and D

8. The action of the plot as it unfolds on the surface is called
 - A. the literal level of meaning.
 - B. the symbolic level of meaning.
 - C. the allegorical meaning.
 - D. Both B and C
 - E. A, B, and C

The Pearl

9. The various songs Kino hears are
- A. Indian poems that have been passed down from generation to generation.
 - B. emotional reactions to the vibrations Kino gets from his environment.
 - C. actually sounds caused by the wind passing through narrow mountain passes.
 - D. sounds of the surf, wind, and forest.
 - E. Both B and D
10. The doctor thinks of the Indians as
- A. children.
 - B. noble savages.
 - C. animals.
 - D. a proud and strong people.
 - E. cruel enemies.
11. Kino does not try to make the trip by sea because
- A. he has no compass.
 - B. it is a season of storms.
 - C. his little boat cannot go out far enough.
 - D. Juana objects to putting Coyotito into the boat.
 - E. someone has put holes in the bottom of his boat.
12. The spreading of greed and envy that affects the villagers after Kino finds the pearl is compared to the
- A. poisonous sting of a scorpion.
 - B. bite of the cold morning frost.
 - C. tearing of flesh from a shark's tooth.
 - D. bite of a rattlesnake.
 - E. ingratitude of a child.

Response Journal

13. We know that the pearl buyer is impressed by the size and value of the pearl because
- A. he drops the coin he is twirling on his knuckles.
 - B. he whistles under his breath.
 - C. he slaps his open hand on the deck.
 - D. he winks at his assistant.
 - E. Both A and D
14. Kino's brother is afraid for him because
- A. he says Kino is crazy with greed.
 - B. he says Kino is angering the gods with arrogance.
 - C. he says that Kino, in defying the power structure, is defying the Indians' whole way of life.
 - D. Kino has killed a man.
 - E. Kino punches and kicks Juana.
15. Kino's religious beliefs are those
- A. of the Catholic church.
 - B. of the old, pagan, pre-Christian tribes.
 - C. of an atheist.
 - D. Both A and B
 - E. None of the above
16. The person who is older, wiser, and gives Kino advice is
- A. the priest.
 - B. Juana.
 - C. Juan Thomas.
 - D. the doctor.
 - E. Coyotito.
17. Because she thinks the pearl is evil, Juana tries
- A. to throw the pearl in the fire.
 - B. to give it to the priest.
 - C. to throw the pearl back in the sea.
 - D. to persuade Kino to take the pearl buyer's offer.
 - E. to give it to Kino's brother.

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18. It is significant when Juana and Kino return to the village
- A. that they are walking side by side.
 - B. that the villagers come out and cheer their return.
 - C. that the doctor has fled the town.
 - D. that a large cloud covers the sun and darkens the land.
 - E. Both A and B
19. When he looks into the pearl, Kino sees
- A. himself, his wife, and his child dressed up for a church wedding.
 - B. the frantic eyes of the man in the pool.
 - C. Coyotito with his head shot away.
 - D. Both B and C
 - E. A, B, and C
20. The ending of the story suggests that
- A. Kino and Juana will hide the pearl and save it for another day.
 - B. the pearl is gone for good, and no one will get it now.
 - C. Kino and Juana must still be strong because the pearl buyers will never stop believing that Kino and Juana still have the pearl.
 - D. this time Kino will use the pearl to buy freedom, equality, and economic independence for the entire village.
 - E. Both B and C

The Pearl

Test
Student Answer Sheet

Name: _____

1. _____

11. _____

2. _____

12. _____

3. _____

13. _____

4. _____

14. _____

5. _____

15. _____

6. _____

16. _____

7. _____

17. _____

8. _____

18. _____

9. _____

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____

The Pearl

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on Response Journals**

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Test
Answer Key

1. C

2. A

3. D

4. B

5. E

6. E

7. E

8. A

9. B

10. C

11. E

12. A

13. A

14. C

15. D

16. C

17. C

18. A

19. E

20. B

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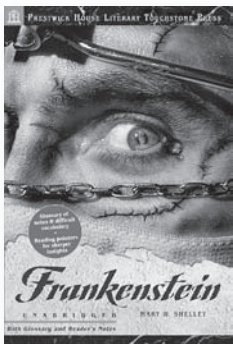
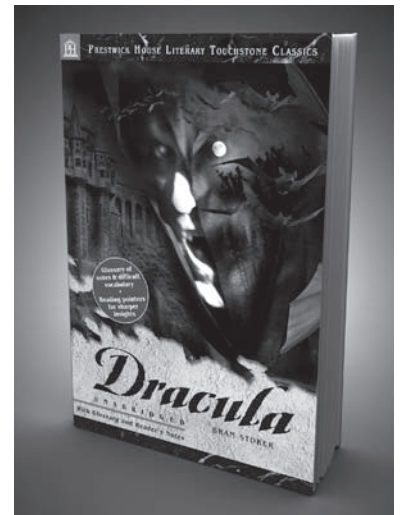
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