

The Pearl - Chapter 1

- Setting
- Jot Notes
- Characters
- Conflict - external and internal
- Chapter 1 Questions

Setting

- Takes place around 1900
- About 300-400 years after the Spanish took over Mexico
- Estuary (mouth of a river)
- Somewhere on the coast of Mexico
- In the town of La Paz

Circumstance

- Indians of Mexico have been under the domination of Spanish for at least 300 years.
- Indians are at the bottom of the ladder
- Spanish culture was imposed on Indians
- Some aspects of the Indian culture still survived (religion)

Jot Notes

- Introduced to the three main characters
 1. Kino
 2. Juana
 3. Coyotito
- Coyotito gets stung by a scorpion while hanging in his hammock
- Kino is a pearl diver, they live in a brush hut in La Paz
- Juana sucks the puncture wound and asks for the doctor

- There is a procession of Indians, led by Juana and Kino, to go to the city to ask for the doctor's help
- The doctor refuses to treat the baby and Kino hits the iron gate. (bloody knuckles)

Characters

- Kino - a pearl diver, provider for his family, protector, stubborn
- Juana - Kino's wife, obedient, strong, quiet, stubborn, loyal, respectful, protective of her son
- Coyotito - child of Kino and Juana
- Juan Thomas - Kino's older brother
- Apolonia - Juan Thomas' wife
- Doctor - wealthy, cruel, dishonest

Conflict

- Coyotito vs. the scorpion (external)
- Kino vs. the scorpion (external)
- Kino vs. the gate (external)
- Juana vs. the poison (external)
- Doctor's refusal shocks Kino into realizing that something drastic must happen if he is to provide for his son's future (internal)
- Kino's struggle with whether to ask the doctor for help or not (internal)

Important Points

1. The songs and wholeness...the songs are ancient and have been passed down by generations of Indians.

When things are happy they hear the Song of the Family. When evil threatens, they are warned by the Song of Evil. The songs are individual parts of the whole. This theme of wholeness is that everything has its place in the universe and when something happens to one of the parts, the whole system is affected.

2. The Ants...Steinbeck tries to show the similarities between the human and animal worlds. The ants reflect the actions of humans. Kino does very little to change the outcome of the struggle.
3. Scorpion...The scorpion attack is part of the human struggle for survival. No matter how hard people struggle in life, there always seems to be another problem/obstacle in their path.
4. Class Distinctions...The Spanish, because of their money and power are the ruling class. The Indians are the exploited, lower class.
5. Nature vs. Civilization...The contrast is shown between the Indians and the "civilized" life of the town.

The Doctor	Kino
1. Has a large home made of stone and plaster	1. Lives in a small brush house
2. Drinks Chocolate	2. Drinks pulque
3. Sleeps in a plush bed	3. Sleeps on a mat
4. Gloomy and dark house	4. Sunny and Happy house
5. Frustrated and greedy	5. Happy and Content
6. Rich	6. Poor
7. Agitated	7. In tune with nature

Chapter 1 Questions

1. In this chapter, we are introduced to two songs which reflect the mood at the time as well as the character's thoughts and feelings. Name each song and explain what each one symbolizes.

- Song of the Family - represents security, warmth and love (all is well)
- Song of Evil - heard whenever evil or danger threatens the safety or security of the family (the scorpion).

2. (a) What happens to Coyotito?

Coyotito gets stung by a scorpion.

(b) Explain how Juana administers first aid to the baby.

Juana administers first aid to the baby by putting her lips down over the puncture and sucking out the poison

3. Why do you think the author compares Juana's eyes to the eyes of a lioness?

A mother lioness will do anything to protect her young - no matter what the cost. Juana is determined to save her baby (her most precious possession). "Her cold eyes merely reflected deep determination".

4. Describe the doctor's character. Support your answer using details from the chapter.

The four beggars, in front of the church, knew that the doctor was fat, lazy, ignorant, cruel and filled with avarice. He had given clumsy abortions and brown pennies for alms. The doctor was described by the author when the servant went to inform him about the baby as dressed in a gown of silk that was too tight and being overweight. (puffy eyes, hoarse throat)

5. a) What unusual person does Juana ask for? Why is this such an unusual request?

The unusual person that Juana asks for is the doctor. This was an unusual request because the doctor never came to the cluster of brush houses - where Kino and Juana lived

b) Why does the doctor refuse to treat Coyotito?

The doctor refuses to treat Coyotito because Kino and Juana had no money or anything of monetary value to pay for the treatment.

5. What does Kino do to show his anger?

Kino showed his anger by hitting the iron gate with a crushing blow with his fist. His bloody knuckles are a symbol of the struggle between people of Spanish background (the ruling class) and the Indians (the exploited lower class).