

Focus ON READING

Vocabulary

READING
COMPREHENSION

The Pearl

John Steinbeck

ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Reproducible Activities

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. "Outside the brush house in the tuna clump, a **covey** of little birds chattered and flurried with their wings."
covey: _____
2. "Near the brush fence two roosters bowed and **fainted** at each other with squared wings and neck feathers ruffed out."
fainted: _____
3. "In his mind a new song had come, the Song of Evil, the music of the enemy, of any foe of the family, a savage, secret, dangerous melody, and underneath, the Song of the Family cried **plaintively**."
plaintively: _____
4. "And Kino saw her determination and the music of the family sounded in his head with a **steely** tone."
steely: _____
5. "They made a quick soft-footed procession into the center of the town, . . . Apolonia, her big stomach jiggling with the **strenuous** pace, then all the neighbors with the children trotting on the flanks."
strenuous: _____
6. "They knew his ignorance, his cruelty, his **avarice**, his appetites, his sins. They knew . . . the little brown pennies he gave sparingly for **alms**."
avarice: _____
alms: _____
7. ". . . they followed the procession, . . . to see what the fat lazy doctor would do about an **indigent** baby with a scorpion bite."
indigent: _____
8. "The doctor had once for a short time been a part of the great world and his whole **subsequent** life was memory and longing for France."
subsequent: _____
9. ". . . the neighbors departed so that the public shaming of Kino would not be in their eyes. . . . Slowly he put his **suppliant** hat on his head."
suppliant: _____

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. What is the first thing Kino looks at when he wakes?
 - a. Juana
 - b. the door
 - c. the hanging box
2. Where does Kino live?
 - a. in the village center
 - b. in Mexico City
 - c. in a brush house
3. What does Juana fix for breakfast?
 - a. cookies
 - b. corncakes
 - c. fish
4. When does Kino first hear the Song of Evil?
 - a. when he sees the scorpion
 - b. when he goes to the doctor
 - c. when the neighbors come
5. Where does Kino see the scorpion?
 - a. in Coyotito's hanging box
 - b. on the ground near Coyotito
 - c. on the rope of Coyotito's hanging box
6. Who is Juan Tomás?
 - a. Kino's brother
 - b. the town doctor
 - c. a neighbor
7. What does Juana do that surprises Kino?
 - a. She asks Kino to call the doctor.
 - b. She tries to suck the poison out of the sting.
 - c. She uses magic to discourage the scorpion.
8. Who do Kino and Juana see in front of the church on their way to the doctor's house?
 - a. the priest
 - b. the beggars
 - c. the children
9. What reason does the doctor give the servant for not treating Coyotito?
 - a. The bill will never be paid.
 - b. The sting is not serious.
 - c. The doctor is too busy.
10. What reason does the servant give Kino for the doctor's refusal to treat Coyotito?
 - a. The bill will never be paid.
 - b. The sting is not serious.

Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

clarity—clearness; sharp detail

bulwark—a mound of earth used for defense; anything that protects a person from danger or injury

poultice—a soft, wet pad of cloth, herbs, and other ingredients used as a medicine

remedy—a cure; a treatment

undulating—waving

obscured—hidden; blocked from view

rigid—stiff

hummock—an area that is higher than the surrounding terrain; a hill

speculatively—thoughtfully

incandescence—glow

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Nayarit is a state in western Mexico.

An **estuary** is the place where a river runs into the ocean. It is sometimes called the mouth of the river.

The **bow** is the front of a boat, and the **stern** is the back. In a canoe, the stronger paddler sits in the stern and steers the canoe.

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. How does the environment affect the way Kino and his people view the world? How does it affect Kino especially?
2. Why doesn't Juana trust her cure for Coyotito?
3. Do you think Juana's magic and prayers affect the finding of the pearl?
4. Why is Juana afraid to want to find a pearl?
5. Why does Kino howl when he finds the pearl?

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. What things do Kino's people trust?
 - a. spirit and imagination
 - b. things they can see
 - c. the ocean and things in it
2. How did Kino get his canoe?
 - a. He worked for the money to buy it.
 - b. It was a gift.
 - c. It was passed down through his family.
3. What does Juana pray for before she and Kino go out in the canoe?
 - a. that Coyotito will be healed
 - b. that Kino will find a pearl
 - c. that the doctor will decide to help Coyotito
4. Why does Juana believe her poultice won't cure Coyotito?
 - a. The doctor says it isn't effective.
 - b. She doesn't have the right plants and herbs.
 - c. It is simple, doesn't cost anything, and is not made by a doctor.
5. What song does Kino hear while he dives?
 - a. the Song of the Pearl That Might Be
 - b. the Song of the Family
 - c. the Song of Evil
6. What does Juana do while Kino collects oysters?
 - a. She opens oysters.
 - b. She makes the magic of prayer.
 - c. She recites magic spells.
7. Where does Kino find the large oyster?
 - a. in a cluster of small oysters
 - b. on an empty patch of sand
 - c. under an overhang
8. What does Kino do first when he gets back in the canoe?
 - a. He opens a small oyster.
 - b. He pulls up his diving rock.
 - c. He gives Juana the large oyster.
9. Why does Juana look away when Kino opens the oyster?
 - a. She's afraid of wanting to find a pearl too much.
 - b. She doesn't want Kino to open the large oyster.
 - c. She is watching Coyotito.
10. What happens to the oyster after Kino opens it?
 - a. He throws it back in the water.
 - b. Juana saves it to eat.
 - c. The muscle jerks and then lies still.

Deepen Your Understanding

The *setting* of a story describes the time and place of a story. *The Pearl* is set in La Paz, Mexico, near the Gulf of Mexico. Sometimes the setting of a story can tell about what is happening in the story. Sometimes the setting affects culture or the way people behave in the story.

Think about the setting of *The Pearl*. How do the mirages help you to understand how the minds of the people in the story work? How can the descriptions of the fish and the beach help you understand the people? Look for other parts of the setting that give information about the story. Explain how these details add to your understanding of the story.

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why does the news of Kino's pearl spread so quickly?

2. How does the evil that the pearl stirs up in the town become visible?

3. Why do you think the priest comes to visit Kino?

4. What makes the doctor decide to treat Coyotito?

5. Do you think the pearl itself is evil? Why or why not?

Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “And when it was made plain who Kino was, the doctor grew stern and **judicious** at the same time.”
judicious: _____
2. “For there were not many buyers really—there was only one, and he kept these agents in separate offices to give a **semblance** of competition.”
semblance: _____
3. “The news stirred up something infinitely black and evil in the town; the black **distillate** was like the scorpion, or like hunger in the smell of food, or like loneliness when love is withheld.”
distillate: _____
4. “All of these things Kino saw in the **lucent** pearl and he said, ‘We will have new clothes.’”
lucent: _____
5. “And this is said in **disparagement**, whereas it is one of the greatest talents the species has and one that has made it superior to animals that are satisfied with what they have.”
disparagement: _____
6. “If these things came to pass, they would recount how Kino looked and what he said and how his eyes shone, and they would say, ‘He was a man **transfigured**.’”
transfigured: _____
7. “‘Kino,’ he said softly, ‘thou art named after a great man—and a great Father of the Church.’ He made it sound like a **benediction**.”
benediction: _____
8. “Kino stood in the door, filling it, and hatred raged and flamed in back of his eyes, and fear too, for the hundreds of years of **subjugation** were cut deep in him.”
subjugation: _____
9. “He was not good at **dissembling** and he was very well understood.”
dissembling: _____
10. “And the beauty of the pearl, winking and glimmering in the light of the little candle, **cozened** his brain with its beauty.”
cozened: _____

Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer for each question.

1. Why do you think the priest wonders if he has baptized Kino's baby?
2. Why is the town glad that Kino found the pearl?
3. What makes Kino every man's enemy?
4. What are some of the things Kino wants now that he has money?
5. Why does Kino want Coyotito to become educated?
6. What makes Kino afraid to talk about the future?
7. What does the doctor do to cure Coyotito?
8. Based on his earlier actions and his response to the scorpion sting, what is the reason for the doctor's visit?
9. Why is Kino suspicious of the doctor?
10. What happens in Kino's dream?