

The Pearl

Pre-Reading Activities

*Suggested activities prior to the study of **The Pearl**:*

1. Research and identify what “The American Dream” was back in 1900. Then, identify how that definition has changed for people in today’s society. How universal is the American Dream to other cultures? Do they have their own version of “The Dream”?
2. Generate a list of your own needs versus wants. Your ideas will be shared in a class list that your teacher will either post or print so everyone can browse through it. Reflect on what you see. Are people’s needs really much different? Why might people’s wants be vastly different?
3. Review the six elements of a story: Plot, Characters, Setting, Point of View, Conflict, and Theme. Afterwards, read or listen to a short fairy tale, fable, or parable that you may be familiar with (such as *The Tortoise and the Hare*, *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood*.) Practice identifying the six elements.
4. Discuss how relationships between, attitudes toward, and expectations for men and women have changed since the early 1900s. What activities and attitudes might have been perfectly acceptable back then that many cultures would not accept today?
5. Research coastal Mexico, looking for photographs or drawings of the coastline, wildlife, etc. Create a class bulletin board that includes your findings.
6. Look at the list of terms associated with the novella such as: brush house, brush fence, hanging box, poultice, city plaza, cool gardens, etc. Draw pictures of these images as you first think of them. Save the drawings for later while you’re reading the novella to see if your initial impressions were accurate.
7. Journal about religious and cultural traditions your family practices. If you feel comfortable, you may share what you have written with the class.
8. Research pearl oysters and how pearls form. Draw and label a diagram with the stages of the process.
9. Research scorpions. Draw and label the scorpion, and create a one-to-two page paper about them. Discuss the possible outcomes if a scorpion were to sting a person.
10. Discuss the term *subjugation* and how cultures or countries today experience this throughout the world. Predict how this will factor into the novella.
11. Review literary techniques such as: simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, allusion, imagery, symbolism, and irony. Generate two examples of each as practice for identifying them later in the novella.
12. Form groups of three to five. Your teacher will distribute one copy of *The Pearl* to each group. Survey the front and back cover only and come up with a list of five or more predictions about Steinbeck’s story.
13. Review the definitions of myth and legend. Then, spend time as a class discussing how Steinbeck first heard the story of the pearl.
14. Look up the definitions of innocence, naiveté, and ignorance. Then, compare and contrast the three words, based on your own experiences.
15. Define tragedy in your own words. What types of circumstances can be classified as tragedies? How does tragedy impact people? How do people deal with tragedy?