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<td>Steinbeck’s formative years in a poor family in the Salinas Valley of California formed the basis of his literary focus on and empathy for the downtrodden and exploited members of society.</td>
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<td>2. Steinbeck’s Depictions of Mexicans Were Based on His Personal Experiences</td>
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<td>Steinbeck often wrote about ethnic groups, particularly Mexican migrants, as a result of his interaction with laborers in the fields of California. While some critics view his depictions of Mexicans as stereotyped, others acknowledge his role in bringing awareness of this ethnic group to the American consciousness.</td>
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<td>Themes and techniques in <em>The Pearl</em> reflect Steinbeck’s philosophy about the interrelatedness of the natural world and his ability to employ vivid descriptions to convey abstract ideas.</td>
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<td>1. The Pearl Initially Separates Kino from His Simple Life</td>
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<td><em>Tetsumaro Hayashi</em></td>
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<td>Kino becomes obsessed with the pearl, thinking it will make him equal to those of greater wealth. As a result he loses touch with his own values, but eventually he comes to the realization that the pearl is poison to the soul.</td>
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2. Kino Initially Chooses Enslavement to Wealth to Escape Poverty

Sydney J. Krause

Kino’s initial rapture over the pearl enslaves him to material goods instead of a life of poverty. He eventually turns away from all the pearl represents, defeated and poorer but more self-aware.

3. The Townspeople in The Pearl Have a Parasitic Relationship with the Poor

Ernest E. Karsten Jr.

While people within Kino’s peasant community live in harmony with the earth and one another, the townspeople live privileged lives and prey upon the poor.

4. Kino and Juana Must Learn to Live in a World of Dualities

Michael J. Meyer

The animal and shadow imagery used in the novel conveys the dual nature of good and evil for the poor, which is the world in which Kino and Juana exist. They discover there are no absolutes and must navigate through these dualities.

5. Juana Is the Unsung Hero of The Pearl

Debra K.S. Barker

Juana is first to recognize the moral problems presented by the pearl. In contrast to her behavior at the start of the story, Juana emerges from the family’s momentous losses stronger and as an equal partner with Kino.

6. The Pearl Bestows the Riches of Mutual Respect

Edward E. Waldron

The Old Man and the Sea and The Pearl both depict protagonists who have expectations beyond the boundaries of their normal, poor existence. In The Pearl, however, Juana and Kino experience a sense of triumph and gain mutual respect, despite the horrible loss of their son, in ridding themselves of the pearl.
7. Kino’s Dreams for the Pearl Transcend Personal Greed

S.S. Prabhakar Rao

Kino dreams not of the egoistic pleasure of the pearl and the money it will bring but of the benefits the pearl will bring to the family. Kino’s threefold dream includes access to religion denied to him and his people because of their poverty, a rifle for protection from those who might cause harm, and education for his son so he can rise above poverty.

8. The Pearl Inspires Kino to Fight the Poverty and Degradation of His People

Kyoko Ariki

Kino’s experiences with the pearl lead him to understand he cannot return to his old life. His rage over the humiliation of his poverty will lead him to fight for the future of his people.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Perspectives on Poverty

1. The “Culture of Poverty” Perpetuates Distorted Views of the Poor

Paul Gorski

Contrary to the view held by some sociologists and educators, the concept of the culture of poverty is based on class biases and society’s inability to perceive situational causes.

2. There Is a New Approach to Examining the Culture of Poverty

Patricia Cohen

Sociologists coined the term “culture of poverty” in the 1960s. The concept was subsequently discredited due to its negative connotations. Current poverty research is redefining the term in ways that do not place blame on the poor.

3. The Shooting of a Mexican Teen Magnifies Conflict Along the US-Mexican Border

Daniela Pastrana
A US Border Patrol officer’s fatal shooting of a fifteen-year-old Mexican boy who was playing with friends focused attention on the violent nature of life in the area and the abuses of poor immigrants by US authorities.

   *Alexandra Cawthorne*

   The long-held perception of American suburbs as safe bastions of middle-class comfort is no longer accurate. Nearly one-third of the nation’s poor now live in the suburbs, where support services are often less available than in cities.

5. Haitians Live in Dire Poverty 120
   *Paul J. Sullivan*

   Coping with life after the disastrous 2010 earthquake was, in some ways, nothing new to the average Haitian. Illiteracy, appalling living conditions, and lack of access to basics such as electricity and clean water make up the experience of everyday life in Haiti.

6. Western Culture and Materialism Lead to Depression 126
   *Robert J. Hedaya*

   The Western capitalist system, with its emphasis on materialism, leads to disconnection from nature and from any sense of community. More Westerners are depressed as a result of their inner emptiness.

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