Advanced Reading and Writing  
Mr. Myers

Notes on *The Pearl*:

1. Introduction (Penguin teaching guide in the notes folder has some useful information)
   1. John Steinbeck
   2. Look at introduction of book—story is based on a Mexican folk tale; has the feel of a parable—simple story with a universal appeal—Kino could be any man, every man;
   3. This book needs to be read together out loud—at least sections of it
2. Chapter 1—Be sure to read sections together
   1. Discuss setting, characters, the mood of the first part of the chapter
   2. Discuss what happens
   3. The ‘song of family’—what does this mean? Music is an important theme in story
   4. What is all this rage in Kino? Notice the way the class distinction is set up; the indigenous vs. the European descent; Kino vs. the doctor;
3. Chapter 2
   1. the centrality of the sea in the lives of these people; the song of the sea
   2. What was the religious perspective of Kino and Juana? What did they believe and what religion did they practice?
   3. song of the pearl that might be—speaks of the hope, the desire for something better
   4. read the last part of the chapter
4. Chapter 3
   1. The pearl’s impact on the village
   2. Kino’s dreams—What all did he begin to want?
   3. What changes are taking place in Kino in this chapter?
   4. Why does he begin to hear an “evil song”? What is that song?
   5. Bottom of p. 32—what is the meaning of the fish pursuing fish?
   6. The evil doctor—we see evil at work in many people in this story, but the doctor probably represents the person who has given himself most fully to evil—this is what greed and selfishness looks like at the end
   7. The suspicion, the fear, the intruder, the attack—Juana’s realization that the pearl had the power to destroy them and their life.
5. Chapter 4
   1. The selling of the pearl—a wedding-level event—everyone in the village was involved
   2. the wearing of a hat—p. 44
   3. Every person guarding the castle of the Universe—p. 46
   4. legerdemain—trickery with one’s hands/fingers
   5. Explain how the pearl-dealers operated
   6. Kino is defying the whole structure, demanding justice in an unjust—is he being courageous or foolish?
   7. “I am a man”
6. Chapter 5
   1. Juana’s attempt to dispose of the Pearl and Kino’s attack
   2. What is going on in this situation? Doesn’t Kino love and care for his wife?
   3. Another attack in the dark
   4. Why did Kino respond so strongly to the destruction of his canoe?
   5. “It is all darkness”—bottom of 64
   6. “This pearl has become my soul.” Frightening words.
7. Chapter 6
   1. Trekking across barrenness
   2. What did Kino see in the pearl when he looked into it? p. 71
   3. Do you see any significance in the description of the water? (It’s a rough, dry world, but if we go to the right place, there is life)
   4. Kino’s attack, the random shot, and the death of four people
   5. Irony of Coyotito’s name
   6. How do Kino and Juana react to the death of Coyotito? What changes take place in them?
   7. The ending of the story is awful—but it seems like it takes something awful to bring people to their senses sometimes. Tragedy and pain have a way of disillusioning us and putting things in their proper perspective. Kino now knows what really matters, and it is not the pearl and all of the things that he had hoped to buy with it.
   8. What really matters to us? What is really important? This story can shake us out of our illusion or blindness and help us see what matters.