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## Pearl S. Buck

To most of North America, **Pearl S. Buck** lived an exotic and fascinating life. She was born Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker on June 26, 1892 in Hillsboro, West Virginia. Her parents were missionaries and so she lived in China for most of her life until 1934. She moved to Anhui Province, the setting for most of *The Good Earth* with her first husband, John Lossing Buck.

In the early 1900s, life in China was largely a mystery to much of the rest of the world. Pearl Buck wrote about China in many of her novels, because it was what she knew, but also because one of her life goals was to dispel myths about Asia. She wanted to have the world see them as humans sharing the same qualities, strengths and weaknesses, even though their lifestyle and customs were so very different.

She wrote many novels about China, and later other Asian nations. *The Good Earth* is the first and most popular of the trilogy based on the Wang family. *The Good Earth* was written in 1931, followed by *Sons* in 1932, and finally *A House Divided* in 1935.



### Did You Know?

- Her Chinese name is Sai Zhenzhu.
- Pearl Buck set up an adoption agency called *Welcome House Inc.* for adopting Asian-American children. Pearl and her husband John had adopted a daughter.
- She wrote *The Child Who Never Grew* in 1950, which highlighted her active interest in the care of mentally handicapped children. Her own daughter had been born with a disease (PKU) that had caused her to be mentally handicapped, which may have sparked her interest.



## Chapters Three to Six

Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. In each culture, there are celebrations of newborn babies. What are some of the traditional ways people celebrate the birth of babies in your culture?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How do mothers prepare for the birth of a baby in your society? When do they stop working? What do they 'need' to buy? How do they prepare the home? What do they learn to do for the birth process itself?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In the last chapter, we learned that O-Lan was a slave since childhood. Can you speculate at least 2 reasons to why she was sold to the House of Hwang as a child?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Vocabulary

With a straight line, connect each word on the left with its meaning on the right.

- |   |            |   |   |
|---|------------|---|---|
| 1 | Sheaves    | a sharp curved blade used to cut crops, especially grains                         | A |
| 2 | Scythes    | the husk and stalk on a grain that you don't eat                                  | B |
| 3 | Flail      | a harness used to steer and control an ox or oxen                                 | C |
| 4 | Winnow     | a way of grinding grains by using heavy rocks turned by water or animals          | D |
| 5 | Yoke       | bundles of cut wheat, corn, hay or other grains                                   | E |
| 6 | Furrow     | to hit the stalks of grains, and loosen the edible part from the inedible         | F |
| 7 | Millstones | to throw the stalks of grain in the air after flailing, to let the chaff blow off | G |
| 8 | Chaff      | a long narrow trench in the ground in which to plant seeds                        | H |



## Chapters Fifteen to Seventeen

1. Number the events from 1 to 6 in the order they occurred in these chapters.

- a) Wang Lung buys an ox.
- b) Wang Lung buys land from the House of Hwang.
- c) Wang Lung sends his two oldest sons to school.
- d) Wang Lung lets O-Lan keep two pearls from the jewels stolen from the wealthy family.
- e) Ching moves in and becomes Wang Lung's overseer on the farm.
- f) The family moves back to the farm.

2. **Symbolism: the use of an object to represent a more abstract idea of concept. An example is the American Eagle represents the concept of Freedom and Independence. A dove represents the concept of peace. For each of the sentences below, choose the symbol from the list that is being described.**

pearls	one long braid	beans
pearls the land	an ox	the House of Hwang

- a) The symbol of the noble life of ancient China is \_\_\_\_\_.
- b) Wang Lung has \_\_\_\_\_ which symbolizes the loyalty to the old ways, a farmer, tied to his land.
- c) The \_\_\_\_\_ form a bond of forgiveness and support between Ching and Wang Lung.
- d) The \_\_\_\_\_ beauty for O-Lan, who has always been called ugly.
- e) The \_\_\_\_\_ is life.
- f) The \_\_\_\_\_ is a symbol of productivity.

## Chapters Seven to Nine

Answer each question with a complete sentence.

1. What motivates Wang Lung to approach his aunt and demand she control her daughter?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Wang Lung felt it was a bad omen when his wife gave birth to a girl, yet he forms a special attachment to his little girl. Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Analyze the actions of Wang Lung's uncle to describe clearly his true character.

Actions:	What it says about his true character:
Uncle blames his dirty house, poorly behaving children and low crop yield on his 'evil destiny'.	
Uncle pressures Wang Lung for money to use as a dowry for his oldest child, Wang Lung suspects that he will gamble it away.	
Uncle tells villagers that his nephew has food and money hidden away in his house, while others starve.	
Uncle takes money from opportunistic merchants and brings men to Wang Lung's house to convince him to sell his lands.	

4. Foreshadowing occurs when an author writes elements into the story that hint at future events in the story. Predict what may happen with the House of Hwang during The Famine, based upon foreshadowing that appears in the text. Use evidence from the chapters.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Based on Wang Lung's Uncle and his family's behaviors in these chapters, can you predict what problems they may cause for Wang Lung in the future?  
\_\_\_\_\_



### Journaling Prompt

In turn of the century China, elder males were given great respect and honor. Wang Lung must not be rude to his uncle and must share his money with him. Wang Lung also makes sure that his father has food, even if he himself, nor his children and wife have any. How is this different from your society today? Who is respected in your society? Is this good or bad? Explain.





## Chapters 1 to 10

### Demonstrate Your Style

Take the topic of 'the land' in the novel, and write 4 paragraphs, one for each of the following:

- Narrative
- Expository
- Persuasive
- Descriptive

A narrative paragraph would tell a story related to the farming land. An expository paragraph would teach someone how to farm the land. A persuasive paragraph would convince someone to farm the land, and a descriptive paragraph would describe the land using as many senses as possible.

All paragraphs start with a strong topic sentence, a couple body sentences full of information to support the topic, and finish with a closing or concluding sentence that sums up or helps the reader have a more profound understanding of the topic of the paragraph.



## Chapters 11 to 13

### Newspaper Article

Take one event in the novel and write it up as if it were the feature story on the cover of a local newspaper. Study newspaper style writing, recognizing the need to keep your sentences fact-filled, unbiased, and to the point.

The first paragraph should give the most important information right away, and each subsequent paragraph fills in the Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How, with more and more background information. Your feature story should have a photo and a headline to catch the reader's attention.

Examples of events to cover for the newspaper article could be:

- the Famine
- the locust
- the bandit's attack on the House of Hwang
- or choose one of your own



## Word Search Puzzle

Find the following words from the story. The words are written horizontally, vertically, diagonally, and some are written backwards.

unseemly	destiny	harlot	winnow	quiescent
haranguing	merit	husbanded	sundered	remorse
serf	mar	dallied	yoke	steward
omen	flail	lotus	gilt	garner
chaff	relish	opium	impudent	taoist

I	D	E	D	N	A	B	S	U	H	F	B	R
M	U	I	P	O	C	H	A	F	E	R	P	N
P	A	S	U	N	D	E	R	E	D	E	O	I
U	E	R	E	M	O	R	S	E	L	S	T	U
D	S	E	W	U	D	A	L	L	I	E	D	Y
E	C	L	A	H	E	Q	S	O	A	K	E	T
N	G	I	L	T	S	M	Y	T	L	O	R	F
T	O	S	U	K	T	E	L	U	F	Y	E	G
T	A	H	K	L	I	R	M	S	R	Z	P	N
N	S	O	M	E	N	I	E	E	T	W	N	U
E	I	T	I	P	Y	T	E	Y	W	N	U	J
C	R	A	E	S	L	Y	S	O	T	T	S	Y
S	E	K	W	T	P	N	K	H	O	B	G	
E	N	U	G	N	A	N	U	E	C	L	X	C
I	R	Q	R	U	I	R	O	B	W	R	L	E
U	A	Y	E	W	S	M	D	X	T	A	M	T
Q	G	N	I	U	G	N	A	R	A	H	T	U



## Comprehension Quiz

8. What is the irony when Wang Lung says, "we may be beggars but we are not thieves," and then beating his second son in the city for stealing the pork?

2

9. What is meant by, "There is a way when the rich are too rich, and the poor are too poor."?

2

10. We hear of O-Lan crying in the novel only twice: the first time is when Wang Lung takes away her pearls. Why did he take them? Give 2 reasons.

2

11. Why was it so important to Wang Lung to spend time and money with O-Lan as she sickened and died?

2

12. What parallels exist between the House of Hwang and the house of Wang at the end of the novel? Compare and contrast 4 elements between the two houses.

4

13. What role does Pear Blossom play in Wang Lung's life? Give examples from the novel.

2

14. What is the meaning of the title? Give 2 meanings and use facts from the novel to support your response.

4

SUBTOTAL: /18

## Character Sketch

Gather information on one of the main characters in each chapter to complete the character sketch.

A typical quote from the character (with citation):

Character's Thoughts (with citation):

Biceps - strengths of the character:

What/who is a pain in the neck for this character?

What or who does the character love?

Left Hand - What weapons does this character have (real or metaphorical)?

Right Hand - What does the character own or cherish?

Front Leg - Where is the character going (real journey or metaphorical)?

Back Leg - Where did the character come from?

Back Ankle - Weaknesses of the character:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

After You Read 



# Chapters One to Two

Answer each question with a complete sentence or short paragraph.

1. Compare and contrast wedding preparations for Wang Lung to a modern groom in our culture. In which 2 ways are they similar? In which 2 ways are they different?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How do we know that Wang Lung is poor? Give 3 facts from the chapters.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Find a quote from Chapter 1 that suggests O-Lan is used to being hit. Be sure to use quotation marks and cite the page number from the chapter.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is Wang Lung pleased with his wife? Support your answer with at least 3 quotes and/or facts cited from the chapters.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. In every section of this novel, the characters allude to the Earth. The grandfather, upon learning that O-Lan is pregnant, says "so the harvest is in sight". How do you think this ties into the title of the novel?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Journaling Prompt

Slavery was common in the past, and sadly, it still continues today. Research to find out about child slavery: what are some of the reasons for it continuing? In what countries does it happen? What kind of work is common and what, if anything, can be done about it?

1.

Answers will vary, but may include: Similarities: Take special care with hygiene and dressing; have a wedding reception with food and friends. Differences: Groom has met his fiancé before the wedding day; the focus of attention at the reception is on the bride or the couple.

2.

Answers will vary, but may include: Chapter 1 "...there remain only slaves to be had for the poor." He is cautious about spending money on everything from shaving to meat; he has ragged clothes and only one change of clothes; his feast day robe.

3.

Answers will vary, but may include: "there was straw under her hair when he roused her, and when he called her she put up her arm suddenly in her sleep as though to defend herself from a blow."

4.

Answers will vary, but may include: modesty, quote: "then he was pleased when she said to him, 'I will hand you... Wang Lung felt in him a great pride, that this woman was his...'; " but in his heart he was proud of the dishes, for with what meats".

5.

The grandfather means that a baby is the fruit of the marriage being consummated, but he is also alluding to the fact that a family continues with the birth of children, and O-Lan is like the 'good earth', fertile, producing the next generation.

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1.

Answers will vary.

2.

Answers will vary.

3.

Answers will vary, but may include: because they couldn't afford food; for cash; they had too many children; she was an orphan.

### Vocabulary

1. E

2. A

3. F

4. G

5. C

6. H

7. D

8. B

14

1.

a)  D

b)  A

c)  C

2.

a) eggs

b) red

c) O-Lan

d) malignant

e) spirits

f) eggs

g) grandfather's

15

1.

Answers will vary, but may include: Wanted: must be thrifty, able to cook, clean, repair clothing, gather fuel and help in the fields.

2.

Answers will vary, but may include: O-Lan: to prove to her old mistress that she was not worthless, she was clever and capable; Wang Lung: for family honor.

3.

Answers will vary.

4.

Answers will vary but may include: money spent on concubines, slaves and opium.

5.

Answers will vary.

6.

Answers will vary, but may include: It was a symbol for him of wealth and success or good fortune; it brought him honor and respect in the village.

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# EASY MARKING ANSWER KEY



## The Good Earth

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- **RSL.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RSL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **RSL.9-10.3** Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- **RSL.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
- **RSL.9-10.7** Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.
- **RSL.9-10.10** By the end of grade 9 read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
- **RSL.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- **RSL.11-12.2** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **RSL.11-12.3** Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.
- **RSL.11-12.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.
- **RSL.11-12.7** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem, evaluating how each version interprets the source text.
- **RSL.11-12.10** By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.
- **WS.9-10.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- **WS.9-10.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- **WS.9-10.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences..
- **WS.9-10.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **WS.9-10.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- **WS.9-10.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- **WS.9-10.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **WS.11-12.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- **WS.11-12.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- **WS.11-12.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
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- **WS.11-12.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- **WS.11-12.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
- **WS.11-12.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.