

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Insert

The source that follows is:

Source A: 20th Century prose-fiction

The Pearl by John Steinbeck

An extract from the beginning of a novel published in 1947

Please turn the page over to see the source

Source A

In this extract from the beginning of the novel, Kino, a poor pearl diver, is with his wife Juana and their baby Coyotito in their village home in Mexico.

1 The sun was warming the brush house, breaking through its crevices in long streaks. And one
of the streaks fell on the hanging bed-box where baby Coyotito lay, and on the ropes that held
it. It was a tiny movement that drew their eyes to the hanging box. Kino and Juana froze in
their positions. Down the rope that hung the baby's box from the roof support, a scorpion
5 moved slowly. His stinging tail was straight out behind him, but he could whip it up in a flash of
6 time.

7 Kino's breath whistled in his nostrils and he opened his mouth to stop it. And then the startled
look was gone from him and the rigidity from his body. 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
10 melody, and underneath, the Song of the Family cried plaintively. The scorpion moved
delicately down the rope toward the box. Kino was in motion. His body glided quietly across
the room, noiselessly and smoothly. His hands were in front of him, palms down, and his eyes
were on the scorpion. It sensed danger when Kino was almost within reach of it. It stopped,
and its tail rose up over its back in little jerks and the curved thorn on the tail's end glistened.
15 Kino stood perfectly still. He could not move until the scorpion moved, and it felt for the source
of the death that was coming to it. Kino's hand went forward very slowly, very smoothly. The
17 thorned tail jerked upright.

And at that moment, the laughing Coyotito shook the rope and the scorpion fell.

19 Kino's hand leaped to catch it, but it fell past his fingers, fell on the baby's shoulder, landed and
20 struck. Then, snarling, Kino had it, had it in his fingers, rubbing it to a paste in his hands. He
threw it down and beat it into the earth floor with his fist, and Coyotito screamed with pain in his
box. But Kino beat and stamped the enemy until it was only a fragment and a moist place in
the dirt. His teeth were bared and fury flared in his eyes and the Song of the Enemy roared in
his ears.

25 But Juana had the baby in her arms now. She found the puncture with redness starting from it
already. She put her lips down over the puncture and sucked hard and spat and sucked again
while Coyotito screamed.

Kino hovered; he was helpless, he was in the way.

The screams of the baby brought the neighbours. "Scorpion. The baby has been stung."

30 Juana stopped sucking the puncture for a moment. The little hole was slightly enlarged and its
edges whitened from the sucking, but the red swelling extended farther around it in a hard
mound. An adult might be very ill from the sting, but a baby could easily die from the poison.
First would come swelling and fever and tightened throat, and then cramps in the stomach, and
then Coyotito might die if enough of the poison had gone in. But the stinging pain of the bite
35 was going away. Coyotito's screams turned to moans.

Kino had wondered often at the iron in his patient, fragile wife. She, who was obedient and
respectful and cheerful and patient. She could stand fatigue and hunger almost better than
Kino himself. She was like a strong man. And now she did a most surprising thing.

"The doctor," she said. "Go to get the doctor."

40 "The doctor would not come," Kino said to Juana.

She looked up at him, her eyes as cold as the eyes of a lioness. This was Juana's first baby – this was nearly everything there was in Juana's world, and Kino saw her determination.

45 "Then we will go to him," Juana said, and with one hand she arranged her dark blue shawl over her head and made of one end of it a sling to hold the moaning baby and a shade over his eyes to protect him from the light. The people in the doorway pushed against those behind to let her through. Kino followed her.

END OF SOURCE