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SYNOPSIS

Chap. 1: Late in the nineteenth century, Wang Lung, a Chinese farmer, anticipates his wedding day. He lives alone with his aged father in a three-room house. As is the custom, Wang has never met his bride, whom his father selected for him. So great is the family's poverty that Wang marries a woman from the kitchen slaves of the great House of Hwang. When he arrives at the outer gate, the gateman mocks and humiliates him. After gaining entrance to the Old Mistress, he falls on his face before the haughty old woman's dais while she smokes opium. She contemptuously offers O-lan, a strong, large-framed woman lacking both grace and beauty. Although the potential bride is stolid and uncommunicative, she proves to be an exceptional cook for the evening's festivities, which include six guests, but exclude the bride.

Chap. 2: After completing arduous chores and caring for the old man, O-lan joins Wang in the fields. She delights him with news of an impending birth.

Chap. 3: O-lan gives birth alone and unaided to a first son. Wang plans a celebration.

Chap. 4: The next day, O-lan rejoins Wang in the fields. Although he displays no affection for her, Wang marvels at her devotion, capacity for hard work, and thrift.

Chap. 5: On the second day of the New Year celebration, the couple take the infant to town to display him to the Old Mistress. The extravagance of the Hwangs on opium and concubines have taken such a toll that Wang detects a decline in their prosperity. He marvels that they might sell some land. Although he is poor, he has saved enough silver to buy a small parcel from the Hwangs. O-lan exults that she is no longer a slave in the House of Hwang.

Chap. 6: O-lan again conceives and gives birth to a second son in autumn, returning immediately to the fields to work. Wang and his family prosper; villagers talk of electing him as their leader.

Chap. 7: Wang's shiftless uncle borrows money. Although Wang despises him, he feels obligation toward his father's younger brother. O-lan struggles with the birth of a third child, a profoundly retarded daughter later named the Poor Fool. He regards her birth as an evil omen.

Chap. 8: That summer, drought and famine strike the land. Wang again invests in a vast field from the House of Hwang, but conceals the purchase from O-lan. The drought extends into autumn. He slaughters the ox for food. Starving people eat corn husks, tree bark, and, it is rumored, even human flesh. Wang's uncle stirs up neighbors with rumors of hoarded food and coins at his nephew's house. Neighbors raid his mud-walled house. Discovering that the Wang family is no better off than they, the peasants depart in shame. Wang is glad to have invested in land, the one thing that

can't be stolen.

Chap. 9: O-lan gives birth to a fourth child, but strangles the infant to save it from slow starvation. The next morning, his children eat a gruel made from mud. Ching, still shamed by participating in the raid, gives Wang the last of his food, a handful of moldy beans. Strangers follow the uncle to Wang's house and offer to buy his land at 100 pence per acre, only 1/20th of its worth. He is tempted, but refuses to sell. Instead, he gambles on migrating south. O-lan insists that they sell their furniture and cook pot, but keep their farm implements.

Chap. 10: After selling household goods for a few pennies, the family moves south with a horde of migrants. As their smallest child clings to life, they crowd onto a train, which they call the firewagon.

Chap. 11: In the city a hundred miles south, Wang and his family live in a tiny shelter made of mats set against the wall of a great estate. Many hungry people live in similar huts and eat in charity kitchens. He pulls a ricksha while his family begs in the streets.

Chap. 12: Months later, the family survives with nothing left over. Wang dreams of his land, certain that the rains have enriched it. Bitterly frustrated, he watches his sons acquire the thieving ways of city children.

Chap. 13: As O-lan grows heavy with child, Wang contemplates selling his daughter, but refuses. Unrest stalks the poor.

Chap. 14: Wang encounters a missionary distributing pictures of Christ and others offering Communist propaganda. When war comes to the city, the army forces inductees into service. As Wang again ponders selling his daughter, the poor riot and loot the houses of the rich. Caught up in a surge of bodies, Wang finds himself in an inner court. After the looters move on, a rich fat man emerges from hiding. Terrified of Wang, he gives him gold to spare his life. Wang returns his family to the farm the next day.

Chap. 15: Now Wang has the money for transportation and buys an ox on his way into the village. Ching reports that a band of robbers lived in Wang's house that winter. Returned to the farm, Wang rebuilds his fortunes. Ching, who survived the famine, tells of the fearful eating of dogs and offal to survive the past winter. O-lan is again with child.

Chap. 16: Wang discovers that O-lan conceals a pouch of jewels she found under a brick in the rich man's house. He takes them, leaving her only two pearls. Trading with Cuckoo, an officious dealer for the House of Hwang, he offers to buy the estate.

Chap. 17: Wang hires many laborers and establishes himself as the richest land owner of the area. O-lan gives birth to twins, a boy and girl. Wang sets Ching over his workers as supervisor. At the end of five years, Wang realizes that he needs someone to read contracts. He enrolls his older sons in school near the city gate to help him deal with town mer-

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chants. The teacher names the boys Nung En and Nung Wen.

Chap. 18: Peace accompanies his new rise in fortune until a flood two years later in late spring, which delays the planting of his fields. He wearies of O-lan, who has suffered a burning illness since the birth of the twins and has not conceived for seven years. Wang ends his inactivity by frequenting a tea shop where Cuckoo supervises the upstairs brothel. He admires the pictures of prostitutes, but is unfamiliar with paying women for sex.

Chap. 19: When the flood extends into midsummer, he pays for the attentions of Lotus, a petite prostitute. Completely enamored by her frail beauty and talent for lovemaking, he cuts off his braid, washes daily, and dresses in new clothes. To O-lan's distress, he rewards Lotus with O-lan's two pearls, leaving his wife in tears.

Chap. 20: Wang's uncle's family moves in. His wife bargains for Lotus so Wang can install her in a lovely inner court of the house as second wife. At the end of summer, Lotus arrives. Wang spends a whole day with her. O-lan departs for the fields. Cuckoo remains to serve Lotus.

Chap. 21: Peace now eludes Wang. His wife contends with the second wife. When O-lan complains of Cuckoo's haughtiness, he builds a second kitchen for Cuckoo. His uncle's wife joins Lotus and Cuckoo in gorging on rich foods. The aged father yells that there is a harlot in the house; the younger children stare, causing Lotus to call them filthy. Wang is most angry at unkindness to Poor Fool, his mentally-handicapped daughter. To cope with domestic troubles, he returns to the soil.

Chap. 22: Freed of lust for Lotus, Wang rejoices in spiritual health. Local men respect him for his two wives. After the New Year, he contemplates a marriage for his eldest son. In spring, the boy grows pensive and skips class. O-lan notices his likeness to the idle sons in the House of Hwang.

Chap. 23: Lotus suggests Pomegranate Flower as a possible wife for the boy. Cuckoo identifies the father of the girl as Liu, a grain dealer. Meanwhile, the boy falls in with the uncle's son and drinks rice wine. The next day, Wang trails the pair to the house of Yang the prostitute. He dispatches Cuckoo to Liu to bargain for a wife. Wang challenges the uncle for letting his son run to corruption. His uncle counters by revealing his red beard, which he wears as a member of a band of robbers. Pomegranate Flower must remain unwed three more years until she is seventeen. Wang returns to farming and battles a plague of locusts to save his rice beds and wheat. By summer, the fields flourish.

Chap. 24: The eldest son, nearing eighteen, insists on going south to a great school. Wang forces him into the fields. After O-lan grows sicker, she informs Wang that his eldest son visits Lotus's quarters. At noon, he creeps up on Lotus and the son and whips them with a strip of bamboo. Wang exiles the boy to the south.

Chap. 25: Wang goes to the Street of Bridges to apprentice the second son to Liu, who requests Wang's ten-year-old daughter for his son. Wang is content to have sired a scholar, merchant, and farmer and to have settled his younger daughter's future. O-lan falls ill with a wasting illness. He grieves that he feels no affection for her, but weeps when the doctor says she will die.

Chap. 26: Because O-lan desires to see their eldest married, she clings to life. That winter, the house suffers from her

absence as the youngest performs her chores. Wang sits by her bed and listens to murmurs about her miserable girlhood. She rallies before the New Year and asks to see the future daughter-in-law. Wang sends for the son, who had been gone two years. When O-lan dies shortly after the wedding, Wang feels that half his life has ended. Shortly, his old father dies. That spring, the two are buried on a hill overlooking Wang's fields.

Chap. 27: Ching predicts a flood. During a year of famine, Wang watches his stores and eats only a pig and a lake fish that New Year. The uncle grows haughty from his position as a robber. The eldest son proposes murdering the uncle and his family to stop the cousin from leering at Pomegranate Flower. The cousin turns on Wang's second daughter, whom Wang safeguards by sending her to Liu's house until the next harvest, when she will marry. Driven to desperate measures, Wang purchases six ounces of illegal opium for six silver pieces.

Chap. 28: As the uncle contents himself with opium, Wang looks forward to the birth of a grandchild. He grows richer by lending money at high rates and buys children sold into slavery. That summer, he tries to teach his youngest son about farming. The eldest son proposes that the family move into town. The second son concurs and proposes marrying. Wang goes to the great house to buy it.

Chap. 29: Wang is reluctant to leave his old house. He dispatches Ching to find a village maid for his second son and rests from labor while others rent his land. His troubles lighten when the uncle's son leaves for a distant war. Wang worries during the delivery of his grandchild, whom Lotus announces. The eldest son demands a wetnurse for the infant. Wang Lung agrees to purchase tablets of ancestors. Shortly, he abandons his noon meal to run to the field where Ching lies dying. Wang honors him with three days' mourning, then lets out the old home and returns his youngest son to the town house.

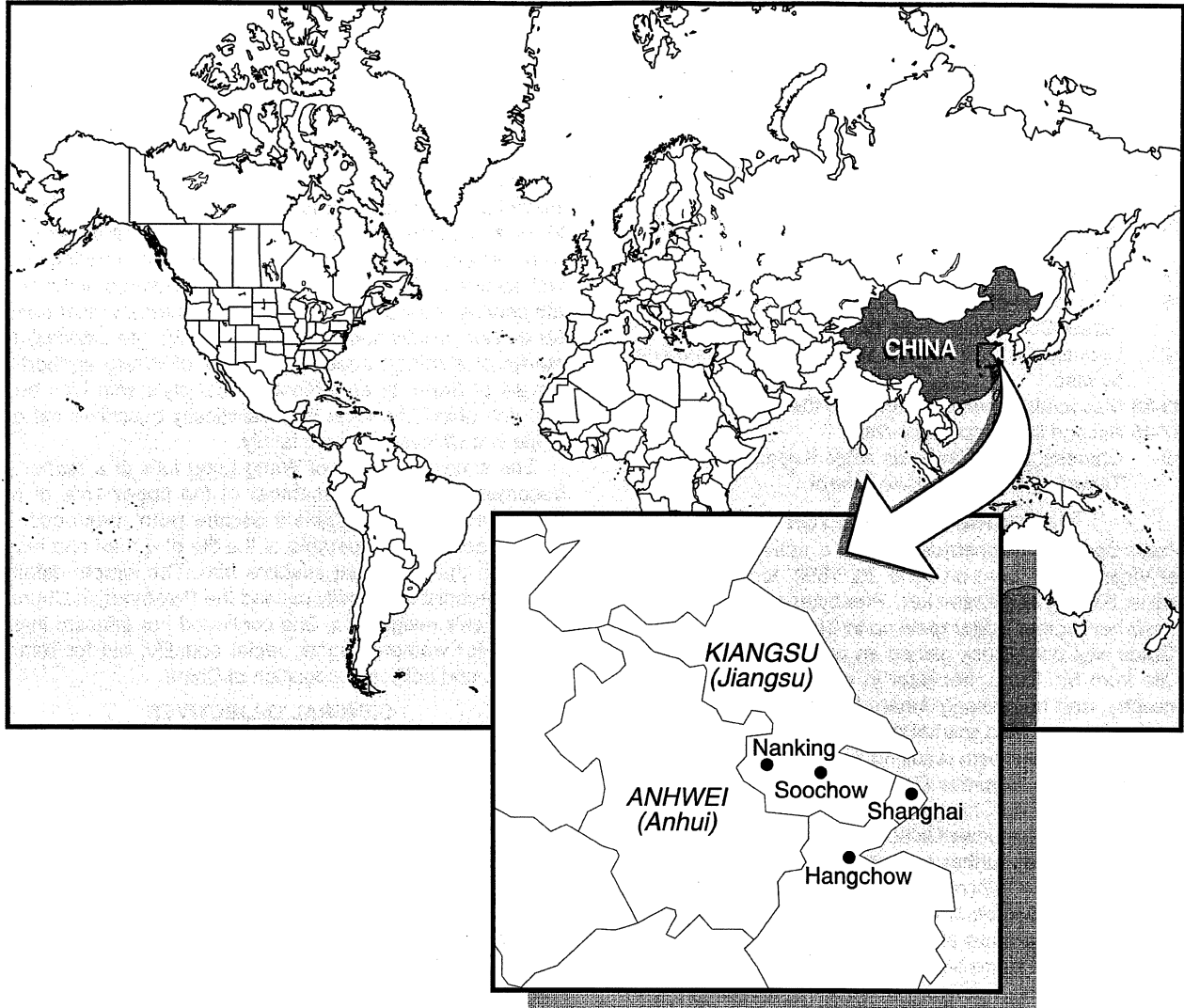
Chap. 30: The elder son requires more finery before the second son's wedding, which is six months away. The second son resents the oldest son's extravagance. The eldest son, grown proud, reminds his father that they are now called the great family Wang. He turns over the rents and income to the second son and hires a tutor for the youngest. While the two older sons nurture enmity and rivalry, Wang enjoys his grandson. Within five years, he has seven grandchildren. When the uncle dies, Wang buries him beside the old man and declares a year of mourning. The uncle's wife shrivels away.

Chap. 31: A horde of soldiers sweeps from the northwest, bringing war to Wang's home. The uncle's son arrives with rowdy soldiers. Wang and his older sons lock their women and children in the inner court. Cuckoo asks the uncle's son which slave he would have. He selects Pear Blossom, who begs to be spared. A month and a half later, the uncle's son departs, leaving a stout servant woman with child.

Chap. 32: After the uncle's wife dies, Wang marries the servant woman to a farm lad. At age 65, Wang has no peace. The two sons' wives squabble; the youngest son wants to be a soldier and predicts a great revolution. Wang regrets that the boy wants Pear Blossom.

Chap. 33: In summer, Wang's lust stirs and he summons Pear Blossom, who prefers him to a young lover. In anger at his father's lust for a young girl, his third son runs away to

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become a soldier.

Chap. 34: In autumn, Wang feels old. He provides Pear Blossom with poison to kill the Poor Fool if he should die and leave her unprotected. His grandchildren number 19. Since the Revolution, they no longer study the Four Books. In his seventies, Wang, Pear Blossom, and the Poor Fool leave the elegant town house and return to the farm home of his youth. Growing senile, he sits in the sun waiting for death. In his lucid moments, he grieves that his sons have no understanding of the struggle he has had. They smile when he warns them never to sell the land.

TIME LINE

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| <p>1850-64 Taipin Rebellion leaves over 20 million Chinese dead and seriously weakens the power of the Chinese government.</p> <p>1866 Sun Yat-sen is born.</p> <p>1879 China cedes Ryukyu Islands to Japan.</p> <p>1883-85 French invade Vietnam and seize Chinese domains there.</p> <p>1887 China cedes Macao to Portugal. Chiang Kai-shek is born.</p> | <p>1893 Mao Zedong is born.</p> <p>1894-95 First Sino-Japanese War: Japan gains control of Formosa and establishes a protectorate in Korea.</p> <p>1897 Britain leases Hong Kong.</p> <p>1898 Russia takes control of Port Arthur; Germany takes control of Kiaochow Bay; Britain takes control of Weihaiwei.</p> <p>1900-01 Boxer Rebellion: Government aids Chinese groups seeking to end foreign domination. Multi-national force invades China and sacks Beijing. Chinese government forced to pay heavy reparations.</p> <p>1904-05 Russo-Japanese War</p> <p>1905 Government abolishes ancient examination system; Confucian classics are eliminated from school curricula.</p> <p>1907 Sun Yat-sen outlines his program for reform.</p> <p>1911 Rebellion breaks out against Manchus; rebels form republic with Sun Yat-Sen as president.</p> <p>1912 Last Manchu emperor abdicates; Yuan Shi-kai becomes president of China.</p> <p>1913 Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party is established.</p> |
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- 1913-14** Yuan dissolves Chinese Parliament and declares himself president for life. Sun Yat-sen flees China.
- 1914** Japanese seize German territories in China.
- 1916** Yuan dies; Sun Yat-sen returns from exile. Parliament reconvenes.
- 1917** Chinese warlords occupy Beijing and dissolve Parliament.
- 1921** Sun Yat-sen becomes president of Canton. Mao joins Communist party.
- 1923** Kuomintang forms coalition that includes Communists.
- 1925** Sun Yat-sen dies.
- 1926** Chiang Kai-shek takes control of Kuomintang and expels Communists from the coalition.
- 1927** Chinese Civil War begins with Communist revolt led by Mao.
- 1933-34** Mao leads Communist army on the Long March.
- 1937-45** Second Sino-Japanese War
- 1949** Chinese Civil War ends after Kuomintang flee to Taiwan and Chinese take control.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker Buck, a native of Hillsboro, West Virginia, was born on June 26, 1892, to Absalom and Caroline Stulting Sydenstricker, Presbyterian missionaries. She and her brother Edgar grew up in China, where their sister Grace was born. Buck gained an understanding of peasant life from Mr. Kung, her tutor in classics and Confucian philosophy, and from Wang Amah, her nurse, who took her to the local theater and market place. The family covered in Shanghai during terrorism resulting from the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, when the Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi called for the murder of all whites in China.

After attending the Jewell school for missionary children in Shanghai, Buck was further educated at Randolph-Macon, a women's college in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1910, and completed a master's degree at Cornell before returning to China to teach English literature at Southeastern, Chung Yang, and Nanking universities and serve in the mission field. In 1923, she began publishing stories in American magazines. After losing the manuscript of a first novel during communist raids, she published *East Wind: West Wind*, which she wrote aboard a liner bound for America in 1925. In March 1927, she and her family survived the Chinese Nationalist attack on Nanking by hiding in the hut of their servant, Mrs. Lu, for fourteen hours until British and American warships ferried stranded Westerners to the safety of Japan.

Buck's third title, *The Good Earth*, remained on the best-seller list from 1931 to 1933. She earned a 1932 Pulitzer Prize and the 1938 Nobel Prize for literature. A major figure on the American literary scene, she produced eighty volumes of biography, children's books, essays, short fiction, plays, screenplays, and novels, including works set in America published under the pseudonym John Sedges. In 1935, she married her publisher, Richard J. Walsh, and settled in Pennsylvania, where they reared Walsh's three children and seven adoptees. During World War II, she composed in-country guides to China for the American military.

In retirement, Buck actively supported child welfare, particularly among Amerasian children sired by U.S. soldiers in Asia. In 1949, she established Welcome House to encourage adoption of biracial children. In 1950, she published *The*

Child Who Never Grew, a documentary on her difficulties in rearing Carol, a retarded daughter, whom she ultimately placed in an institution. In 1964, she set up the Pearl S. Buck Foundation to aid fatherless children left behind by military occupation. At her death in Vermont on March 6, 1973, she retained the respect of the nation.

CRITIC'S CORNER

One of the most popular novels of the 1930s, *The Good Earth* has been adapted for stage and screen, starring Paul Muni and Luise Rainer for the 1937 cinema version. The work remains a standard title on high school reading lists as well as one of the best works by female authors of the twentieth century. As well as making Buck America's most translated author, it introduced *Sons* and *A House Divided*, segments of a trilogy about the House of Wang entitled *The House of Earth*. In an almost biblical style with lyric beauty and rich detail, the focal title realistically describes the cycle of life in a Chinese peasant family.

The simple narrative of Wang Lung tells of a farmer who becomes a landlord, a member of the upper 15% of privileged people during China's decline from greatness. The story is essentially a parable of the life of a man and his kinship with the earth that sustains him. The simple details of the protagonist's sexuality caused the Presbyterian Church to force Buck's resignation. She continued her altruism through support for women's rights, racial equality, aid for retarded children, and political recognition of China.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To enumerate scenes that develop the character of the protagonist
2. To discuss the theme of ambition
3. To note the value of the physical and cultural environment
4. To note the strength of universal needs
5. To enumerate ways that Wang relates to cycles in nature
6. To contrast moments of despair with triumph
7. To characterize the life of a petty landowner with that of a peasant farmer
8. To note rare scenes of relaxation, celebration, harmony, and joy
9. To locate and explain family relationships
10. To enumerate elements that contribute to a somber or hopeless mood

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To account for marriages, purchases, and inheritance
2. To consider the dramatic situation at the rich man's court in the city
3. To contrast Chinese treatment of illness and childbirth with current standards of medical care
4. To describe situations in which Wang feels like an outsider
5. To analyze O-lan's worth to Wang
6. To list examples of new experiences in Wang's life, such as a train ride and a rice kitchen
7. To explain the purpose of Ching as a character
8. To analyze the collapse of the peasant economy during droughts and floods

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9. To characterize the elder son as a snob and social climber
10. To compare the rise and fall of the Hwang family with that of Wang's family

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of the novel, present the following terms and applications to *The Good Earth*:

pathetic fallacy a common form of personification or conceit in which nature suspends its laws to reflect human emotion, for example, the easy birth of two sons as Wang's fortunes build and the difficult birth of the first daughter just as Wang's luck begins to go sour. To add to the family's misfortunes, the daughter is profoundly retarded and seemingly worthless. As though to strike out at the family for its rise in economic and social importance, the gods send O-lan a second daughter, whom she strangles. On the return of the peasants from the south, O-lan gives birth to twins, another evidence of the pathetic fallacy for its symbolism of the meteoric rise of the Wang family from starving peasants to a notable house.

saga an extended study of a genealogy or dynasty sometimes expanding with epic sweep to a study of an entire generation or era, as found in Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* and two subsequent works in her trilogy. The first novel demonstrates differences in social and economic values between Wang and his thrifty wife and father and the two sons who go to school and marry well without ever learning the lessons of manual labor, living with harsh fate, and fighting the forces of nature. As Wang prospers, he tries to find peace in wealth, yet misses the rhythms of the seasons and the demands of farming that begin his rise in fortune. At the end of the first novel, his sons smile cynically over his head, humoring an old man who demands that land should be revered, but never sold.

tone an author's attitude toward the subject and audience, which accrues directly, subtly, and sometimes ambiguously from hints, diction, stylistic touches, and texture, for example, the teller's objectivity toward Wang's joys, sorrows, and terrors of going hungry. Pearl Buck settles on a quasi-biblical narrative style that both ennobles and examines the character and ambition of Wang Lung, founder of the House of Wang. Buck is able to present his steadfast courage, ambition, and petty weaknesses without commentary. While sanctioning his marriage of a tea shop prostitute, she demonstrates how Wang makes his own misery in an uncomplicated house that once lived harmoniously with the earth. Ironically, it is his servant girl Pear Blossom and the Poor Fool who keep him company in old age.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The action of *The Good Earth* takes place in eastern China, primarily in the province of Anhwei (Anhui). In China's coastal plains, Wang Lung makes a tenuous living, depending on the proper balance of weather favorable to growing rice and wheat. When drought triggers a mass famine and he is forced to eat his ox, he takes his family one hundred miles south by train to Kiangsu (Jiangsu) province to a large city, presumably Nanking, where the author once taught literature. The difference between traditional village ways and the hustle and moral compromise of city life disorients Wang. He must learn streets and thoroughfares in order to earn a living as a ricksha puller. His sons learn too well how to beg and

steal; his father refuses to degrade himself by begging.

Returned to the beloved Anhwei farming district, Wang Lung remains centered on the land as his wealth grows and his name is connected with the great house. He sends his elder son south to school and witnesses the departure of his youngest son to join the military, but Wang's awareness of local politics and migrations is almost nonexistent as he focuses on farming, building his land holdings, and protecting his family. These events occur during one of China's great upheavals—the 1900 Boxer Rebellion and the murder of Westerners by the nation's secret societies.

After peace is haphazardly imposed on the nation, the urge for democracy and the end of the Manchu dynasty continues to foment. By October 10, 1911, a strong revolutionary force in central China maintains its hold, ending the rule of Pu Yi, the young boy who is the last of the Manchu emperors. Under the strong hand of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, an American-educated egalitarian, China moved away from elitism toward a new nation intent on uplifting the commoner. Wang's son, whose generation leads the push, explains to his father in Chapter 32, "There is to be a war such as we have not heard of—there is to be a revolution and fighting and war such as never was, and our land is to be free." To his father's doddering country ways, the boy asserts, "You do not understand—you are too old—you understand nothing."

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about peasant culture, revolution, China, Pearl Buck, the Manchus, and Dr. Sun Yat-sen, consult these sources:

Acting on Your Values, Rosen Publishing Group
The Boxer Rebellion, Lynn Bodin
Characters in Crisis, Center for Humanities
Sun Yat-Sen, Marie-Claire Bergere and Janet Lloyd
Also, consult these websites:

"The Boxer Rebellion," <http://www.smplanet.com/imperialism/fists.html>.

"A Brief Introduction to the History of the Kuomintang of China," <http://www.kmtroc.org/party.html>.

"China Online," <http://www.fresco.web.co.uk/chinatown/pages/culture/history>.

"The Manchu Dynasty," <http://www.nz.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ostas/sinol/manfacts.htm>.

"Sun Yat-sen," <http://www.pathfinder.com/asiaweek/current/issue/sr14.html>.

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* should include these aspects:

Themes

- poverty
- discontent
- manual labor
- ambition
- family
- suffering
- loss
- rebellion
- old age

Motifs

- coping with the vicissitudes of farming
- marrying for convenience rather than love
- the hardships of peasant life for women

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- wayward, undisciplined children
- loss of inheritance through dissipation
- the corruption of a dynasty

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are provided so that you can reread the passage from which the item is taken.

1. Only men of leisure have the need for beautiful women to divert them. (Chap. 1, p. 13)
(The Old Mistress of the House of Hwang is contemptuous of Wang Lung, a peasant farmer destined for unremitting toil and hardly worthy of notice. She gives him one of her least valued slaves for a wife so that she can gain merit for the afterlife. O-lan is neither pretty nor particularly intelligent. In the Old Mistress's opinion, a lowly farmer has no need for beauty. His desire should be satisfied by a hard-working, obedient mate. Her attitude toward the poor assumes that, since Wang has never enjoyed beauty, he has no need or desire for it.)
2. There was no house in the village of small scattered houses, of which theirs was one of a half dozen, which was so filled with warmth and plenty as their own, and Wang Lung felt that if he became too intimate with the others there would be borrowing. (Chap. 4, p. 31)
(As winter approaches, Wang Lung recedes into a cautious frugality. Careful in the spending of money and use of goods, he wastes nothing on gambling or luxuries. Everything on the farm; even chaff and manure, have a use. O-lan preserves meat; Wang Lung holds his crops until he receives the highest price; both work ceaselessly. As he ages, he becomes more extravagant, but never completely loses his earlier frugality.)
3. Then indeed are they growing poor. Land is one's flesh and blood. (Chap. 5, p. 37)
(Wang is scandalized that the Hwang family sells its land, which means far more than just livelihood. He could no more part with his land than he could sell a part of his body. He is spiritually rooted in soil, which feels like an extension of his flesh.)
4. Now that . . . for speaking so to your father's generation! Have you no religion, no morals, that you are lacking in filial conduct? (Chap. 7, p. 44)
(Wang Lung's uncle impels him to behave appropriately toward his parents and elders. As long as a father lives, his sons must honor and serve him. By extension, the uncle demands a similar filial duty, which includes holding his tongue when he disagrees with an elder of his father's generation, in this case, his father's younger brother.)
5. There is a way when the rich are too rich. (Chap. 13, p. 85)
(Wang cries out against fate when he is stranded in a strange southern city far from the land. He is not alone in decrying the unfair distribution of wealth. The poor people rise up to plunder the city's wealthy homes. Wang, unlike his rebellious younger son, recognizes the fault of a system weighted in favor of aristocrats, yet he lacks the impetus of the younger generation, whose rebellion is far reaching beyond the heat of the moment.)
6. And it was a pride to Wang Lung in the village that men mentioned with envy the women in his inner court; it was as though men spoke of a rare jewel or an expensive toy that was useless except that it was sign and symbol of a man who had passed beyond the necessity of caring only to be fed and clothed and could spend his money on joy if he wished. (Chap. 22, p. 154)
(Forced into inactivity because of a flood, Wang recedes into the joys of wealth and takes his pleasure in a tea shop. His inexperience in leisure is obvious by his tentative exploration of the upstairs. From the pictures on the wall, he realizes that the shop praises delicate women, but he is innocent of the brothel that flesh-and-blood women serve upstairs. In his first venture up the staircase of a two-story building, he encounters the real Lotus and is too shy to fondle her.)
7. There in that land of mine is buried the first good half of my life and more. It is as though half of me were buried there, and now it is a different life in my house. (Chap. 26, p. 195)
(Although Wang felt no romantic attachment to O-lan, he feels the void left by her death. After the burial on a hill above his fields, he acknowledges her value by remembering how they shared the first half of his life. He is aware that she tolerated his hardships without complaint, bore sons, and worked beside him in the fields. Associated with the lean, hard early times that were rewarding in their toil, he recalls the simple joy of living on the land. Now, his life has become meaningless with a bauble like Lotus as mate. For the first time, he knows the anguish of the House of Hwang, which started its own decline on the slippery slope of shallow values.)
8. He only said "Heaven wills it," and he accepted flood and drought with meekness. (Chap. 27)
(Typical of Chinese peasantry, Ching tolerates drought, flood, famine, pestilence, and war without railing against the gods. Stoic in his acceptance of suffering, he acknowledges the all-encompassing will of heaven. Unlike Wang, he sees no point in condemning the gods and risking greater punishment.)
9. Well, even great families are from the land and rooted in the land. (Chap. 30, p. 225)
(Wang tries to convince his eldest son that they have sprung from the earth and that the land has made them wealthy. In an agrarian culture, he understands intuitively that the ultimate source of prosperity is land itself. All the great families began as farmers and rose to landowners. During his rise, he witnessed the decline of the great House of Hwang, primarily as a fault of sons who forgot their roots and foolishly sold off their holdings piece by piece to pay for idle luxuries. In old age, Wang realizes that his sons follow the same pattern and will sell land after his death. He foresees the eventual decline of his own family because they have never shared his perception of the source of his strength.)
10. For he saw his eldest for what he was: a man big in body but afraid of his own town wife and more afraid of not appearing nobly born than of anything. (Chap. 33, p. 251)
(Wang's eldest son lacks the appropriate appreciation of humble origins. He dresses in finery, poses as a scholar, and would like to be regarded as a scion of a great and noble house. His fear of scorn or ridicule as a farmer's son impels him to marry a refined woman, move into

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town, and live as he understands a nobleman must.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important. Defend your answers by referring to passages in the novel.

Questions 1 - 5 Literal Level

1. Why does Wang honor his father?

(At the beginning of the novel, Wang's father is a querulous old man whose family has dwindled to one remaining son. In spite of the old man's complaining and childish ways, Wang honors him with the respect that Old Chinese culture demands of a dutiful child. In the time of famine, Wang offers the old man any food the family acquires. As the old man grows senile, Wang sees to his wants and needs, beginning in the morning when the old man awakens and demands hot water to quell his cough.)

Even though Wang never violates custom, there is little evidence of deep feeling or understanding between father and son. For example, when Wang looks forward to a wife who is not entirely ugly, the old man longs for a grandson and for a woman to help with the farm work. Seldom do father and son communicate at any length, but, when the old man dies, Wang honors him with a fine coffin and a proper burial on a high hill where flood waters will never soak the burial plot. Ironically, by the end of the novel Wang Lung has come to resemble his father in many ways.)

2. Why does Wang take his family south to the city?

(When drought paralyzes the farm and ruins the harvest, months follow when the village poor suffer slow starvation, surviving on dead animals, bark, and offal from the streets. Rumors indicate that some villagers feed on human flesh. At this point, Wang decides to transport his family south to find work. After the drought ends, he plans to return to his land.)

With his wife, two sons, infant daughter, and elderly father, Wang joins a crowd boarding the train. In the city a hundred miles south, he finds work pulling a ricksha; his family beg in the streets. He is ill at ease in the strange surroundings and despises the ruination of his sons' morals. He yearns for the country, where he knew the cycle of life and the odds of succeeding. Unfortunately, the Wang family must accumulate money beyond daily needs to finance a return to the empty house and fallow fields. Only after Wang is caught in the rioting and carried along into the great house behind the wall does the opportunity arise. Almost without effort, he robs the rich fat man and uses the gold to pay for a return to the country and a restocking of seeds and an ox.)

3. What is the status of women in pre-Communist China?

(Early in the novel, Pearl Buck demonstrates the low state of Chinese peasant women, who function at the level of slaves. Unlike the privileged Old Mistress, O-lan changes hands much as Wang Lung would bargain for a farm animal. Custom requires that she walk behind her husband and obey him in all things. Even the gift of green peaches, she eats unobtrusively. Installed in Wang's mud-walled house, she has no right to complain of abuse or neglect, even serving the wedding guests as though she were a menial rather than the bride.)

When poverty assails the family in the city, O-lan murders a girl baby, perhaps to keep it from trying to suckle milk from her withered breasts. When their situation worsens, Wang considers selling his oldest girl in the custom of peasant families, who lighten the load of feeding children by ridding themselves of girls. In good times, Wang denigrates O-lan by replacing her with a sex toy, Lotus, whom he installs in splendor to loll about and do nothing but serve her master. In prosperity, his women are materially more comfortable, but are still possessions that the master uses as he will.)

4. What is Ching's relationship to Wang?

(Ching is a literary foil to Wang. Living in the same village and farming the land, Ching is an impoverished, uneducated peon some years older than his neighbor. During the famine, he joins other starving peasants in a raid on Wang's home. Because the group finds no stores of food or coins, Ching bears much shame for his breach of friendship. To atone, he shares the last of his beans with Wang's destitute family.)

When Wang returns to the land and begins to prosper, he hires Ching as overseer. In the boom years, Ching comes closer to being a friend and confidante than anyone else, but he can never forget that he is the underling and Wang his master. Tradition demands that the servant always walk behind his betters. When Ching dies, Wang weeps as though a family member has died. He intends to bury the faithful foreman in the family plot, but his sons reject the idea. As a compromise, Wang chooses a space at the entrance to the wall. The death symbolically severs Wang's final tie to the land. Thereafter, he spends nearly all his time in town until he returns to the country to die.)

5. Compare O-lan, Lotus, and Pear Blossom in their relationship to Wang Lung.

(O-lan is Wang's first wife and loyal drudge. A former kitchen slave in the Hwang household, she is plain, obedient, hardworking, silent, and somewhat primitive. The Old Mistress instructs Wang, "Take her and use her well. She is a good slave, although somewhat slow and stupid." Before O-lan dies, she bears three sons and three daughters. Always she gives birth alone and unassisted, then immediately returns to a demanding work schedule. In addition to housework, she helps Wang in the fields. She remains uncomplaining and never expects closeness or comradeship. Only her tears indicate the wretchedness of losing the two pearls she conceals between her breasts. As death approaches, she takes advantage of her importance by demanding to see her son married and a child conceived.)

In contrast to O-lan's squarish body and unbound feet, Lotus is an enticing, delicate prostitute who becomes Wang's sexual comfort in middle age. For all her allure, she is conniving, selfish, petty, and useless—the complete opposite of O-lan. At first, he is infatuated with her beauty and delightful body. His attraction continues after she comes to live in the inner court as second wife. In time, she is reduced to little more than an ornament that he enjoys without emotional involvement and flaunts as a status symbol. In later years, he loses interest after idleness, rich food, and age destroy her body.)

The companion of Wang Lung's old age is Pear

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Blossom, who displays some of the qualities of O-lan and Lotus. A young slave, she is both fetching and helpless. She clings to her master for protection and gradually becomes his last mistress. Their relationship is quiet and serene rather than hotly passionate. Like a child to a father, she depends on Wang Lung to shelter her from the soldiers who overrun the house. When he moves back to the farmhouse, he takes Pear Blossom as the protectress of his old age.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. Why does Wang Lung kowtow to the uncle and his wife? (Although Wang has always held his father's brother in low esteem, he displays a certain degree of filial obligation toward him. When the disreputable uncle reappears at the prosperous farm, Wang reluctantly takes him in. After the family becomes so demanding and overbearing that he finally orders them out of the house, the uncle reveals a red beard, symbol of membership in a robber band. This accounts for the safety of Wang's home, which has never been raided. The significance dooms Wang Lung to subservience: As long as the uncle is a guest, Wang's farm and family are safe.)

After observing how easily Wang is intimidated, the uncle becomes even more insufferable. Wang's disapproving eldest son suggests that they push the old couple into the water, then tempers the act of murder by offering to feed them opium until they die of addiction. The strategy works; the uncle takes to the drug greedily. The compromise frees Wang of the sin of killing an elder relative and places blame for death on the uncle, who willingly lies all day in a drugged stupor until it kills him. Returning to filial duty, Wang buries his father's younger brother with honor befitting his station.)

7. What are Wang's feelings for his eldest daughter? (After bearing two sons, O-lan gives birth to a girl. At first, Wang looks on the event as an evil omen. During the famine, he grows more tolerant of her and warms to her small body, which is wholly dependent on him for life. He whispers, "Poor fool—poor little fool" in acknowledgement of her weak smile and toothless grin. The act is the first sign that Wang is capable of loving another human being.)

As a result of her early deprivation, the eldest girl is so profoundly retarded that she can neither speak nor protect herself from the elements. Her simple pleasures consist of sitting in the sun, playing with a bit of cloth, and smiling vacantly. She is Wang's responsibility and he cares for her tenderly and lovingly, reviling any who menace the girl. Near his death, he repays the comfort he has gained from his daughter by instructing Pear Blossom on how to poison the Poor Fool to save her from neglect at the hands of unfeeling relatives.)

8. Why do Wang's sons delight and disappoint him? (A doting patriarch, Wang delights in his first and second children, both sons. Unlike girls, who may be sold or given in marriage to rid the house of their expense, sons are expected to obey the father and care for him in old age. As Wang prospers, it is not necessary for the sons to toil. When the eldest is twelve, Wang sends him to a scholar to learn to read contracts and write necessary documents. The second son whines so much that Wang agrees to send him also. Wang is content that he has a

third son left to learn the business of farming.

Neither the eldest nor the second son possesses Wang's profound love for land. The eldest assumes the manners of a young lord, thus earning his father's pride and contempt. After the second son apprentices to Liu the grain merchant, the boy becomes a capable businessman. Wang admires him, but is uncertain about the remaining boy, who is sullen and uncommunicative. When the third son demands an education equal to his brothers, Wang agrees. He is bitterly disappointed that none of the three will remain on the land. Eventually, the youngest is enamored of soldiering, rejects plans for marriage, and leaves to join the revolution.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Why does Pearl Buck parallel the rise of the House of Wang with the decline of the House of Hwang?

(From the opening chapter, the House of Hwang dominates Wang's fortunes. A kitchen slave on the estate becomes his wife. At the time of the marriage, the House of Hwang seems endlessly prosperous, but signs of decay are already evident. The growing corruption derives from the Old Mistress's addiction to opium, the Old Lord's infatuation with young girls, and the young lords' dissolute lives. The decline of the house is even clearer when the family begins selling off land for cash.)

Since Wang buys plots from the great house on several occasions and eventually acquires the estate itself, his rise contrasts the decline of the old gentry. Ironically, even as he prospers, the same signs of decay begin to weaken his own household. Although O-lan develops no taste for luxury or idleness, his sons acquire no love or respect for land. The uncle and aunt become addicted to opium. Wang himself buys a concubine and takes a young girl to his bed just as the Old Lord did. The contrast between the luck of two families points up the eternal cycle of rise, decline, and fall that characterizes individuals, families, nations, and civilizations. In particular, it foreshadows eventual decline in Wang's family. At the end of the novel, Wang's sons anticipate their father's death so they can begin selling their inheritance.)

10. What does Wang's life demonstrate about success and failure?

(On the surface, Wang's life epitomizes rags to riches success, a common theme in saga literature. With luck and a tremendous will to work toward a better life, Wang achieves outstanding material gain. However, once freed of the need to work from dawn to dusk, his ultimate pleasure and contentment lacks the joy and anticipation of his poorer years. The primary cause of his discontent derives from his obsessive love of land, which precludes satisfaction in human relationships. He delights in saving silver, but never understands or appreciates his father, sons, or women.)

As Wang ages, he grows wealthier, but farther from the land that once nurtured him. Knowing that his sons plan to sell their fields after he dies, he seems to feel that a life of toil has been wasted. Both nobler and more human as a poor peasant, he thrives only after abandoning the great house and returning to the land for comfort. In historical terms, his family's inevitable decline is neither tragic nor unfortunate. The downward spiral is mere-

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(*ly part of the human cycle.*)

Questions 11-13 Creative Level

11. Read Pearl Buck's *The Mother*. Write a report that demonstrates the author's compassion for the drudgery and despair of peasant women in China.
12. Pantomime the daily tasks of a peasant worker, slave in a large estate, soldier, ricksha puller, or tea shop owner.
13. Using desktop publishing, make a chart of the Chinese cycle of years, naming the animals that govern each year and the qualities of people born under those signs. Include a job description for the geomancer.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Economics and Mathematics

1. Explain to a small group the problems faced by the House of Hwang. Discuss how wealth shifts those problems into Wang Lung's house.
2. Discuss the thrift of Ching and O-lan and their significance to Wang's rise from peasant farmer to landowner.
3. Compose a paragraph explaining why the worth of Wang's land drops by 80% during the famine.

Science and Health

1. Make a chalk talk about the dangers of childbirth in the early nineteenth century, especially giving birth unaided and alone. Discuss the difficulty that O-lan experiences after the birth of twins.
2. Compose a lecture on the care of profoundly retarded children. Debate Wang's decision to leave poison to end the life of his Poor Fool after he dies.
3. Assess the diet of the Wang household in the early years. Determine what essentials are lacking, especially dairy foods for calcium.

Law

1. List the disadvantages of social marriage of convenience, for example, a lack of friendship and equality between mates. Determine how the two daughters-in-law suit the older son and second son.
2. Launch an internet web site detailing the intricacies of ownership and the subsequent rise in political influence for ignorant men like Wang.
3. Determine with a group whether Wang is guilty of robbing the fat rich man. Comment on his appearance in the court of an estate and O-lan's discovery of jewels under a brick.

Cinema

1. Summarize orally the pictorial qualities of *The Good Earth*. Make a story board of the most memorable scenes.
2. Join with a group to list family elements in these videos: *The Good Earth*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *You Can't Take It with You*, *Cheyenne Autumn*, *The Pearl*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Daughters of the Dust*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Southern Comfort*, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, *Roots*, *Queen*, *The Learning Tree*, *Life with Father*, and *I Remember Mama*.

Geography

1. Create a mural or web site that contrasts the rice-growing plains of China with the burgeoning cities of Nanking and Shanghai. List elements of coastal life that force Wang Lung's family to adapt, particularly pulling a rick-

sha, begging, eating in a charity kitchen, making a shelter of mats, comprehending social unrest, interpreting gossip, and riding a train.

2. Compose a paragraph expressing the dangers of flood and drought to people who live close to the land.

Art

1. Using desk-top publishing or other artistic media, design a map showing the distance from China's coastal plains east a hundred miles to Nanking, a birth announcement for Wang's first grandchild, timetables for the train and rice kitchen, a deed for Wang's first property and for the great house, a wayside shrine for the gods, a placard for Liu's business and for the tea shop, a diploma for Nung En and Nung Wen, instructions for burying Wang Lung near his wife and father, a list of common tools and farm implements for sale, a marriage certificate for Wang Lung and O-lan or for the elder son and Pomegranate Flower, public notice of the leasing of Wang's farmland, a headstone for O-lan and Ching, characters to accompany a New Year's scroll, and a decorative gate naming date and ownership of the House of Wang.
2. Compose a movie billboard for *The Good Earth* featuring Lotus's arrival, Wang at the house of Yang, soldiers staring at Pomegranate Flower or the youngest son selecting Pear Blossom, Wang sitting in the sun, O-lan clutching two pearls, Wang studying a picture of Christ, and O-lan serving guests at her wedding celebration.
3. Dress dolls in appropriate period costume. Include contrasting dress for an infant, child, gatekeeper, soldiers, laborers, prostitute, wedding, mourner, traveler, beggar, Western travelers in a ricksha, and peasants celebrating the New Year.

Social Studies

1. Write a brief address explaining the importance of O-lan in Wang's life. Include her value as adviser, fellow tiller of the soil, mother, daughter-in-law, and confidante.
2. Make contrasting chalkboard definitions for first wife, mother, slave, daughter, and peasant.
3. Lead a debate of Wang's decision to educate his older sons. Comment on the bitterness the youngest feels when his father makes choices without consulting him.
4. Comment on the degradation of the poor peasant in Chinese society.

Music

Work with a group to compile musical themes, holiday songs, traditional harvest tunes, Chinese national anthem, and marching songs to accompany scenes of varying intensity.

Language and Speech

1. Characterize in separate paragraphs the differences in Wang Lung's self esteem during the different phases of his life and fortunes. Comment on his refusal to accept a pock-marked wife or one with a split lip.
2. Compose individual posters explaining the significance of these terms: hind, written characters, seal character, geomancer, lute, dominoes, hasp, inarticulate, moat, winnow, chaff, flail, scythe, hovel, New Year's signs, bean curd, serf, and the Four Books.
3. Comment on the author's use of relationships rather than names for the old father, uncle, uncle's wife, uncle's

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son, elder son, second son, youngest son, younger daughter, and old mistress. Note the disregard for the names Nung En and Nung Wen. Surmise why the author gives no place names for the village and city.

Literature

1. Read aloud from segments that discuss the value of land, the seasons, and nature. Contrast Pearl Buck's comments with similar passages in Isabel Allende's *House of the Spirits*, Hamlin Garland's "Under the Lion's Paw," Pearl Buck's *The Mother*, John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra*, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House in the Big Woods*, John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Johan Bojer's *The Emigrants*, Patricia Maclachlan's *Sarah Plain and Tall*, O. E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, and Robert Frost's "The Death of the Hired Man."
2. Citing examples from *The Good Earth*, list stages in human growth from birth through adulthood and old age. Note Chinese social customs that acknowledge the passages, especially concealment for a bride before the relationship is consummated, red clothing for an infant son, preparation of a bride for marriage, and the purchase of a coffin for an elderly father.
3. Draw a character web representing the social and economic interconnectedness of female characters, notably Cuckoo, the old mistress, O-lan, Pomegranate Flower, Pear Blossom, Lotus, the dead infant daughter, the female twin, and the Poor Fool.

History and Current Events

1. Re-create by time line, webbing, flow chart, mural, or web site the milieu of late nineteenth-, early twentieth-century China, especially the business centers at Nanking and Shanghai. Explain why the plains, large estates, and cities offered few choices for peasant women.
2. Lead a panel discussion of Wang's wisdom in putting his money into land rather than in sums of money, farm animals, or other purchases during periods of social and economic upheaval in China.

Education

Brainstorm a curriculum for teaching Wang's youngest son how to farm wisely and well. Discuss how science and math courses would help him with irrigation, plowing, planting, and crop rotation.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Outline the daily work of a land owner like Wang Lung or Ching, including management of properties, supervision of harvests, tilling, care of ox and implements, harvesting, selling, repairs and expansion of a mud-walled house, and supervision of the sons' education and training.
2. Write an essay contrasting a tour of the plains with a tour of Nanking or Shanghai. Comment on the types of activities a visitor might enjoy in peasant villages, such as talking with farmers, sampling local tea, bird watching, riding, hiking, bicycling, camping, sketching, traveling by train, and rock and wildflower collection.
3. Compose a letter from Wang's sons to the officers of the local troops concerning disrespect for homeowners, disruption of normal life, and menace to women, children,

animals, and property.

4. Write a dramatic scene to show the ride home on the firewagon. Discuss Wang's anticipation of new plantings, chores for his sons, and assignments for O-lan to refurbish the house and attend to the gods and family graves.
5. Create a story board for an outdoor performance or pantomime of *The Good Earth*. List significant scenes to include in the abridged plot, especially Wang Lung's first and subsequent visits to the House of Hwang, O-lan's death, the building of a court and kitchen for Lotus, and the departure of the soldiers.
6. Write an essay contrasting a typical day's work pulling a ricksha with a day's labor planting, hoeing, or harvesting rice and wheat. Include details of O-lan's domestic duties, particularly tending the old man, making clothing, feeding and watering the ox, and collecting fuel for the hearth.
7. Plan a peasant wedding for Wang Lung's second son. Include entertainment for Liu's family, appropriate foods, new jewelry and clothing, and honors for the wayside gods.
8. Write news releases for the most significant events of the story, including the arrival of soldiers, Wang's purchase of the great house, the death of the old mistress, making boundaries with Wang's seal, and Lotus's arrival at Wang's inner court.
9. Make an oral report on Wang Lung's youth compared with life for a young peasant farmer in the time of Sun Yat-sen or Mao Tse-tung.
10. Outline the difference between country folk and refined families like the old lord and old mistress or the rich fat man whom Wang robs. Explain why Wang fails to live at ease with luxury and ostentation.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Cite examples of disaster, rumor, fear, ignorance, intimidation, resilience, and success in the novel.
2. List actions that demonstrate love of land and respect for family.
3. Compose a scene in which the second son's wife arrives at the house or the youngest girl arrives at the house of Liu.
4. Compile a character list and explain the relationship of each to Wang Lung. Include the old father, uncle, Cuckoo, gatekeeper, Old Mistress, rich fat man, O-lan, eldest son, Pear Blossom, Liu, soldiers, and Poor Fool.

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East Wind: West Wind, 1929
The Young Revolutionist, 1931
Sons, 1932
The First Wife and Other Stories, 1932
All Men Are Brothers, 1933
The Return, 1933
The Mother, 1934
A House Divided, 1935
The Exile, 1936
Fighting Angel: Portrait of a Soul, 1936
The Spirit and the Flesh, 1937
The Patriot, 1937
This Proud Heart, 1938
The Chinese Novel, 1939
Today and Forever, 1941

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Portrait of a Marriage, 1941
Of Men and Women, 1941
27 Stories, 1941
American Unity and Asia, 1942
The China Sky, 1942
The Chinese Children Next Door, 1942
Dragon Seed, 1942
The Promise, 1943
Portrait of a Marriage, 1943
The Water Buffalo Children, 1944
The Dragon Fish, 1944
What America Means to Me, 1944
China Flight, 1945
The Townsman, 1945
Yulan, Flying Boy of China, 1945
Tell the People, 1945
Talk about Russia, 1945
China in Black and White, 1945
Pavilion of Women, 1946
The Big Fight, 1947
The Big Wave, 1947
Far and Near: Stories of China, Japan and America, 1947
How It Happens: Talk About the German People, 1947
Peony, 1948
Kinfolk, 1949
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One Bright Day, 1950
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The Hidden Flower, 1952
Command the Morning, 1952
The Man Who Changed China, Sun Yat-Sen, 1953
Sacred Oasis, 1953
My Several Worlds, 1954
Come My Beloved, 1954
New Voices, 1955
Imperial Woman, 1956
A Christmas Miniature, 1957
American Triptych, 1958
A Desert Incident, 1959
The Christmas Ghost, 1960
14 Stories, 1961
A Bridge for Passing, 1962
The Heart Came Home, 1962
The Boy Who Drew Cats, 1963
The Joy of Children, 1964
Children for Adoption, 1964
The Gifts They Bring, 1965
For Spacious Skies, 1966
The People of Japan, 1966
The Angry Wife, 1966
The Time Is Noon, 1967
To My Daughters, With Love, 1967
The Long Love, 1968
The Three Daughters of Madame Liang, 1969
The Good Deeds, 1969
The Kennedy Women, 1970
Mandala, 1970
The Story Bible, 1971
America, 1971

Pearl Buck's America, 1971
The Goddess Abides, 1972
Once Upon a Christmas, 1972
Pearl Buck's Oriental Cook Book, 1972
All Under Heaven, 1973
Mrs. Starkling's Problem, 1973
A Gift for the Children, 1973
Words of Love, 1974
All Under Heaven, 1974
A Letter from Peking, 1975
The Rainbow, 1976
Satan Never Sleeps, 1976

RELATED READING

Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits*
Johan Bojer, *The Emigrants*
Willa Cather, *My Antonia* and *O Pioneers*
Anton Chekov, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Peasants*
Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*
Robert Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man"
Hamlin Garland, "Under the Lion's Paw"
Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
Rose Wilder Lane, *Let the Hurricane Roar*
Patricia Maclachlan, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*
Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind*
John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*
O. E. Rølvaag, *Giants in the Earth*
John Steinbeck, *The Pearl* and *The Grapes of Wrath*
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*
Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House in the Big Woods*

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TEACHER'S NOTES

THE GOOD EARTH

VOCABULARY TEST

Replace the underlined words in each sentence with the author's original choice. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| A. acquiescent | F. scrupulous | K. indignation | P. incessant | U. cauldron |
| B. impassive | G. malice | L. incensed | Q. exultation | V. loutish |
| C. delicacy | H. reproved | M. surcharge | R. coax | W. dotard |
| D. dias | I. robust | N. indolent | S. devour | X. befitted |
| E. petulance | J. articulate | O. filial | T. perseverance | Y. meekness |

- _____ 1. His uncle understood perfectly Wang Lung's anger.
- _____ 2. Wang Lung was angered at such impudence.
- _____ 3. To everything the maid was agreeable.
- _____ 4. Day after day Wang Lung went into the room where Lotus lay motionless upon her bed.
- _____ 5. Wang Lung stared at O-lan, healthy and unbelieving.
- _____ 6. Wang Lung turned away with secret joy.
- _____ 7. The cry of the child was constant and piercing.
- _____ 8. Then at sunset Lotus sent Wang Lung away with her pretty fretfulness.
- _____ 9. Wang Lung had no clear thought of anything.
- _____ 10. Then Wang Lung was careful to do all that should be done for the one dead.
- _____ 11. Wang Lung had learned now from that expressionless square countenance to detect small changes at first invisible to him.
- _____ 12. Wang Lung pushed with determination toward the edge and found himself at last on the fringe of the multitude.
- _____ 13. When the eldest son was gone Wang Lung felt the house was purged of some burden of unrest.
- _____ 14. Wang Lung looked with outrage at the gateman.
- _____ 15. As for the vegetables, there was everything which the hand of man could encourage from the soil; glittering red radishes and white, hollow lotus root and taro, green cabbages and celery, curling bean sprouts and brown chestnuts and garnishes of fragrant cress.
- _____ 16. On top of this earthen oven stood a deep, round, iron kettle.
- _____ 17. Upon a platform in the center of the room Wang Lung saw a very old lady.
- _____ 18. What they feared was this, that locusts had come out of the south to eat what was planted in the fields.
- _____ 19. And being of the elder generation, he could not be scolded.
- _____ 20. They walked home, then, she half a dozen paces behind him as suited a woman.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Identify which character is speaking (A.) and who is being addressed (B.)

- _____ 1A. When I return to that house it will be with my son in my arms. I shall have a red coat on him
_____ 1B. and red-flowered trousers and on his head a hat with a small gilded Buddha sewed on the front and on his feet tiger-faced shoes.
- _____ 2A. Ah, it is something you do not know—to have an evil destiny! Where the fields of others
_____ 2B. bear good rice and wheat, ours bear weeds; where the houses of others stand for a hundred years, the earth itself shakes under ours so that the walls crack; where others bear men, I, although I conceive a son, will yet give birth to a girl—ah, evil destiny!
- _____ 3A. I am too old for you, my heart, and well I know it. I am an old, old man.
_____ 3B.
- _____ 4A. And do you talk of starving and then laugh at the same time! You fools, starve then! . . . Now
_____ 4B. you are fit to beg!
- _____ 5A. How is this for a way? Let us push them all into the water one night.
_____ 5B.

Part II: True or False (30 points)

Write **T** if the statement is true or **F** if any part is false.

- _____ 1. O-lan selects two pearls with which to buy a new ox.
- _____ 2. The youngest son wins his father's praise by stealing beef for dinner.
- _____ 3. Wang Lung rushes to Ching's side, but can't save him from dying.
- _____ 4. The Old Mistress dies, leaving Cuckoo to find wives for sons in the House of Hwang.
- _____ 5. Wang and his eldest son hide the women in the inner court to protect them from soldiers.
- _____ 6. The servant who bears a son fathered by the uncle's son gains respect and marries well.
- _____ 7. Inside the rich man's court, O-lan finds jewels under a loose brick.
- _____ 8. The gold pays for Wang's family to ride the train north to the village once more.
- _____ 9. Pear Blossom accepts the poison intended for the Poor Fool.
- _____ 10. Lotus delivers Pomegranate Flower's first son.
- _____ 11. The pictures at the tea shop display the beauty of the women upstairs.
- _____ 12. When the waters recede, Wang's land is not fit to plow.
- _____ 13. O-lan serves the wedding foods, but remains out of sight of guests.
- _____ 14. Wang takes the strangled child to the fields and hurls its corpse to the dogs.
- _____ 15. After purchasing the great house, Wang learns to write his own character seal.

THE GOOD EARTH

Part III: Identification (10 points)

Explain the significance of each term below.

1. geomancer
2. firewagon
3. pigtail
4. Liu
5. revolution

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Determine how much of Wang's success is luck and how much is the result of shrewd planning and hard work.
2. Contrast Wang's two houses.
3. Account for Wang's tears when O-lan dies.
4. Describe elements of nature that influence character behavior.

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COMPREHENSIVE TEST B

Part I: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each question below.

- _____ 1. How do men in rural China wear their hair?
- _____ 2. What food does Ching give his starving neighbors?
- _____ 3. What possessions does Wang Lung regret taking from O-lan?
- _____ 4. What hides the face of a robber?
- _____ 5. For whom does Wang Lung buy poison?
- _____ 6. In what direction does Wang Lung move his family when he leaves the farm?
- _____ 7. What job does Wang Lung find in the city?
- _____ 8. What does O-lan wish to see before she dies?
- _____ 9. Who decorates the inner court before Lotus arrives?
- _____ 10. Who serves the Old Lord in the house of Hwang after the Old Mistress dies?

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Write a brief description of each of these characters.

1. Liu
2. O-lan
3. Pomegranate Flower
4. Wang Lung
5. Yang
6. rich fat man
7. Wang's father
8. Ching
9. Wang Lung
10. tutor

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Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Complete each statement below with the best response. Place the letter of your answer in the space provided.

- _____ 1. The uncle's son refers to the second son's wife as a (A) radish, (B) pock-marked slave, (C) soldier's right, (D) whore.
- _____ 2. Wang fears that, when he dies, no one will tend to (A) the land, (B) Lotus, (C) family graves, (D) the Poor Fool.
- _____ 3. The bag of jewels buys (A) Pear Blossom, (B) the Great House, (C) more land, (D) a noble title and magistracy.
- _____ 4. O-lan displays her thrift by (A) sewing tiger-faced shoes, (B) drying a chicken, (C) refusing to kill the ox, (D) purchasing opium for the uncle and his wife.
- _____ 5. In the city, Wang Lung is unfamiliar with (A) rice kitchens, (B) huts made of mats, (C) beggars, (D) bribing gatekeepers.
- _____ 6. To improve the family's begging, O-lan (A) disposes of the youngest girl, (B) slaps the boys, (C) forces the old man to appear sad and helpless, (D) puts a handful of moldy beans in her bowl.
- _____ 7. Wang Lung returns to the house in midday to spy on (A) the soldiers, (B) Cuckoo, (C) Pear Blossom, (D) the eldest son.
- _____ 8. Before Wang can escape the city and return home, (A) the revolution begins, (B) peasants riot, (C) O-lan gives birth to twins, (D) the old man dies.
- _____ 9. As Wang Lung watches O-lan, he thinks (A) what a good wife she is, (B) about buying Pear Blossom, (C) about the high price of a woman from the House of Hwang, (D) how ugly she is.
- _____ 10. Ching is afraid to (A) challenge a man in a red beard, (B) teach a new worker to use the flail, (C) blame the gods for bad luck, (D) eat New Year's cakes with Wang Lung's family.
- _____ 11. To assure good luck, Wang Lung claims that the child (A) has smallpox, (B) will be sold as a slave, (C) was sired by a soldier, (D) is dead.
- _____ 12. O-lan celebrates the holiday with (A) strips of red paper, (B) the leg of a pig, (C) blood pudding, (D) bean curd and pork.
- _____ 13. The sons smile at mention of (A) Yang, (B) selling land, (C) the Poor Fool left in the rain, (D) soldiers soiling pools of fish.
- _____ 14. The second time O-lan gives birth, she (A) asks for a wetnurse, (B) regrets that the child is a girl, (C) returns immediately to the fields, (D) leaves blue marks on the infant's neck.
- _____ 15. O-lan advises her husband to sell the furniture, but not to (A) spend money for a train ride, (B) buy the ox, (C) kill the ox, (D) sell the farm implements.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Contrast Wang's wedding with those of his sons.
2. Characterize O-lan as a wife, mother, laborer, and homemaker.
3. Discuss how too much leisure time affects Wang Lung.
4. Characterize peasant life in the village.

THE GOOD EARTH

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. Q | 11. B | 16. U |
| 2. L | 7. P | 12. T | 17. D |
| 3. A | 8. E | 13. M | 18. S |
| 4. N | 9. J | 14. K | 19. H |
| 5. I | 10. F | 15. R | 20. X |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1A. O-lan | 4A. O-lan |
| 1B. Wang Lung | 4B. her sons |
| 2A. the uncle' wife | 5A. eldest son |
| 2B. Wang Lung | 5B. Wang Lung |
| 3A. Wang Lung | |
| 3B. Pear Blossom | |

Part II: True or False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F | 11. T |
| 2. F | 7. T | 12. F |
| 3. T | 8. T | 13. T |
| 4. F | 9. T | 14. F |
| 5. T | 10. F | 15. F |

Part III: Identification (10 points)

1. The geomancer studies omens to determine possibilities and times for marriage and burial.
2. The firewagon is the train that transports Wang's family to and from the city in the south.
3. After meeting Lotus, Wang cuts off his pigtail, which marks him as an old-fashioned peasant
4. Liu, the village grain merchant in the Street of Bridges, accepts Wang's second son as an apprentice and keeps his youngest daughter safe in his home until she is wed.
5. Wang's youngest son leaves home to join the coming revolution.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. in a braid | 6. south |
| 2. beans | 7. pulling a riksha |
| 3. two pearls | 8. wedding of her eldest son |
| 4. red beard | 9. the uncle' wife |
| 5. the little fool | 10. Cuckoo |

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Answers will vary.

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. B | 11. A |
| 2. D | 7. D | 12. A |
| 3. C | 8. B | 13. B |
| 4. B | 9. D | 14. C |
| 5. A | 10. C | 15. D |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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