

## Armadillo and Rabbit Discuss *The Pearl*

“Well,” Rabbit said, finishing John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, “this story’s meaning is clear: the love of money is the root of all evil. Everything bad in the story happens because someone tries to get rich. The most important example is that if Kino and Juana had not sought to find and keep the pearl, Coyotito would still be alive.”

“I don’t think it’s that simple,” Armadillo replied.

“But,” Rabbit insisted, “the very first page of the text says the tale is a parable, black and white. Nothing is more ‘black and white’ in the story than the message that wanting to get rich leads to bad things.”

“You’re misunderstanding what parables are,” Armadillo answered. “Parables are not fables with a single moral but poems with multiple possible meanings. That’s why the very beginning of the story also says that people will make their own meanings.”

“Sure,” Rabbit conceded without actually conceding, “there could be other meanings. But wouldn’t you agree that my interpretation is the main one?”

“Actually,” Armadillo went on, “I think it’s a surface reading.”

“Why?” Rabbit asked skeptically. “What else could the story mean?”

“Good questions,” Armadillo said.

*Write up Rabbit’s answers to these two questions. (1) Come up with reasons and evidence against the idea that “the love of money is the root of all evil” is the best interpretation of the story (or for the idea that it’s only a surface reading). (2) Come up with some alternative possible interpretations.*