
GRADE 9 SOCIAL STUDIES STUDY GUIDE***The Good Earth***

by Pearl S. Buck

The Good Earth is an historical novel depicting the ways in which traditional China met its revolutionary future. The novel contains many useful historical themes which will be covered in World History. Make sure to read the novel carefully and to take notes as you read. You will have some type of assignment to complete on the reading when the school year begins. The questions below will help you to prepare for discussion and assessment of the novel in the fall. Make sure to cite examples from the novel to support your answers.

1. In what ways does the novel depict China in an era of change?
2. What is the most important theme of the novel to you, and why?
3. Why is the land so important to Wang Lung? What message does Pearl Buck give by depicting Wang Lung's deep love for the land?
4. In what ways does the novel depict the patriarchal society of China?
5. Describe O-lan and explain why she becomes the wife of Wang Lung.
6. What can you conclude about the wedding ceremony of the couple?
7. How does the author depict the vices of opium, gambling, and prostitution? Are any other vices described?
8. What religions are depicted in the novel, and how do the characters view spirituality?
9. What is filial piety, and how is this displayed in the novel?
10. What does it mean to have a daughter? What is the role of women in China?
11. How does Wang Lung's family react to the famine and failure of the land?
12. What adjustments did Wang Lung make for life in Kiangsu?
13. An American woman is mentioned in the novel. What does this tell you of the Chinese view of foreigners?
14. What impact did life in Kiangsu have on Wang Lung's sons? How are they different from their father?
15. Why might there be need for a revolution in China?
16. In what ways does wealth drastically change Wang Lung?
17. Wang Lung sends his sons to school. How important is education in society?
18. What impact does the arrival of Lotus have on the house of Wang Lung?
19. How does Wang Lung react to his eldest son's relationship with Lotus?
20. What did O-lan accomplish in her life, and how did Wang Lung react to her death?
21. How would you assess Wang Lung's life? Was he ultimately successful?
22. What does the novel teach you about life in China?