

A.B.M. College, Golmuri

English Core

I.A. & I.Com.

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THE ENEMY

- **Pearl S. Buck**

Brief Biography of Pearl S. Buck

Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker was born on June 26, 1892, in Hillsboro, West Virginia, U.S.A. Her parents, Absalom and Caroline Sydenstricker, were Southern Presbyterian missionaries, stationed in China, where she spent most of the first forty years of her life. The Sydenstrickers lived in Chinkiang, in Kiangsu (Jiangsu) province, then a small city lying at the junction of the Yangtze River and the Grand Canal. Pearl's father spent months away from home, itinerating in the Chinese countryside in search of Christian converts. From childhood, Pearl spoke both English and Chinese.

In 1910, Pearl enrolled in Randolph-Macon Women's College, in Lynchburg, Virginia, from which she graduated in 1914. In 1915, she met a young Cornell graduate, an agricultural economist named John Lossing Buck. They married in 1917, and immediately moved to Nanhsuchou (Nanxuzhou) in rural Anhwei (Anhui) province. In this impoverished community, Pearl Buck gathered the material that she would later use in *The Good Earth* and other stories of China. From 1920 to 1933, Pearl and Lossing made their home in Nanking (Nanjing), on the campus of Nanking University, where both had teaching positions.

Pearl had begun to publish stories and essays in the 1920s, in magazines such as *Nation*, *The Chinese Recorder*, *Asia*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. Her first novel, *East Wind, West Wind*, was published by the John Day Company in 1930. In 1931, John Day published Pearl's second novel, *The Good Earth*. This became the best-selling book of both 1931 and 1932, won the Pulitzer Prize and the Howells Medal in 1935, and would be adapted as a major MGM film in 1937. In 1938, less than a decade after her first book had appeared, Pearl won the Nobel Prize in literature, the first American woman to do so. By the time of her death in 1973, Pearl would publish over seventy books: novels, collections of stories, biography and

autobiography, poetry, drama, children's literature, and translations from the Chinese. Pearl Buck died in March, 1973, just two months before her eighty-first birthday. She is buried at Green Hills Farm.

CHARACTERS

1. Dr. Sadao Hoki – A Japanese doctor. He studied medicine in America and later returned to Japan.
2. Hana – His wife, Japanese. The two met in America, became friends and married there legally. It is unlikely that Hana was a medical student.
3. Sadao's father – A true, die-hard Japanese, blindly patriotic. He did not allow any foreign articles at home.
4. The old General – Japan's army General; Sadao's patient. He was a cruel man in his prime years.
5. Tom – An American soldier who got ashore near Sadao's house following a serious injury. Tom was treated by Sadao.
6. Yumi – Sadao's maid, in charge of the babies. She was attached to the babies.
7. Gardener – Sadao's gardener, an old man, in service since Sadao's father's time.
8. The cook – Sadao's cook, an old man, in service since Sadao's father's time.
9. An officer – A messenger of the General.

SETTINGS & BACKGROUND

1. The story happens on a coastal town of Japan.
2. Most probably in the year 1941 following Japan attacking Pearl Harbor where US army was camping and controlling.
3. Japanese were hostile to the Americans. Any Japanese was ready to kill any American found in their soil.

SUMMARY

Life during second world-war in Japan. Dr. Sadao Hoki and his wife Hana spot a dark shape in the surf that turns out to be a white man; a severely wounded soldier. At first they agree to turn the man over to authorities as a prisoner of war. This makes only perfect sense considering not just the ramifications of treating his wounds, but that the doctor and his wife are both virulently racist nationalists who consider the Japanese to be superior to the white race anywhere in the world. They had met in America before the war and he only proposed because his father consented to his choice of a pureblood.

Changing their minds in the face of the massive trauma exhibited by the man, the two agree to take him back to their home and treat his injuries as an act of humanitarian compassion consistent with their belief in the superiority of the Japanese people. They must inform their servants of this decision, of

course. The servants are every bit as racially prejudiced and biased as their employers, but their edges have not been softened by the humanitarianism of medical service. The servants make no secret of their belief that the man should have been left to die and turn cold toward the doctor and his wife.

After a week of treating the white man and helping him recover from his life-threatening injuries, the servants quit when their ultimatum that the man be turned over to the authorities is met by the doctor's steadfast resolve. Meanwhile the man—an American named Tom—is well enough to thank the doctor for saving his life. The doctor warns him not to be premature with this assessment. When a messenger arrives for her husband, Hana is terrified that the servants have spilled the beans and they are about to be punished.

Instead, the message directed Dr. Hoki to a patient consultation with General Takima, a wife-beating hero of the Battle of Manchuria. Takima is very ill and will likely die without the surgical skill of the doctor. Sadao chooses to confess to the General about the situation with the injured soldier. The General, in a remarkable display of self-interest over duty agrees to keep the secret. After all, if he turns in the doctor, then Sadao will likely be executed and he needs the doctor alive in order to prolong his own life. They reach an agreement in which the General will send assassins to kill Tom.

After a few days, the soldier not only has not been assassinated, but has recovered much of his strength which intensifies the doctor's fear. Since it seems the General has changed the plans they agreed upon, Dr. Hoki takes it upon himself to arrange the man's nighttime escape aboard a Korean fishing boat without informing his wife. The escape plan seems to be going off without a hitch.

Then the doctor is called in for emergency surgery to save the General's life and when the patient is strong enough to receive the news, he tells him that his prisoner somehow escape in the night. The General confesses that he was worried about his own life to the degree that he had completely forgotten the assassination agreement. He then goes on to very strongly that it was simply a case of carelessness and most certainly not dereliction of duty or lack of patriotism. The two men strike a deal to keep secrets secret with the General promising Sadao that he will be rewarded.

As Dr. Hoki looks out toward the horizon for the American's signal that he was still safely in his hiding spot awaiting the arrival of the fishing boat. But the sun sets without a signal, informing the doctor that the escape has successful. This, Dr. Hoki thinks, is his real reward. As he ponders his time in America, the true depth of his irrational prejudice against the white race is revealed through his thoughts. Such is the depth of his hatred of the "repulsive" whites of the world that he is actually glad the country is at war with them.

Then muses to himself: "Strange. I wonder why I could not kill him?"

GIST

- Dr. Sadao, a Japanese surgeon finds a wounded American soldier on the beach near his house.
- He is unable to throw him back though he was his enemy as he was a doctor and his first duty was to save a life.

- Hana, his wife, though initially reluctant because it was dangerous for all including the children to keep the enemy in the house, joins her husband in operating and nursing the enemy soldier back to health, even though the servants desert the house.
- Hana assists Dr. Sadao in operating the soldier in spite of her physical discomfort and hesitation.
- Though it was war time and all hands were needed at the front, the General did not send Sadao with the troops as he is an expert surgeon and the General needed him.
- Sadao tells him about the enemy soldier but he does not take any action as he is self-absorbed and forgets his promise that he would send his private assassins to kill the enemy and remove his body.
- Taking advantage of the general's self-absorption Sadao decides to save the soldier's life. After the soldier is out of danger Dr. Sadao helps him to escape from his house to safety.

THEMES

Racism as a By-Product of Nationalism

All of the Japanese characters exhibit a profoundly antagonistic attitude toward white people. The only explanation for this deep-seated hatred of whites and feeling of superiority toward them is offered through the experiences of Sadao in America. Yet, every one of his recollections prove to reference people who were kind, merciful or showing compassion toward him. If experience is the driving mechanism behind such comprehensive hatred and dismissal of millions of people simply due to the color of their skin, then Sadao's racism can only be termed irrational. In this way, that racism is inextricably linked to the negative influence of nationalism. Since Sadao's experiences do not align with his bias, it can only be explained as a condition engendered by a steady diet of nationalist propaganda.

Duty vs. Self-Interest

This theme is explored through two different men representing two distinct expressions of self-interest. Sadao knows it is his patriotic duty to turn the injured white American over to the authorities as a prisoner of war, but his compassion as a physician sworn to heal trumps that duty. This is a case where self-interest is a complicated thing because his interest involves duty to his vocation. On the other hand, General Takima avoids the expectations of duty to his country in order to overlook Sadao's dangerous decision because of a more nakedly explicit preference for self-interest. If he carries out his duty as a General, the doctor will wind up imprisoned or worse which means he will not be available to conduct the surgery which the General needs to prolong his life.

The Universality of the Human Race

Many readers may complete this story and think to themselves how much it reminds them of people they know or the problem of white supremacists or how the idea of Japanese superiority comes into conflict with that country's wartime ally, Germany, where Hitler was preaching the gospel of Aryan

superiority. The truth is that it is fairly easy to make points about everybody is the same when characters are presented as victims of oppression. Making that point with characters who represent the worst aspects of an oppressive regime, however, is much more difficult and the story's greatness lies in how just easily Buck pulls it off. It may not even be until after the story has been completed and allowed to simmer afterward that the expression of Japanese superiority and the unrelenting and relentlessly irrational racism of every Japanese character comes to be seen as a universal aspect united people of all colors, nationalities, and cultures.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. There are moments in life when we have to make hard choices between our roles as private individuals and as citizens with a sense of national loyalty. Discuss with reference to the story you have just read.

A. Dr. Sadao is trapped in a dilemma. On one hand, being a doctor having moral and ethical responsibility to save the wounded soldier and on the other hand, being a patriot, to let the enemy die or hand him over to the army. He fulfills his ethical responsibility, saves the man, risks his own life, his family, and reputation and then later, as a patriot plans to get him killed with the help of the army general. Later on again, he helps him escape which reflects his true personality.

2. Dr. Sadao was compelled by his duty as a doctor to help the enemy soldier. What made Hana, his wife, sympathetic to him in the face of open defiance from the domestic staff?

A. Hana firmly follows her husband's sense of duty although she knows that her husband's decision is being questioned by everyone. She is humanitarian and compassionate and goes beyond her duty to perform the tasks which she is not supposed to. It is her care that helps the man recovers quickly. She respects her husband and has a sense of duty towards him.

3. How would you explain the reluctance of the soldier to leave the shelter of the doctor's home even when he knew he couldn't stay there without risk to the doctor and himself?

A. Sadao and Hana had treated the American man with a lot of kindness and warmth. The man had suffered severely at the hands of the Japanese army as he had been made a prisoner of war. This warm attitude of Sadao and Hana gave him so much relief that he did not want to leave their house. The man felt at home – safe and warm. So, even though they were at risk at the hands of the army and the people of Japan, the man was reluctant to leave them.

4. What explains the attitude of the General in the matter of the enemy soldier? Was it human consideration, lack of national loyalty, dereliction of duty or simply self-absorption?

A. All his life the general had performed his duties with utmost sincerity. He realized that killing innocent men had become a burden on his soul. He understood Sadao's mindset which indicated that he wanted to save a life irrespective of the fact that he was from an enemy country. The general also considered him to be a human being and so, excused Sadao to save his life.

5. Why did the servants leave Dr. Sadao's house?

A.They were not in favour of keeping the American prisoner hidden in the house. They also did not want Dr. Sadao to save his life as he was the enemy. Also, if the police come to know of it, all their lives would be in danger. So they left the house.

6. Who was the white man whom Dr. Sadao and Hana found?

A.The white man was an American soldier as evident from his clothes. They guess that he was a prisoner of war from his cap that said 'Navy Seals'.

7. "But Sadao searching the spot of black in the twilight sea that night, had his reward". What was the reward?

A.The "reward" was the escape of the enemy. Dr. Sadao searched the spot of black in the twilight sea that night to see if the man was still there but there was no light. Obviously the man had gone. The escape of the prisoner was his reward.

8. What message does "The Enemy" give?

A.This is a great lesson in humanism. Dr. Sadao by nursing his country's enemy proves true to his professional ethics.