EXTRA WRITING ASSIGNMENTS/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - *The Good Earth*

**Interpretation**

1. From what point of view is *The Good Earth* written? What advantages did using that point of view give the author?

2. If you were to rewrite *The Good Earth* as a play, where would you start and end each act? Explain why.

3. Where is the climax of the story? Explain your choice.

4. What are the main conflicts in the novel? Are they all resolved? If so, how? If not, why not?

**Critical**

6. Who were the six women in the story who affected (and were affected by) Wang Lung? For what purpose(s) did he need each?


8. Explain the importance of the setting in *The Good Earth*. Could this story have been set in a different time and place and still have the same effect?

9. Characterize Pearl Buck's style of writing. How does it contribute to the value of the novel?

10. Discuss the validity of using the city as a "bad" place and the country as a "good" place.

11. Explain how the title relates to the events of the novel and the themes of *The Good Earth*.


16. Are the characters in *The Good Earth* stereotypes? If so, explain why Pearl Buck used stereotypes. If not, explain how the characters merit individuality.


18. Compare and contrast the birth of Wang Lung's first son with the birth of his second son and his grandson.

19. What is the symbolic importance of each of the following: Wang Lung's braid, the land, feet, the colors red and black, and water?
20. After the seven years of prosperity, Wang Lung suffers a series of family troubles. What is each problem he faced, and what was the solution to each?

21. Compare Wang Lung's wedding to his first son's wedding.

22. Compare and contrast Wang Lung's sons.

23. Contrast Wang Lung's sons' reactions to his relationship with Pear Blossom and explain how each son's reaction is consistent with his character.


25. Compare and contrast Wang Lung with his sons.

26. What was the role of religion in Wang Lung's life?

27. Several times in the novel Wang Lung appears to be a hypocrite. Explain when, how and why.

28. Explain the role of education in the novel. Is it good or bad?

29. What were the outward signs of a wealthy family?

30. In the end, was Wang Lung's family different from Hwang's? How so, or why not?

31. There were certain things Wang Lung would not do or felt guilty doing even though they were customary. What were those things, and why did he feel guilty or not do them?

32. What purpose did O-lan's death serve in the whole context of the novel?

33. Why will the sons sell the land and divide the profits?

**Personal Response**

34. Suppose Pearl Buck had left out the part about the sons' selling the land and dividing the profits. How would that have changed the theme(s) of the book?

35. Did you enjoy reading *The Good Earth*? Why or why not?

36. Was Wang Lung a good husband and father?

37. Would you like to visit China? Why or why not?