

Name _____

Score _____

The Good Earth

Pearl S. Buck

CHAPTER I

It is Wang Lung's _____. He rises at dawn as always to light the fire and heat the _____, but today is different. Instead of merely washing, he fills the wooden tub and bathes. He puts aside his padded _____, now torn and soiled, for a clean one of cotton, and over it goes his one cotton coat saved for feast days. He brushes out and rebraids his _____, the traditional long lock of hair growing from the crown of his head, and he weaves a tasseled _____ cord into the braid.

His old father complains: such wastefulness! Water for a bath, tea leaves in the bowl of hot water Wang brings him: "It is the day," says Wang.

In the town, Wang has the _____ shave his head around the queue but balks at cutting off the queue, as is now the fashion: for that he must ask his father's permission. In the market he buys a little _____, a little _____, and a small _____ for his wedding feast. At last everything is done, and he must now go to the great House of _____, the residence of the district's biggest landowner, and fetch his bride, a young slave woman his _____ has bought for him and whom he has never seen.

At the gate of the mansion he stops, faint with nervousness: he forgot to eat this morning. Back into the town he goes, to gulp _____ and _____ in the tea house, dawdling so long that he is asked to pay extra. He jumps up and heads for the great house again. Here the gateman treats him with scorn, demands a tip, and finally ushers him into the presence of the Old _____. The tiny, withered old lady summons O-lan.

In little more than a dozen pages you have a graphic image of the little _____, the frugal way of life, the demanding old father, and the novel's hero. Wang Lung is a farmer. He is young, shy, practically a stranger in his own village where he rarely goes,

having no money to spend. He is intimidated even by the tea house _____, let alone the arrogant gateman, and all but falls on his face before the _____. From here on the mood changes, and comedy gives way to deeper levels of sympathy. Watch especially how O-lan's character emerges, how she is described only by her actions and the way Wang sees her, and how you can gather clues about what she thinks and feels. This is a good example of Pearl Buck's skill at characterization.

O-lan appears. The Old Mistress tells Wang about her- "She is not _____, but that you do not need." Wang notices with some disappointment that O-lan's feet are _____ because they had not been bound when she was young. The Old Mistress orders O-lan to _____ her husband, bear him sons, and bring the _____ for her to see. Then she abruptly dismisses them. This seems to be the entire marriage ceremony for a poor farmer and a slave bride.

The first things Wang does for O-lan are to carry her _____ and buy her a few small, green _____. To bring good fortune on his marriage and future, he lights two sticks of incense, one for O-lan and one for himself, before the earth _____ and _____ in the little field shrine. O-lan puts out her hand and brushes off the ashes so that the incense will burn well. To Wang it seems that _____ is sharing a significant moment with him.

At the farmhouse, O-lan cooks the _____. The guests, all male, arrive, and O-lan declines to appear before them. But she has cooked a fine feast, and _____ is proud of both her modesty and her skill. Alone with her at last he is shy and nervous but finally exultant at having a partner and a new life with a woman of his own.