

Pearl Buck: The Woman, The World and Two Good Fathers

Synopsis

Pearl Buck first saw Green Hills, the Pennsylvania farm she bought and filled with beauty and love, in a photograph no larger than a postage stamp. Green Hills grew with Buck's family of nine adopted children. Buck shaped additions to the 1832 farmhouse to the likeness of a traditional Chinese home. It has private rooms for family members, each with access to a central courtyard where the family could gather.

The house itself is full of rare and beautiful art works representing Pearl Buck's years in China. The rooms, the views – each window looks out on water – and the furnishings all stimulate recollections of Pearl Buck's life in China and America, her marriage to her publisher, and her philanthropy: She founded and supported a nonprofit organization to assist orphan Amerasian children.

This filmed tour of Green Hills – conducted by television personality Hugh Downs – is also a visit to the world of a distinctive and distinguished woman. Pearl Buck was a Nobel Prize winner, a recipient of thirteen honorary doctorates, author of ninety books, a sculptor, a pianist, and an organist. And, incredibly and delightful to ponder, she viewed her abilities in art and music – which were substantial, as the film indicates – as "mere distractions" from writing and housekeeping.

Green Hills is, like Pearl Buck herself, a bridge between

the ordinary and the extraordinary – a bridge, too, between East and West

Questions to ask before viewing

1. What do you know about Pearl Buck?
2. For what do you think she is famous?

Questions to ask after viewing

1. Hugh Downs recalls Rudyard Kipling's observation that "East is east, and west is west, and never the twain shall meet." What do you think Kipling meant by that?
2. Downs also speaks of Pearl Buck's believing that humans are not made up of "we" and "them", "but of" all of us." What do you think that means?
3. Where is Pearl Buck's home, and what is it called? How did she first learn about the place? When was the original structure built?
4. How many books did Pearl Buck write? What honors did she receive in her lifetime?
5. In addition to being a fine and prolific writer, what other artistic talents did Pearl Buck possess?
6. Name some of the elements that Hugh Downs describes as part of Pearl Buck's "Chinese legacy."
7. Describe the arrangement of rooms and views at Green Hills? Describe some of the furniture and other objects at Green Hills. Recall any anecdotes associated with them. Do you think you'd like to live at Green Hills? Why?
8. What is the name of Pearl Buck's best-known book?
9. Recall details of Pearl Buck's two marriages.
10. How many children were in her family?
11. What is the work of the Pearl Buck Foundation?

Length

24 Minutes

Subject areas

U.S. History, American Literature

Audience levels

High School, College, Adult

Catalog number

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Discussion Guide

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Objectives

- To provide a context for the examination of the achievements of Pearl Buck.
- To recreate the life and times of this distinguished American.
- To provide examples of the American spirit at its best.
- To instill pride in the American virtues and values of individualism, productivity, and creativity.



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