

Learn About



Pearls



Wearing Pearls



Pearls have been worn as a symbol of wealth and power for countless centuries. In fact, a natural pearl necklace such as the one above, with perfectly matched spheres, has historically been one of the most expensive pieces of jewelry a person could own. Those necklaces belonged only to the very wealthy nobility.

It is believed that pearls were first discovered along the coast of India, where ancient fish-eating tribes discovered them while searching for food. Egypt used mother-of-pearl for decorative purposes as long ago as 4200 B.C. In the first century B.C., ancient Roman women sewed pearls into their clothes and into the upholstery of their couches.

Since that time, pearls have continued to represent wealth in societies worldwide. With the creation in the 19th century of the cultured pearl, pearl necklaces have become much more affordable. A cultured pearl is created by an oyster farmer under controlled conditions, rather than occurring naturally as they did in the past. Because culturing creates more pearls, the extravagant cost has gone down. Today, while still beautiful, pearls can be owned by the average woman who wants an attractive addition to her jewelry collection.

Where do pearls come from?



Pearls are created inside oysters like the one above. Oysters are a type of mollusk, or soft-bodied creature surrounded by a hard outer shell. Pearls begin when a piece of debris, such as sand gets between one of the oyster's shells and the protective layer called the mantle that covers the oyster's organs.

The creation of the pearl results from the oyster protecting itself from irritation. As soon as the debris is felt, the oyster begins covering it with nacre—the mineral substance of which the outer shell is made. Layer upon layer of nacre (also called mother-of-pearl) coats the tiny bit of debris, shielding the oyster's organs from the irritant and eventually forming the precious gem.

When an oyster farmer creates a cultured pearl, he introduces a grain of sand into the oyster rather than waiting for it to happen by accident. The oyster does all the rest of the work on its own. The process usually takes about 3 years from the time the debris is implanted to create a good pearl with a thick coating of nacre.



While oysters create saltwater pearls, pearls can also come from freshwater sources. Freshwater pearls are created in mussels (another type of mollusk) that live in ponds, lakes, or rivers. Freshwater pearls can be cultured in much the same way saltwater pearls are. While freshwater pearls are less valuable than saltwater pearls, they come in a bigger variety of shapes and colors.

Vocabulary

Spheres- a round solid figure; a 3-dimensional circle

Nobility-group of people belonging to a noble class in a country; especially those with a hereditary or honorary title

Upholstery-soft, padded cloth covering that is fixed to furniture

Cultured-grown in an artificial manner

Oysters-saltwater mollusks with rough, irregular shells

Mollusks-soft-bodied creatures surrounded by a hard outer shell

Mantle-protective layer in an oyster that shields the organs

Nacre-also known as mother-of-pearl; a mineral substance from which pearls are made

Implanted-inserted into a body

Saltwater-of or found in salt water; living in the sea

Freshwater-of or found in fresh water; not of the sea

Mussels-freshwater mollusks with a brown or purplish black shell

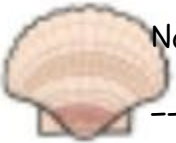




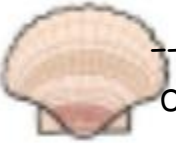
Vocabulary



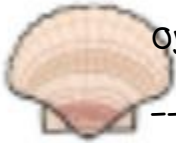
Spheres _____



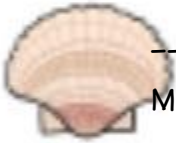
Nobility _____



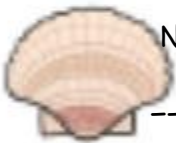
Upholstery _____



Cultured _____



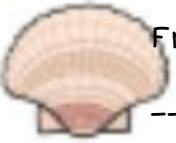
Oysters _____



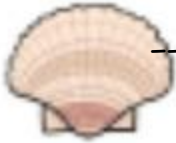
Mollusks _____



Nacre _____



Implanted _____



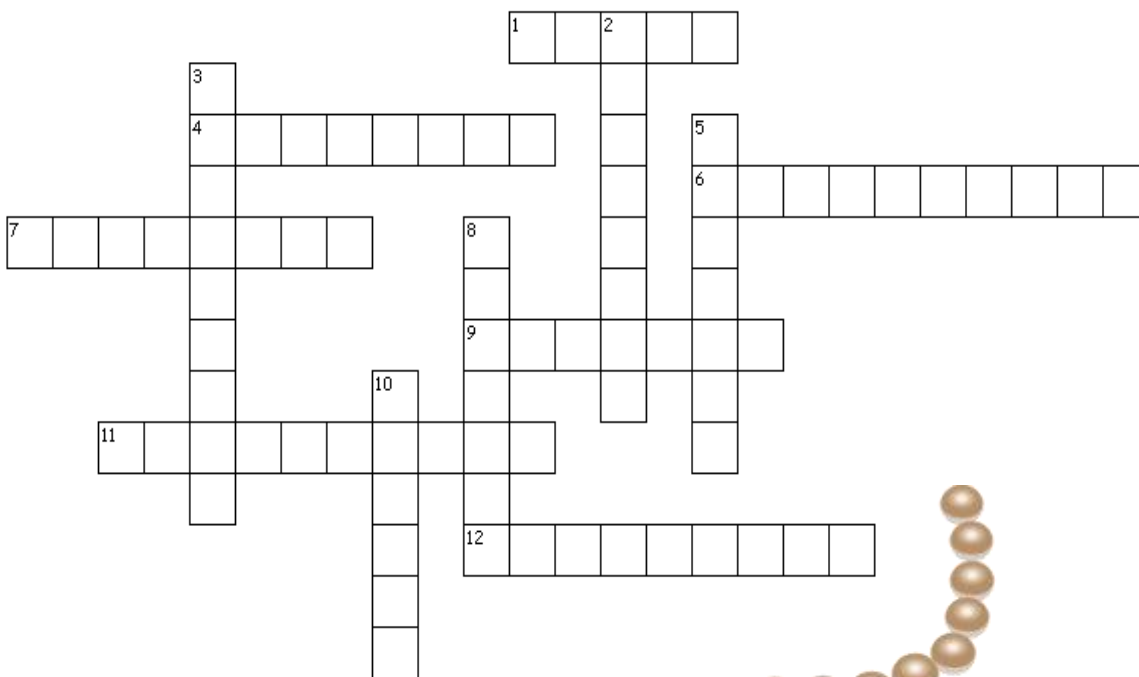
Freshwater _____



Mussels- _____



Pearl Crossword Puzzle

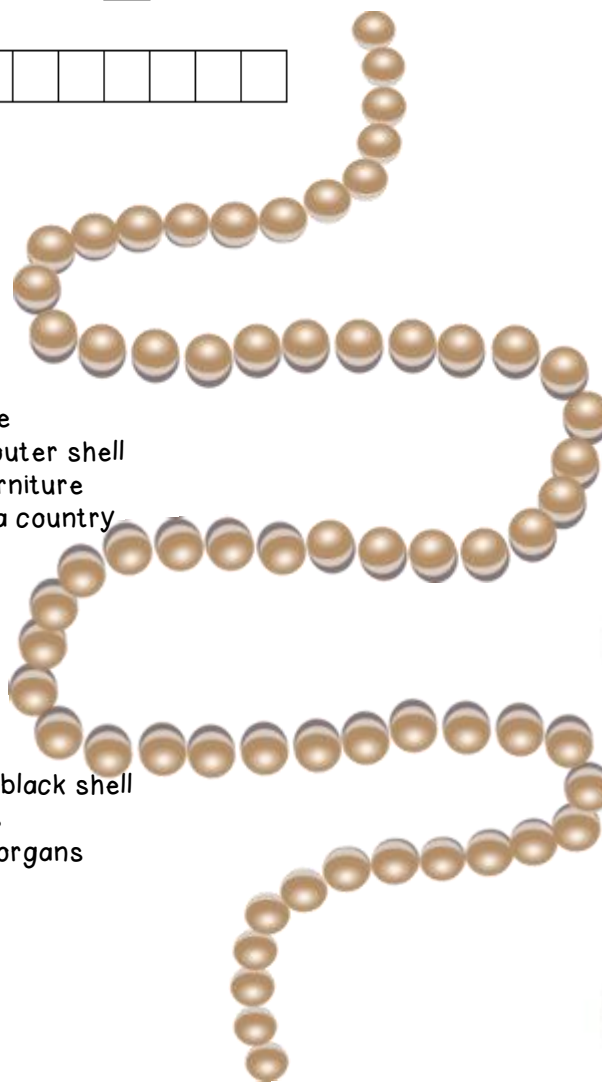


Across

- 1. mineral substance from which pearls are made
- 4. soft-bodied creatures surrounded by a hard outer shell
- 6. soft, padded cloth covering that is fixed to furniture
- 7. group of people belonging to a noble class in a country
- 9. a round solid figure; a 3-dimensional circle
- 11. of or found in freshwater; not of the sea
- 12. of or found in salt water; living in the sea

Down

- 2. grown in an artificial manner
- 3. inserted into a body
- 5. freshwater mollusks with a brown or purplish black shell
- 8. saltwater mollusks with rough, irregular shells
- 10. protective layer in an oyster that shield the organs





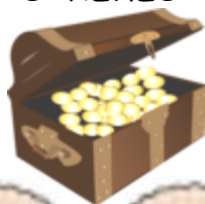
Pearl Word Search

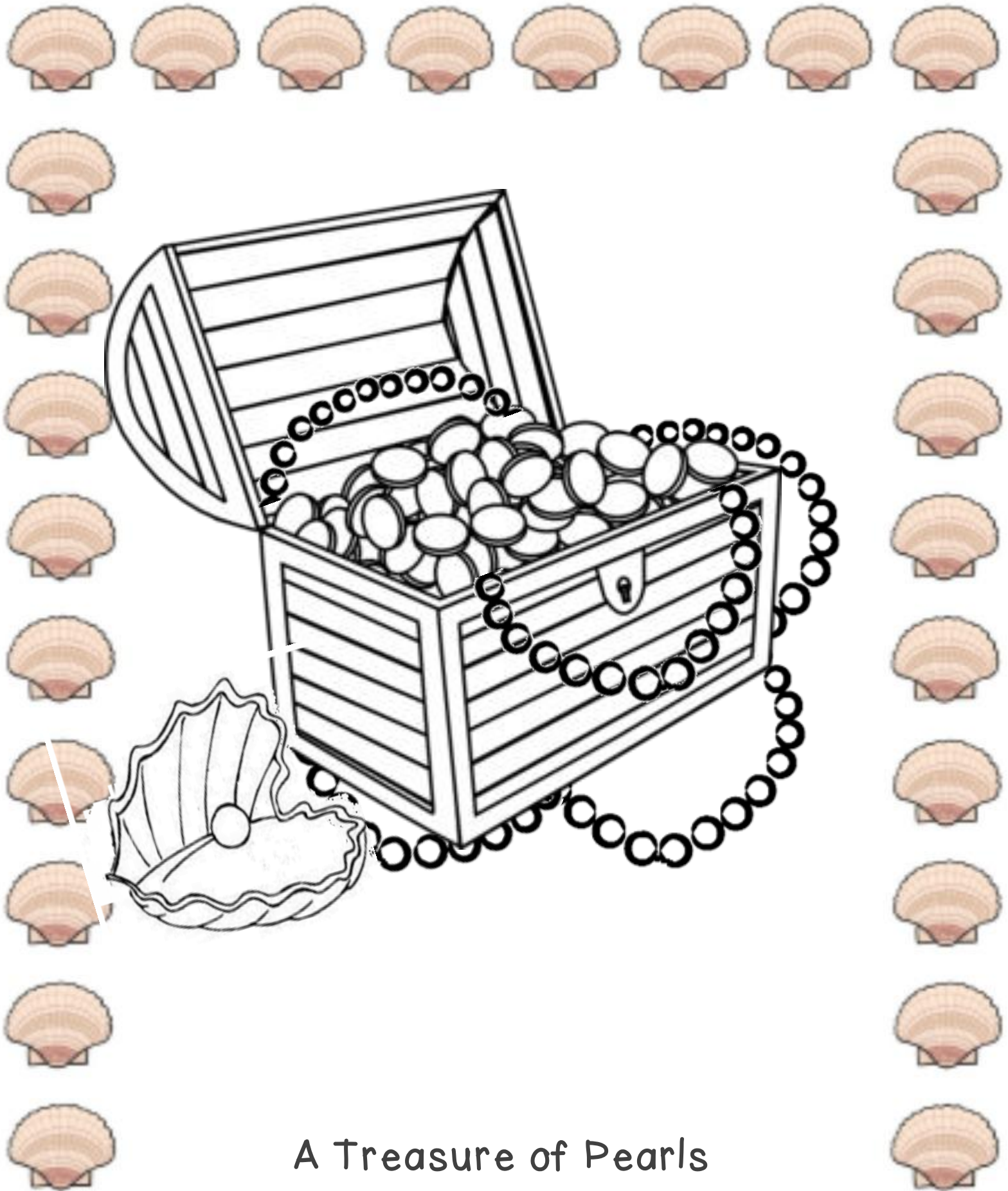
J E J V P G S N F J V C F S D
P A W W P L U A A R L R H R R
G D W C E Z L C L C E J K E R
X R O S J Y T K C T R T Q T O
R L S Q S R X U A P W E Q S O
E U W C T E L W D Q B A G Y T
M S P T A T H L P Y X S T O F
N H E T U S I M P L A N T E D
O B W R E L M A N T L E N Q R
B T E R E O C C F H S V U M R
I D F Q M H L V G U H F K J R
L G D Y T P P Q I U M W L A A
I W X M J U W S C T L M C I D
T G N H X C N X M J D U P X A
Y S K S U L L O M B N K Z W F

CULTURED
MANTLE
NACRE
SALTWATER

FRESHWATER
MOLLUSKS
NOBILITY
SPHERES

IMPLANTED
MUSSELS
OYSTERS





A Treasure of Pearls

