



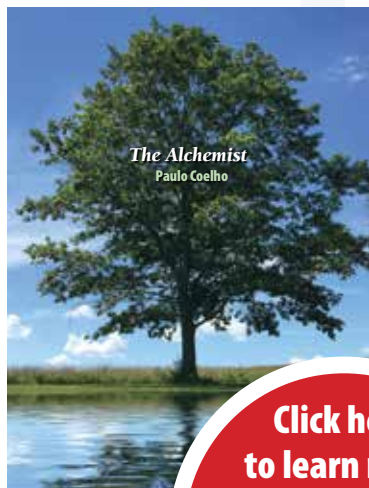
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The Alchemist

Part 1

1. Santiago is haunted by a reoccurring dream, so he seeks out a woman who interprets dreams. Have you or someone you know ever had a reoccurring dream? Write a paragraph describing the dream. In addition, provide an interpretation, or your best guess, as to the dream's meaning.
2. Over time, Santiago has become attached to his sheep. He enjoys reading to them from his books and talking to them as if they are people. Santiago also notices that their sleep habits have become synchronized; most of the sheep awaken when he does. Think of a character from a book or movie who has a close attachment with an animal, either wild or domestic. Write a short story relaying an account of this special bond. For instance, you may describe how the character and animal form a bond, or a time when one helps the other. If you prefer, create a story based on these characters. The story should not exceed three pages.
3. The merchant's daughter is surprised that Santiago can read; she had assumed that all shepherds were illiterate. When have you or someone you know ever witnessed or promoted a stereotype? Compose an editorial for your school newspaper in which you discuss how this stereotype came about and whether you think that it is accurate. In addition, provide your perspective on the damaging effects of stereotypes.
4. Santiago and the merchant's daughter converse for hours. The merchant's daughter is amazed by stories of Santiago's travels, and Santiago begins to imagine village life. Write a journal entry in which you discuss a person from real life or a fictional character who taught you something about a different culture or lifestyle. What did you learn? Discuss at least one similarity or difference between this culture and your own.
5. Santiago explains that, despite his parents' wishes, he has wanted to see the world since childhood. At age sixteen, he leaves the seminary and becomes a shepherd in order to travel. Write a short paragraph about a dream that you had as a young child. What did you hope to do as an adult, and why?

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10. As a traveler, Santiago is not required to maintain relationships with the people that he meets. In the seminary, however, he had encountered the same people day after day. Santiago bitterly reflects on life in the seminary in the following passage:

“If someone isn’t what others want them to be, the others become angry. Everyone seems to have a clear idea of how other people should lead their lives, but none about his or her own.” (Pg. 16)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write an editorial that voices your opinion by providing your observation of human behavior. If possible, include an example that supports your view. The editorial should not exceed one page.

11. Santiago meets Melchizedek, an old king, who initiates a philosophical discussion about personal freedoms. Melchizedek states that most people believe they have no control over their lives because their lives are dictated by fate. Consider the king’s perspective, and provide short answers for the following questions. Please use complete sentences for your answers.
- A. Is Santiago in charge of his life as he asserts, or is it his fate to travel? How can you tell the difference, if at all?
 - B. Have you ever felt that an event in your life was out of your control and that you had no way to alter its course?
 - C. Have you ever made a decision that you knew would change your life?
 - D. Do you believe in fate?

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52. Santiago has to remind himself to slow down and read the signs, or omens, along the journey; he realizes that impulsive behavior may throw him off course. How does your patience compare to Santiago's? Do you consider yourself an impetuous or patient person? Describe yourself in a short paragraph.
53. At the oasis, Santiago learns to respect the local traditions. He questions a woman at the well, and she informs him that women dressed in black are married and should not be approached. The Englishman, however, is willing to disregard tradition; he anxiously pushes Santiago to question additional married women about the alchemist, but the boy refuses. Based on this situation, use complete sentences to briefly answer the following questions:
- A. What is your response to the Englishman's disrespect for local custom? Should he abide by the rules, or is he exempt because he is a foreigner?
 - B. Describe a tradition from another group or culture that you do not understand or find strange. The custom may be something that you witnessed firsthand, heard about, read about, or saw on television.
 - C. What is a tradition that you or your family practice? Briefly describe the custom, which may range from a minor daily event to a major annual event.
54. Santiago experiences love at first sight when he meets Fatima and instantly determines that she is his "twin soul." He had been taught by his family to get to know someone before committing in a relationship, but he is certain about Fatima before he even learns her name. Do you agree with Santiago or his family? Are situations like Santiago's and Fatima's—that is, love at first sight—possible in the real world? If so, how often do you think they happen? Create a journal entry that addresses these questions.

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64. The alchemist tests Santiago by telling him to find life in the desert. Santiago has doubts, but he figures out that his horse can lead the way. Finally, the horse takes them to a cluster of rocks, where the alchemist finds a cobra. Santiago passes the test, proving to the alchemist that he is worthy of his journey. Think of a test of skill or a rite of passage that you or someone you know has undergone. Write a journal entry about the experience, including its purpose and how you or the individual felt.
- A. How does the love between Santiago and Fatima compare to Paulo Coelho's explanation of love? For instance, how is Fatima a source of inspiration for Santiago?
 - B. How does Santiago's love for Fatima differ from his love for the merchant's daughter?
 - C. What has Santiago learned from his love for Fatima, and how will this help him on the rest of his journey?
66. The alchemist explains the "Soul of the World" to Santiago:
- "The wise men understood that this natural world is only an image and a copy of paradise. The existence of this world is simply a guarantee that there exists a world that is perfect. God created the world so that, through its visible objects, men could understand his spiritual teachings and the marvels of his wisdom." (Pg. 127)
- What is your opinion of the alchemist's explanation? For instance, do you believe that there is another, perfect world where we go when we die? If so, is this world an image of that place? Write a response to the alchemist that voices your opinion. Your response should be at least a page in length.
67. The alchemist tells Santiago that a single grain of sand contains "all the marvels of creation." (Pg. 127) He then instructs the boy to study the sand and listen to his heart in order to understand the "Soul of the World." Imagine that you have a friend who does not understand the alchemist's meaning. Write a letter to this friend clarifying how a grain of sand can contain the meaning of the world. In addition, explain why the alchemist feels that the heart is more significant than the mind. For instance, how is the heart able to detect things that the mind cannot?
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