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The Alchemist

BY PAULO COELHO



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All references come from the Harper Collins edition of *The Alchemist*, published 1993.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Personal Calling****Objective:** Making early connections with the book**Activity**

Read Paulo Coelho's Introduction to *The Alchemist*. Think about how Coelho attributes the book's success to an awareness of his "personal calling" and the ability to overcome the four major obstacles he outlines.

List some of your personal dreams or goals in the first column of the following chart. They should not all be about strictly work or careers. In the box next to each life goal, list any obstacles that could stand in your way. Don't worry if some overlap with Coelho's, but try to list as many others as you can. For instance, you might share Coelho's fourth obstacle, which is the fear of realizing your dreams, but you may also have more specific ones. We have supplied one example of what yours might look like.

After making your list of goals and obstacles, choose the goal that means the most to you and consider it your personal calling for the next part of the activity. Next, form small groups and share your calling, revealing what you listed in column two. Then highlight or circle the obstacles that you share with your classmates, even if you have a different calling. As a group, answer and discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think others share some of your obstacles, even though your calling may be different? What reason do you think Coelho would give for the similarities?

2. In addition to overcoming our obstacles, Coelho argues that we must first have an awareness of our personal calling in order to fulfill it. Do you think that connecting with your peers has increased your awareness? Why or why not?

3. Try to predict some of the major themes from reading just the introduction. How do you think the author will present his ideas through the storyline?

4. What is the secret to life, according to Coelho? Given the book's vast popularity, do you think reading it will change your views on life?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part One**Found Poem****Objective:** Understanding poetic form**Activity**

Write a “found poem” using Part One.

A “found” poem is a poem made up entirely of phrases or quotations found in the text. Go back through Part One and make up a found poem of your own. The poem could tell the reader something about Santiago’s emotional state, but this is not necessary; it may be totally unrelated to the action of the story, which is one of the best parts of writing a found poem.

Your poem should be at least 10 lines long. The lines do not need to rhyme, but they certainly may. You can arrange the phrases in any way you like and change the punctuation, but do not deviate from the actual words. Give the poem a title, which may or may not come from the book. Below is an example taken entirely from Part One.

The Journey

They wanted me to be a priest
I couldn't have found God in the seminary
And since I am not wise
I have had to learn the reading of palms
Learn to recognize omens and follow them
I don't know how to turn them into reality...
I promised that I would make my own decisions
It's easy, and yet I've never done it before
Now it was too late to change anything
Our lives become controlled by fate
That's the world's greatest lie

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part Two

Imagery Chart

Objectives: Using antonyms to illustrate contrast in settings
Using symbols to represent descriptions of settings

Activity

The caravan travels through the desert to reach the oasis. It moves from one environment to a completely different environment. The words used to describe an oasis are antonyms for those that describe a desert—wet versus dry, for example. Using the example that we have supplied—contrasting the city and the country—as a guide, create a chart that describes the oasis and the desert as they are represented in the story. For every word, phrase, or sentence you list in the description column for one setting, you should have an equal number of antonyms to describe the opposite setting. Try to come up with at least ten items that you can contrast. Use a thesaurus if you need additional words. In the final column, write down the possible effect that is depicted through the use of your choices.

Another way to describe a setting is through the use of symbols. Choose a few words from each setting and draw symbols to represent them. Try not to use words in your symbols unless they need clarification, as in “omen.” Be creative and challenge yourself to use less common symbols, or invent new ones.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Parts One and Two**Personification****Objective:** Recognizing personification and its purpose**Activity**

One of the lessons the boy learns from the desert is that there's an order to the universe, and every being has its place. To emphasize this, near the end of Part Two, the desert asks Santiago, among a few other questions, "What is love?" When human characteristics, such as speaking, hoping, etc., are given to objects, animals, or nature, it is called personification.

Find examples of personification in the book and list them in the following chart along with what you believe is the intended lesson or message.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wrap-Up

Jeopardy Game

Objective: Constructing a game to test overall comprehension of the book

Activity

For the game show “Jeopardy,” contestants must provide answers in the form of a question. Divide into two groups. Each group will write jeopardy “questions” and “answers” for each of the boxes on the game board below. It should include the details from the entire book. Remember to adhere to the difficulty levels, making your easiest answers worth 200 points and your most difficult worth 1000.

Look at the samples below. For the answer under the **Message in Dialogue** category, “The boy and the desert discuss the falcon,” the contestant could respond with the question, “What is the dialogue where the boy discovers that everything is connected?” This is more difficult than the answer in the second column for 200 points, “He met the boy in the marketplace,” which could be answered with the question, “Who is the King of Salem,” or “Who is Melchizedek?”

Places	Which Character?	Plot Details	Literary Terms	Message from Dialogue
200	He met the boy in the marketplace.	200	200	200
400	400	400	400	400
600	600	600	600	600
800	800	800	800	The boy and the desert discuss the falcon.
1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Turn in your game board and answers once it is complete.