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- Table of Contents
- Introduction to the *LitPlan Teacher Pack™*
- first page of the Study Questions
- first page of the Study Question Answer Key
- first page of the Multiple Choice Quiz Section
- first Vocabulary Worksheet
- first few pages of the Daily Lessons
- a Writing Assignment
- first page of the Extra Discussion Questions
- first page of the Unit Test Section

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TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

The Alchemist

based on the book by  
Paulo Coelho

Written by  
Susan R. Woodward

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Paulo Coelho

Paulo Coelho was born August 24, 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to Pedro Queima Coelho de Souza and his wife, Lygia. Coelho's parents did not share in their son's dream of becoming a writer, and even went so far as to have him twice institutionalized in a mental hospital for attempting to pursue his dream. The treatment in the hospital did nothing to make Coelho conform to his parents' wishes; in fact, he became rebellious. He got involved with the hippie movement in the 1960's as it spread through Brazil, embracing progressive politics and joining the peace and love generation. His creative explorations led him to the theatre, to journalism where he published an alternative magazine called *2001*, and to the Brazilian rock scene where he wrote lyrics for famous Brazilian singers such as Raul Seixas, Elis Regina, and Rita Lee.

His involvement in the hippie movement led Coelho to explore various types of mysticism and spirituality. He was highly influenced by the works of Aleister Crowley, and even joined an organization known as the Alternative society, which defended the individual's right to free expression. After being detained, questioned and tortured by a group of paramilitaries, Coelho decided to tame his radical behaviors. A chance meeting with a stranger in Amsterdam led Coelho to turn his life toward Catholicism and to walk the medieval pilgrim's route, the road to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. This route across northern Spain is known as St. James's Way. This experience was recreated in his book *The Pilgrimage: Diary of Magus* (1987).

In 1988, Coelho wrote *The Alchemist*, based on *Tale of Two Dreamers* by Jorge Luis Borges, which was originally based on a tale from *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. Coelho's novel did not receive much critical acclaim, however, and the first edition only sold about nine hundred copies. When the publishing company decided not to reprint, Coelho refused to give up on the work, and signed with another publishing company. *The Alchemist* has since sold more copies than any other novel in Brazilian literary history.

Paulo Coelho and his wife, Christina, live in Rio do Janeiro where he serves as a member of the Board of the Shimon Peres Institute for Peace, a special counselor for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for "Intercultural Dialogues and Spiritual Convergences," a board member of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, and a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters.

#### Major Works

*Hell Archives* (1982)

*Practical Manuel of Vampirism* (1986)

*The Pilgrimage* (1987)

*The Alchemist* (1988)

*Brida* (1990)

*The Gift* (1991)

*The Valkyries* (1992)

*Maktub* (1994)

*By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* (1994)

*The Fifth Mountain* (1996)

*The Manual of the Warrior of Light* (1997)

*Veronika Decides to Die* (1998)

*The Devil and Miss Prym* (2000)

*Fathers, Sons and Grandsons* (2001)

*Eleven Minutes* (2003)

*The Genie and the Roses* (2004)

*The Zahir* (2005)

*Like the Flowing River* (2006)

*The Witch of Portabello* (2007)

## INTRODUCTION *The Alchemist*

This LitPlan has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *The Alchemist*. It includes nineteen lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** invites students, through Langston Hughes's poem "A Dream Deferred," to contemplate what happens when dreams are put off. Students will also discuss the tale of Narcissus from Greek mythology in preparation for understanding the novel's Prologue. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for selected vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for selected vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the vocabulary review, a lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. Students will read a companion piece related to the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life and research alchemical concepts. They will give a presentation on their companion pieces and relate to *The Alchemist*. Students will create character journals. Students will select a quotation and write a persuasive essay about how the quotation relates to ideas presented in *The Alchemist*.

There is a non-fiction **reading assignment**. Students must read non-fiction articles, books, etc. to gather information about various forms of divination (tarot, i-ching, runes, etc.).

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **Unit Resource Materials** section includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The **Vocabulary Resource Materials** section includes similar worksheets and games to reinforce the vocabulary words.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

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## UNIT OBJECTIVES *The Alchemist*

1. Through reading Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, students will work both independently and in cooperative groups.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.
3. Students will explore the themes of following one's dreams, individuality, and love.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *The Alchemist* as they relate to the author's theme development.
6. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
7. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - b. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - c. To encourage logical thinking
  - d. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language
  - e. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas

Note: Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.

8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.



READING ASSIGNMENTS *The Alchemist*

Date Assigned	Assignment	Completion Date
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 1</i></p> <p>Prologue &amp; Part One through "And he vanished around the corner of the plaza."</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 2</i></p> <p>"The boy began again to read his book" to the end of Part One</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 3</i></p> <p>Beginning of Part Two to "I don't even know what alchemy is," the boy was saying, when the warehouse boss called them to come inside."</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 4</i></p> <p>"I'm the leader of the caravan" through "The boy thought of Fatima. And he decided he would go to see the chiefs of the tribes."</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 5</i></p> <p>"The boy approached the guard" through "'We'll leave tomorrow before sunrise,' was the alchemist's response."</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 6</i></p> <p>"The boy spent a sleepless night" through "I already know how to turn myself into the wind."</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 7</i></p> <p>"On the second day, the boy climbed to the top of a cliff" through "They mounted their horses."</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Assignment 8</i></p> <p>"I want to tell you a story about dreams" through the Epilogue</p>	

UNIT OUTLINE *The Alchemist*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Intro: Dreams "A Dream Deferred" Narcissus myth  PVR RA#1	Study ?s RA#1  Philosopher's Stone  PVR RA#2	Study ?s RA#2  Quiz RA#1&2  Writing Assignment #1  PVR RA#3	Study ?s RA#3  Library/Media Center Non-Fiction Work: Divination  PVR RA#4	Study ?s RA#4  Quiz RA#3&4  Characterization Posters  PVR RA#5
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Study ?s RA#5  Share Non-Fiction Assignments  PVR RA#6	Study ?s RA#6  Quiz RA#5&6  Writing Assignment #2:  PVR RA#7	Study ?s RA#7  PVR RA#8  Oral Reading	Study ?s RA#8  Quiz RA#7&8  Biblical Allusions	Vocabulary Work
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Art Appreciation: Creative Response Descriptive Language	In-Class Creative Writing: Journal Entries (polishing)	Peer Response: Journal Entries  Share Aloud	Extra Discussion Questions	In-Class Writing: Writing Assignment #3 (Persuasive)
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	
Day 1: Present Book Talks	Day 2: Present Book Talks	Review Materials	Unit Test	

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R = Read

## LESSON ONE

### Objectives

1. To analyze the poem "A Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes to set the theme for the novel *The Alchemist*
2. To familiarize students with the Greek tale of Narcissus in preparation for the allusion in the prologue of *The Alchemist*
3. To be introduced to Paulo Coelho and his novel *The Alchemist*
4. To preview the vocabulary worksheet and study guide questions for reading assignment #1
5. To read reading assignment #1

### Activity #1

Tell students to write a journal entry considering the following:

*Fully describe a goal or dream that you are working toward. What is the purpose of this goal? What will it help you to achieve after attaining it? What strengths do you possess that will help you along the way?*

Ask students to share ideas aloud about their personal dreams/goals. Ask them to think about why they wish to pursue these dreams and how they might feel if they do not follow through.

Read Langston Hughes's poem "a Dream Deferred." Since the poem has gone into public domain, a copy is included in this LitPlan. Have students share their thoughts about the poem and about what happens to dreams that are put off too long.

### Activity #2

Give brief notes about the life of Paulo Coelho (see introductory materials for this LitPlan), and discuss how certain aspects of his life might have led him to write a book about spiritual growth and the gaining of self-knowledge.

### Activity #3

Distribute the books that the students will use in this unit. Ask them to look at the cover and try to predict what the book might be about. Accept any reasonable response. Then tell students that Paulo Coelho begins the novel with a classical allusion to Greek mythology. Tell students about the Greek myth of Narcissus and attempt to make predictions about how this might tie into Coelho's novel. A brief retelling of the story of Narcissus follows this lesson.

### Activity #4

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

### Study Guides

Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test. **Preview the study questions for Reading Assignment #1 together in class.**

### Vocabulary

Prior to each reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 *The Alchemist*

### PROMPT

You are reading *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, which is about a boy who gives up everything he has in order to follow his dream. Along the way, he will meet an alchemist who knows the secrets of the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life. You will be researching the legends of the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life in order to gain insights into the mystical power they are presumed to possess. After gaining a clearer understanding of this power, you will then select one of the following works that also involve these legendary elements and reflect on how the characters use, or intend to use, the mystical powers of alchemy. Are the powers of alchemy used appropriately, or does the desire for some other sort of power overshadow the character's judgement? You will be required to give a presentation about the work you read and its correlation to the topic at the end of the unit.

### PREWRITING

Part I: Research the legends surrounding the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life. Take notes from articles from the library or the Internet that may prove helpful in supporting your ideas throughout this project.

Part II: Select one of the following works:

*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling  
*Indiana Jones and the Philosopher's Stone* by Max McCoy  
*Frankenstein* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley  
*Parsifal* by Cretien de Troyes  
*Reinmator* by H. P. Lovecraft

As you read, make copious notes about the references to the Philosopher's Stone or the Elixir of Life as revealed in your research. You should also create character sketches for both the protagonist and the antagonist that outline both positive and negative character traits.

### DRAFTING

Your introduction should include a discussion of both the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life based on your research. You also need to refer to the work you have selected to analyze for this assignment. Your thesis statement should reveal whether or not the character attempts to use the powers of alchemy appropriately or if he/she was driven by some other force. Use your character sketch notes (taken during your reading) to help you. For the body, be sure to write at least two paragraphs demonstrating how the character of your selected work reflects the main idea of your thesis. Incorporate at least two quotations from both the work itself and from the articles you'd printed out as support. Finally, make connections to Paulo Coelho's treatment of the topic of alchemy in his novel, *The Alchemist*. You are required to correctly use five vocabulary words from the unit in your essay.

### PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a person whose opinion you trust to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

### PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper, double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.