

Mrs. Opel's Summer Reading (Honors English 9)

Summer Reading

One of the course requirements for Honors English 9 is to read and annotate *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho before the first day of class. The book may be purchased at any bookstore or on Amazon. Students will quiz over the book on the first day of school and then complete a thorough analysis of the book and various writing assignments. Students will be expected to contribute not only knowledge of the text but also personal insights and analyses.

Course Description

This course focuses on world literature taught in historical and cultural contexts with an emphasis on critical reading and writing. The Socratic Method is an integral component of the course; success in the course requires consistent participation in all activities.

Google Classroom Invitations

(Sign up so you can get information throughout the summer and over the course of the year.)

1st Period: <https://classroom.google.com/c/NDg3Mzc1NDY3MTgz?cjc=poqnkW6>

2nd Period: <https://classroom.google.com/c/NDg3Mzc1NTA4NDkx?cjc=54ktmzx>

6th Period: <https://classroom.google.com/c/NDg3Mzc1NTA4NjU2?cjc=j6zjcpz>

How To Annotate a Text

Marking and highlighting a text makes you an active reader by allowing you to ask questions, comment on meaning, and mark significant passages. Annotating is a permanent record of your intellectual exchange with the text. Annotating will enable you to discuss the novel with support, evidence, and proof, which will aid in future writing assignments.

- Types of Passages to Mark/Underline
 - Important plot elements – Make a note at the top of the page or in the margin of important plot events.
 - Key Ideas – Mark key ideas and note briefly your reflections about them.
 - Questions – If you have a question about something in the book, write it on the page when the question occurs.
- How to Mark a Text
 - Underline sections that seem important.
 - Draw a line down the margin and underline/highlight key phrases in the passage.

- Use an asterisk next to an important passage. Two asterisks indicate a greater degree of importance, three even more. Note why the passage is important.
- Make marginal notes to respond to ideas in the text. For example, when you come across a character description, write the name of the character in the margin so you can locate that passage easily when needed. Ask questions, label literary elements, or summarize critical events.
- Circle the page number of important passages.
- Use post-it-notes to record important information and/or signify important pages.
- Types of Passages to Highlight
 - Themes
 - Character development
 - Literary devices
 - Symbols
 - Figurative language

Paulo Coelho’s Comment on *The Alchemist*

In an interview with Oprah Paulo Coelho was asked, “So is your dream—your dream to be a writer—is that the same thing as what you refer to in *The Alchemist* as a Personal Legend?” Coelho responded with: “A Personal Legend is the reason you are here. It's as simple as that. You can fill your hours and days with things that are meaningless. But you *know* you have a reason to be here. It is the only thing that gives you enthusiasm.”

The Alchemist Reading Guide

- These questions should help you better understand the novel and help you reflect on the important themes.
- You may see questions similar to these on a quiz, test, or writing assignment.
- You do not have to answer these questions, but I highly recommend you look them over and know the answers.

Part I

1. Why does Coelho open with the modified myth of Narcissus? How does the new version differ from the original one? How does it change the myth’s meaning? What might the author be suggesting about how we perceive the world and ourselves?
2. The novel opens with Santiago thinking about his sheep. What does he observe about their existence? How might the sheep symbolize the way some people live

their lives? How does his observation that they “have forgotten to rely on their own instincts” foreshadow later events in the story?

3. How does Santiago’s father react when his son tells him that he wants to travel?(p.9) Why does he react this way and how does it affect Santiago?
4. To what degree is his father’s observation about travelers (“They come in search of new things, but when they leave they are basically the same people they were when they arrived.”) true about Santiago?
5. Why does the old fortune teller say that Santiago’s dream is difficult to interpret?(p.12-14). Why is Santiago suspicious of her?
6. The old man tells Santiago the story about the miner and the emerald on p. 24. How does it connect to Santiago’s situation? What does he mean when he says that “treasure is uncovered by the force of flowing water, and it is buried by the same currents”? What does this quote have to do with the miner/emerald story?
7. What point does the old man’s story about the boy in the castle and the drops of oil (p.30-32) make? How might this story apply to us in our modern lives?
8. How does the King assist Santiago in recognizing omens? When does Santiago use this help?
9. How do Santiago’s thoughts and perceptions about himself and the world begin to change on pp. 42-44? Describe three things that Santiago sees now that he had never noticed before.

Part II- The boy approached the guard at the front of the door (p.104)

1. What lessons does Santiago learn by working at the crystal shop? Why do you think Coelho chose crystal? How does the crystal merchant’s explanation for not taking the pilgrimage to Mecca (p.55) highlight the difference between Santiago and the merchant? What effect does the merchant say Santiago has had on him?
2. The Englishman and his goals are described on pp.65-70. What is he looking for? What does he demonstrate to Santiago that he already knows? On p. 78, he says that the progress made at the crystal shop is an example of the principle of the Soul of the World. What does he mean? How does he define this? How does he connect the idea to the relationship between the caravan and the desert?
3. The oasis is described in great detail. How does its lushness, laughter and color reflect what Santiago finds there? Where else in the story does Coelho provide details about the physical setting in order to lend more meaning to the events which occur there?

4. Explain how Santiago's union with Fatima represents the Language of the World, according to Santiago on p.93. Why does Fatima accept that her new husband wanders the desert, as she explains on p.98?

Part II (The boy approached the guard at the front of the door)-End

1. What is the meaning of the two dead hawks and the falcon in the oasis? How does this omen change Santiago's status in society?
2. During his trek through the desert with the alchemist, Santiago is told of many basic truths. The alchemist says, "There is only one way to learn. It's through action. Everything you need to know you have learned through your journey" (p.125). What are some of the things Santiago has learned through action?
3. Why do you think the alchemist tells Santiago the story about the man's dream about the two sons (the poet and the soldier) on p. 156?
4. Why did Santiago have to go through the dangers of the tribal wars on the outskirts of the oasis in order to reach the Pyramids? At this point, the boy remembers the old proverb: "The darkest hour of the night came just before the dawn." How does this apply to his situation now? At the end of the journey, why did the Alchemist leave Santiago alone to complete it?
5. Earlier in the story, the Alchemist told Santiago "when you possess great treasures within you, and try to tell others of them, seldom are you believed." At the end of the story, how did this simple lesson change Santiago's life? How did it lead him back to the treasure he was looking for?