

## English II Honors Summer Assignment

Your required summer assignment is to read the novel, *The Alchemist*, by Paulo Coelho. You can purchase the novel online, a physical copy, or view the [PDF here](#).

We will begin the next school year with meaningful analysis and discussion of the text, as well as a comprehensive exam on the novel. The novel focuses on the significance of the quest or journey in one's life, the power of dreams, the conflict between fate and destiny, and the interconnectedness of all things. To facilitate active reading, to encourage meaningful and critical thinking, and to grow accustomed to the rigor in Sophomore Honors English, we require that you interact with the text.

**How to study a novel:** Studying on your own requires self-discipline and a carefully thought out plan in order to be effective. Keep the following guidelines in mind while you read *The Alchemist* this summer. This is meant as a guideline; you need not actually answer each of the questions separately, but prepare to discuss many, if not all of them.

1. You will need to read the novel more than once. Start by reading it quickly for pleasure, then read it slowly and thoroughly.
2. If there are any words you do not understand, look them up in a dictionary. Use this as a learning opportunity to expand your vocabulary.
3. On your second reading, make detailed notes on the characters, conflicts, symbolism and themes in the novel. Further readings will generate new ideas and help you remember details of the plot.
4. Some of the characters will develop as the plot unfolds. How do your responses towards them change during the course of the novel? What type of characterization does the author use? Are the characters static or dynamic; flat or round? Do they have an epiphany during the novel?
5. From whose point-of-view are the events described? How does this point-of-view affect the plot? Does the point-of-view change? If there is a first-person narrator, is he/she reliable?
6. A novel may or may not present events chronologically; there may be flashbacks. The time scheme may be a key to its structure and organization.
7. What types of conflicts are present in the work? What do they reveal about the theme and the author's purpose? What is the primary conflict?
8. What part does/do the setting/s play in the novel? Are certain events, characters or conflicts associated with particular settings? (Setting is the time and location where the novel takes place.)
9. Are words, images, or incidents repeated so as to give the work a pattern? Do such patterns or motifs help you to understand the novel's themes?

10. Identify which styles of language are used in the novel. (e.g. prose, poetry, slang, figurative language, colloquialisms, imagery, etc.) How does the author's diction reveal the tone of the piece?

11. What is the effect of the ending? Is the action completed and closed, or left incomplete and open?

12. Does the novel present a moral and just world? What does this reveal about the author's purpose?

13. Cite exact sources for all quotations, whether from the text or from critical commentaries. Wherever possible, find all your own examples (textual evidence) from the novel to support your opinions.

14. Always express your ideas in your own words thus, avoiding plagiarism.

15. Remember, there is NO substitute for thoroughly reading the novel and formulating your own thoughtful opinions. Using Cliffs Notes and Spark Notes deprives you of the joy of independent reading, discovery, and learning that is vital to your integrity, maturity and academic growth.