

English I CP: Life is a Journey Summer Reading Assignment

Required Text: *The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho

Annotating and Close Reading:

Students must demonstrate evidence of reading and actively engaging with the text. You will be required to bring your annotated copy of the book to class on the first day.

NOTE: See handout that follows called “**CLOSE READING and ANNOTATING TEXT**” for helpful information.

Written Assignment:

As you read *The Alchemist*, you will be focusing on Santiago’s physical journey from the Andalusia region of Spain to the Pyramids in Egypt and the role his journey plays in his development. Keeping this idea in mind, use the charts that follow to create a record of his journey. On the left side, keep track of five people, places and events, and on the right side explain what he learns at each point in the journey.

Life is A Journey

As you read, the story, write down the people Santiago meets, the places he visits, or the events that occur along the way.

Explain what Santiago learns about himself, others, or the world around him.

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CLOSE READING and ANNOTATING TEXT

What is close reading? Close reading is thoughtful, active, critical reading of a text that focuses on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text's form, craft, meanings, etc.

What is annotating?

Think of annotations as **"showing your work" while you read**. You are showing what you are thinking while you read. Thinking is how you connect to the text. This, of course, requires ACTIVE participation with the text, engaging your mind while you read, not skimming the page. Marking important sections can also be helpful in locating them quickly in discussions. What the reader gets from annotating is a deeper initial reading and an understanding of the text that lasts. You deliberately engage the author in conversation and questions.

How and what do I annotate?

The possibilities are limitless. Keep in mind the reasons we annotate. Your annotations must include comments. Remember that the purpose is to indicate evidence of thinking.

- Have a conversation with the text. Talk back to it.
- Ask questions (essential to active reading).
- Comment on the actions or development of a character. Does the character change? Why? How? The result?
- Comment on lines / quotations you think are especially significant, powerful, or meaningful.
- Express agreement or disagreement.
- Summarize key events. Make predictions.
- Connect ideas to each other or to other texts.
- Note if you experience an epiphany.
- Note anything you would like to discuss in class or do not understand.
- Note how the author uses language and crafts the text:
 - ✓ point of view / effect
 - ✓ reliability of narrator
 - ✓ setting / historical period
 - ✓ tone / mood
 - ✓ themes
 - ✓ symbols
 - ✓ imagery
 - ✓ allusions
 - ✓ irony
 - ✓ contrasts / contradictions / juxtapositions / shifts
 - ✓ any other figure of speech or literary device
 - ✓ effects of word choice (diction) or sentence structure or type (syntax)
 - ✓ repetition of words, phrases, actions, events, patterns

As you mark, you notice patterns the author uses and shifts in patterns. Notice that annotations are meant to be more than a “scavenger hunt” for literary techniques and devices. Along with marking these you should comment on the effectiveness or significance of the device. Identifying devices is great, but only if you can determine how they are useful and effective.

How can I create successful annotations? You should use any technique that works for you! Here are two suggested ideas:

- **Highlighter Pen and Pencil:** A highlighter allows you to mark exactly what interests you. While you read, highlight whatever seems to be key information. At first, you will probably highlight too little or too much; with experience, you will choose more effectively which material to highlight. Then, use a **pencil to write your comments in the margins of the text**. A pencil is better than a pen because you can make changes. Even geniuses make mistakes, temporary comments, and incomplete notes.
 - **NOTE:** Be sure to write notes so that when you go back to review your highlighted passages, you remember exactly why you chose it. If the margins are not large enough, consider writing a number in the margins and then keeping a notebook with comments by corresponding number.
- **Sticky Notes:** Using sticky notes allows you to easily flip through the text and find passages to share. You might even consider color coding them in a way that works for you (yellow=character development; blue=imagery, figurative language, tone; green=symbols)

Won't this take a long time? The most common complaint about annotating is that it slows down your reading. Yes, it does. That's the point. If annotating as you read annoys you, read a chapter, then go back and annotate. Reading a text a second time is preferable anyway.

***Approach the work with an open mind.
Let the literature inspire you and stretch your imagination!***