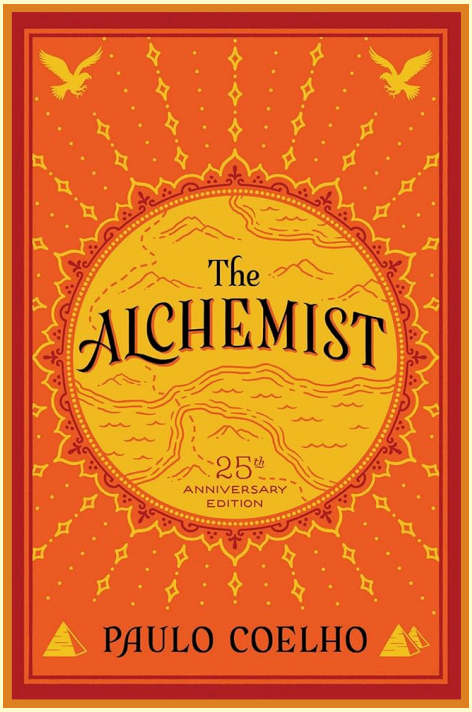
FOOTHILL HIGH SCHOOL

ENGLISH 2 HONORS ~ SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT



The Alchemist, by Paulo Coelho

The recommended English 2 Honors summer assignment is to read *The Alchemist*, by Paulo Coelho. 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. Consider these ideas as you follow along with Santiago's (the protagonist) journey.

To facilitate active reading, to encourage meaningful and critical thinking, and to grow accustomed to the rigor and expectations for text annotations in Sophomore Honors English, we recommend that you interact with the text as you read the novel. What does that mean?

It means you should choose one significant passage (typically 1-2 significant paragraphs of the novel) for approximately every 10 pages of the novel (i.e. one passage on page 12, another on page 18, a third on page 29, etc.). Aim to use the color-coding guidelines below as you highlight and annotate. Make margin notes of questions and specific themes, symbols, motifs, conflicts, style, characterization, figurative language, purpose, and tone.

You may purchase copies of the novel from your local bookseller or check them out from the Foothill High School library. If you check out a copy from the library, use sticky notes to highlight and annotate the text.

Remember to relax and enjoy the summer with some good reading as you prepare for another exciting year ahead. It will be several weeks into the school year before we even start talking about it, but we encourage you to enjoy this book over the summer.

PINK: symbols & motifs

BLUE: thematic ideas such as:

- the interconnectedness of all things
- the power of dreams
- fate vs. destiny
- life as a journey or quest

YELLOW: imagery

ORANGE: figurative language

GREEN: characterization

HOW TO STUDY A NOVEL

Studying and reading 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* and other texts throughout the year. 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. **Read the novel more than once.** Start by reading it quickly for pleasure, then re-read it slowly and thoroughly.
2. **Take notes.** On your second reading, make detailed notes on the characters, conflicts, symbolism and themes in the novel. As you do so, consider the following:
   - **Vocabulary.** 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.
   - **Characterization.** Some 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?
   - **Perspective.** 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?
   - **Time.** 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.
   - **Conflicts.** 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?
   - **Setting.** What part does/do the setting/s play in the novel? Are certain events, characters or conflicts associated with particular settings? Keep in mind that setting refers to both time and place.
   - **Motifs.** Are words, images, or incidents repeated so as to give the work a pattern? How do such patterns or motifs help you to understand the novel's themes?
   - **Language.** 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?
   - **Resolution.** What is the effect of the ending? Is the action completed and closed, or left incomplete and open?
   - **Purpose.** Does the novel present a moral and just world? What does this reveal about the author's purpose?
   - **Textual Evidence.** Wherever possible, find all your own examples from the novel to support your opinions. Cite exact sources for all quotations, whether from the text or from critical commentaries.
3. **Avoid Plagiarism.** Always express your ideas in your own words, thus avoiding plagiarism. Remember, there is NO substitute for thoroughly reading the novel and formulating your own thoughtful opinions. Not only does using *Spark Notes* or *ChatGPT* violate the FHS Academic Honesty Policy, but this also deprives you of the joy of independent reading, discovery, and learning that is vital to your integrity, maturity and academic growth.