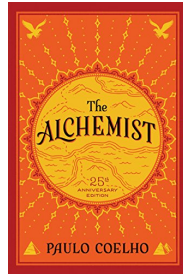


TO: Honors English 9 Students for 2026-2027  
RE: Summer Reading Obligations: *The Alchemist*  
DATE: 20 May 2026  
FROM: Mrs. Dolga

Your preparation for next year's 9<sup>th</sup> grade Honors English class begins this summer!  
Over the summer you will read Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* (the entire novel).



You can purchase an inexpensive copy for yourself, preferably the 25th anniversary edition. [Click here for Amazon.com listing.](#) Owning your own copy allows you to annotate directly in the book, an advantage for comprehending and recalling the text.

**You may also arrange to borrow a copy of the book from PGHS. You can sign out a book at the HS Main Office.**

To help you understand and analyze *The Alchemist*, **you will complete 3 assignments, including a double-entry reading journal.** All 3 assignments are due on the first day of school and will count as your first DK grade of the course. (The Honors English 9 summer reading obligation replaces the summer reading project from our librarian, Mrs. Small.)

*The Alchemist* Assignments:

1. Pre-Reading WebQuest
2. "Prologue": Narcissus Myth Activity
3. Reading Journal (7 Sections)

Optional Enrichment:

1. Excerpt from Essay
2. Poem

**FIRST, CREATE a separate Google doc where you can compile answers for all of the assignments. Label it with your last name and "Honors English 9 Summer Reading".**

**Word of Caution: Avoid any use of websites that offer AI-generated writing tools. AI-generated writing is considered cheating/plagiarism and will earn a "0".**

(Courtesy of Mary Nutter and Michelle Rubano)

## *Preliminary Notes About the Novel:*

*The Alchemist* is written in a fable format. Generally speaking, fables use recognizable, simple characters and settings in order to illustrate a simple truth about life or human nature.

Even though you may not initially understand some of the unusual terminology in the story (Soul of the World, for example), its themes are ones which are probably familiar to you. Can you think of some old, familiar proverbs or songs that capture some of these ideas? For example, think about what ends up being more important for Santiago—the journey...or the destination??? Where is it that Santiago eventually finds happiness? People have been writing and singing about the answers to these questions for years!

The novel integrates ideas and philosophies of many faiths and historical periods. Many of these ideas concern the pursuit of truth, one's intended destiny and the attainment of personal happiness. Coelho refers to these combined elements as one's "Personal Legend." He tells the story of Santiago in order to teach us how we may find and live out our own Personal Legends. These ideas, though, have been explored since ancient times in one form or another by countless faiths and peoples. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Christianity, Judaism, countless tribal cultures, in addition to ancient and modern philosophers, all attempt to define the idea of one's Personal Legend (though they may call it by different names), and all subscribe paths to achieving personal fulfillment. Thus, although the legend is about no faith or philosophy in particular, it is about all faiths and philosophies.

In an interview, Paulo Coelho talks about "Four Pillars of Alchemy— four important "tips" for finding one's Personal Legend:

1. One must believe in "The Soul of the World." The ancient Latin term for this concept is "anima mundi." In short, this idea suggests that everything in the world is interconnected; that is, what one does affects everything else, from the smallest grain of sand to the largest whale, and vice versa. Writers and thinkers such as Plato, Walt Whitman, and Khalil Gibran have attempted to illustrate this interconnectedness in their works.
2. One must listen to the voice of the heart. Coelho suggests that sometimes we must follow our feelings and intuitions, even if we do not fully understand them. Through feeling one gains wisdom.
3. One must be faithful to one's dreams, for they both test and reward us. In other words, the path to achieving one's Personal Legend may not be an easy one, but we must endure the tests in order to gain the rewards.
4. One must "surrender oneself to the universe." Coelho suggests that we must allow ourselves to be open to recognizing and learning from omens and signs which come our way.

(Courtesy of Mary Nutter and Michelle Rubano)

### **ASSIGNMENT #1: Pre-Reading WebQuest**

Summary: *The Alchemist* tells the story of Santiago, the young Andalusian shepherd who dreams of buried treasure in Egypt and embarks upon a challenging and enlightening journey to find it. With all the simplicity and symbolic richness of a fable, Paulo Coelho's novel is both a hunt for buried treasure and a spiritual quest, with a hero who overcomes trials along the way with the help of disguised teachers who guide him.

Before you begin reading, complete the following questions about the novel, *The Alchemist*.

Answer the questions in complete sentences in your separate Google doc.

YOU MUST CITE YOUR SOURCES. (Copy and paste the web link after each answer.)

#### **Pre-Reading WebQuest**

1. What is alchemy? What does an alchemist do?

SOURCE:

2. Alchemy is a subject, a field of study. List and discuss two other subjects to which alchemy is related or similar.

SOURCE:

3. What is the Philosopher's Stone? The Philosopher's Stone has been mentioned in novels, films, and even video games. Give at least two examples where it is mentioned.

SOURCE:

4. List 5 interesting facts about the author Paulo Coelho.

SOURCE:

### **ASSIGNMENT #2: "Prologue": Narcissus Myth Activity**

The myth of Narcissus is one you are probably familiar with, although there are several variations of the story.

1. Read [Edith Hamilton's](#) retelling of the Narcissus myth (found on the next page).
2. Then read the "Prologue" in the beginning of the novel, *The Alchemist*.
3. Answer these questions in complete sentences in your separate Google doc:

- 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 ourselves and the world?

Excerpt from [Edith Hamilton's \*Mythology\*](#), Chapter 4: "The Earliest Heroes":

[The hero was a beautiful lad, whose name was Narcissus.] His beauty was so great, all the girls who saw him longed to be his, but he would have none of them. He would pass the loveliest carelessly by, no matter how much she tried to make him look at her. Heartbroken maidens were nothing to him. Even the sad case of the fairest of the nymphs, Echo, did not move him. She was a favorite of Artemis, the goddess of woods and wild creatures, but she came under the displeasure of a still mightier goddess, Hera herself, who was at her usual occupation of trying to discover what Zeus was about. She suspected that he was in love with one of the nymphs and she went to look them over to try to discover which. However, she was immediately diverted from her investigation by Echo's gay chatter. As she listened amused, the others silently stole away and Hera could come to no conclusion as to where Zeus's wandering fancy had alighted. With her usual injustice she turned against Echo. That nymph became another unhappy girl whom Hera punished. The goddess condemned her never to use her tongue again except to repeat what was said to her. "You will always have the last word," Hera said, "but no power to speak first."

This was very hard, but hardest of all when Echo, too, with all the other lovelorn maidens, loved Narcissus. She could follow him, but she could not speak to him. How then could she make a youth who never looked at a girl pay attention to her? One day, however, it seemed her chance had come. He was calling to his companions. "Is anyone here?" and she called back in rapture, "Here—Here." She was still hidden by the trees so that he did not see her, and he shouted, "Come!" —just what she longed to say to him. She answered joyfully, "Come!" and stepped forth from the woods with her arms outstretched. But he turned away in angry disgust. "Not so," he said; "I will die before I give you power over me." All she could say was, humbly, entreatingly, "I give you power over me," but he was gone. She hid her blushes and her shame in a lonely cave, and never could be comforted. Still she lives in places like that, and they say she has so wasted away with longing that only her voice now is left of her.

So Narcissus went on his cruel way, a scorner of love. But at last one of those he wounded prayed a prayer and it was answered by the gods: "May he who loves not others love himself." The great goddess Nemesis, which means righteous anger, undertook to bring this about. As Narcissus bent over a clear pool for a drink and saw there his own reflection, on the moment he fell in love with it. "Now I know," he cried, "what others have suffered from me, for I burn with love of my own self—and yet how can I reach that loveliness I see mirrored in the water? But I cannot leave it. Only death can set me free." And so it happened. He pined away, leaning perpetually over the pool, fixed in one long gaze. Echo was near him, but she could do nothing; only when, dying, he called to his image, "Farewell —farewell," she could repeat the words as a last good-by to him.

They say that when his spirit crossed the river that encircles the world of the dead, it leaned over the boat to catch a final glimpse of itself in the water.

The nymphs he had scorned were kind to him in death and sought his body to give it burial, but they could not find it. Where it had lain there was blooming a new and lovely flower, and they called it by his name. Narcissus.

(Now read the "Prologue" in *The Alchemist*.)\*

\*Coelho uses a version of the Narcissus myth called "The Disciple" by Oscar Wilde.

### ASSIGNMENT #3: Reading Journal (7 Sections)

*A few notes before you begin...*

I have divided the novel into seven sections.

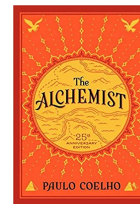
**Reading strategy: Read one section per week.**

You will complete one Reading Journal “sheet” for each section.

You can find the Reading Journal “sheet” template starting on the next page.

The page numbers listed below are for the 25th anniversary edition. ----->>>

Your pagination may be different, so pay attention to the beginning and ending sentences, which I have indicated for every reading section.



| Section # | Pages Assigned / Description of Reading  |
|-----------|--|
| #1        | Part One<br>pp. 1 – 23<br>Section begins, <i>The boy's name was Santiago.</i><br>Section ends, <i>...and he read things he had never told anyone.</i> (up to *)                                    |
| #2        | pp. 23 – 50<br>Section begins, <i>"I'm the king of Salem,"...</i><br>Section ends, <i>"I need money to buy some sheep."</i> (up to Part Two)   |
| #3        | pp. 51 – 73<br>Section begins, <i>The boy had been working for the crystal merchant...</i><br>Section ends, <i>...the warehouse boss called to them to come outside.</i> (up to *)                 |
| #4        | pp. 73 – 107<br>Section begins, <i>"I'm the leader of the caravan,"...</i><br>Section ends, <i>And he decided he would go to see the chiefs of the tribes.</i> (up to *)                           |
| #5        | pp. 107 – 132<br>Section begins, <i>The boy approached the guard...</i><br>Section ends, <i>"...and it will one day return there."</i> (up to *)   |
| #6        | pp. 132 – 158<br>Section begins, <i>They crossed the desert for another two days in silence.</i><br>Section ends, <i>...with an escort party to accompany them as far as they chose.</i> (up to *) |
| #7        | pp. 158 – 171 (read Epilogue)<br>Section begins, <i>They rode for the entire day.</i><br>Novel ends on the last page of the Epilogue.  |

SETTING: Click on this [Slide Show](#) for an introduction to the opening setting of the book.

**Double-Entry Reading Journal (Section 1, pp. 1 - 23)**

**Themes:** The hero's journey \* dreams (Personal Legend) \* omens  
\* interconnectedness of the universe \*

**Summary of Reading**

- **point of view, setting, characters, plot, repetition, imagery, flashback, allusion, etc.**
- Abridged and in your own words
- Connect to a theme whenever possible

**3 Significant Quotes (narration or dialogue)**

- Choose quotes that seem significant to you *OR* are connected to a theme.
- **Record the page # for each quote!**

**My Questions about the Text**

- Write any questions you have at this point.

**My Interpretation/Analysis of Each Quote**

- Explain the meaning of each quote *AND/OR* how it connects to a theme.

**My Predictions about the Text**

- Write what you think may happen next.

**Double-Entry Reading Journal (Section 2, pp. 23 - 50)**

**Themes:** The hero's journey \* dreams (Personal Legend) \* omens  
\* interconnectedness of the universe \*

**Summary of Reading**

- **point of view, setting, characters, plot, repetition, imagery, flashback, allusion, etc.**
- Abridged and in your own words
- Connect to a theme whenever possible

**3 Significant Quotes (narration or dialogue)**

- Choose quotes that seem significant to you *OR* are connected to a theme.
- Record the page # for each quote!

**My Questions about the Text**

- Write any questions you have at this point.

**My Interpretation/Analysis of Each Quote**

- Explain the meaning of each quote *AND/OR* how it connects to a theme.

**My Predictions about the Text**

- Write what you think may happen next.

**Double-Entry Reading Journal (Section 3, pp. 51 - 73)**

**Themes:** The hero's journey \* dreams (Personal Legend) \* omens  
\* interconnectedness of the universe \*

**Summary of Reading**

- **point of view, setting, characters, plot, repetition, imagery, flashback, allusion, etc.**
- Abridged and in your own words
- Connect to a theme whenever possible

**3 Significant Quotes (narration or dialogue)**

- Choose quotes that seem significant to you *OR* are connected to a theme.
- **Record the page # for each quote!**

**My Questions about the Text**

- Write any questions you have at this point.

**My Interpretation/Analysis of Each Quote**

- Explain the meaning of each quote *AND/OR* how it connects to a theme.

**My Predictions about the Text**

- Write what you think may happen next.

**Double-Entry Reading Journal (Section 4, pp. 73 - 107)**

**Themes:** The hero's journey \* dreams (Personal Legend) \* omens  
\* interconnectedness of the universe \*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Summary of Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>point of view, setting, characters, plot, repetition, imagery, flashback, allusion, etc.</b></li><li>● Abridged and in your own words</li><li>● <u>Connect to a theme</u> whenever possible</li></ul> <p><b>3 Significant Quotes (narration or dialogue)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Choose quotes that seem significant to you <i>OR</i> are <u>connected to a theme</u>.</li><li>● <u>Record the page # for each quote!</u></li></ul> | <p><b>My Questions about the Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Write any questions you have at this point.</li></ul> <p><b>My Interpretation/Analysis of Each Quote</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explain the meaning of each quote <i>AND/OR</i> how it <u>connects to a theme</u>.</li></ul> <p><b>My Predictions about the Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Write what you think may happen next.</li></ul> |
|   |   |

**Double-Entry Reading Journal (Section 5, pp. 107 - 132)**

**Themes:** The hero's journey \* dreams (Personal Legend) \* omens  
\* interconnectedness of the universe \*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Summary of Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>point of view, setting, characters, plot, repetition, imagery, flashback, allusion, etc.</b></li><li>● Abridged and in your own words</li><li>● <u>Connect to a theme</u> whenever possible</li></ul> <p><b>3 Significant Quotes (narration or dialogue)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Choose quotes that seem significant to you <i>OR</i> are <u>connected to a theme</u>.</li><li>● <u>Record the page # for each quote!</u></li></ul> | <p><b>My Questions about the Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Write any questions you have at this point.</li></ul> <p><b>My Interpretation/Analysis of Each Quote</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explain the meaning of each quote <i>AND/OR</i> how it <u>connects to a theme</u>.</li></ul> <p><b>My Predictions about the Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Write what you think may happen next.</li></ul> |
|   |   |

**Double-Entry Reading Journal (Section 6, pp. 132 - 158)**

**Themes:** The hero's journey \* dreams (Personal Legend) \* omens  
\* interconnectedness of the universe \*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Summary of Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>point of view, setting, characters, plot, repetition, imagery, flashback, allusion, etc.</b></li><li>● Abridged and in your own words</li><li>● <u>Connect to a theme</u> whenever possible</li></ul> <p><b>3 Significant Quotes (narration or dialogue)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Choose quotes that seem significant to you <i>OR</i> are <u>connected to a theme</u>.</li><li>● <u>Record the page # for each quote!</u></li></ul> | <p><b>My Questions about the Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Write any questions you have at this point.</li></ul> <p><b>My Interpretation/Analysis of Each Quote</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explain the meaning of each quote <i>AND/OR</i> how it <u>connects to a theme</u>.</li></ul> <p><b>My Predictions about the Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Write what you think may happen next.</li></ul> |
|   |   |

**Double-Entry Reading Journal (Section 7, pp. 158 - 171)**

**Themes:** The hero's journey \* dreams (Personal Legend) \* omens  
\* interconnectedness of the universe \*

**Summary of Reading**

- **point of view, setting, characters, plot, repetition, imagery, flashback, allusion, etc.**
- Abridged and in your own words
- Connect to a theme whenever possible

**3 Significant Quotes (narration or dialogue)**

- Choose quotes that seem significant to you *OR* are connected to a theme.
- **Record the page # for each quote!**

**My Questions about the Text**

- Write any questions you have at this point.

**My Interpretation/Analysis of Each Quote**

- Explain the meaning of each quote *AND/OR* how it connects to a theme.

**My Predictions about the Text**

- Write what you think may happen next.

## Supplemental Readings - Optional Enrichment

The following texts riff on themes found within *The Alchemist*. They are optional; however, I encourage you to read one or both. The texts also include interactive annotations, questions, and audio components for you to utilize.

Essay: Excerpt from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson  
<https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/excerpt-from-self-reliance>

Poem: “What Love Isn’t” by Yrsa Daley-Ward  
<https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/what-love-isn-t#:~:text=Yrsa%20Daley%20Ward%20is%20a,has%20on%20the%20overall%20theme.>

Contact Info:

If you have any questions, email: [jdolga@pgsd.org](mailto:jdolga@pgsd.org).

I am very excited to work with you next year!

Mrs. Dolga