



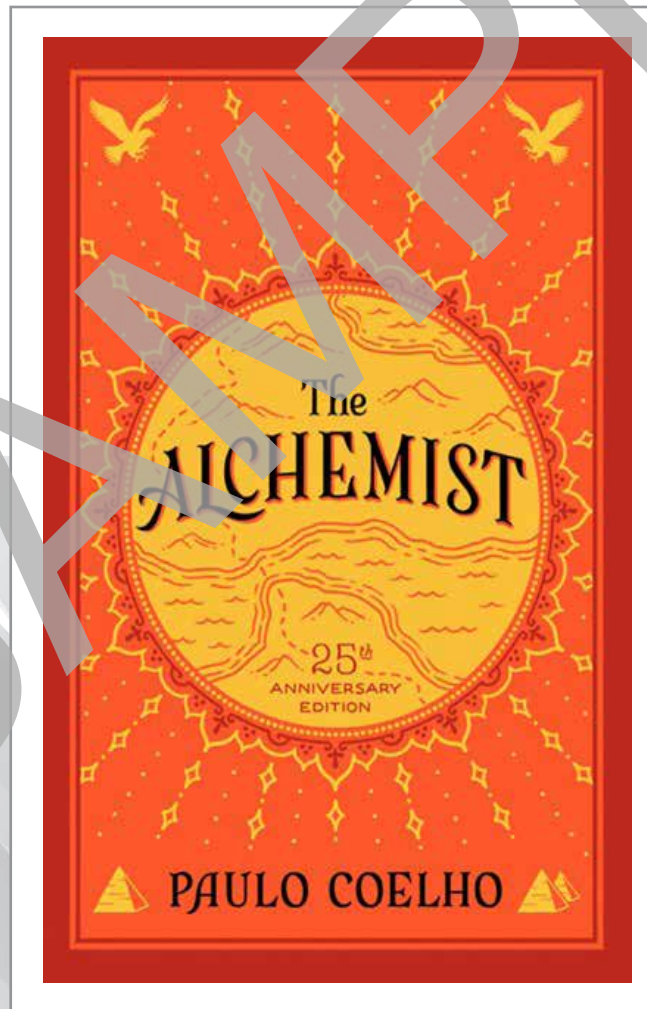
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Alchemist

Paulo Coelho



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Alchemist

Paulo Coelho

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Analysis, compare/contrast, research, critical thinking, evaluation, interpretation

Comprehension

Cause/effect, predicting, inference, thematic development, plot development, figurative meanings

Vocabulary

Target words, definitions, application

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, report, debate

Writing

Poetry, essay, prose, letter, fable

Literary Elements

Fable, allegory, extended metaphor, irony, allusion, characterization, setting, theme, genre, point of view, mood, foil

Across the Curriculum

Art—drawing, graphic art, scrapbook; Music—soundtrack, songwriting; History—comparative religion, culture; Thinking—communications, research

Genre: fable

Setting: from southern Spain, through the Sahara desert, to Egypt; an indeterminate time period—the story is intended to feel timeless

Point of View: third-person omniscient; usually limited to the main character with select breaks

Themes: pursuing dreams; transformation; living in the present; understanding one's relationship to nature and to God; love without possession; living life through action

Style: narrative

Tone: philosophical; hopeful

Conflict: person vs. self; person vs. nature; person vs. person

Translations: from Portuguese into 60 languages

Summary

Santiago, a shepherd in the Andalusia region of Spain, has a recurrent dream about finding treasure. He seeks out an interpreter of dreams who tells him he will find his treasure at the Pyramids in Egypt. Still unsure whether or not to pursue this dream, he has an encounter with a man with obvious supernatural powers who identifies himself as Melchizedek, the king of Salem. He tells Santiago about pursuing his Personal Legend, that dream each person holds that s/he has always wanted to accomplish. Santiago sells his sheep, travels to northern Africa, and joins a caravan to cross the desert to Egypt. In the course of his travels he faces multiple obstacles, including losing his fortune three times, kidnapping due to tribal wars, and a beating at the hands of thieves. He also encounters various people from whom he learns life lessons, including a crystal merchant, an English scholar of alchemy, an alchemist, and Fatima, who becomes his love and soul mate. Through these trials and encounters, he undergoes a spiritual transformation, learning the Language of the World and realizing the interconnectedness of all creation to God. Santiago eventually arrives at the Pyramids, only to discover that all along his treasure lay under the very sycamore tree in Spain where he first dreamt about it.

About the Author

Paulo Coelho was born in 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Before fully committing himself to his literary career, he worked as a journalist, theater director and actor, and had a successful career writing lyrics for Brazilian singers. In the early 1970s, he spent two years traveling the world, including South America, North Africa, Mexico, and Europe. He learned about secret societies, oriental religions, and mysticism, which sparked his interest in the spiritual quest. In 1986, he took the pilgrimage of St. James of Compostella in Northern Spain, which had a profound spiritual effect on him. He wrote about this experience in his book, *The Pilgrimage*. He wrote *The Alchemist* in 1987, and despite slow initial sales, it became one of the all-time bestselling books in Brazil. It has sold over 30 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 60 languages. It was one of the bestselling books of the 20th century. Several of Coelho's other works, including *Eleven Minutes* and *The Zahir*, have become bestsellers worldwide, making Coelho one of the most influential writers in the world. Although Coelho is a practicing Catholic, his experiences give him an appreciation for the many ways spirituality manifests itself in the world. Coelho currently serves on a number of boards and councils working toward world peace and cultural understanding. He lives with his wife, Christine, alternately in Brazil and in France.

Introduction–Page 33

Santiago, a young shepherd, arrives with his flock at an abandoned church in Spain where he has a recurring dream. The next day he travels to Tarifa to have his dream interpreted by a gypsy woman. She tells him the dream means he will find a hidden treasure in Egypt and become a rich man. He next encounters a mysterious and mystical man who speaks of the shepherd’s dream and purpose in life—his Personal Legend. Santiago decides to sell his flock and pursue the treasure. Throughout his travels, he anticipates his reunion with a merchant’s daughter with whom he thinks he is in love.

Vocabulary
disinter
impetus
euphoria
aura
sacristy
raven
zenith
seminary
recurrent
dryly
levanter
abashed

Discussion Questions

1. What is the meaning of the story of Narcissus and the lake? Is it a tale of vanity and selfishness or a tale of beauty? What makes it a “lovely story”? (
2. What is the attraction of travel to Santiago? What differing opinions does his father hold about traveling? With whom do you identify more?
3. The interpreter of dreams tells Santiago, “It’s the simple things in life that are the most extraordinary; only wise men are able to understand them” (p. 15). Is there truth to this statement, or is the interpreter justifying her inability to understand Santiago’s dream? What other examples can you think of that might exemplify this claim?
4. Santiago reflects, “When someone sees the same people every day...they wind up becoming a part of that person’s life. And then they want the person to change. If someone isn’t what others want them to be, the others become angry. Everyone seems to have a clear idea of how other people should lead their lives, but none about his or her own” (pp. 15–16). Is this notion something you have ever experienced with family and friends in your own life? What do you think causes people to want to change others? What happens when we strive to change those around us?

Assessment for *The Alchemist*

Assessment is an ongoing process. The following ten items can be completed during the novel study. Once finished, the student and teacher will check the work. Points may be added to indicate the level of understanding.

Name _____ Date _____

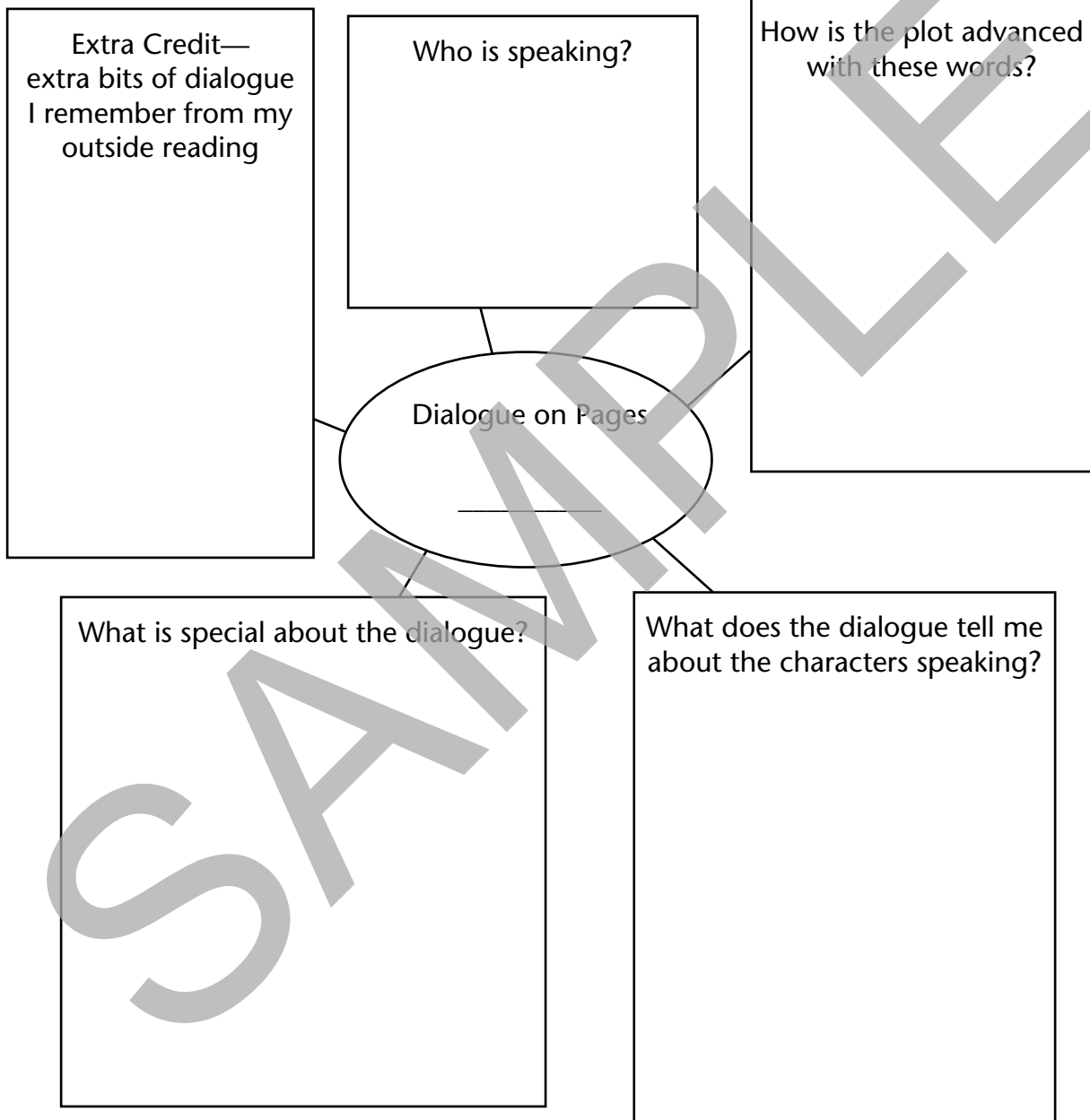
Student

Teacher

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Working in a small group, write five review questions over your assigned section. Participate in an oral review. |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Compare two of your completed Supplementary Activities with members of a small group. |
| _____ | _____ | 3. In a small group, make flash cards using vocabulary words. Take turns quizzing one another. |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Write a book review. Include a short summary of the book along with your recommendation. |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Keep a journal for a day noting all examples of unspoken language you observe. Note how gestures, facial expressions, signals, intuition, and "hunches" figure into all that you observe. Write about what you experience. |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Share one Post-reading Extension Activity with the class on an assigned day. |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Correct all mistakes on quizzes. |
| _____ | _____ | 8. With a partner, prepare a television interview with Santiago, the young Spanish shepherd who found a buried treasure. |
| _____ | _____ | 9. As the teacher calls out a personality trait, write the name of the character from the novel that you think best matches the trait. Afterward, share your characterizations with your classmates. |
| _____ | _____ | 10. Choose one quote from the book that expresses an idea you agree with or appreciate. Write an essay discussing your understanding of that quote and how you would like to apply it to your life. |

Using Dialogue

Directions: Examine the dialogue between Santiago and the desert, wind, and sun. Fill in the chart to evaluate the purpose of the dialogue and whether or not it is effective in moving along the plot.



Triple Venn Diagram

Directions: Using the Venn diagram below, compare and contrast fables, myths, and allegories.

