

The Alchemist

PART ONE

Beginning: “The boy’s name was Santiago,” and ending with the paragraph, “The boy could see in his father’s gaze...”

1. Why is Santiago sleeping on the ground and using a book as a pillow?
2. How does Coelho set the **tone** of the novel within the first couple of pages?
3. What do Santiago’s sheep, his father, and the merchant’s daughter all have in common?
4. Coelho has Santiago believe that the church he sleeps in may be haunted because it caused him to have the same dream for a second time. By doing this, Coelho effectively establishes what?
5. How does Coelho suggest Santiago’s ability to experience personal growth?
6. What does Santiago’s jacket reveal about him?
7. How does Coelho work Santiago’s background into the story?
8. What makes Santiago happy as a shepherd?

Beginning: “The horizon was tinged with red,” and ending with the paragraph, “He looked to the skies, feeling a bit abashed...”

1. Why is Santiago afraid of gypsies?
2. How does Coelho reassure the reader that the gypsy isn’t going to harm Santiago?
3. If Santiago enjoys meeting new people, why is he annoyed with the old man tries to spark up a conversation with him?
4. What does Coelho accomplish in describing Santiago’s errands after his consultation with the gypsy?
5. How does Coelho give credibility to Melchizedek?
6. How does Coelho introduce the themes of The Soul of the World and Personal Legends?
7. What does Coelho do to change Santiago’s mind about not believing in dreams and marrying the merchant’s daughter, thus saving the story?
8. If everyone knows what their Personal Legend is when they are young, why do people give up?
9. Why does Santiago curse the moment he met Melchizedek?

10. What is the narrative purpose for Melchizedek to insist that Santiago give him one-tenth of his flock?
11. What does the introduction of the stones, Urim and Thummim, do for the character of Santiago?
12. What is the point of telling a story within a story?
13. Why does Coelho include the short passage beginning, "At the highest point in Tarifa there is an old fort, built by the Moors," and ending, "But an old king sometimes has to take some pride in himself."?

Beginning: "How strange Africa is, thought the boy," and ending, "And after another long silence, he added, 'I need money to buy some sheep.'"

1. How does Coelho choose to transport the reader to Africa?
2. Why does Coelho mention the beautiful sword in the market?
3. What is the narrative purpose for Santiago's being robbed of all his money?
4. After Santiago gets robbed in Tangier, what does Coelho accomplish by revealing how happy the candy merchant is or by revealing how unhappy the crystal merchant is?
5. Why does Coelho end Part One with the line, "I need money to buy some sheep."?

PART TWO

Beginning: "The boy had been working for the crystal merchant for almost a month," and ending, "Not everyone can see his dreams come true in the same way."

1. How has Santiago's role changed in the beginning of Part Two?
2. What does Santiago's change of roles say about his development as a character?
3. What theme is advanced by Santiago's success in this section?
4. What is the point of the conversation between Santiago and the crystal merchant?
5. What is the primary effect of the crystal merchant's words?
6. How does Coelho reveal that the usually impatient and curmudgeonly crystal merchant is tolerant of Santiago?
7. What is the narrative purpose of the crystal merchant's story about the five obligations of Muslim law?
8. Coelho uses the crystal merchant's questions as a technique to do primarily what?

Beginning: “The boy went to his room and packed his belongings,” and ending, “What could it cost to go over to the supplier’s warehouse...”

1. What is Coelho’s purpose for keeping Santiago in Tangier for a year?
2. Why doesn’t Santiago initially want to pursue his Personal Legend to the Pyramids?
3. What purpose do Urim and Thummim serve?
4. What is Coelho’s intent for continually referencing the old king during his description of other characters?

Beginning: “The Englishman was sitting on a bench in a structure that smelled of animals,” and ending, “‘And I better read your books,’ said the boy.”

1. Coelho’s main purpose for introducing the character of the Englishman is to what?
2. How does Coelho create a sense of danger before Santiago heads out into the desert?
3. What is Santiago talking about when he describes “the mysterious chain that links one thing to another, the same chain that had caused him to become a shepherd, that had caused his recurring dream, that had brought him to a city near Africa, to find a king, and to be robbed in order to meet a crystal merchant, and...”?
4. How is journeying across the desert analogous to Santiago’s search for his Personal Legend?
5. What is Coelho suggesting when he points out that the challenges of the caravan go unnoticed by the Englishman?
6. How does Coelho continue to teach the reader about the major themes of his book, namely, The Soul of the World and The Universal Language, while Santiago is merely traveling within the larger scope of the caravan traveling across the desert?

Beginning: “The caravan began to travel day and night,” and ending, “And, if I have to, I will accept the fact that he has become part of the clouds, and the animals, and the water of the desert.”

1. When Santiago sees the oasis on the horizon and asked the camel driver, “Well, why don’t we go there right now?” the camel driver’s response is, “Because we have to sleep.” What does this accomplish?
2. Coelho uses many literary tools in order to introduce the oasis to the reader for the first time including imagery, allusion, emotion, and exposition. However, he does not use dialogue. Explain.
3. What narrative purpose does the war serve?
4. What further purpose is served by making oases places of refuge from the tribal wars?

5. Coelho is using the Rule of Three when he has Santiago talk to the woman dressed in black, the man, and the young woman at the well, before Santiago discovers where the alchemist lives. Why do this?
6. Coelho introduces Santiago to his love object in the middle of his search for his Personal Legend. What does this accomplish for the story?
7. What is the line, "The coy listened to the sound of her voice, and thought it to be more beautiful than the sound of the wind in the date palms," an example of?
8. The character of Fatima serves many narrative purposes including, objective, obstacle, priority and surprise, but not guide. Why?
9. Santiago's decision either to stay with Fatima or continue along his journey is the culmination of this passage's rise in action. What makes it so effective?
10. In order for characters to be dynamic, they must grow. How does Coelho use this passage to significantly mark Santiago's growth?

Beginning: "He wandered for a while, keeping the date palms of the oasis within sight," and ending, "We'll leave tomorrow before sunrise,' was the alchemist's only response."

1. What is Coelho doing by having Santiago experience his vision in the desert, and not the oasis?
2. What makes Coelho's turn of events ironic, in that Santiago may be shot for warning the tribal elders of an attack against them?
3. How does Coelho create his frightening introduction of the alchemist?
4. How does Coelho get Santiago to trust the alchemist after frightening him so?
5. What is Coelho's purpose for asking Santiago to become the counselor of the oasis?
6. It seems Santiago is constantly being tested. In this passage alone he is tested three times; physically, when he is introduced to the alchemist; emotionally, when his desires are satisfied by Fatima and his wealth; and spiritually, when he is asked to find the life in the desert. Why do you suppose Coelho does this?

Beginning: "The boy spent a sleepless night," and ending, "It said that the darkest hour of the night came just before the dawn."

1. Coelho thinks it's important enough to take the time to develop the relationship between Santiago and Fatima. Why is this important if Santiago is just going to leave to find his treasure?
2. What purpose does Coelho accomplish by revealing the conversation Santiago has with his heart, in the midst of journeying with the alchemist?
3. From Coelho's perspective, why is it significant that Santiago has had a literal conversation with his

heart?

Beginning: “So what should I do now?” and ending, “They mounted their horses, and rode out in the direction of the Pyramids of Egypt.”

1. What opportunity does Coelho miss while Santiago and the alchemist are searching by the three armed tribesmen at the very beginning of the passage?
2. How is Coelho able to increase the sense of danger for Santiago crossing the desert even when compared to earlier in the book while the tribes are at war?
3. Santiago has learned many truths about Coelho’s world. What does Coelho do to prevent his character from becoming over confident?
4. How is it that Santiago is already an alchemist? For what, ultimately, is alchemy metaphor?

Beginning: “The two were taken to a nearby military camp,” and ending, “And that he, a boy, could perform miracles.”

1. When the alchemist and Santiago are captured, the alchemist tells the chief that he “was simply acting as guide” for Santiago, and that Santiago is an alchemist. Why would Coelho’s character do this?
2. Coelho tells the reader just before the desert is quoted, that it and Santiago speak the same language. Why do this?
3. How does Coelho’s use of personification in the passage enhance the story’s message?
4. How does Coelho show the reader that Santiago truly understands the Soul of the World?
5. What else does Coelho’s decision to use love as Santiago’s topic to engage nature accomplish for the story?
6. How might this passage be considered the climax of the book?

Beginning: “The boy rode along through the desert for several hours,” and ending, “Because now he knew were his treasure was.”

1. How does Coelho effectively communicate to the reader the relief Santiago feels as his long journey comes to a close?
2. Coelho uses positive emotions through painful hardships to do what in the passage?
3. What is the narrative purpose of the terrible assault on Santiago?
4. What does Coelho accomplish by setting this passage at the Pyramids?
5. How are dreams used in this passage?