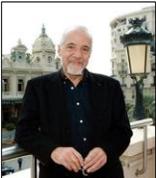


Topic	Key information	Self-testing activities
<p>Context – facts about Paul Coelho, the author</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1947 • Always wanted to be a writer • Dropped out of law school in 1970 • Travelled through much of South America, North Africa, Mexico, and Europe. • 1974 imprisoned short time by the military dictatorship then ruling in Brazil. • 1980 walked the 500-plus mile Road of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What links can you make between Coelho's life and the story of 'The Alchemist'? • Can you identify any moments in the novel which you think might have been inspired by things which happened to Coelho? • Where can you see that Coelho has used his own knowledge to help him write the book?
<p>The title – facts relating to the book's title, 'The Alchemist'</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founded in Egypt, alchemy was practiced throughout the Mediterranean regions and as far away as China. • Alchemists believed that all objects consist of water, air, fire and earth • Early alchemy was controversial and was opposed by many rulers and religions. • Alchemists wanted to turn metal into gold. • They also wanted to develop potions (e.g. The Philosopher's Stone or The Elixir of Life), to ensure good health and to extend how long people lived for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think some religions and rulers wouldn't have liked the idea of alchemy? • Why do you think the idea of living for longer appealed to some people at the time? • Why might some people have disliked the idea of living for longer than was normal?
<p>Motifs and symbols – these appear often in the book and help the author to deliver his key message</p>	<p>Dreams In <i>The Alchemist</i>, dreams represent not only an outlet into one's inner desires, but also a form of communication with the Soul of the World. Santiago's dream of a treasure in Egypt, for instance, reveals to him his Personal Legend and sets the entire plot of the Alchemist into motion.</p> <p>Maktub Many of the characters that Santiago meets during his journey use the word <i>maktub</i>, which as the crystal merchant explains, means "it is written."</p> <p>Omens Omens offer Santiago guidance on his journey and reassure him that the Soul of the World has endorsed his journey. As Melchizedek explains, omens make up part of the Universal Language of the World, and if Santiago taps into this language he can always find the meaning in his environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An omen is considered an event which tells us something good or bad will happen to us soon. • Do you believe in omens? • Have you experienced one? • Do you believe that your future is already "written", or can you decide what happens to you in your own life? • Do you think that dreams can tell us more about our own wishes? • Have you ever had a dream that told you something about yourself that you hadn't yet realised? Can you explain what happened?

Key characters



The Alchemist
200-year-old, extremely potent alchemist inhabiting in the Al-Fayoum Oasis.



Santiago
The Book's central character: An adventurous shepherd who have unwavering resolve to accomplish his *personal legend* of finding a treasure.



Fatima
A gorgeous and innocent juvenile "desert woman" who lives at the Al-Fayoum Oasis.



Melchizedek
The King of Salem. He appears to possess magical powers and helps those pursuing their Personal Legends.



Crystal Merchant
A struggling merchant who owns a crystal shop on top of a desolate hill. He is a good-hearted, devout Muslim, but has a crippling fear of change.



Englishman
A well-educated science scholar gritty to learn the clandestine of alchemy by learning from a factual alchemist. He is a cynic and adore reading his tomes.



Merchant's daughter
The beautiful and intelligent raven-haired daughter of the merchant.



Merchant
A merchant who buys wool from Santiago on a yearly basis.



Caravan Leader
The bold leader of a caravan traveling across the Sahara Desert from Tanger to Egypt.

Key quotations

"...whoever you are, or whatever it is that you do, when you really want something, it's because that desire originated in the soul of the universe. It's your mission on earth."

"..every blessing ignored becomes a curse."

"We are afraid of losing what we have, whether it's our life or our possessions or our property. But this fear evaporates when we understand that our life stories and the history of the world were written by the same hand."

"The alchemists spent years in their laboratories, observing the fire that purified the metals. They spent so much time close to the fire that gradually they gave up the vanities of the world. They discovered that the purification of the metals had led to a purification of themselves."

"What you still need to know is this: before a dream is realized, the Soul of the World tests everything that was learned along the way. It does this not because it is evil, but so that we can, in addition to realizing our dreams, master the lessons we've learned as we've moved toward that dream. That's the point at which, as we say in the language of the desert, one 'dies of thirst just when the palm trees have appeared on the horizon.'"

Form – 'The Alchemist' takes the form of a **fable**

A '**fable** is a story with a moral';
The **Alchemist** is nothing but a story of a young Shepherd who follows his dream relentlessly and seeks to achieve it with determination and dedication.

Self-testing activities

- Which character do you like most and why?
- Can you explain which character has the most impact on Santiago and why that is?
- Can you choose a quotation and explain what you think it means in your own words?
- Can you choose a quotation and explain how it relates to the rest of the novel?
- What do you think your personal 'mission on earth' is and why?

- Why do you think Coelho chose to use a fable to spread his message?
- Why are fables often effective ways of telling people how to live their lives?
- Can you think of any other fables and their key messages?
- What is the moral of 'The Alchemist'?