

## Paulo Coelho: De Alchemist

### Auteur

Paulo Coelho, seen by some as an alchemist of words and, by others, as a mass culture phenomenon, is the most influential author of the present century.

Readers from over 150 countries, irrespective of their creed and culture, have turned him into a reference author of our time.

His books, translated into 56 languages, have not only topped the bestseller lists, but have gone on to become the subject of social and cultural debate. The ideas, philosophy and subject matter covered in his books touch the aspirations of millions of readers searching for their own path and for new ways of understanding the world.

Paulo Coelho was born in 1947 into a middle-class family, the son of Pedro, an engineer, and Lygia, a housewife.

At seven, he entered the Jesuit school of San Ignacio in Rio de Janeiro. Paulo came to detest the obligatory nature of religious practice. However, although he hated praying and going to mass, there were compensations. In the school's austere corridors, Paulo discovered his true vocation: to be a writer. He won his first literary prize in a school poetry competition, and his sister, Sonia, recounts how she won an essay prize by entering something that Paulo had discarded in the wastepaper bin.

However, Paulo's parents had very different plans for their son's future. They wanted him to be an engineer and tried to stifle his desires to devote himself to literature. Their intransigence and his discovery of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* aroused Paulo's spirit of rebellion, and he began routinely to flout the family rules. His father took this behaviour as a sign of mental illness and, when Paulo was seventeen, he twice had him committed to a psychiatric hospital, where Paulo underwent several sessions of **electroconvulsive therapy**.

Shortly after this, Paulo became involved with a **theatre** group and began working as a **journalist**. In the eyes of the comfortably-off middle classes of the time, the theatre was a hotbed of immorality. His frightened parents decided to break their promise not to confine him again and had him readmitted to hospital for the third time. When he came out, Paulo was even more lost and more enclosed in his own private world. In despair, the family called in another doctor who told them: Paulo isn't mad and he shouldn't be in a psychiatric hospital. He simply has to learn how to face up to life. Thirty years after these experiences, Paulo Coelho wrote *Veronika Decides to Die*.

According to Paulo: 'Veronika Decides to Die was published in Brazil in 1998. By September, I had received more than 1,200 e-mails and letters describing similar experiences. In October, some of the subjects discussed in the book - depression, panic attacks, suicide - were addressed at a conference that went

on to have national repercussions. On 22nd January of the following year, Senator Eduardo Suplicy read out some extracts from my book at a plenary session and managed to get approval for a law that had been doing the rounds of the Brazilian Congress for ten years - a law prohibiting arbitrary hospitalisation.'

After this period, Paulo returned to his studies and it looked as if he was finally going to follow the route his parents had prepared for him. Not long afterwards, though, he dropped out and went back to the theatre. This was in the sixties, and the hippie movement had exploded onto the world scene. These new trends took root even in Brazil, ruled at the time by a repressive military regime. Paulo wore his **hair long** and made a point of **never carrying his identity card**; for a time, he took **drugs**, wanting to live the hippie experience to the full. His passion for writing drove him to start a magazine, of which only two issues were ever published.

Around this time, the musician and composer, Raul Seixas invited Paulo to write the words to his songs. Their second record was a huge success and sold more than 500,000 copies. This was the first time Paulo had earned a large amount of money. Their partnership continued up until 1976. Paulo wrote more than sixty songs with Raul Seixas, and together they changed the **Brazilian rock scene**.

In 1973, Paulo and Raul became part of the **Alternative Society**, an organization that opposed capitalist ideology, defended the individual's right to do what he or she pleased, and also practised **black magic**. He later described these experiences in *The Valkyries* (1992).

During this period, they began publishing "**Kring-ha**", a series of comic strips, calling for more freedom. The dictatorship considered these subversive, and Paulo and Raul were detained and imprisoned. Raul was soon released, but Paulo was kept in for longer because he was considered to be the 'brains' behind the comic strips. His problems did not end there however; two days after his release, Paulo was seized as he was walking down the street and taken to a **military torture centre** where he remained for several days. According to him, he only escaped death by telling them that he was mad and had already been admitted to mental hospitals three times. He started physically harming himself when his kidnappers were there in the room, and, in the end, they stopped torturing him and let him go.

This experience marked him deeply. At twenty-six, Paulo decided that he had had enough experience of 'life' and wanted to be 'normal'. He got a job at the record company, Polygram, where he met the woman who would later become his wife.

In 1977, they moved to London. Paulo bought a typewriter and started writing, without much success. The following year, he returned to Brazil, where he worked as an executive for another record company, CBS. This only lasted three

months, after which he separated from his wife and left his job.

In 1979, he met up with an old friend, Christina Oiticica, whom he would later marry and with whom he still lives.

The couple travelled to Europe where they visited several countries. In Germany they went to the concentration camp at Dachau. There Paulo had **a vision** in which a man appeared to him. Two months later, he met that same man in a café in Amsterdam and spent a long time talking to him and exchanging views and experiences. The man, whose identity Paulo has never revealed, suggested that he should return to Catholicism. Paulo started studying the **symbolic language of Christianity**. He also proposed that Paulo should walk the Road to Santiago (a medieval pilgrim's route between France and Spain).

In 1987, a year after completing that pilgrimage, Paulo wrote his first book, *The Pilgrimage (The Diary of a Magus)*. The book describes his experiences during the pilgrimage and his discovery that the extraordinary occurs in the lives of ordinary people. It was published by a small Brazilian publishing house and, although it received very few reviews, it sold quite well.

In 1988, Paulo wrote another, very different book: *The Alchemist*. This was a highly symbolic book, a metaphor of life, which reflected his eleven years spent studying alchemy. The first edition sold only 900 copies, and the publishing house decided not to reprint.

Paulo would not give up the pursuit of his dream. He got a second chance: he found a bigger publishing house, Rocco, that was interested in his work. In 1990, he published *Brida*, in which he wrote about the gift that we all carry within us. The publication of this book, which, this time, received plenty of press attention, took *The Alchemist* and *The Pilgrimage* to the top of the bestseller lists. *The Alchemist* went on to sell more copies than any other book in the history of Brazil, and even made it into the Guinness Book of Records. In 2002, the Portuguese literary review, *Jornal de Letras*, the great authority on literature and the Portuguese literary market, declared that *The Alchemist* had sold more copies than any other book written in Portuguese in the entire history of the language.

In May 1993, HarperCollins published 50,000 copies of *The Alchemist*, which was the largest ever initial print run of a Brazilian book in the United States. At the launch, the executive director of HarperCollins, John Loudon, said: 'It was like getting up at dawn and seeing the sun rise while the rest of the world still slept. Wait until everybody else wakes up and sees this too.' Paulo was overwhelmed by HarperCollins' enthusiasm for the book. 'This is a very special moment for me,' he said. His editor ended the launch by saying: 'I hope the publication of the book will be as long, exciting and successful as his Latin American story has been.'

Ten years later, in 2002, John Loudon wrote to Paulo: *The Alchemist* has

become one of the most important books in our company's recent history. We are so proud of the book and its success. The story of its success with us mirrors the story of the book!' HarperCollins planned an ambitious campaign for the 10th anniversary of publication, which included an international mass market version, to be sold around the world to the book's growing legion of fans.

Julia Roberts said: 'It's like music, really, the way he writes, it's so beautiful. It's a gift that I envy above all others.' (In Paulo Coelho: The Alchemist of Words, Discovery Networks/Polo de Imagem [documentary]). Madonna said in an interview in the German magazine "Sontag-Aktuell": 'The Alchemist is a beautiful book about magic, dreams and the treasures we seek elsewhere and then find on our doorstep.'

The success of The Alchemist in the United States marked the beginning of his international career. Several Hollywood producers showed immediate interest in the **film rights**, which were acquired in 1993 by Warner Brothers.

Before publication in the United States, The Alchemist had been published by small publishing houses in Spain and in Portugal. In Spain, the book did not make the bestseller lists until 1995. Seven years later, the Spanish Publishers Guild wrote that The Alchemist (Editorial Planeta) had been the top-selling book in Spain in 2001. On the other hand, the Spanish publishing house is preparing an unprecedented relaunch of his complete works for year 2002. Paulo Coelho is the top-selling author in Portugal (Editorial Pergaminho), with more than a million copies sold.

In 1993, Mônica Antunes, who has been collaborating with Paulo since 1989 after reading his first two books, established in Barcelona the literary agency Sant Jordi Asociados together with Carlos Eduardo Rangel, with the mission of selling the rights of Paulo's works.

In May of that year, after the publication of The Alchemist in the United States, Mônica offered the title to several international publishers. The first publishing house to acquire the rights was Ex Libris from Norway. Its publisher, Øyvind Hagen, wrote to Mônica: 'The book has made a strong and continuing impact on me.' A few days later, the newly founded French publishing house Anne Carrière Editions replies to Mônica: 'It's a wonderful book and I will do everything to let it become a best seller in France.'

In September 1993, The Alchemist topped the bestseller lists in Australia. The Sydney Morning Herald claimed: 'It's the book of the year. An enchanting work of infinite philosophical beauty.'

In April 1994, The Alchemist was launched in France (Anne Carrière Editions). It received marvellous reviews, and the reading public went wild about the book, which began its climb up the best seller lists. Two days before Christmas, Anne Carrière wrote to Mônica: 'As a Christmas gift, I am sending you the bestseller lists from France. We are first!'. The Alchemist had reached number one in every

list in France, where it stayed for five consecutive years. After its phenomenal success in France, Paulo's books left the purely literary world behind to become a European phenomenon that has spread throughout the world.

Ever since then, each and every one of Paulo Coelho's six novels so far translated into French have made it to number one in the bestseller lists, remaining there for months. He has even had three of his titles in the top ten at the same time.

By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept, published in Brazil by Rocco in 1994, confirmed his international status. In this book, Paulo explored his feminine side.

In 1995, *The Alchemist* was published in Italy (Bompiani), immediately reaching the top of the bestseller lists. The following year Paulo was given two prestigious Italian awards, the Super Grinzane Cavour Book Award and the Flaiano International Award.

In 1996, Editorial Objetiva acquired the rights to his book, *The Fifth Mountain*, paying an advance of one million dollars, the biggest ever paid to a Brazilian author. That same year, Paulo was made a 'Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres', and Philippe Douste-Blazy, the French Minister of Culture, said: 'You have become the alchemist for millions of readers. Your books do good because they stimulate our capacity to dream, our desire to search.' In 1996, Paulo was also appointed special advisor to the UNESCO programme 'Spiritual Convergences and Intercultural Dialogues.'

The same year, *The Alchemist* was published in Germany (Diogenes). The hardback edition beat all records in 2002 after remaining over 306 weeks in "Der Spiegel" bestseller list.

At the 1997 Frankfurt Book Fair, his publishers, along with Diogenes and Sant Jordi, held a cocktail party to honour Paulo and to announce the simultaneous international launch of *The Fifth Mountain*. This took place in March 1998 with a main event in Paris. Paulo enjoyed huge success at the Salon du Livre, spending more than seven hours signing books. His French publisher, Anne Carrière, organized a supper in his honour at the Louvre Museum, which was attended by hundreds of celebrities and journalists.

In 1997, Paulo published his remarkable book, *The Manual of the Warrior of Light*, a collection of philosophical thoughts aimed at helping us to discover the warrior of light within. The book has become a point of reference for millions of readers. It was first published in Italy (Bompiani), where it was a spectacular sales success.

With *Veronika Decides to Die*, published in 1998, Paulo returned to a more narrative style, and the book received excellent reviews.

In January 2000, Umberto Eco said in an interview for "Focus": 'I like Coelho's

most recent novel. It really touched me deeply.' Sinéad O'Connor, in "The Irish Sunday Independent", said: 'The most incredible book I've ever read is Veronika Decides to Die.'

Paulo made a successful tour in 1998, visiting Asia in the spring and the countries of Eastern Europe in the autumn, a journey that began in Istanbul, on the Orient Express, passing through Sofia (Bulgaria) and ending in Riga (Latvia-Baltic States).

Paulo Coelho's vertiginous career continued. "Lire" magazine (March 1999) declared him to be 1998's second best-selling author worldwide.

In 1999, he was given the prestigious Crystal Award. According to the World Economic Forum, 'Paulo's most important contribution has been to touch and unite so many different cultures through the power of language, which clearly marks him out for this Award.' Paulo has been an invited member of the World Economic Forum from 1998 until the present day. In 2000, he was appointed to the Board of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship.

In 1999, the French government made him a 'Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur'.

In that same year, Paulo took part in the Buenos Aires Book Fair with Veronika Decides to Die. The reaction to Paulo's presence there was unprecedented and highly emotional. The media all agreed that no other author could attract so many people. 'Colleagues who have been working at the Book Fair for the last 25 years say that they have never seen anything like it, not even when Borges was alive. It has been really extraordinary, I don't think I'll ever see another writer get such a response. People's admiration for Paulo defies description,' Lidia María from V&R told us. On the day of the signing, people started queuing more than four hours before the appointed time, and the directors of the Fair agreed to close later than usual so that no one would be disappointed.

In September Paulo visited Israel. All his books have been a sales success since the publication of The Alchemist. Eri Stematzky, owner of the biggest chain of bookstores in Israel, told us, "I had never seen such a long line, and I only wish the day will come when people will stand in line like this for an Israeli author."

In May 2000, Paulo visited Iran and became the first non-Muslim writer to make an official visit to the country since 1979. He was invited by the International Centre for Dialogue among Civilizations. Before his visit, it is estimated that millions of pirated copies of his books had already been sold (Iran has never signed the International Copyright Agreement). Since that visit, Paulo has become the only non-Muslim writer to receive royalties. He could never have imagined receiving such a warm welcome in a land so distant from and so different to the West. Thousands of Iranian readers came to his signings and his talks. According to Paulo's words, 'I received many gifts, I received much love,

but above all I received the understanding of my work, and this touched me profoundly. To my great surprise, my soul had arrived before myself, my books were present and I found old friends in the people I had never met before. I did not feel like a stranger in a foreign land. It was something that moved me deeply and filled me with joy since I felt that beyond anything else, the possibility of a dialogue with any human being on the face of the hearth exists. Iran showed me this was possible.'

In September *The Devil and Miss Prym* was published simultaneously in Italy (Bompiani), Portugal (Pergaminho) and Brazil (Objetiva). To coincide with the launch, Paulo, in his house in Rio de Janeiro, gave dozens of interviews to media from all over the world. The existence of the Instituto Paulo Coelho was made public for the first time; set up in 1996 by Paulo Coelho and his wife, Christina Oiticica, it provides support and opportunities for the underprivileged in Brazil, especially children and the elderly.

Paulo was awarded the 'BAMBI 2001', the oldest and most prestigious award in Germany. In the jury's opinion, Paulo Coelho's belief that the destiny and gift of every human being is to become a 'warrior of light' in a dark world, contains a deeply humanistic message, a message that had particular poignancy that year.

The first time that Paulo travelled to Colombia was on the occasion of the 2001 International Book Fair in Bogotá. Thousands of people awaited the arrival of their idol, who received a welcome worthy of a pop star. Paulo called for calm and patience; everyone's book would be signed. After five hours, 4,000 books had been signed and sold.

In September, he also attended an amazing book signing at the Borders bookshop in London. According to Events Manager, Finn Lawrence, Paulo's signing of his new novel, *The Devil and Miss Prym* (HarperCollins) 'was, without doubt, the biggest event of the year', with people there from all five continents (from Japan, Pakistan, Angola, America and all the European countries). In November, he travelled to Mexico, where thousands of readers waited for hours for him to arrive at the Guadalajara Book Fair.

In early 2002, Paulo travelled for the first time to China and visited Shanghai, Beijing and Nanjing, taking part in numerous events, including book signings and meetings with readers.

On 25th July 2002, Paulo Coelho was elected to chair number 21 of the prestigious Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL). The aim of the Academy, whose headquarters is in Rio de Janeiro, is to safeguard the Brazilian language and culture. Following the announcement of his election and during the following night, Paulo received more than three thousand messages from his readers and became the focus of media attention throughout the country. When he came out of his house, people applauded him. Despite being adored by millions of readers, he has always been spurned by certain literary critics, which is why his admission to the Academy was such an important social event.

On 28th October, delivering a speech that praised utopia and faith, Paulo took up his charge at the ABL. Among his words, he quoted the sentence of his predecessor, the economist Roberto Campos, 'The violence of the arrow dignifies the target', and added, 'many times, at moments in which I felt judged with excessive severity by the critics, I remembered this sentence. And I remembered another dream I was not willing to give up: to enter the Brazilian Academy of Letters one day.'

In September 2002, Paulo caused a real sensation when he travelled to Russia where five of his books were simultaneously on the bestseller lists, with *The Devil and Miss Prym* at number one, followed by *The Alchemist*, *The Manual of the Warrior of Light*, *Veronika Decides to Die* and *The Fifth Mountain* (Sophia Publishers). In only a fortnight, more than 250,000 copies of his books were sold in Russia, bringing to more than a million the total number of copies sold in just one year. According to the marketing director of the MDK chain, Paulo's signing was the biggest ever. 'We have never had so many people coming in to get the signature of their favourite author. We organize a lot of signings and readings at our bookshop, and we have had famous guests here before, like the Russian Presidents Mr Yeltsin and Mr Gorbachev, or even Mr Putin, but we have never had this many people. It was really unbelievable. MDK had to turn away hundreds of readers trying to join the enormous crowd.'

In October 2002, Paulo received the 'Club of Budapest Planetary Arts Award 2002' in Frankfurt, and the 'Best Fiction Corine Award 2002' in Munich.

In November, the author visited the Scandinavian countries and took part in fantastic events organized at the bookstore Tanum Karl Johan and at Rockfeller (for Bokbadet TV programme) in Oslo, as well as at the Academic Bookstore in Helsinki, and the NK bookstore in Stockholm.

Paulo has always counted on the wholehearted support of his publishers. His success is not limited to his books, but extends into other cultural and social areas.

Various theatre companies have seen the great dramatic and poetic potential of his work. *The Alchemist*, for example, has been adapted and produced on all five continents in various theatrical forms - musicals, dance theatre, puppets, dramatised readings, opera. The book will eventually appear on the Broadway stage in the form of a musical. Other works that have caught the dramatic imagination are *Veronika Decides to Die*, *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept* and *The Devil and Miss Prym*.

Alongside the books are a whole series of products related to the author and his work, amongst them, diaries, calendars, journals, appointment books, art books and even **three electronic games**: 'The Pilgrim', 'The Legend' and 'The Secrets of Alamut' (The Arxel Guild), designed in collaboration with the author.

Paulo's constant presence in the media can also be seen through articles and newspaper columns. Over the years, he has written a large number of articles and essays for all the most important newspapers and magazines.

In March 1998, he began writing a weekly column in the Brazilian newspaper "O Globo". Such was its success among readers, that Sant Jordi started syndicating the columns in other international media. Four years on, newspapers such as Reforma in Mexico are still publishing the columns.

His columns have been published on a regular basis in "Corriere della Sera" (Italy), "El Semanal" (Spain), "Ta Nea" (Greece), "TV Hören + Sehen" and "Welt am Sonntag" (Germany), "Anna" (Estonia), "Zwierciadlo" (Poland), "El Universo" (Ecuador), "El Nacional" (Venezuela), "El Espectador" (Colombia) and "The China Times Daily" (Taiwan), amongst many others.

He also appears on the Internet. Paulo has written a series of 365 brief essays, which have been published in the form of a daily message on the following Internet portals: Ynet (Hebrew), RCS (Italian), UOL (Portuguese) and Terra (Spanish). Paulo has also created a newsletter, The Manual On-Line, which has 30,000 subscribers.

Paulo has appeared in various documentaries about his life for Discovery Networks/Polo de Imagem (Latin America and Spain), ZDF (Germany) and Unknown Planet (Russia). In other programmes, he has been filmed travelling (RTE, Ireland) or on pilgrimages (NHK and Aichi, Japan). He has appeared, too, in other documentaries about various aspects of Brazilian life (Productions Espace Vert, Canada and France).

On TV there have been several spaces and interviews about him on programmes for such international channels as Informe Semanal (Spain, 2001), Q&A (CNN, 1999) and Hard Talks with Tim Sebastian (BBC, 1999).

Paulo has granted innumerable interviews to different media from the same level as "The New York Times" (USA), "El País" (Spain), "Der Spiegel" (Germany), "Le Monde" and "Express" (France), "Corriere della Sera" and "La Repubblica" (Italy), among many others.

## De alchimist

### Structuur van het verhaal

1. Voorwoord van de schrijver  
Tafel van smaragd

### Precepts of the Emerald Table of Hermes

1.  
I speak not of fictitious things, but that which is certain and true.
2.  
What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.
3.  
And as all things were produced by the one word of one Being, so all things were produced from this one thing by adaptation.
4.  
Its father is the sun, its mother the moon; the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth.
5.  
It is the father of perfection throughout the world.
6.  
The power is vigorous if it be changed into earth.
7.  
Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, acting prudently and with judgement.
8.  
Ascend with the greatest sagacity from the earth to heaven, and then again descend to earth, and unite together the powers of things superior and inferior. Thus you will obtain the glory of the whole world, and obscurity will fly away from you.
9.  
This has more fortitude than fortitude itself, because it conquers every subtle thing and can penetrate every solid.
10.  
Thus was the world formed.
11.  
Hence proceed wonders, which are here established.
12.  
Therefore I am called Hermes Trismegistos, having three parts of the philosophy of the whole world.
13.  
That which I had to say concerning the operation of the sun is completed.

-- Hermes Trismegistos  
Leergeld betalen?

Universele taal vindt hij bij

-Hemingway

-Blake (ie dichter William Blake cf

[http://www.english.uga.edu/nhilton/Blake/blaketxt1/all\\_religions\\_are\\_one.html](http://www.english.uga.edu/nhilton/Blake/blaketxt1/all_religions_are_one.html))

-Borges

-Malba Tahan

2. Lucas 10:38-42

3. Proloog

## Oscar Wilde, boek met Narcissus, het meer

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) heeft het met 'Dorian Gray' onovertroffen omschreven. Alles heeft zijn prijs, ook de schoonheid. Vaak zelfs een hele hoge prijs. De hoofdpersoon van deze roman uit 1890 is een symbool van schoonheid. Van binnen echter, verouderd, verzuurt en verrot hij in de loop van de tijd. Een portret, dat hij in zijn jeugd heeft laten maken, verandert met zijn innerlijk. Zo erg, dat hij het schilderij moet verstoppert voor de buitenwereld. Was het boek honderd jaar later geschreven had de hoofdpersoon wellicht zijn gezicht laten verbouwen.

Het kan best zijn dat alleen Dorian Gray de veranderingen in zijn eigen voorkomen in het portret geprojecteerd zag. Want, hij moet zichzelf 'intensely' hebben geadoreerd en voortdurend naar zijn ingelijste evenbeeld hebben staan kijken. Oscar Wilde zal Narcissus in gedachten hebben gehad. Die was verliefd op zijn eigen spiegelbeeld.

Is dit het boek dat begint met een begrafenis en dat de jongen de ganse tijd probeert te lezen ????? Dat volgens de koning van Salem belangrijk maar saai is?)

### 4. Eerste Deel

Eindigt met besluit te werken in Tanger om terug te kunnen keren naar spanje en schapen te kunnen kopen

### 5. Tweede Deel

## Personages

### 6. Santiago

De jongen wordt maar twee maal in het verhaal bij zijn naam genoemd, alletwee keer op dezelfde plaats: vijgenboom en vervallen kerk.

Waarom Santiago? (bedevaartsoord?) Na bekering tot katholicisme was bedevaart van Compostella eerste daad van Coelho.

p99-100: naar jongen wordt gerefereerd als 'vreemdeling'

### 7. Winkelier

### 8. Dochter van winkelier

### 9. De oude man, Melchizedek en koning van Salem *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God.* Cf. <http://www.stnm.org/bstudy/bstudy13.html>

### 10. Banketbakker

Zijn 'droom', 'legende' is koekjes bakken, heeft die bereikt

### 11. Kristalverkoper

Zijn droom zozegzegd naar Mekka te gaan maar zijn legende ervan te dromen en er nooit naartoe te Hij 'kent zijn dromen maar wil die niet verwekelijken'

### 12. Engelsman

Zoekt alchemist. Zoekt de universele taal van heelal (eerst in Esperanto, dan in Godsdienst, dan in -> alchemie hier gebruikt in letterlijke zin, niet in overdrachtelijke zoals in de gehele boodschap van het boek.



het is gaan.

het Alchemie)

13. Leider van de Karavaan

14. Kamelendrijver

Leeft in het hier en nu -> wijs?

15. Fatima

Woestijnvrouw (wacht op de terugkeer van haar man uit de woestijn), maar toch bovenal vrouw (afscheid doet pijn). (Vrouw die de woestijn kent)

Waarom naam Fatima? Cfr Santiago: allebei pelgrimsoorden? Cfr

<http://www.portcult.com/FAT.10.SANTIAGO.htm>

16. Alchemist

Eet de sperwers (tekens) op (????)

## Plaatsen

17. Tarifa

18. Tanger

19. Al-Fayoum

20. Koptisch Klooster

## Taal

Dromen zijn de taal van God

Dromen gaan ofwel over de wereld ofwel over de eigen ziel

Taal van de Geestdrift

Taal van de Liefde (referentie tweelingziel ~Plato)

Taal van de woestijn

Taal van het leven

Taal van het hart

(onduidelijk: functie van het hart in het verhaal, dat snap ik niet)

## Vreemde landen

De jongen schrik van 'de Moren' die zouden komen binnenvallen. Maar wordt uiteindelijk verliefd op en in de woestijn in het land van de Moren.

Heeft in Tanger in het begin schrik van het 'Heidens Gedoe' en van de taal, maar uiteindelijk blijken de Arabieren in Tanger Spaans te spreken

Engelsman blij dat hij met een niet-Arabier kan praten.

## Alchemie

Urim en Tummim

Vraag:

Wat is nu precies de Urim en de Tummim?

Antwoord:

In Ex.28: 4 worden de kleren beschreven, die Aäron moest dragen. Over zijn onderkleed had hij een opperkleed en over dat opperkleed droeg hij een efod. Dat was blijkens vers 6 een prachtig bewerkt kleed, dat korter geweest zal zijn dan het opperkleed. Op die efod was een borstschild

bevestigd met gouden kettinkjes (vers 22-25). Het borstschild was volgens vers 16 een vierkante lap stof waarop aan de voorzijde twaalf stenen waren ingelegd met de namen van de stammen erop gegraveerd. Dat wil zeggen een naam op elke steen. Boven op de efod op de schouders waren ook twee stenen ingelegd met elk de namen van zes stammen erin gegraveerd.

Het borstschild van de beslissing was een dubbele lap stof zodat er iets ingestopt kon worden. In dit borstschild nu werden de Urim en de Tummim gedaan (vers 29, 30; zie ook Lv.8: 8). De hogepriester droeg ze zo op zijn hart. En deze vroeg voor het aangezicht van de Heer de beslissing van de Urim (Nm.27: 21; vgl. Ea 2: 63 en Nh.7: 65). Wat nu precies die Urim en Tummim waren staat er niet bij. Evenmin staat er hoe Aäron er mee moest omgaan, hoe hij wist wat de Heer antwoorde. Men denkt dat het gaat om twee stenen of andere voorwerpen waarvan de naam volgens Luther betekende 'licht en recht'. Anderen geven als betekenis 'verlichtingen en volkomenheden'. Men heeft geopperd dat het 'ja' en 'nee' stenen waren (waarbij men aan twee stenen dacht). De vragen werden dan zo gesteld, dat er enkel met ja en nee op geantwoord behoefde te worden. In bepaalde gevallen zien we ook dat er heel concrete vragen werden gesteld en de antwoorden ook in bevestigende of ontkennde zin gegeven werden (Zie b.v. 1 Sm.23: 9-13). Er staat echter ook van Saul, dat de Heer hem niet antwoordde door de Urim. ER kwam dus noch een ja noch een nee uit.

Waarschijnlijk is het zo, dat de hogepriester op de beslissing door middel van de Urim en Tummim toch ook profetisch een aanvulling gaf of dat die profetische aanwijzingen de beslissing van de Urim en Tummim begeleidden. Dat lijkt te volgen uit 1 Sm.30: 8 waar het antwoord verder gaat dan enkel ja of nee. Die gedachte vindt steun in Jh. 11: 50,51, want daar staat dat de hogepriester geacht werd ook te profeteren.

In de nieuwe bedeling hebben wij de verlichting door de Heilige Geest en door het Woord van God. In Jezus Christus is verlichting en volkomenheid openbaar geworden.

21.Tafel van de smaragd

22.Vaste: Steen der Wijzen

Kan metaal in goud veranderen.

Is gelukt door Helvetius, Elias, Fulcanelli, Genber

23.Vloeibare: Levenselexir

## Dieren

24.Schape

Soms vindt de jongen ze dom, soms beseft hij dat hij er veel van heeft geleerd. Vooral omdat Coelho katholiek is, is het interessant dat hij herder en schaap gebruikt. De schape zijn onwetend en dom. "Tevereden met water en voedsel, in ruil krijgen wij wol, gezelschap en vlees" of nog straffer: 'Als ik ze 1 voor 1 zou slachten zouden ze dat pas door hebben als de hele kudde is uitgeroed'.

25.Kamelen

jongen heeft medelijden met ze

engelsman heeft teveel boeken mee, kameel wordt moe

26.Paard

Kent de taal van het leven

## Vragen over het boekje

*The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

Study Guide

Language and Literature

## Mrs. Koplik

### Pre-Study Discussion, Reflection and Writing Activities:

1.Coelho states that “simple things are the most valuable and only wise people appreciate them.” Produce a written or artistic response (or bring something to class) which depicts something that is “simple” yet valuable to you. Be prepared to explain specifically why/ how the item is valuable.

2.The alchemist (in the form of Melchizedek) says to Santiago, “When you really want something to happen, the whole universe conspires so that your wish comes true.” Write or create a response which captures a time in your own life when you had a wish, and you felt that the whole universe conspired for OR against you. What happened to make you feel that way? Did your wish come true?

3.Santiago is guided by his dreams and by omens which appear to him throughout his journey. Write about a noteworthy dream you have had, or about an omen which guided you somehow during the course of your life. How did you interpret the dream or omen, and how did it influence your life?

4.The old man states that the “world’s greatest lie....is that at a certain point in our lives, we lose control of what’s happening to us, and our lives become controlled by fate.” Do you, like the old man, believe this is a lie, and that we are always in control of our destinies? Why/ why not? Why do you think people believe the “World’s greatest lie”? Or.....Write about/explore artistically a time in your life when you felt as though you had “lost control,” and your fate was being determined by other forces. Why did you feel that way? Did you regain control?

5. Santiago is told that “people are afraid to pursue their most important dreams because they feel they don’t deserve them, or that they’ll be unable to achieve them.” Create a written or artistic response to the following: Do you have a goal or dream which intimidates you? Why do you feel unworthy or fearful of it? What practical steps might you take to make the goal more accessible or easier to accomplish? On the other hand, are there some dreams which we are correct to fear? Do you believe some dreams should simply *remain* as dreams? Why/why not?

### Geographical Locations in the Novel:

Andalusia

Tarifa

Salem (Jeru”salem”)

Tangier (p. 44)

Ceuta (p. 44)

Mecca (p. 54)

Al-Fayoum (oasis in Egypt)

El Cairum (p.76)

Nile

Coptic Monastery

Moors (p.27)

Sahara Desert (36)

### **Regional, Cultural or Spiritual Allusions and Terms:**

Narcissus (Prologue)	Esperanto (p.66)
King Melchizedek (Genesis14, “King Most High”)	Helvetius, Elias, Fulcanelli, Geber (p.82)
Koran (p. 54)	Scarab (p.161)
Muslim	Simum (p.148)
Mecca	Coptic (153,154)
Allah (p. 71, 97)	Tiberius (p.158)
Levanter (p.27)	hookah (p. 114)
“Maktub” (p. 59)	

### **The Alchemist’s Terms/Expressions:**

The Soul of the World	Philosopher’s Stone ((p.66)
The Unspoken Language	Elixir of Life (p. 66)
The Language of the World	Master Work (p.81)
Personal Legend	Emerald Tablet (p. 126)
Principle of Favorability (p. 29)	Urim and Thummin (p. 30)

### **Vocabulary:**

scabbard (37)	treasonous (129)
conspire	elixir (133)
scimitar (112)	contemplate (134)
brandish (112)	fixedly (136)
dialect (106)	flourish (145)
prognostication (111)	sirocco (146)
monotony (124)	tether (151)
tracts (126)	recount (153)
agitated (128)	disciple (153)
centurion (158)	avidly (159)
scarab (161)	sacristy (163)
alchemy	infidel (34)

### **Preliminary Notes About the Novel:**

*The Alchemist* is written in a fable format. What is a fable, and why would Coelho use it to tell his story? Generally speaking, fables use recognizable, simple characters and settings in order to illustrate a simple truth about life or human nature. What is it that Coelho attempts to teach?

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.

Alchemy is the medieval "science" of transforming rocks into gold. Alchemy plays an important part in the plot (literal level) of the story, but it also becomes a symbol, or *allegorical* device, in the legend (figurative level). Coelho is really using characters, events and symbols as tools to show us how to achieve **spiritual alchemy**. In other words, how do we find or recognize the "gold," -- our Personal Legend-- in the "rocks" of the everyday, ordinary, simple details of our lives? As Santiago discovers, sometimes the "gold" is not faraway, not glittery, not exotic, and not complicated, but it may require a journey of courage, faith and perseverance to discover what it is and where it is hidden.

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.

#### **Questions for Novel Study:**

1. 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?
2. The novel opens with Santiago thinking about his sheep. What does he observe about their existence? How might the sheep symbolize the way some people live their lives? How does his observation that they “have forgotten to rely on their own instincts” foreshadow later events in the story?
  3. How does Santiago’s father react when his son tells him that he wants to travel?(p.9)
  4. To what degree is his father’s observation about travelers (“They come in search of new things, but when they leave they are basically the same people they were when they arrived.”) true about Santiago?
  5. Why does the old fortune teller say that Santiago’s dream is difficult to interpret?(p.12-14). Why is Santiago suspicious of her?
  6. The old man tells Santiago the story about the miner and the emerald on p. 24. How does it connect to Santiago’s situation? What does he mean when he says that “treasure is uncovered by the force of flowing water, and it is buried by the same currents”? What does this quote have to do with the miner/emerald story?
  7. What point does the old man’s story about the boy in the castle and the drops of oil (p.30-32) make? How might this story apply to us in our modern lives?
  8. How does the King assist Santiago in recognizing omens? When does Santiago use this help?
  9. How do Santiago’s thoughts and perceptions about himself and the world begin to change on pp. 42-44? Describe three things that Santiago sees now that he had never noticed before.
  10. What lessons does Santiago learn by working at the crystal shop? Why do you think Coelho chose crystal? How does the crystal merchant’s explanation for not taking the pilgrimage to Mecca (p.55) highlight the difference between Santiago and the merchant? What effect does the merchant say Santiago has had on him?
  11. The Englishman and his goals are described on pp.65-70. What is he looking for? What does he demonstrate to Santiago that he already knows? On p. 78, he says that the progress made at the crystal shop is an example of the principle of the Soul of the World. What does he mean? How does he define this? How does he connect the idea to the relationship between the caravan and the desert?
  12. The oasis is described in great detail. How does its lushness, laughter and color reflect what Santiago finds there? Where else in the story does Coelho provide details about the physical setting in order to lend more meaning to the events which occur there?
  13. Explain how Santiago’s union with Fatima represents the Language of the World, according to Santiago on p.93. Why does Fatima accept that her new husband wanders the desert, as she explains on p.98?
  14. What is the meaning of the two dead hawks and the falcon in the oasis? How does this omen change Santiago’s status in society?
  15. During his trek through the desert with the alchemist, Santiago is told of many basic truths. The alchemist says, “There is only one way to learn.

- It's through action. Everything you need to know you have learned through your journey"(p.125). What are some of the things Santiago has learned through action?
16. Why do you think the alchemist tells Santiago the story about the man's dream about the two sons (the poet and the soldier) on p. 156?
  17. Why did Santiago have to go through the dangers of the tribal wars on the outskirts of the oasis in order to reach the Pyramids? At this point, the boy remembers the old proverb: "The darkest hour of the night came just before the dawn." How does this apply to his situation now? At the end of the journey, why did the alchemist leave Santiago alone to complete it?
  18. Earlier in the story, the alchemist told Santiago "when you possess great treasures within you, and try to tell others of them, seldom are you believed." At the end of the story, how did this simple lesson change Santiago's life? How did it lead him back to the treasure he was looking for?

### **Topics for Research:**

What is alchemy? What processes were involved? Who performed it and why? Who were the famous alchemists of the medieval period?

Who is Melchizedek? What role does he play in the Old Testament?

What are the Five Pillars of Islam (p. 54). What is the Koran?

Explore the concept of Soul of the World as different religions and philosophies define it.

Research the tribal ways of the Bedouins of the Sahara (77).

Research one of the geographical settings from the novel.

What are the basic theories of Freud's or Jung's dream analysis theories? Catalog all of the dreams that occur in the book, and attempt to interpret one according to a theorist.

Research levanters, siroccos and other regional weather features described in the book.

### **Post-Reading Activities:**

Map out Santiago's journey. Include obstacles he encounters and lessons he learns in their geographically correct locations. Provide a key which suggests ideas, progress, symbolism, etc. (I will explain)

Read Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" and keep a reaction journal which connects his verse to Coelho's Soul of the World idea.

Keep a dream journal for one week. Try to interpret what you think they mean

on your own, then research what they might mean according to Freud or Jung, or according to an ancient culture (medieval, Egyptian, Greek, African, etc.)

Create a dance, pantomime, musical or other performance in which you use “Unspoken Language” to convey the story of Santiago.

Create a painting, collage, photo-essay, shapescap (I will explain) or sculpture which captures an idea, relationship or moment from the story. Provide a written explanation of your work.

Produce a creative writing piece which captures some of the central ideas of the book. Some ideas:

Journal: A Day in the Life of a Shepherd

Two or three songs (with lyrics) from “The Alchemist: The Musical”

Rewrite a portion of the story from a different perspective: Fatima, the Alchemist, the Fortune Teller, the crystal merchant, the sheep!

Write Santiago’s “How-To Find Your Treasure” Handbook, or “Personal Legends for Dummies”

Scrapbook (with explanatory notes) of Santiago’s travels—feature pictures and items which Santiago accumulates as he learns about life

Letters between Fatima and Santiago

Unspoken Language Journal-Tune in to the various forms of unspoken language we experience around us every day. What gestures, facial expressions, intuitions and signals do we give and receive to guide us in our responses, actions, reactions and relationships? Observe interactions at school, at home, in nature, and in public places, and record incidents which illustrate that unspoken communication is sometimes as (if not more) powerful than the spoken word.