

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Guided Study Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

(pg. 1-10)

1. Who is Santiago? How is he introduced at the beginning of the story?
2. What is strange or unusual about Santiago's dream?
3. Recall a dream you have had. What makes this dream especially memorable? Do you think dreams have a deeper "meaning"?
4. What is the geographical setting at the beginning of the novel?
5. What do Santiago's parents plan for him, and how does he change that plan?
6. What does Santiago plan to do in Tarifa?

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7. Santiago stops in Tarifa to consult with an old woman about his recurring dream. What price does she charge him?
8. Santiago meets an old man in the village. What is his name? Why do you think that the author would have

included this name in the novel?

9. What does the old man want in payment for helping Santiago?

10. How does the old man convince Santiago of his power?

11. How does the old man explain the concept of Personal Legends to Santiago? Why does the old man believe that few people ever really attain their Personal Legends?

12. Why does the old man tell Santiago to follow “omens?” Do you believe that omens exist? Why or why not?

13. What does the old man take from the breastplate as a gift to Santiago?

14. The old man tells Santiago a story that concludes with the secret of happiness. According to the old man, what is the secret of happiness?

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15. When Santiago decides to leave his home country of Spain in order to follow his personal legend. Where does he go?

16. How are the two locations different in regards to food/drink, religion, customs, etc.?

17. What happens when Santiago follows his new friend into the marketplace?

18. Although Santiago does not speak Arabic, he has a conversation with the candy seller. Why is this important?

19. What comfort do the black and white stones provide to Santiago?

20 Describe the first interaction between Santiago and the crystal merchant.

(pg. 51-79)

21. What lessons does Santiago teach the crystal merchant (page 64)?

22. Who is the Englishman and what do we learn about him?

23. What motivates the Englishman to befriend Santiago?
24. On page 71, the leader of the caravan provides us with a metaphor about the desert. What comparison is being made here?
25. According to the Englishman, what is the Soul of the World?
What is an alchemist?

(pg. 79-104)

26. Explain the Elixir of Life, the Master Work, and the Philosopher's Stone (page 80-81).

27. Why is the alchemist watching people as they enter the oasis from the caravan?

28. Describe the Oasis.

29. What does it mean when a woman in the Oasis is dressed in black?

30. What is the language of the world? How does Santiago learn it?

31. What agreement do Fatima and Santiago come to?

(pg. 104-123)

32. Santiago sees two hawks as an omen. What do they signify?

33. What happens when Santiago visits the tribal chieftains to tell them about his vision?

34. What test do the chieftains outline for Santiago?

35. Describe Santiago's first interaction with the Alchemist.

36. Describe the battle at the oasis.

37. What is Santiago's reward for saving the oasis?

38. Describe the "goodbyes" that are said between Fatima and Santiago as he is leaving.

(pg. 123-143)

39. What advice does the alchemist give about listening to one's heart? Do you agree or disagree?
40. The author includes many examples of foreshadowing here. How do we know that Santiago awaits more trouble on his quest?
41. What do the Arabs find when they search the alchemist? Why did they allow the alchemist to keep the treasure?
42. The alchemist tells Santiago, "When you possess great treasures within you, and you try to tell others of them, seldom are you believed" (page 134). Interpret this quote. How can you relate this quote back to your own life? (Hint: Think about the "simple, yet valuable" objects that we brought to English class!)
43. What happens when the alchemist and the boy are both taken into the military camp?
44. Why would the alchemist set up such a "test" for Santiago?

45. Who is at risk of death here? Why?

(pg. 143-167)

46. As Santiago is attempting to turn himself into the wind, who does he hold conversations with?

47. Critics apply the term *pathetic fallacy* to instances in which human characteristics (such as reason and the ability to speak) are given to parts of the natural world. Based upon this definition, what three aspects of the natural world are personified in this way during Santiago's efforts to turn himself into the wind?

48. Two people are smiling after Santiago turned himself into the wind. Who are they? Why are they smiling?

49. What does the alchemist do at the Coptic monastery?

50. How does the alchemist distribute the gold? Why does he think Santiago might need the gold later?

51. What is the point of the alchemist's story about the sons of Roman emperor Tiberius?

52. What advice does the boy's heart give him as he approaches the Pyramids? What does he do when he sees the Pyramids?

53. Who approaches Santiago as he digs in the sand, and what do they do?

54. What story does one attacker tell Santiago?

55. After the attackers leave, Santiago gets up from the sand and begins to laugh. Why?

56. *The Alchemist* presents us with a lot of important lessons learned by Santiago throughout his journey. What ONE lesson do you think was the most important for him to learn? Why?