

Summary on the novel 'the alchemist' essay



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The Alchemist- responding to the novel 1- The novel is based on 19th-20th century, Santiago, the shepherd lives out in the fields with his sheep. He goes from Andalusia, Spain to Tangier, from Tangier he travels to the Sahara oasis AAA-Famous. The impact of the time setting in this novel is the fact that religion is very strong amongst the people. We as readers come across this time setting and setting (location) itself has an impact on the behavior of the characters we come across as we come across a fairly conservative society. - The Culture context of the text: This novel has some connections with the author Paulo Cello; in this novel he has explored the idea of spirituality and one's personal legend, goal, spiritual awakening/]Rooney, inspiration, motivation and sociality. Cello in the past has lived his life as a hippy in the ass's and in the ass's he was involved in the drug culture, soon he went on to travel to Spain and North Africa where he went on a spiritual awakening.

While he lived as a hippy he began to be very spiritual as he also traveled, Santiago (protagonist) is a traveler while a shepherd at the same time who goes on to travel from Spain to North Africa and whilst traveling he encounters a spiritual Journey. 3- The genre of this text is somewhat of a drama theme, while a great deal of adventure is also an aspect of the novel. Spirituality is also a major aspect in this text. The atmosphere which is created in this text is that of a spiritual and adventurous atmosphere.

Throughout the text people are getting to know one another and are sharing their personal legends, goals and experiences. 4- Santiago goes on a physical Journey from Andalusia to the Middle East (North Africa) where he is constantly traveling and working to go to the pyramids in Egypt, Santiago

wants to go to Egypt as he has had a dream of a child telling him to go to the pyramids (Egypt) because he will find a treasure there (page 15).

His spiritual journey is that of one to achieve his personal legend/goal and to understand what is known as the spirit of the world' which is in other words known as nature conspiring to help one achieve his/her personal goal.

Santiago experiences an emotional Journey as he falls in love with Fatima, the girl from the oasis. - There is an antagonist in this novel who only appears for a very brief time, and that is the thief that robs Santiago in Tariff.

A minor character which has a major spiritual influence on Santiago throughout the text is Milkweed (king of Salem) who briefly converses with Santiago in the plaza of Tariff.

This mysterious king tells Santiago that 'When you want to achieve something, the universe conspires to help you' (page 24), he also gives Santiago 'Rim and Thumb' (two stones) which represent 'yes' and 'no' in responding to omens. This king inspires Santiago throughout the whole novel to achieve his personal legend/goal. Before Santiago meets the old king, he didn't know what a 'personal legend' was, but he didn't realize he was on his way to achieve it, the king introduces the idea of a personal legend to Santiago through a very crucial statement, 'It's what you always wanted to accomplish.'

Everyone, when they are young, knows what their personal legend is. ' Although the king only appears in the text for a brief moment (page 23) he is always present in spirit to Santiago and is a very positive presence. A character who becomes central is the Englishman who studies alchemy, he

influences Santiago to read and to study in order to learn, however, Santiago influences the Englishman to be more social and to not rely on books unconditionally and purely as experiences are also great lessons in one's life.

6- Use of symbols and motifs; the sheep are a symbol of being held back and not achieving their personal legend.

In symbolizing being held back and not achieving their personal legends the sheep also represent the baker and the crystal merchant who are both people who haven't taken risks in life, they have not achieved their personal legends. The desert is a harsh place with tough weather conditions, the tribes of the desert are also tough witted and warlike as a tribal war erupts while Santiago is traveling through the desert oasis. However, the desert is a symbol of struggle and an obstacle which Santiago faces on achieving his personal legend.

The desert shows the struggle and obstacles which people face when trying to achieve their personal legends. 7- Narrative perspective: first or third person or varied respective: In the vast majority of the time throughout the text we hear the story being narrated in third person, however, from time to time we as the readers do see the narrator switch to Santiago speaking/ thinking which is in first person perspectives. 8- Impact of first line: ' The alchemist picked up a book that someone in the caravan had brought. The impact which we get from the first line is that the alchemist is highlighted as a significant character in this text by Cello. However, the first line does not have great significance in this text but it is a flashback as we eventually learn how Santiago ends up in the caravan. Complications: Santiago goes to a gypsy woman to have his dream interpreted but he doesn't have money to

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spend in order to have his dream interpreted properly. When Santiago reaches Tariff he doesn't know the language which is spoken there so he sets out to find a guide, this guide happens to be a thief and robs him.

He is then left with no money but just his sheep and 'Rim and Thumb'. While he is traveling through the desert a tribal war breaks out and it becomes unsafe to travel certain parts of the desert thus aging his trip to Egypt more dangerous as many fear that bands of armed men will rob them while traveling. On his Journey to Egypt he is stopped by one of the warring tribes and is put to the test as they believe he is an alchemist and they tell him that if he can't transform into wind then he will be executed. The impact of the last line: 'I'm coming, Fatima.'

He said. 'This line gives the reader the idea that Santiago has achieved his personal legend as Fatima says to Santiago desert women wait for their men to return from achieving their goals/personal legends. 9- Impact of language and imagery: The imagery is very straight forward in this text and leaves an impact on the reader through the old king Milkweed (king of Salem) which Santiago encounters, this king leaves an impact on the reader so as to really think about how Santiago is a new person from the point where he encounters the king and onwards.

The old king influences Santiago to respond to omens and to pursue his personal legend/goal. The wise old king is a symbol/image for wisdom, inspiration and friendliness (he is amongst the good characters). The thief who robs Santiago is a symbol and image for the terminology that everything happens for a reason, meaning that if Santiago hadn't been robbed he

wouldn't have worked at the crystal merchant's shop where he became a wealthy man.

The language used is of a very philosophical and at times also religious which impacts the story and gives the reader a feeling of the events being real in the text which really draws the reader in. 10- Levels of conflict: Person v. Self; Santiago often has problems thinking about whether he should pursue his personal legend or if he should go back to Spain and live with the money which he has earned from working for the crystal merchant. Person vs..

Individual; the alchemist convinces Santiago to achieve his personal legend in traveling to the pyramids to find the treasure after having taken some time to convince Santiago. I believe the main themes discovered in this novel are adventure, Santiago is always traveling and meeting new people. Love is also a theme which is an aspect in this text, Santiago has come across girls which he has fallen in love with but his main girl is Fatima whom he wishes to marry.

Another major theme is one's personal legend, that is, the fact that each person has their goal/personal legend which they've always wanted to achieve. Conflict is a major obstacle for Santiago as the tribal war which is a conflict that stops people from traveling through the desert. Spirituality is the key theme explored in this text as Santiago is a man who is on a spiritual Journey/ awakening, throughout his travel he has learnt many new things and has learnt how to communicate spiritually with forces that exist within the world.