

## Freshman English – Summer Reading Assignment #1 – 2009

Text: *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

ISBN: 978-0-06-112241-5

Directions: As you read *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho this summer, please follow the directions below.

1. Review all of the accompanying material before you begin reading the book.
2. Do not leave your Summer Reading assignment until the end of the summer. Begin as soon as possible after the Fourth of July.
3. Be an active reader. Do not ignore difficult vocabulary. Look up words you do not understand.
4. Refer to the questions and take notes as you read to help you when you answer the guide questions.
5. Answer the guide questions on loose-leaf notebook paper in complete sentences. If you wish to type, use blank paper and double-space.
6. Be prepared to turn in your guide question responses on the first day of school.
7. Your answers will be graded and returned to you during the first week of school to enable you to study for the test.
8. Bring your text to school to use during class discussions.
9. You will have a test and an in-class timed writing assignment on the text during the first week of school.

## Study Guide - *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho

*The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho is one of the most important literary phenomenons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The book has sold over 30 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 67 languages and tops the best-seller list in 18 countries.

The success of *The Alchemist* can be attributed to several things. First, the story of Santiago, the shepherd is one of everyday spirituality: the kind of spirituality that is applicable to most people's daily lives. One of the central messages of the book is that a person's spirituality is not separate from a person's need to realize his or her dream. Coelho's message is that the things that are closest to a person's heart are messages from the universe.

Second, the story of Santiago is told in a simple, straight-forward style that is reminiscent of fairy tales and children's stories. This simple style, paired with the book's non-denominational spiritual lesson helps to explain its appeal to readers of all tastes and spiritual inclinations.

### GUIDE QUESTIONS

**DIRECTIONS:** Number each response with the number of the question. Answer each question in complete sentences. Do not copy the questions. Do not copy from the text, unless you are using a short quote to illustrate a point. If you do decide to quote, be certain to use appropriate punctuation. Please skip one line between each numbered answer.

1. The prologue of *The Alchemist* begins with a retelling of the Narcissus myth. Use the internet to locate the original myth and read a summary. What is the theme of the traditional Narcissus myth?
2. The prologue focuses on the lake, rather than Narcissus. How has the lake been affected by Narcissus? Why is the lake selfish?
3. What is a person's Personal Legend?
4. What is your Personal Legend at this point in your life?
5. Fatima is Santiago's love interest. Why is she an appropriate choice for Santiago in relation to his Personal Legend?
6. What does Paulo Coelho say is a requirement for true love?
7. Give an incident in the story that illustrates the story's theme of tolerance and understanding.
8. How does Santiago's quest yield both spiritual and material wealth?

9. What is the Soul of the World? What nourishes the Soul of the World?
10. Who is Melchizedek and why does he appear to Santiago?
11. What does Melchizedek say is the world's greatest lie? What do you think is the world's greatest lie?
12. How does Melchizedek convince Santiago that he is not a fraud?
13. What are two improvements that Santiago makes to the crystal shop? What effect does Santiago have on business at the crystal shop?
14. Why does Santiago decide to not return to Spain after working at the crystal shop?
15. Who is the Englishman and why does he introduce himself to Santiago?
16. Why is the Englishman headed to Al-Fayoum?
17. What is the universal language? Why do you think Paulo Coelho calls this the universal language?
18. Describe the vision Santiago has in the desert.
19. What is the only way to learn according to the Alchemist? Why does the Alchemist tell Santiago to listen to his heart?
20. Having read *The Alchemist*, how do you think its author Paulo Coelho feels about organized religion?

## Freshman English– Summer Reading Assignment #2 – 2009

Text: *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie

ISBN: 0-425-20045-0

Directions: As you read *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie this summer, please follow the directions below.

1. Review all of the accompanying material before you begin reading the book.
2. Do not leave your Summer Reading assignment until the end of the summer. Begin as soon as possible after the Fourth of July.
3. Be an active reader. Do not ignore difficult vocabulary. Look up words you do not understand.
4. Refer to the questions and take notes as you read to help you when you answer the guide questions.
5. Answer the guide questions on loose-leaf notebook paper in complete sentences. If you wish to type, use blank paper and double-space.
6. Be prepared to turn in your guide question responses on the first day of school.
7. Your answers will be graded and returned to you during the first week of school to enable you to study for the test.
8. Bring your text to school to use during class discussions.
9. You will have a test and an in-class timed writing assignment on the text during the first week of school.

## Study Guide - *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie

Agatha Christie is one of the most famous writers of detective fiction in the world. Even though she died in 1976, her 66 books are still best-sellers. She has been called the Queen of the Golden Age mystery novel, and *Murder on the Orient Express*, written in 1934, is considered a Golden Age, between the world wars, or classic mystery novel. In *Murder on the Orient Express* also known as *Murder on the Calais Coach*, Christie accurately portrays the lives of the upper-middle class British men and women of this time period as rich tourists or members of the leisure class. Her novels rarely portray working class men and women.

*Murder on the Orient Express* is a murder mystery and the main character is Christie's most famous character, detective Hercule Poirot. Poirot is a quirky Belgian detective well-known for his eccentricities, his waxed moustache and his brilliant mind. It is Hercule Poirot's genius and skill as a detective that leads to the discovery of the murderer of Ratchett.

### GUIDE QUESTIONS

**DIRECTIONS:** Number each response with the number of the question. Answer each question in complete sentences. Do not copy the questions. Do not copy from the text, unless you are using a short quote to illustrate a point. If you do decide to quote, be certain to use appropriate punctuation. Please skip one line between each numbered answer.

1. Which two characters does Hercule Poirot observe behaving in a suspicious manner on the Taurus Express train to Istanbul? What rouses Hercule Poirot's suspicions about the two?
2. Who is M.Bouc? How does Hercule Poirot end up returning to London on the Orient Express?
3. When Hercule Poirot first spots Ratchett and Hector McQueen eating dinner at the hotel how does he describe Ratchett?
4. Why does Ratchett want Hercule to work for him? What is Hercule's response?
5. Hercule Poirot spends the night in a first-class cabin and several unusual things occur. What things happen that Hercule finds interesting?
6. The train is trapped in a snow bank and the body of Ratchett is discovered. How has he been killed? At what time did Ratchett's watch stop?
7. What things are found in the murdered man's compartment?

8. Who was Daisy Armstrong? How did she die? What is Ratchett's connection to Daisy Armstrong?
9. Many of the passengers observed a woman in a red kimono in the corridor on the night of the murder, but no one admits to owning a red robe. Where is the red kimono found?
10. What French phrase does Hercule hear said in Ratchett's room on the night of the murder? Use the internet to translate the phrase.
11. How does Hercule Poirot know that Hector McQueen is involved in the murder after he interviews him?
12. Who did Hildegard Schmidt bump into in the corridor on the night of the murder? Why can't she identify this person?
13. What is wrong with Mrs. Hubbard's story about locking the door that communicated with Ratchett's apartment?
14. Why does Poirot not believe that Ratchett took a sleeping draught on the night of his murder?
15. Describe Colonel Arbuthnot. What kind of justice does Colonel Arbuthnot believe is the best?
16. Why does Poirot believe that Ratchett's stab wounds were inflicted by several different people?
17. Poirot, Dr. Constantine and M. Bouc review the facts of the case and then Poirot solves the case by doing what?
18. What is Countess Andreyi's true identity? How is she related to the Daisy Armstrong case?
19. How was Mary Debenham related to the Daisy Armstrong case?
20. What two possible solutions does Poirot suggest? Which solution does Poirot suggest that M. Bouc and Dr. Constantine tell the police? What does Poirot's suggestion show about his character?