**THE ALCHEMIST**

***The Central Idea***

**The Alchemist, by Paulo Coelho, conveys a universal theme. It focuses on fulfilling our own “Personal Legends,” Coelho encourages his reader's to follow their dreams. Everyone has their own Personal Legend, their ultimate goal in life, but too many of us never pursue it.**

***The Story***

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* **The story starts with a scene where Santiago comes to an old church to rest with his sheep- wakes suddenly in the middle of a dream he has seen earlier too**
* **Santiago – a shepherd – leads a simple life – simple desires**
* **Learns from observation – specially from his sheep**
* **Has been with his sheep for two years – great bonding with them- calls them by names- read out to them parts from books he reads**
* **Speaks with them – most importantly about the girl he is looking forward to meet again after a year**
* **The girl is the daughter of a merchant – whom he had visited a year ago for work**
* **Met her in her father’s shop- she had shown interest in the fact that he could read**
* **The father had called him again after a year – looking forward to meet the girl**
* **How could a shepherd read?**
* **Santiago’s parents wanted him to become a priest – had also joined a seminary**
* **But he wanted to travel – finally mustered the courage to tell them**
* **The father – tried to tell him that nothing would be gained by travelling and that he would come back at the end**
* **But when he saw that Santiago was convinced about his ‘Personal Legend’ – he relented and suggested he become a shepherd**
* **Gave him 3 Spanish gold coins and Santiago bought sheep**
* **It seems the father too had had a dream but had not fulfilled it**
* **Coelho – emphasises how a possibility of a dream come true makes life exciting**
* **At Tarifa – Santiago meets a gypsy woman – asks to interpret his dream**
* **Dream – a child playing with his sheep- takes him to Egyptian pyramids – tells him there is a treasure hidden- when he is about to show the location – Santiago is awake**
* **The gypsy woman interprets – charging 1/10th of his treasure – only if he finds it**
* **Santiago is irritated as the gypsy woman doesn’t say anything different**
* **While Santiago is thinking about the girl- an old man disturbs him**
* **Santiago is irritated but keeps quiet- has learnt to respect elders**
* **The old man tells him about the world’s greatest lie- AT SOME POINT OF TIME WE LOSE CONTROL OVER OUR LIFE- DESTINY CONTROLS IT-**
* **The old man appreciates that Santiago has pursued his dream**
* **Tells Santiago that if he gives him 1/10th of the flock – he will tell him where the treasure is**
* **Santiago thinks its some trick of the Gypsy woman**
* **Then the old man writes on the sand his parents name and many other things about him**

**Santiago thinks the man is Mythical / has Supernatural powers**

* **His name is Melchizedek ( a biblical figure)**
* **Santiago asks Melchizedek why his is talking to a shepherd inspite of being a king**
* **He says because he is creating his Personal Legend – unlike the baker who is waiting for a later time**
* **WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING ALL THE UNIVERSE CONSPIRES IN HELPING YOU ACHIEVE IT**
* **CHILDREN ARE DREAMERS – DREAM ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL LEGENDS BUT GIVE UP DUE TO WORLDLY PRESSURES**
* **He tells him that he would come the next day – he should keep the 1/10th of the stock ready – will tell him about the treasure.**
* **IF YOU START BY PROMISING WHAT YOU DON’T HAVE – YOU WILL LOSE YOUR DESIRE TO WORK TOWARD GETTING IT**
* **Story of a miner ( had gone in search for a precious stone – spent many years – couldn’t find it – finally picked one and threw it in anger- it fell upon another stone which cracked – and there – there was the precious stone he wanted- moral – not to give up – many a times the goal is just nearby**

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* **The boy continued reading**
* **Not able to concentrate – tense and upset**
* **Went to the bakery – bought a loaf – wanted to tell the baker about what the old man had said but didn’t do so – the baker would be upset**
* **Went to a ticket window which was selling tickets**
* **When the man asked him if he wanted a ticket , Santiago said –tomorrow – the man said – another dreamer ( he wants to dismiss the boys dreams )**
* **He thinks about the sheep- he knew everything about them-**

**( COMFORT ZONE – PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE TO EXPLORE THE NEW)**

* **He also thinks of the merchants daughter- but thinks she is not as important as the flock**
* **He realises that he left his parents – if they could live without them- even the sheep could**
* **The next day** [**Santiago**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/characters/santiago)**meets**[**Melchizedek**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/characters/melchizedek-the-old-man)**at noon, and brings him six**[**sheep**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/symbols/santiago-s-sheep)**.**
* **He tells Melchizedek that he has already sold all his other sheep to his friend**
* **Melchizedek says that this is called “the principle of favorability - beginner’s luck- there is a force that wants Santiago to realize his Personal Legend, and so it encourages him early on with the taste of success.**
* [**Santiago**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/characters/santiago)**asks**[**Melchizedek**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/characters/melchizedek-the-old-man)**where the treasure is- Melchizedek says it is in Egypt near**[**the pyramids**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/symbols/the-pyramids-of-egypt)
* **Melchizedek - to find the treasure- to follow omens prepared by God.**
* **Melchizedek opens his cape and shows Santiago that he wears a breastplate of gold covered with precious stones**
* **offers**[**Santiago**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/characters/santiago)**a white stone and a black stone from the breastplate-** [**Urim and Thummim**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-alchemist/symbols/urim-and-thummim)**.**
* **However, Melchizedek cautions Santiago to try to make his own decisions, and not just rely on the stones.**
* **Melchizedek says - he must not forget the language of omens- he must not forget to keep following his Personal Legend until it is achieved.**
* **Story of a boy in search of a wise man - Melchizedek’s story has clear parallels with Santiago’s life,**
* **Both the boy in the story and Santiago are beginning a quest, and along the way they will learn from a wise man (currently Melchizedek himself, but Santiago will later encounter the alchemist who will serve as a mentor).**
* **The wise** man **in the story teaches the boy by letting him experience situations for himself and by setting him with a challenge. His instructional style mirrors that of the alchemist, as we will see later.**

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* **The boy leaves**
* **Melchizedek sitting with the sheep – thinks about the boy and hopes he remembers him ( Inspite of being a king – basic human emotions**
* **Santiago arrives in Morocco, Africa- goes to a bar in Tangier**
* **A stranger comes – speaks Spanish – sits with Santiago – the owner is annoyed – Santiago asks if he could take him to the Pyramids – the man asks for money – Santiago hands over the entire amount- cheated**
* **Santiago- feeling sorry for himself**
* **He is reflecting that between sunrise and sunset of the same day - he went from being a successful shepherd to being stranded with no money in a country where he does not speak the language.**
* **HE HAS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THINKING OF HIMSELF AS THE POOR VICTIM OF A THIEF AND AS AN ADVENTURER IN QUEST OF HIS TREASURE**
* **Santiago meets the crystal merchant – starts working for him**