**World Literature  
Summer Reading Assignment – The Alchemist**

1. Create your google folder following the directions provided. Copy and paste these questions in your google folder and label - *The Alchemist Questions.*

2. If possible, buy (or download) a copy of Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist*. (If you can only borrow from the library, that’s fine too.)  
3. Answer the following reading comprehension questions; this assignment will be graded for completion. By doing this work, you will be prepared for writing the essay portion of the assignment.

4. Write your essay in your google folder and label – *Alchemist Essay.*

**Due Dates:**

* Discussion Questions due first day of school, August 30th.
* Essay due Thursday, September 1st.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS The Alchemist***Interpretive*  
1. Discuss three positive and three negative character traits for Santiago. What do these traits show you about the kind of person the boy is?  
2. Discuss at least three specific character traits for each of the following: the gypsy woman, the king, the crystal merchant, the thief, the Englishman, Fatima, and the alchemist. What do each of these traits say about their characters?  
3. What seems to be the main conflict in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*? Fully describe the conflict and how it is (or is not) resolved.  
4. How does the fact that the novel is set in both Spain and Africa play an important part in the events of the plot? What elements of life in these countries seem to play a key role in the main conflict? How does the setting differ from your own culture?  
5. What elements of the setting are important to this novel? How would the novel been different if it had been set in the Australian Outback? America's Wild west?  
6. Examine each of the boy's "teachers" throughout his journey. What lesson does he learn from each?

7. Describe the climax of the novel. How does the boy react to the climax?

*Critical*

8. Explain how Langston Hughes's poem "A Dream Deferred" relates to *The Alchemist*. What are both authors suggesting about dreams? (*You need to look up the poem online.)*

9. Explain the connection between the myth of Narcissus and The Alchemist. Why do you suppose Paulo Coelho selected this myth as a prologue to his tale?

10. Explain the five obligations from the Koran that are expected of every Muslim. What do these obligations show about the culture of the people? How does the crystal merchant honor his obligations?

11. Explain the role the king of Salem plays in the boy's adventure. What does he represent to Santiago? What about the crystal merchant's role? Fatima's? The Alchemist's?

12. The old man tells the boy that he is the King of Salem. One possibility is that he is the King of Jerusalem. What might be the significance of this? Suppose that the reference is to Salem, Massachusetts. How might the connotation of this city change the significance to the novel? Explain how this could be a source of irony.

13. Explain the following Biblical allusions: Joseph of Egypt, The Roman Centurion, Creation, The Treasure of the Heart, Urim and Thummim.

14. Explain the symbolism of the boy's dream.  
15. How is it fitting that the boy should come to work for a crystal merchant? What might the crystal symbolize for the boy? What might it symbolize for the merchant?  
16. How is the meeting with the refugee at the Pyramids a source of irony? How does the boy's original dream play a role in the irony?  
17. Santiago is reunited with Fatima at the end of the novel. What does waiting show about her character?

18. Explain the main theme of this novel. What is Paulo Coelho's message to his readers?

*Critical/Personal Response*

19. What do you suppose might be the source of Santiago's discontent in the seminary that eventually leads him to become a shepherd? What does he hope to learn? What is significant about the boy's choice of occupation?

20. Compare Santiago's response to the dream in Spain with that of the marauder at the Pyramids. How might the story have been different if Santiago had responded as the marauder?

21. Suppose that Santiago had decided to have Fatima accompany him on his journey instead of leaving her to wait for his return. How might the story been different?

22. Suppose Santiago decided to stay with the crystal merchant instead of pursuing his Personal Legend. What aspects of the plot would have been changed?

*Personal Response*

23. Did you enjoy this novel? Why or why not?  
24. What age do you think is most appropriate for reading novels like The Alchemist? Why might age make a difference with this type of novel?  
25. Did you feel challenged when reading this novel? What types of challenges may have come forward for you?  
26. Do you intend to read more books of this type? Why or why not?

27. Which of the characters do you identify with the most? Why?

**Complete the Following Writing Assignment**

*Please note – If you would like to be considered for Honors, you must complete the Honors essay prompt.*

**Grade 11 – College Prep Essay**

Choose one of the themes below and write a 5-paragraph, C-E-C format essay – following all MLA formatting rules. You will include quotes from the novel as concrete detail and comment on how these details support your thesis statement (all in 3rd person, present literary tense…you know the drill!).

Be unique with your ideas. Do not merely summarize the novel, but demonstrate how you can develop an eloquent and intelligent argument. One sentence of commentary is not satisfactory! Please include a Works Cited.

CHOOSE ONE:

***Perseverance.*** Many times Santiago finds himself wanting to turn back and it is only when he reaches deep within himself that he finds the strength of will to continue on. Explain the theme and its application.

***Faith/positive thinking.*** Without faith, Santiago could not succeed, and without the faith others had in him, Santiago would have been lost. Explain the theme and its application.

**Grade 11 – Honors Essay**

Read the two quotations that follow, and select one you feel best supports the main idea of Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*. In your essay, you need to indicate whether or not you agree with the main idea of the quotation and then defend your position by using specific textual support from *The Alchemist*.

PREWRITING  
Choose one of the following:  
"What a man thinks of himself, that is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate." Henry David Thoreau

"There are some people who live in a dream world, and there are some who face reality; and then there are those who turn one into the other."  
Douglas Evertt

Decide whether or not you agree with the main idea of your selected quotation and choose specific textual evidence from *The Alchemist* that best supports your position.

DRAFTING

Label the assignment – Alchemist Essay – in your google folder

In your introduction, explain the meaning of the selected quotation and state whether or not you agree with the speaker (without using first person). This is best done by indicating whether or not the statement is true. At the end of your introduction, create a thesis statement in which you refer to Paulo Coelho's novel as support for your position. Your body paragraphs should contain at least two specific scenes from *The Alchemist* (complete with embedded quotations and parenthetical citations in MLA format) that support your position on the quotation. Remember, one sentence of analysis is not satisfactory! Conclude your essay with some sort of a challenge to your reader with reference to the quotation.

Include a properly formatted Works Cited – in MLA format, of course!

PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.

If you have any questions on this assignment, just email me! [Dyrvik.c@nashuachristian.org](mailto:Dyrvik.c@nashuachristian.org)