



FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Annandale High School
4700 Medford Drive
Annandale, VA 22003

June 1, 2011

Dear Rising Ninth Grader,

Welcome to Annandale High School and to the English Pre-IB Honors program! We commend you on your choice to take a challenging, but rewarding path to start off your high school career. We know fall and the start of school are only remote concepts for all of us right now. Nevertheless, we want to encourage you to get started early on the summer reading assignment because it will be among the first things we do in the fall.

The summer reading assignment for the English 9 Pre-IB Honors program is to complete the following based on *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. (Copies of the book can be found at the public library, in bookstores or you can borrow a copy from AHS.):

1. Answer the Pre-Reading Response
2. Fill in your Personal Word List
3. Answer the Questions for Novel Study as you read

Assignments 1 and 2 are due on the first day of school and points will be deducted for each day late after then. TYPE or neatly write answers to packet questions using blue or black ink. Assignment 3 will not be collected; HOWEVER, we will conduct a Socratic Seminar (class discussion) based on your answers for the questions—for a grade. Additionally, when school begins, you will be assigned more work concerning the novel, so make sure you read carefully and pace yourself so you are not left with lots of reading to do right before school starts. Read early in the summer and know that you are starting high school with good time management skills which are important for all classes in Pre-IB and IB. Note: You may work with friends on this assignment for help, but all answers must be individual. Credit will not be given to answers that have been copied directly from another student. You are on your honor! Good luck with the summer reading assignment. We look forward to meeting you in the fall and to learning about your reaction to this great work of literature.

Kathleen Dion
Pre-IB 9 Lead Teacher

Alan Weintraut
English Department Chair

Aaron Schneider
Assistant Principal

Pre-Reading Response

The alchemist (in the form of Melchizedek) says to Santiago, “When you really want something to happen, the whole universe conspires so that your wish comes true.”

Directions: Write a minimum one-page response that captures a time in your own life when you had a wish, and you felt that the whole universe conspired for OR against you. What happened to make you feel that way? Did your wish come true?



Questions for Novel Study

Directions: Answer EACH question thoroughly. This assignment may be single spaced, as long as there is a space separating each question (like below). Your assignment title should be: *The Alchemist* Questions for Novel Study.

1. Why does Coelho open with the modified myth of Narcissus? How does the new version differ from the original one? How does it change the myth’s meaning? What might the author be suggesting about how we perceive ourselves and the world?
2. The novel opens with Santiago thinking about his sheep. What does he observe about their existence? How might the sheep symbolize the way some people live their lives? How does his observation that they “have forgotten to rely on their own instincts” foreshadow later events in the story?
3. How does Santiago’s father react when his son tells him that he wants to travel? (p.9)
4. To what degree is his father’s observation about travelers (“They come in search of new things, but when they leave they are basically the same people they were when they arrived.”) true about Santiago?
5. Why does the old fortune teller say that Santiago’s dream is difficult to interpret? (p.12-14). Why is Santiago suspicious of her?
6. The old man tells Santiago the story about the miner and the emerald on p. 24. How does it connect to Santiago’s situation? What does he mean when he says that “treasure is uncovered by the force of flowing water, and it is buried by the same currents”? What does this quote have to do with the miner/emerald story?
7. What point does the old man’s story about the boy in the castle and the drops of oil (p.30-32) make? How might this story apply to us in our modern lives?
8. How does the King assist Santiago in recognizing omens? When does Santiago use this help?

9. How do Santiago's thoughts and perceptions about himself and the world begin to change on pp. 42-44? Describe three things that Santiago sees now that he had never noticed before.
10. What lessons does Santiago learn by working at the crystal shop? Why do you think Coelho chose crystal? How does the crystal merchant's explanation for not taking the pilgrimage to Mecca (p.55) highlight the difference between Santiago and the merchant? What effect does the merchant say Santiago has had on him?
11. The Englishman and his goals are described on pp.65-70. What is he looking for? What does he demonstrate to Santiago that he already knows? On p. 78, he says that the progress made at the crystal shop is an example of the principle of the Soul of the World. What does he mean? How does he define this? How does he connect the idea to the relationship between the caravan and the desert?
12. The oasis is described in great detail. How does its lushness, laughter and color reflect what Santiago finds there? Where else in the story does Coelho provide details about the physical setting in order to lend more meaning to the events which occur there?
13. Explain how Santiago's union with Fatima represents the Language of the World, according to Santiago on p.93. Why does Fatima accept that her new husband wanders the desert, as she explains on p. 98?
14. What is the meaning of the two dead hawks and the falcon in the oasis? How does this omen change Santiago's status in society?
15. During his trek through the desert with the alchemist, Santiago is told of many basic truths. The alchemist says, "There is only one way to learn. It's through action. Everything you need to know you have learned through your journey" (p.125). What are some of the things Santiago has learned through action?
16. Why do you think the alchemist tells Santiago the story about the man's dream about the two sons (the poet and the soldier) on p. 156?
17. Why did Santiago have to go through the dangers of the tribal wars on the outskirts of the oasis in order to reach the Pyramids? At this point, the boy remembers the old proverb: "The darkest hour of the night came just before the dawn." How does this apply to his situation now? At the end of the journey, why did the alchemist leave Santiago alone to complete it?
18. Earlier in the story, the alchemist told Santiago "when you possess great treasures within you, and try to tell others of them, seldom are you believed." At the end of the story, how did this simple lesson change Santiago's life? How did it lead him back to the treasure he was looking for?

