

Catholic Central

English II, Summer Reading Assignment, 2026

***The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho**

We encourage you to [purchase your own copy](#) so you have access to it in the fall, but this book is also available through the library (both as a physical book and ebook). Listening to the audiobook is another acceptable option, too!

We hope you will enjoy this inspiring novel about finding and following your dreams, told from the point of view of a young man who travels from Spain to Egypt. Hopefully, while following his search, you will find much to reflect upon and perhaps apply to your own journey.

Grading:

You will receive points for:

1. Annotations or handwritten notes

- a. You can make these notes into your copy of the book or by using post-its
- b. If you don't own your copy of the book, or you use an audiobook, you should take handwritten notes on a separate sheet of paper

2. A 2 paragraph response to ONE of the prompts (see page 2 of this document)

You may type or handwrite your response to the prompt you choose. Please be sure to write in complete sentences, using paragraphs to organize your ideas. This should be the work of your own hand and the product of your own mind.

Checklist of what to bring on the first day of class:

- your copy of *The Alchemist* (unless you borrowed it from the library or friend)
- your notes/annotations on *The Alchemist*
- your typed response to one prompt (see page 2)

If you have any questions, email!

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Prompt Option 1: The “King of Salem” tells Santiago that the new book he has acquired is about the same thing almost all other books are about: “people’s inability to choose their own Personal Legends.” This story is so common, he suggests, because people have come to believe “the world’s greatest lie”—that we all lose control of our own lives and let ourselves be controlled by fate.

Paragraph 1: When is Santiago tempted to let his life be controlled by fate? What happens to him? Which choices does he make that are the most important to his journey?

Paragraph 2: What about you? Write about a time you stopped making decisions for yourself (and let other people or “fate” guide your path) OR write about a time you made a hard choice for yourself, moving off the common path. What happened when you gave up a personal choice or made a hard choice? What connections can you make between your story and the characters in *The Alchemist*?

Prompt Option 2: One of the first major diversions from Santiago’s journey is the theft of his money in Tangier, which forces him into taking a menial job with the crystal merchant. This seems like a terrible crisis, but there, Santiago learns many lessons on everything from the art of business to the art of patience.

Paragraph 1: For Santiago, which lessons in Tangier are the most crucial to the pursuit of his personal legend? How and why?

Paragraph 2: What about you? When have you experienced a setback in your own life? What did it feel like? What came of it? Did you learn important lessons from this challenge like Santiago or not?

Prompt Option 3: Santiago meets a crystal merchant and the two discuss the pilgrimage to Mecca. The crystal merchant argues that having a dream is more important than fulfilling it, which is what Santiago is trying to do. Look back at their argument.

Paragraph 1: What is the crystal merchant’s argument? What is Santiago’s response? What are some important lines from their discussion? What do they reveal about Santiago? Why is this argument interesting given the ending of the book?

Paragraph 2: What about you? What is your life dream? What do you hope your life will look like in five years? Ten years? What will happen if you don’t achieve those dreams?

Prompt Option 4: An *oasis* is a place in a desert that provides water and refuge. For travelers, finding an oasis can be a matter of life or death. At the same time, an oasis tempts travelers to halt their journey (avoiding the pain of more travel). Look back at Santiago’s discovery of an oasis in the story.

Paragraph 1: What are Santiago’s experiences at this oasis? Who does he meet? What are some of the important quotations from this chapter? What do they reveal about Santiago and his journey?

Paragraph 2: What about you? When have you experienced an “oasis” (a place of safety or a break from suffering or struggle)? Is your oasis a physical location? A person or group? Faith? What kind of comfort does your oasis provide? What are the challenges in leaving your oasis to rejoin the “real” world?

Prompt Option 5: Early 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.” This is a problem that people of faith often encounter.

Paragraph 1: At the end of the story, how did this simple lesson save Santiago’s life? How does it lead him back to the treasure he was looking for? What theme or message does this help reveal?

Paragraph 2: Reflect on your own faith life. Where are you in your journey with God? Is your faith a treasure or is there a better metaphor for how you feel about your faith? How might you continue to nurture your faith this coming year?