

QUESTIONS ABOUT
THE ALCHEMIST
Part 2

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho is the story of a Spanish shepherd seeking his personal legend, which he believes is a chest filled with jewels and gold. This novel is based on Christian theology with many allusions to and quotes from the Bible but the Christian teachings are thoroughly mixed with the beliefs of animism.

The questions run from where Santiago (usually called the boy in the narrative) has reached an oasis in the Egyptian desert.

1. The alchemist says a certain kind of knowledge cannot be taught through books because it is made up from “pure life”, and people become so fascinated with the words and pictures they wind up forgetting the “Language of the World.” What is the “Language of the World”?
2. Describe the oasis.
3. Why are no safety precautions taken in the oasis? What do the travelers hand over to the tribal chieftains of the oasis? Why?
4. The boy meets a young woman “not dressed in black.” What does this signify? She speaks without words. What language do we all understand in our hearts?
5. What is this woman’s name? What important omen does she give the boy?
6. Are our partners chosen by destiny, and is there only one person in the universe who is destined to be our true mate?
7. Whose side is God on in this particular war between the tribes?
8. The boy observes a fight between two hawks. What event does this fight portend? Do you believe in omens?
9. For what purpose might God reveal the future?
10. Describe the interior of the chieftain’s tent.
11. How will the chieftains’ decision affect the boy?
12. Who is the mysterious man on the great horse?
13. What does “Maktub” or “It is written” mean? How does it apply to the boy’s vision? Is the outcome of his vision fore-ordained?
14. Is there a battle? Who wins? What happens to the boy?

15. Muslims don't drink wine, but the alchemist gives the boy wine. When the boy asks why, what does the alchemist answer? Do you agree with this answer?
16. When the boy tells the alchemist he doesn't know how to find life in the desert, what is the alchemist's answer? Do you believe what the alchemist says is true?
17. What life does the boy find?
18. We say, "If you love someone, let them go. If the love is true, your love will return." How does this apply to Fatima and the boy? What decision does the boy make?
19. According to the alchemist, there is only one way to learn. What is it? Sir Isaac Newton who is credited with "discovering" gravity said, "I can see farther than others because I stand on the shoulders of giants." What does this mean? Are these two points of view compatible?
20. According to the alchemist, why did God create the world?
21. The alchemist claims you can understand "all the marvels of creation" by studying a single grain of sand. Do you believe this? Why?
22. The alchemist says we should listen to our hearts. What does this mean?
23. How does every search begin? How does it end?
24. What is the "Soul of the World"?
25. What lesson does the boy learn during their encounter with the Arabs?
26. If alchemy is about penetrating the "Soul of the World" and discovering the treasure that is reserved for each of us, then why is gold so important to the alchemist?
27. How many days will the boy have to transform himself into the wind?
28. What one thing makes a dream impossible to achieve? Do you believe this? Why?
29. What does the boy say that love is?
30. How are the boy and the wind the same?
31. According to the alchemist, what does love do for us?
32. What is the "Hand That Wrote All"? What is the "Master Work" that the six days of creation evolved into?
33. What does the alchemist do with the lead he has turned into gold?
34. Who tells the boy where to find his treasure? Where does he find it?
35. Is the chest of gold and jewels his real treasure? If not, what is?