

EL ALQUIMISTA



Student Support and Glossary

CONTAINS:

- *Explanations of the historical, geographical, religious and cultural allusions in the novel*
- *Maps*
- *Spanish/English Glossary*
- *Assignments*
- *Assessments*
- *Page-by-page Glossing*
- *Discussion Questions*
- *Reading Tips*

by Bryce Hedstrom

EL ALQUIMISTA

Student Support and Glossary

For Paulo Coelho's Novel

*This study guide corresponds to the 2002 Rayo edition of El Alquimista
(Spanish translation), published by HarperCollins, ISBN 94-28948.*

*This guide is not connected in any way to HarperCollins
and has not been approved by Paulo Coelho.*

Written by Bryce Hedstrom

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Songs for Spanish Class

A collection of catchy songs to help students of all levels; these are easy to read and easy to sing songs from all over the Spanish-speaking world. It contains children's songs and traditional folk songs with historical and cultural commentary so that students can understand the meaning of the lyrics and the significance of the song in Spanish-speaking culture. Also has grammar songs, vocabulary songs and holiday songs. Each song has easy guitar chords and is in a key that is easily singable for a group. Contains an exhaustive grammatical index, a complete subject index, a geographical and cultural index, and notes and teaching tips for the teacher. Illustrated by the author. 64 pages.

Stories for Spanish Class

This is a compilation of original winner stories for beginning Spanish classes. Each story can be used as a framework to either tell in your classroom or as material for extended readings. In this collection you will find simplified adaptations of authentic legends (*La Llorona*) and history (*Christopher Columbus*, *La Batalla de Puebla*), as well as expansions of jokes into stories (*¡Eso sí que es!*) and popular culture told as stories. Students like these stories because many of them deal with real teen issues in a funny and exaggerated way. The stories are presented in order of difficulty, so that the teacher can follow them through the school year or use them as supplements to any existing curriculum. The stories parallel the vocabulary and structure development of Blaine Ray's *Look I Can Talk!* book. For example, there is an extended reading version of the famous *Cuento del Gato*, and the urban legend known as "The Mexican Pet" has been adapted to parallel the vocabulary found in *La Vaca y el Mono*. 73 pages.

Conversational Spanish, Course 1

This book is the backbone of a basic Spanish course that can be taught in one college semester, or one year in high school. It includes stories, songs, mnemonic devices, activities and a thorough level I and II Spanish-English dictionary. The stories are student-tested and are original or adaptations of Hispanic folktales and urban legends. They advance in vocabulary and structures throughout the course. There are also many communicative activities that support beginning subjects like foods and numbers. This course can be used alone or coordinate with Blaine Ray's early Spanish I readers *Pobre Ana*, *Patricia Va a California*, and *Casi Se Muere*. The dictionary includes all of the words in Blaine Ray's level I and II readers as well as vocabulary for beginning levels. 174 pages.

The Power of Cognates

Learning to speak a new language well requires our students to acquire hundreds of words, and unfortunately there are very few short cuts. To become reasonably fluent students must commit these new words to memory. But there is a shortcut. Since up to one third of the words in Spanish and English are cognates, students can exponentially increase their Spanish vocabulary once we teach them to recognize and use cognates. This book contains over 6,000 cognates in 28 English/Spanish cognate groups, plus two lessons on the most common (and entertaining!) false cognates. Each section begins with the most frequently used Spanish words in that cognate group. Teachers and authors have said this feature is particularly helpful in picking the most high frequency words to use with their students. The book includes tests, practice assessments and tips to help students acquire these amazing vocabulary boosters. 120 pages.

El Alquimista Student Support and Glossary

One of the best ways to learn Spanish is simply to read for pleasure. If we can find books that hook kids with a captivating story, the content itself will compel them to read. *The Alchemist* is that type of book. Besides the engaging story, the setting and the historical allusions are rooted in Iberian culture and imagery. Through the journeys of Santiago, the main character in the story, students will absorb Hispanic culture and history. One problem with *El Alquimista* however, is that the author assumes a high level of literacy: the content is so deep and rich that students may have difficulty understanding the text. The Student Support and Glossary was written to help students to understand the vocabulary and the historical, cultural, geographical and religious elements in the novel. With this support, students in Spanish 2 have been able to read the novel in Spanish. 82 pages.

Pobre Ana Teacher's Guide

This book has everything a teacher needs to teach through *Pobre Ana* and have the students enjoy and understand it. There are maps, activities, advice for acting out chapters in class, reading tips, a listening activity for the movie, and final assessments. There are also short quizzes for each chapter, as well as longer sets of questions that can be used as sample oral questions (or to copy and hand out to the students on the days your voice isn't there). These questions often go beyond the text to prompt students into using their own lives and background knowledge to engage them in meaningful discussions (in Spanish!). It also contains extended readings written especially for this novel. Ana's pitiful letters to Dear Abby and Dr. Oprah (and their responses) are particularly popular with students. The final assessments for the book are differentiated. Students can pick their level of complexity and way of showing that they have learned the content and vocabulary. 73 pages.

Casi se Muere Teacher's Guide

I love this novel and this guide will help your students understand it. I lived in Chile as an adolescent and I love the culture. I have tried to infuse this guide with that passion. The guide includes maps and background readings. There are notes to accompany an optional lecture (in easy Spanish, of course!) about the culture, history and geography of Chile. There are short quizzes and scores of sample oral questions for each chapter. There is also an activity in which to put the major events of the story in order to check for understanding. The card game contains 30 questions from the novel about the history, geography and culture of Chile, which keeps students reviewing and showing off their knowledge with each other in a fun way. Students can show their understanding of the text via three differentiated assessments. I also include lots of reading advice for new instructors and veterans alike. 117 pages.

Activities and Readings for El Día de los Muertos COPY MASTERS

My students love the Day of the Dead. If it is presented in a comprehensible and interesting way, even students at the beginning of level I can read and discuss the holiday in Spanish. This is a packet of student-tested materials that I use at all levels to help students learn about *El Día de los Muertos* and to demonstrate what they have learned. This packet contains 20 copy-ready handouts for your classroom and authentic cultural stories that have been differentiated into four ascending levels. It has authentic and fun songs with easy guitar chords, a word search, differentiated quizzes, an extensive vocabulary list and cultural/language projects with rubrics. 29 pages.

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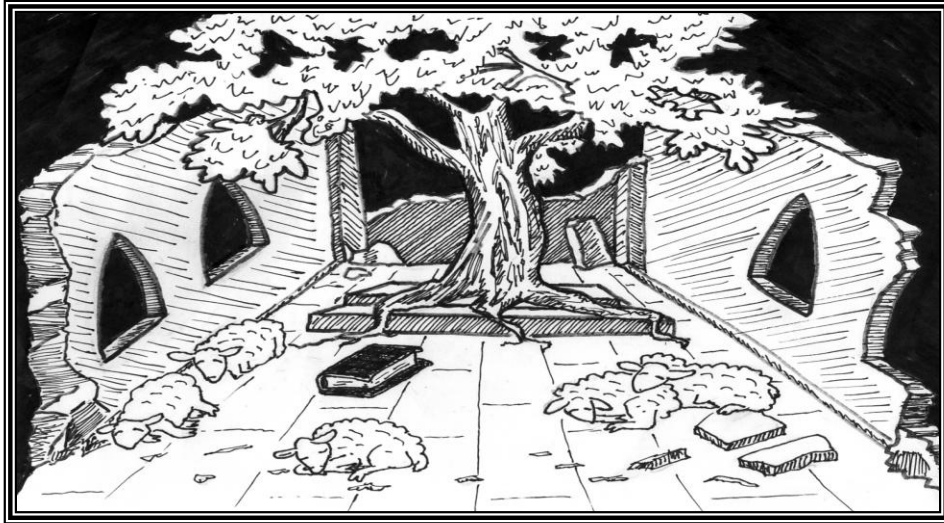
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ON READING EL ALQUIMISTA



*One of the best ways to learn Spanish is simply by reading for pleasure. Millions of people around the world have enjoyed reading *The Alchemist*. It has been a best seller for years and has attracted readers of all ages and cultures. To date, the novel has been translated into 56 languages. Hopefully, reading **The Alchemist** in Spanish will be a pleasurable experience for you as well.*

As you read, keep this in mind: You do not have to understand every single word; you just have to understand the gist of a passage. If you understand most of the words on a page and get caught up in the story itself you will be reading for meaning. You will get lost in the story and concentrate on the message. The ultimate goal is to actually forget that you are reading in Spanish and get caught up in the flow of reading an interesting story.

*When you come across unknown words, it may be best to just guess at their meanings and skip over them, unless they keep on showing up—in that case you should look them up in the **Page-by-Page Glossary** or in the **Alphabetical Glossary** found in this guide. But do not get into the habit of looking up every single word you do not know well, because this practice will slow you down and interrupt the flow of the story. You should read for understanding because no matter how good you are at grammar, most of what you can say in a new language is acquired subconsciously—you pick up words by reading or listening and they just “sound right”. That is the goal in reading this novel.*

We will approach reading in various ways:

- 1) You will read on your own (both in class and outside of class).*

- 2) *We may interpret key passages into English to be sure everyone understands the story.*
- 3) *We may act out interesting passages to help you think more about them.*
- 4) *We may listen to a recording or as a native speaker reads aloud and follow along in the text.*
- 5) *At times we may take turns reading aloud in Spanish.*

Whatever method we use, we will stop frequently to summarize and discuss what we are reading and to hear your observations. It is in live classroom discussions, with these things being "transmitted from mouth to ear" (p. 110) where students will learn the most language and develop. Why is this? Some linguists would explain it as personalized comprehensible input. In the story, the Alchemist says that some things "have to be transmitted that way," and that it is "difficult to capture them by means of pictures or [written] words." (p. 110)

The Alchemist is a symbolic story that urges its readers to follow their dreams. This is an intensely personal book. Different readers get different meanings out of it, so we especially want to hear what YOU are getting out of it. We want to talk about what YOU think, how YOU see the story and how these lessons apply to YOUR life.

*This guide can also help almost any student that wants to read the book on their own. Even students in classes as low as Spanish II & III have been able to read **El Alquimista** with the help of this guide. Some students will want to read the book for pleasure in Spanish because they have read it previously in English. Other students miss class frequently due to outside commitments and this guide will help them to fill in the gaps from the class discussions that they have missed by being absent.*

*You will notice that this story is told in terms of a fable. The messages conveyed are deep, but the settings are simple. There are also very few characters. In fact, only two major characters in the book even have names, **Santiago** and **Fatima**—those two names have long and storied pedigrees in the history and religion of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal). Other characters are highlighted as they are introduced, but they have no names.*

ALCHEMY TERMS FOUND IN EL ALQUIMISTA

Although there are many references and allusions to the world's two largest monotheistic religions of Christianity and Islam in this novel, the underlying world view of the novel is primarily a soft form of Monism, the view that all of reality is one and that each person needs to realize his/her oneness with creation. This is most clearly seen in the passage where Santiago becomes the wind. Do not allow this aspect of the work to deter you from reading the novel. Keep in mind that the author is using a fable format to portray timeless wisdom.

Alchemy is a curious combination of the monistic world view and science. There are terms having to do with alchemy throughout the book. Many of the concepts and terms may be strange to you. These are the most common alchemical terms and their explanations as found in the text.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Alquimia <i>Alchemy</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Es traer hacia el plano material la perfección espiritual (p. 165) |
| Alquimista <i>Alchemist</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Un hombre que conoce la naturaleza y el mundo. (p. 163)▪ Un hombre que tiene poderes excepcionales (p. 87) |
| El Alma del Mundo <i>The Soul of the World</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ El principio que mueve todas las cosas; una fuerza positiva (p. 98);▪ Permite que alguien entienda cualquier cosa (p. 100) |
| La Tabla de Esmeralda <i>The Emerald Tablet</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Un pasaje directo para el Alma del Mundo (p. 151) |
| La Gran Obra <i>The Master Work</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consiste de la Piedra Filosofal y el Elixir de Larga Vida (p. 101) |
| Elixir de Larga Vida <i>The Elixir of Life</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ La parte líquida de la Gran Obra era llamada Elixir de la Larga Vida, y curaba todas las dolencias, además de evitar que el alquimista envejeciera. (p. 101);▪ El que tome este elixir nunca más estará enfermo (p. 157) |
| La Piedra Filosofal <i>The Philosopher's Stone</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Un trocito de esta piedra transforma cualquier metal en oro. (p. 157)▪ Es la parte sólida de la Gran Obra (p. 101) |
| Historia Personal <i>Personal Story, Destiny</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Es el gran sueño de su vida (p. 28);▪ Aquello que tú siempre deseaste hacer (p. 40);▪ Tú misión en la tierra (p. 41);▪ El camino que cada hombre debe seguir (p. 47) (Cumplir la Historia Personal es el tema del libro) |

NOTES ON THE ALCHEMIST

(NOT CRUCIAL INFORMATION , JUST INTERESTING TRIVIA)

- Paulo Coelho held an on-line workshop on *The Alchemist* in July of 2009. You can see the discussions in the archives at: <http://paulocoelhoblog.com/2009/06/22/workshop-the-chemist/>
- The plot of *The Alchemist* has a long pedigree. It is loosely based on a short story, *The Tale of Two Dreamers* by Jorge Luis Borges, the Nobel-prize winning Argentinean novelist and poet. That story was published in 1935 in a book of Borges' stories, *Historia universal de la infamia* (The Universal History of Infamy). Borges' story was based on a story from the famous Arabian book *The Thousand and One Nights*, which also includes such famous stories as *Alladin and the Magic Lamp* and *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves*.

The plot of *The Alchemist* is also similar to an old English folktale known as “*The Pedlar of Swaffham*,” which many believe to be true. The ancient church in the village of Swaffham still has an old carved wooden statue of the Pedlar and his dog in it.

- The style of writing in *The Alchemist* is simple, straightforward and filled with important life lessons. It is similar in style to classics such as *Aesop's Fables*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, or more recently books like *The Little Prince*.
- *The Alchemist* is a [bestseller](#) across the globe. It was originally written in [Portuguese](#) and was first published in [Brazil](#) in [1988](#) under the title *O Alquimista*.
- The book has been a world-wide bestseller for over twenty years. It has been translated into at least 56 languages so far and is thought to be on its way to becoming a type of classic.
- There are rumors in Hollywood that a major motion picture of *The Alchemist* will be produced.
- Despite its spiritual themes, Coelho's book does not promote any specific religion, although there are Catholic and Muslim elements and imagery involved in the story.
- Tangier (*Tanja* in [Arabic](#) and *Tánger* in [Spanish](#)) is a bustling city in northern [Morocco](#) with a population of almost a million. It lies on the [North African](#) coast across from the [Strait of Gibraltar](#), where the [Mediterranean](#) meets the [Atlantic](#) Ocean. It is the capital of the [Tangier-Tétouan](#) Region of Morocco.
- The word [tangerine](#) comes from the city of Tangier, from where tangerines were first shipped to Europe. Tangerine as an English word was first recorded in 1710.
- The city of Tangier is a crossroads of the European and Arabic worlds. It is a multi-cultural city that includes Muslims, Christians, Jews, and many foreign immigrants. It has also attracted many well-known artists and musicians due to its thriving culture and pleasant weather.