

English IV Summer Reading

The Alchemist Reading Guide: These questions are *only* for student comprehension. Students do not submit the answers.

Introduction to pg. 33

1. How long has Santiago been a shepherd?
2. What unfamiliar feeling arises in Santiago the first time he talks to the merchant's daughter? How does this feeling conflict with the reason he became a shepherd?
3. What, in Santiago's mind, draws the sheep to him?
4. In what way is Santiago unusual for a shepherd?
5. How does Santiago's father feel about his son's becoming a shepherd? What does his father give him? What does Santiago detect in his father's gaze?
6. What makes life interesting to Santiago? What do you think of this notion?
7. Why does the interpreter of dreams say she can only interpret some dreams?
8. What does the gypsy woman charge Santiago for interpreting his dream?
9. To what does the old man refer when he speaks of a "Personal Legend"? What is the "world's greatest lie"?
10. What initial picture does the narrative give of the old man?
11. What further definition of a "Personal Legend" does the old man offer?
12. What is the "principle of favorability"?
13. What are Urim and Thummin?
14. What lesson is the old man conveying in the story of the boy in the castle and the drops of oil?

pp. 33-68

1. What happens when the young Spanish-speaking Arab take Santiago to the market?
2. Why does Santiago weep?
3. What "answer" does Santiago get when he consults Urim and Thummin about the future of his treasure?
4. Why is the candy seller Santiago helps in the market happy?
5. What problems with his business does the crystal merchant face when Santiago first meets him?
6. What causes Santiago's despair at the end of Part One?
7. What obligation of being a Muslim has the crystal merchant yet to fulfill?
8. What fear does the merchant express when Santiago suggests selling tea in crystal glasses?
9. What is the meaning of "Maktub"?
10. What language does Santiago say the sheep taught him that is more important than learning Arabic?
11. What does Santiago observe about the merchant just as he prepares to leave?
12. What goals has the Englishman accomplished in life, and what has he yet to accomplish?

pp. 68-104

1. What makes the Englishman suddenly acknowledge Santiago, when he previously tried to ignore him?
2. According to the Englishman, with which two words is the universal language written?
3. How many people and animals comprise the caravan crossing the desert?
4. Describe the mood of the people once they begin crossing the desert.
5. Compare how the Englishman and Santiago occupy themselves while crossing the desert.

6. With whom in the caravan does Santiago make friends?
7. What is the Emerald Tablet?
8. Define and describe the Master Work.
9. How do Santiago and the Englishman differ in how they regard alchemy?
10. What threat arises that could keep the caravan from reaching the oasis?
11. Why is the camel driver unconcerned about the impending war?
12. What does Santiago feel during his encounter with the young woman at the well?
13. What does the alchemist tell the Englishman he must try to do?
14. What bad omen does Santiago read while watching the two hawks in the sky?
15. What is the seer's secret to reading the future?

pp. 104-132

1. How does Santiago respond to the chieftain's question as to why the desert would speak to him, a newcomer?
2. What is the "agreement" the older among the chieftains makes with Santiago?
3. How does Santiago feel about the prospect of dying?
4. What question does the turbaned man on horseback put to Santiago?
5. Describe the outcome of the battle.
6. What does the alchemist serve Santiago when he visits him?
7. What action does the alchemist direct Santiago to take?
8. What "life" does the boy find in the desert?
9. Why is Santiago's heart heavy, even when the alchemist says he will lead him to the Pyramids?
10. How will the desert change for Fatima once Santiago is gone?
11. According to the alchemist, what is "the only way to learn"?
12. What, according to the alchemist, must Santiago listen to above all else?
13. What is the one thing Santiago still needs to know?

pp. 133-167

1. What lesson does the alchemist teach Santiago by telling the tribesman about the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life?
2. What does Santiago's heart tell him are his strongest qualities?
3. Why do the tribesmen seize the alchemist and Santiago?
4. To save their lives, what act does the alchemist promise Santiago will perform?
5. What is the one thing the alchemist says will make a dream impossible to achieve?
6. When speaking to the desert, how does Santiago define love?
7. Why is the wind stronger than the desert?
8. What are the limitations of the wind?
9. What simple explanation does the boy give the sun about what alchemists do?
10. How does human action affect the Soul of the World?
11. How does Santiago's prayer differ from all previous prayers in his life?
12. What does the alchemist demonstrate to Santiago before they part company?
13. How does Santiago determine where to start digging at the Pyramids?
14. What happens to Santiago as he digs for his treasure in the sand?
15. Where does Santiago find his treasure?