

BOOK REVIEW

The Alchemist

Paulo Coelho

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“When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.” Paulo Coelho has been sending this message through his book “The Alchemist” since 1988, when it was first published. It was originally written in Portuguese, and is now available in over 65 languages.

The story begins in the vast fields in Andalusia, Spain, and it takes readers over the sea to a port town in Africa, then to an oasis in the middle of the desert, and finally to the foot of the Pyramids. The main protagonist is a boy who dreams of traveling. One day, he decides to go to the Pyramids in Egypt, where in a dream he saw a hidden treasure.

In his journey, he learns about life, love, and dreams through the experiences he has and through the people he meets. It’s not just in the book that life keeps going with or without someone’s wish. It just keeps going no matter what. When life starts, there are so many dreams, there is so much time to dream of dreams, too. As the book notes, however, some people think that “at a certain point in our lives, we lose control of what’s happening to us, and our lives become controlled by fate.” The “fate” can be translated into “chance” or “time” or whatever it is that is not controlled by human beings. It became true in the novel for a merchant in the port town in Africa. His business was very successful. He had a dream to visit Mecca some day, but he had a good life. The life he built was to realize his dream one day, but he was too busy to focus on his dream, and eventually his focus was not on his dream anymore. He was completely stuck. He was too afraid of leaving what he earned, but at the same time, he knew he had a dream.

The boy almost became like the merchant when he found his love, Fatima, in the oasis. He could work there and get married with her. He could start his life there, and it would be a good one. However, he also encountered the alchemist, who told him to pursue his dream, and he guided him to the Pyramids.

With his help, he learned many things like how to read omens and how to understand the language of nature. He also told the boy that the only way to learn is through action, and everything he needs to know he has learned

through his journey. An Englishman, who the boy met when he went across the desert, also learned that all he needed to do to achieve his goal was not to read and think about how to do something, but just try to do it. Up until he met the alchemist, he was reading books and trying to figure out how to turn metal into gold without actually doing any experiments. He might have thought that as soon as he met the alchemist, he would learn it from him, however, it turned out that was too optimistic of an idea. So long as he didn’t start moving, nothing started moving.

When one finds his or her Personal Legend, their heart gets excited but scared at the same time. When the balance of these two feelings crumbles, that’s when people start becoming too bold or they start making excuses. “The secret of happiness is to see all the marvels of the world, and never to forget the drops of oil on the spoon (that one must not spill).” To do that, the internal balance is essential. Moreover, along the journey, devouring books or sitting in front of a computer could bring knowledge, however, when actions are actually taken, that is when life starts becoming more interesting. Big, small, fast, slow, any kind of action will be followed by greater knowledge and experience. Life keeps moving, but it keeps showing omens, too.” In order to find the treasure, you will have to follow the omens. God has prepared a path for everyone to follow. You just have to read the omens that he left for you.” The story that tells us this could be our omen as well. Catch it. Everything else from here is up to us.

