**The Alchemist**

**Paulo Coelho**

**Research Project:**

There are many terms, ideas, locations, and philosophies that are discussed throughout the novel *The Alchemist* that if left unturned may lead the reader to remain ignorant of the beauty and depth that this novel encompasses. Therefore, it is imperative to spend some time furthering our knowledge and gaining insight into the journey that becomes Santiago’s life.

Below you will find a compilation of choices to explore further. You are to choose one topic that you will spend time researching, analyzing, and presenting to the class.  The purpose of this project is to inform. Your job will be to gather all pertinent information regarding your topic, to synthesize the information into a coherent essay, and then to present your findings to the class. Please make sure that you focus your topic to how it relates to the novel as a whole. Some of these topics could become very large, so a focus is necessary. There will only be one person presenting each of the topics. You will all be responsible for the information presented, so it would behoove you to pay close attention during every presentation. (hint: you may want to take notes)

**Here are your choices:**

1. What is alchemy?  What processes were involved?  Who performed it and why? Who were the famous alchemists of the medieval period?

2. Who is Melchizedek?  What role does he play in the Old Testament? "The dreamer" Joseph is also mentioned in the novel, who was he and what was his role in the Old Testament as well?

3. What are the Five Pillars of Islam (p. 54).  What is the Koran?

4. Explore the concept of Soul of the World as different religions and philosophies define it.

5. Research the tribal ways of the Bedouins of the Sahara (77).

6. Research one of the geographical settings from the novel, and focus on culture, religion, beliefs, important historical events, language, etc.

\*\*\*You may also choose one not on this list, but must clear it with your teacher.

Andalusia                                                                 Al-Fayoum (oasis in Egypt)

Tarifa                                                                       El Cairum (p.76)

Salem (Jeru'salem )                                                 Nile

Tangier (p. 44)                                                         Coptic Monastery

Ceuta (p. 44)                                                            Moors (p.27)

Mecca (p. 54)                                                          Sahara Desert (36)

7. What are the basic theories of Freud’s or Jung’s dream analysis theories?  Catalog all of the dreams that occur in the book, and attempt to interpret one according to a theorist.

8. Research levanters, siroccos and other regional weather features described in the book. Then discuss the superstitions regarding these as well. You will also need to discuss the weather conditions in two of the main locations that Santiago travels to.

9. What is Transcendentalism? What is the history of this movement and what do Transcendentalist believe? Who are famous Transcendentalists? How is this novel Transcendental is nature?

10. You may also choose one of the following Regional, Cultural or Spiritual Allusions and Terms and research the philosophies, symbols, and ideas surrounding each of these terms.  How are they relevant to the novel? You could also discuss omens that are relevant.

Narcissus (Prologue)                                                        Esperanto (p.66) Christianity

Helvetius, Elias, Fulcanelli, Geber (p.82)

Other religions                                                             Scarab (p.161)

Muslim                                                                            Simum (p.148)

“Maktub” (p. 59)                                                        Coptic (153,154)

Allah (p. 71, 97)                                                          Tiberius (p.158)

The Alchemist’s Terms/Expressions:

The Soul of the World                                                     Philosopher’s Stone ((p.66)

The Unspoken Language                                                 Elixir of Life (p. 66)

The Language of the World                                              Master Work (p.81)

Personal Legend                                                               Emerald Tablet (p. 126)

Principle of Favorability (p. 29)

Urim and Thummin (p. 30)

**Requirements:**

2-3 page synthesis essay of all of the information you uncovered

MLA format and citation of textual evidence

Works Cited page

Visual aid for presentation (Prezi, Powerpoint, video (you have created), website, etc..)

Presentation should be 3-5 minutes and should focus on your topic and the information you uncovered. You will also want to discuss how this topic is relevant/ important to the novel. What insight does this information provide?