



The Horizon Newsletter

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The Alchemist: Paulo Coelho's Take on Persistence, Identity, and Overcoming Fear Sruthi Anne

It is not easy to push one's self past comfort zones, but fear will hold down the true pursuit of dreams. The Alchemist tells a story about an Andalusian boy named Santiago who travels to Egypt. He is a shepherd boy who wishes to make a difference in his life. He dreams of discovering treasures in the Pyramids of Egypt. As a result of that dream, he chooses to travel to Egypt in order to find and collect his riches. In this book, the author Paulo Coelho advises the reader to constantly follow one's aspirations and listen to their hearts. When Santiago is confronted by his dream at the beginning of the book, he is unsure of what to do. However, as he continues along his travels, Santiago has entire faith that his heart will lead him through life. Santiago's journey leads him to greater understanding and emphasizes that one must overcome one's fears in order to achieve their dreams.

Santiago learns an important lesson along the way; he understands that family does not have to be blood related to be able to call a place "home". In The Alchemist, Santiago leaves home to go on an adventure, and instead of contacting his family back home, he forms connections with the people he has met along the way; he also falls in love. As a result, he went on to start his own life and meet his wife, Fatima. "But ever since he had been a child, he had wanted to know the world, and this was much more important to him than knowing God and learning about man's sins." (10, Coelho). Although Santiago's father would like him to become a priest, Santiago was not too keen on the idea. After much debate between father and son, the

decision was made that Santiago would travel, and his father would try to be supportive. Besides, Santiago was mature enough to make his own choices. But, his biological family distanced himself from him, and they no longer had a significant impact on his life. With the love of his new wife and friends, he no longer viewed family as having to be blood related.

Santiago persisted in pursuing his dreams after he had looked at the life of the Crystal Merchant. The merchant served as an example to Santiago by showing him what life might turn out to be for him if he did not pursue his dreams. Fear is a roadblock in life. One must get over fear in order to pursue one's dreams. "Tell your heart that fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second encounter with God and with eternity." (86, Coelho). Following a setback on his journey, Santiago becomes terrified of further setbacks, and starts pondering a life similar to that of the Crystal Merchant. Santiago views his circumstances more optimistically now that he realizes that a life of shepherding is always an option for him to return to at any point. Santiago has not only learned how to be a crystal merchant, but he has also saved enough money to travel to his treasure and, most importantly, avoid making the same mistake again. Santiago has gained a greater appreciation for the miracle of life, and is focused on following his desires.

People would be more willing to act on their aspirations if they can overcome their own fear of failure. The two most difficult fears to conquer are the fear of losing valuable items or people, as well as the uncertainty of the future. Furthermore, fear is nothing more than a roadblock in life; it has the ability to corrupt the mind and generate unpleasant beliefs that aren't always true. Internal fear fuels these beliefs, and the only way to overcome it is to confront it head on.