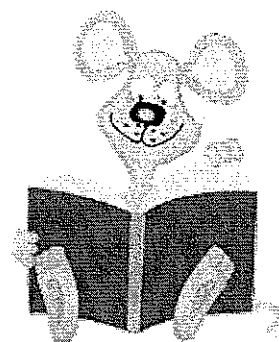


## SHKP Book Club

### Book Review Competition

Name: Leung Chun Yin William  
Age: 12  
Date: 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2006  
Book Title: The Alchemist  
Author: Paulo Coelho



### A Review of "The Alchemist"

What is this book about? How to herd sheep (According to the Chinese title)? Is it a novel about dreaming? About science? About alchemy? Or is it plainly an adventure book? I wondered with infinite curiosity as I picked up "The Alchemist" in the Public Library. However, I knew I was soon to find out.

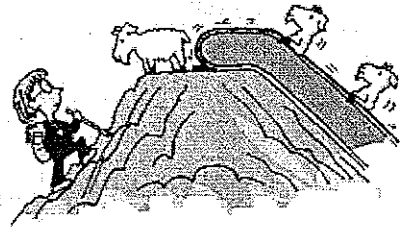
This tiny pocket book will not be "discovered" by readers, including me, if it wasn't an international bestseller. Placing itself on top of other books isn't an easy thing, and it sure isn't boasting to be a "bestseller".

Every teenager would think that "The Alchemist" is the English version of the prevailing cartoon show on TVB every night. I regret to tell them it is not. Instead, it is a philosophical book which overflows with wisdom and idealization. The story commences with a normal Andalusian shepherd named Santiago. He was a preoccupied and dreamy boy. He wanted to find a treasure in Egypt. On his exhausting journey, he met an old Gypsy woman, the old King of Salem - Melchizedek and an alchemist. All three of them led Santiago mentally to realizing his Personal Legend. In the end, Santiago found out that "*treasure lies where your heart belongs.*" The real treasure was not the silver coins and wealth that Santiago had found, but visiting the beautiful Pyramids and the acknowledgement of wisdom.



I learnt a lot while reading this interesting book. Especially from the events and the wise conversations between Santiago, the alchemist, the King of Salem, the crystal merchant, the chief tribesman, etc. Let me explain it in detail.

I have many dreams and goals in my life. I want to write a story, start a diary, make a personal website, have good academic results and able to contribute to the society, etc. However, I know my Achilles' heel - I give up too easily. I do not have too much perseverance. One or two obstacles could stop me from realizing my



"Personal Legend". For instance, I started numerous notebooks of vocabulary, but if you take a look at one of them, you will surely be startled - there are only one or two words in it. After reading "The Alchemist", I am determined to alter my steadfastness in working. To be honest, I am very impressed with Santiago's resoluteness and persistence. How could a normal boy not give up when he faces so many obstacles? I will take Santiago as my exemplar and paradigm. From now on, I will strive for the best to achieve my dreams and goals.

Among all the characters, I like the alchemist the most. Through his words of wisdom and the various conversations with Santiago, the readers could surely learn something. They could also introspect their own wrongdoings and attitude towards life through the intelligent words of the alchemist. For example, when Santiago begged the alchemist to teach him how to transform lead into gold, the latter replied, "Think about it, if every man turns lead into gold, gold will lose its value." This simple answer reminds the readers that things which can be easily achieved have no value at all. There were lots of other speeches about evil, greed, love, sacrifice, psychology, philosophy, courage, wealth, life and death. To be honest, I could have made a whole list of his "lectures"!

If we read the story carefully and thoughtfully, we can find some hidden morals behind the various events that occurred. Let us take the Englishman as an example. He wanted earnestly to meet the alchemist after years of studying alchemy. He wanted to learn how to make gold. During his years of studying, he only relied on one thing - books. However, when he *really* could meet the alchemist, the latter did not choose him to be his disciple. Instead, he chose Santiago, who was completely ignorant of alchemy. Why?

Try to compare the Englishman and Santiago. The Englishman only acquired knowledge from reading, reading and reading. However, Santiago did not care anything about written knowledge. He was very open-minded and loved the nature. He loved to "follow the signs of nature and omens", as mentioned in the novel. This is the attitude that we should follow in our daily lives. When we really want to learn something thoroughly, we should not learn from books alone; we should also observe everything around us carefully. By doing this, we can surely acquire much hidden knowledge which we cannot learn from books.

We can also see that Santiago loves to make friends with strangers. Because of this, Santiago learned a lot from them. Actually, it is the same in our daily lives. We should try to get along with some knowledgeable people whom we are unfamiliar with. We could surely learn a lot more knowledge outside-class.



Santiago wouldn't have achieved his goal of finding the treasure if he lacked one crucial aspect - courage. Walking from Andalusia to the Egyptian Pyramids is absolutely not an effortless and unproblematic thing to do. Despite all his problems and obstacles, the young Santiago completed the exhausting journey, depending on his courage and faith in himself. This shows us another living motto - courage is very important when we want to achieve our goals.

The book also tells us that we must be contented in what we have. The most valuable thing might be your simplest possession. As Santiago's father said, "Travel the world until you see that our castle is the greatest, and our women the most beautiful." The alchemist also said, "Simple things are the most valuable and only wise people appreciate them." Our "treasure" might already be before our eyes, we can't see it simply because we aren't aware of its presence.

People, especially the youth, love to dream. However, as we grow up, we start giving up our own dreams. Why? It is because we fear failure. As the crystal merchant said to Santiago, "I am afraid that great disappointment awaits me, and so I prefer to dream." In this case, no one would succeed. What everyone needs is courage. The alchemist once said wisely, "Courage is the quality most essential to understanding the Language of the World." It is absolutely correct. Courage can urge us to continue trying in spite of failing. "Understanding the Language of the World" means achieving our dreams. If we can resist and drive away the "evil" force of failure, we will surely succeed and achieve our goals.

Throughout the entire story, no one could have imagined Santiago digging up the treasure in the abandoned church where the story started. I was amused when I read the finale. Paulo Coelho had surely made the tale complete using this ending.

According to what I mentioned above, I like this book in three aspects. First, it is really inspirational. It taught me various ways to change my way of living. Second, the characters were very interesting and wise. Third, the story ended with an unexpected twist.

"The Alchemist" is a story full of metaphors. Santiago represents every motivated and ambitious teenager. The sheep represents what we possess in our daily lives. The old gypsy woman and the old King of Salem are the people who encourage and serve as our beacon lights (i.e. our friends, parents and teachers). Actually, the alchemist is with us every moment. He is the power which inspires teenagers to pursue their goals.

As the old King of Salem said, "When you really want something to happen, the whole universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." As a conclusion, I hope that every one of us will be persistent in pursuing our dreams, and may good luck be with us until we accomplish them. Dream on !!!



(1288 words)

~ *THE END* ~