

## *The Alchemist (by Paulo Coelho)*

When I first saw the cover of this book, I was very curious in the word “alchemist”. What is alchemist? What does an alchemist do? How is alchemy related to me? These questions appeared in my mind instantly.

The book that I am going to introduce is *The Alchemist*. It is an adventurous tale begins with an ordinary Spanish boy called Santiago. He was a shepherd who longed for travelling very much. With his sheep, he travelled around the country. However, once a Gypsy woman who interpreted dreams told the boy that he would find the treasure buried in the Egyptian Pyramids. Afterwards, along his way to Egypt, Santiago met an old king (who told Santiago about the Personal Legend — a person’s dream), a crystal merchant, an Englishman, Fatima (the woman that Santiago loved) and the alchemist (the companion of Santiago on the way to the pyramids). Of course, Santiago’s journey wasn’t as smooth as driving a car on a highway. He did face difficulties, for instance, being robbed, being kidnapped in a battle in the desert, lack of money, etc. But by learning the “Language of the World” (the language that uses love and enthusiasm instead of words to communicate) and different truths from the alchemist, Santiago was able to overcome these obstructions and successfully found the treasure.

Alchemist is actually a person who attempts to change ordinary metals into gold. But in the story, the alchemist didn’t concentrate on changing lead, copper and iron into gold to make himself wealthy. Instead, he tried to convince Santiago, as well as the readers, to pursue his Personal Legend and to turn our dream into reality, no matter what difficulties you are facing. When everyone wants to lead a better life, he will put his effort in trying to search his own “treasure” (his own dream) and that is why alchemy existed. At this moment, I realized that alchemy isn’t as simple as turning metals into gold, but it involves human’s dream towards ideal life.

To my surprise, although Santiago successfully found the treasure — a chest of gold coins and some precious jewellery, he didn’t found them in the Egyptian Pyramids. Grotesque! He found them in the abandoned church where he had lived with his sheep just before the trip to Egypt. And it just means that, he had just gone round a humongous circle before he found the hidden treasure. Does it mean that the trip was useless to him? Or does it mean that his destiny played tricks on him? No, and on the contrary, his destiny gave two treasures to Santiago. The first treasure is, of course, the gold coins and jewellery that he found in the abandoned church after the trip. And the second treasure is not very obvious, but I found it in the book, and it is the truths of life that Santiago learnt during the trip, especially those which led the boy through difficulties towards his Personal Legend. As what I have said in the previous paragraph, Personal Legend is something that you want to accomplish, and everyone cherishes one. In the book, the alchemist led the boy through difficulties and taught the boy about the truths behind alchemy, and those truths are very useful and essential to him. This treasure was even more significant and precious to his life than the gold coins and jewellery he later found.

“Because I don’t live in either my past or my future. I’m interested only in the present. If you can concentrate always on the present, you’ll be a happy man.” This is the sentence that I quote from the book, and it is the sentence that I love the most in this book. Another thing that the book taught me is to focus on the present. We should forget all our successes and failures in the past. Meanwhile, we also need not worry about the future. All we need to do is to do our best and work hard at present. That’s another crucial factor towards success.

*The Alchemist* is an epitome of pilgrimage. With truths and philosophy, the trip in this book really inspires me a lot. I enjoy reading this book, in addition to its well-written and thrilling plots, it is because of what I learnt from this book — to chase our Personal Legend with perseverance and to concentrate on our present.