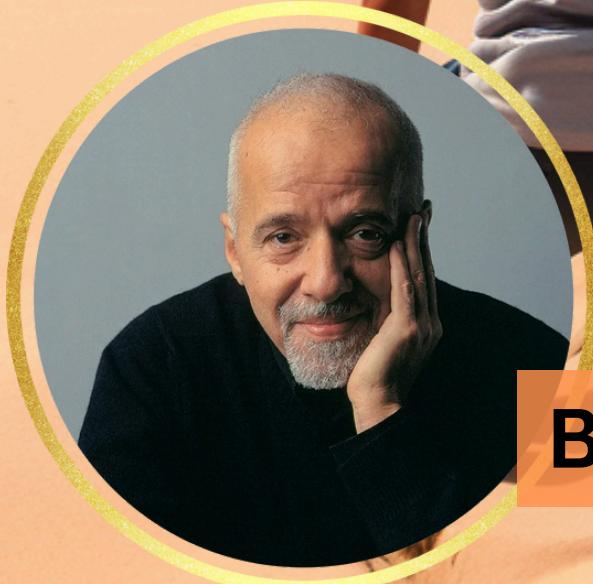




# Discussion Guide

## CAMP AFGHANISTAN BOOK CLUB

# The Alchemist



BY PAULO COELHO

# WELCOME TO CAMP AFGHANISTAN BOOK CLUB

## ABOUT CAMP AFGHANISTAN

Camp Afghanistan is for students of high school age in Afghanistan to prepare for international educational opportunities. Hosting various programs in English, the camp aims to enhance students' language skills while simultaneously empowering them to make positive impacts both in Afghanistan and globally.

## ABOUT CAMP AFGHANISTAN BOOK CLUB

The goals of the Camp Afghanistan Book Club are to inspire Afghan youth to explore diverse perspectives through global literature and to serve as a follow-up to the Camp Afghanistan week-long training. The club aims to enhance youth English language skills, public speaking, and confidence, while building a supportive community of like-minded young learners. It will also provide an accessible learning tool for out-of-school youth and may offer opportunities for exchanges with universities abroad.

## HOW DOES THE BOOK CLUB WORK?



### **We pick one book every two months**

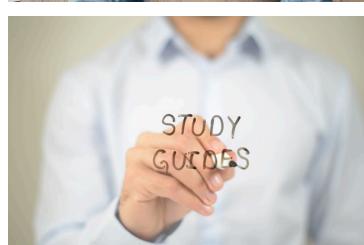
Including textbook, fiction, and biographies

Copies to be provided to members either online or printed



### **We meet online once a month**

Via Zoom discussing the book and opportunities to engage with the book such as debates



### **You will have discussion guides in PDF**

Members will be provided with a newsletter discussion guide helping them with reading, discussion, and writing

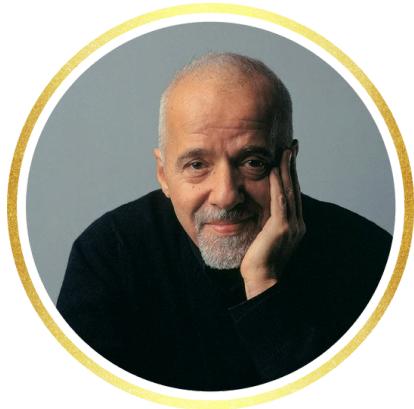


### **Opportunities to write summary/review**

Members can write reviews and summaries of the book that will be published in a newsletter/webpage

## ABOUT OUR AUTHOR

Paulo Coelho de Souza, a Brazilian lyricist and novelist renowned for *The Alchemist*, faced a tumultuous early life marked by his rebellion against conventional expectations, leading to his brief commitment to a mental institution. After dropping out of law school, Coelho pursued a bohemian lifestyle and a career in songwriting before being arrested in 1974 for subversive activities by Brazil's military regime. A spiritual awakening during a 1986 pilgrimage inspired him to become a full-time writer.



Coelho married artist Christina Oiticica in 1980, and they settled in Geneva. In 1996, he founded the Paulo Coelho Institute to aid children and the elderly, and in 2014, he established a virtual Paulo Coelho Foundation, complementing his physical foundation in Geneva, while staying active on social media.

**“There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure.”**

PAULO COELHO IN THE ALCHEMIST

## THE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Choose one meaningful quote from *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

Write an essay of 1,000 words explaining why the chosen quote is significant to you. Discuss its relevance to the themes of the book, its impact on your personal philosophy, or how it inspires you.

### Formatting:

- The essay must be typed and submitted as a Word document
- Use Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double-spacing
- Include your full name and contact information at the top of the first page

### Assessment criteria:

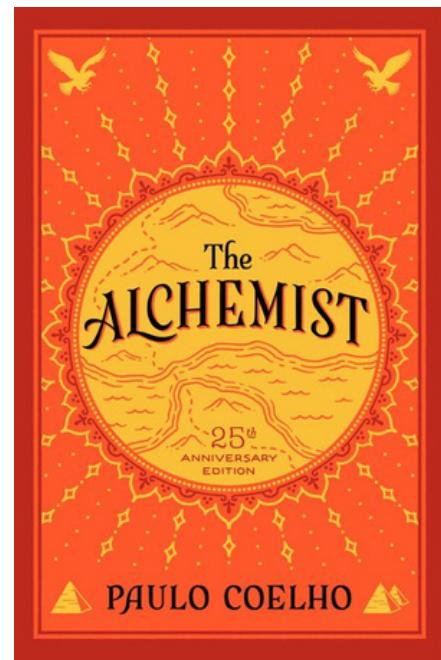
**(1)** Clarity and coherence of writing **(2)** Depth of analysis and insight into the chosen quote **(3)** Originality and creativity in connecting the quote to personal experiences or broader themes **(4)** Proper use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Email your essay to [summer.camp.afg@gmail.com](mailto:summer.camp.afg@gmail.com) with the subject line "Essay Submission - [Your Full Name]".

## ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Alchemist* is a philosophical novel that tells the story of Santiago, a young Andalusian shepherd (from southern Spain) who dreams of discovering a worldly treasure located somewhere in the Egyptian pyramids. Driven by recurring dreams, he decides to follow his *Personal Legend* or life's purpose.

The journey Santiago embarks on is filled with rich symbolism and deep allegories. Along the way, he meets various characters who guide and challenge him, including a gypsy woman, a king, a crystal merchant, an Englishman, and an alchemist. Each encounter teaches Santiago important lessons about listening to his heart, recognizing the signs along life's path, and following his dreams regardless of the obstacles.



Central themes in the novel include the importance of pursuing one's dreams, the interconnectedness of all things, and the idea that the journey is just as important as the destination. Coelho's writing style is simple yet profound, making the book accessible while also thought-provoking.

*The Alchemist* is celebrated for its motivational and inspirational messages, encouraging readers to seek out their own paths and to not be afraid of failure or setbacks. We have chosen this as our first read because this book resonates with people across various cultures and backgrounds including for you as Afghan youth.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discussion questions in our book club will help us talk about the book in our meeting once we have all finished reading. These questions will make it easier for us to share our thoughts, feelings, and ideas about the story, characters, and messages in the book. While reading the book think of how you'd respond to these questions:

1. What did you think of Santiago's decision to leave his home and go on a journey?
2. How important do you think taking risk and moving out of comfort zone was in Santiago's journey? Can you reflect on a time you moved away from your comfort zone? What was your experience and what did you learn?
3. Who was your favorite character and why?
4. What do you think is the main message of the book?
5. How did the different people Santiago met on his journey help him?
6. Can you think of a time in your life when you followed a dream or goal? What challenges you faced? How did it turn out?
7. What role do you think faith and destiny play in Santiago's journey?
8. How do the symbols in the book, like the desert and the alchemist, add to the story?

## JOIN OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY

To learn more about Camp Afghanistan, please follow up online

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