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Pais = Canada

subject = my essay about "The Alchemist"

Mensagem = I am originally from Lithuania, but this year I am redoing my high school in Canada. For the English class, I chose to write about "The Alchemist", for my independent project.

I will paste it here, if you are interested to read it sometime.

Inspiration in "The Alchemist"

"The Alchemist is an unabashed delight and inspirational wonder. This fable is a roseate amalgam of spiritual quest, existential puzzle, lovely sensitivity, and deep strength."

Malcolm Boyd

How come Paulo Coelho's novel had such an amazing inspirational effect to everyone, who read it? The book was translated into 41 different languages and more than 52 million copies were sold. What unique ideas were reflected in the novel that made it so popular? I will try to answer these questions below.

First of all, the reader's interest to the novel is obtained momentarily, while reading the first page of the book. A short story in the Prologue section gives an overall sense of the author's intentions and reveals his writing style, which is easy to read and understand for almost all potential audiences. There are three short stories, integrated in the novel, which in a way frame the work of Paulo Coelho. The first story is provided in the Prologue, the other one in the middle of the book, told by the character of king Salem and one more is told by the character of Alchemist nearly at the end of the novel. It is enough to read one of these short stories, in order to consider, whether you will like the book, or not. The one in the Prologue has a strong inspirational effect and prepares the reader for the uncommon viewpoint before reading the novel. To imply the thought-provoking atmosphere and to set up the right mood for my discussions below, I am providing the full quotation of the Prologue.

"The Alchemist picked up a book that someone in the caravan had brought. Leafing through the pages, he found a story about narcissus.

The Alchemist knew the legend of narcissus, a youth who knelt daily beside a lake to contemplate his own beauty. He was so fascinated by himself that, one morning, he fell into the lake and drowned. At the spot where he fell, a flower was born, which was called the narcissus.

But this was not how the author of the book ended the story.

He said that when Narcissus died, the goddesses of the forest appeared and found the lake, which had been fresh water, transformed into a lake of salty tears.

"Why do you weep?" the goddesses asked.

"I weep for Narcissus," the lake replied.

"Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus", they said, "for though we always pursued him in the forest, you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand."

"But ... was Narcissus beautiful?" the lake asked.

“Who better than you to know that?” the goddesses said in wonder. “After all, it was by your banks that he knelt each day to contemplate himself!”

The lake was silent for some time. Finally, it said:

“I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected.”

“What a lovely story,” the alchemist thought. ”

Paulo Coelho wrote: “Whenever we do something that fills us with enthusiasm, we are following our legend. However, we don’t all have the courage to confront our own dream. (...) So, why is it so important to live our personal calling if we are only going to suffer more than other people? Because, once we have overcome the defeats and we always do we are filled by a greater sense of euphoria and confidence.” The above quotation reveals the intended thesis of the novel. Paulo Coelho had a vision about the unity of the universe, where every element of it had to serve its purpose. (“each thing has to transform itself into something better, and to acquire a new Personal Legend, until, someday, the Soul of the World becomes one thing only.”)

The main ideas, reflected in “The Alchemist”, inspire the readers to reason their own way of life. The determination to achieve an intended personal goal noticeably strengthens after reading the advices, provided in the novel.

“Every search begins with beginner’s luck. And every search ends with the victors being severely tested.” The words of Alchemist inspire the main character Santiago to go on with the pursuit of his dream. When the seeker is aware about the possible difficulties in his way, he is ready to start his journey.

There is always a beginning. The beginning of the fulfillment of the dream is the making of the decision. “When someone makes a decision, he is really diving into a strong current that will carry him to places he had never dreamed of when he first made the decision.” When Santiago decided to seek for his treasure, he didn’t know where the life will bring him. He was open and ready for anything. During his journey Santiago discovered and explored very interesting places, like the crystal shop or the desert, which were unfamiliar to him before.

“It’s the possibility of having a dream come true that makes life interesting.” The process of the exploration is perhaps more important than the satisfaction of achieving the goal. It’s the secret of human happiness. “(...) people fail to recognize the good things that happen in their lives every day that the sun rises.” Every little movement towards the dream awakens the joyful pleasure in the seeker’s heart and gives the strong inspiration to go forward.

There is a significant idea revealed in the novel, that if one seeker meets another seeker with a different “Personal legend”, they should respect each other and try not to “step over each other’s head” to achieve their personal aims. After Santiago met the chemist and got to know him better, he thought to himself: “His way isn’t the same as mine, nor mine as his. But we’re both in search of our Personal legends, and I respect him for that.” It’s a good example of the appropriate actions when dealing with somebody else’s ambitions. The tolerance is a necessity.