

"The best of a book is not the thought which it contains, but the thought which it suggests;
just as the charm of music dwells not in the tones but in the echoes of our hearts."

John Greenleaf Whittier

Summer 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Secaucus Middle and High Schools are introducing a new summer reading program for the 2010-2011 school year. Our teachers strongly believe that reading is an essential component in helping our students to think critically and creatively. Reading instills in them a rich vocabulary, gives them food for thought, and encourages them to seek knowledge beyond the pages of books. When reading a class novel, students experience the sharing of unique ideas and perspectives with their classmates.

With that in mind, each grade/class will be assigned one novel to read and respond to over the summer vacation. It is our hope that by having students read the same book, we can begin the new school year in a more unified way. All the books that have been chosen can be found at any library or bookstore in paperback form or ordered online. Students will be responsible for completing the novel guide that corresponds to their assigned novel (see reverse), and should be prepared for class discussions about the book when they return to school in the September. We also encourage students to read books this summer that appeal to their own individual interests, and look forward to discussing the assigned books when we see them in September.

Sincerely,

Deidre Ertle
Principal
Secaucus High School

Robert Daniello
Acting Principal
Secaucus Middle School

Christine Candela
Summer Reading Chair
English Department Facilitator

The Alchemist
By Paulo Coelho

If you have English in the Fall semester, this assignment is due to your English teacher on **September 14, 2010**. If you have English in the Spring semester, you will return this assignment on **September 14, 2010** to the English department. Listen for specific announcements.

Section I- Characters

Characters: On a separate sheet of paper, write or type a paragraph description for each character (consider their interaction with Santiago, what was their life like before meeting Santiago, did they teach Santiago any lessons, or did Santiago teach them etc)

(one paragraph per character)

Santiago

Dream Interpreter

Melchizedek “King of Salem”

Crystal Merchant

The Englishman

Fatima

The Alchemist

Section II- Quotations

Directions: Directions: As you read this novel, keep a double entry journal. On the left hand side of the page, write or type the quotations you have selected for analysis, and to the right of the quote respond to your selection. An example can be found below. Try to find at least 8-12 quotations and reflect on their meaning; however, you are encouraged to choose as many as you would like. Your journal, when it is complete, will look like the example below—quotations on the left, and reader response on the right.

Explain how and why the quote is important. Remember to identify the speaker, listener, and the context of the quotation. Be sure to examine all the quotations carefully, looking for any of the following to help you write your reflections:

- Character development: What is revealed in the quote about the character’s personality?
- Themes: Is there anything in the quote that relates to the author’s message.
- Literary devices such as: *simile, metaphor, irony, allusion, etc.* Consider the reason WHY the author creates this figurative language in the quote. What is the writer trying to highlight, did the words appeal to you in some way?
- What insights about life have you gained from the quote?
- Did the quote bring forth feelings such as pity, contempt, admiration, exasperation, compassion, etc?
- Was there any confusion over issues that the quote brought to light?
- Were there any humorous quotes/anecdotes you encountered along the way?

Example of journal entry for quotations:

1. “The boy and his heart had become friends, and neither was capable now of betraying the other.” In this line the author uses personification. He describes the heart as one would an actual person. This demonstrates how once you know yourself, and figure out what you believe in, it is hard to go against what you know to be right and true.

Section III- Theme

Thematic Essay (CHOOSE ONE): In a well-developed essay (minimum of four paragraphs written or typed), reflect on one of the following themes from the novel:

- Controlled Luck/ Will/Fate- How does luck, will, or fate dictate the rest of Santiago’s journey? Give specific examples from the book that support your reasoning. Also consider your own feeling about luck, will, and fate. Do you believe in any of the three? Which one(s) has played a role in your life?
- In the introduction it states that there are four obstacles in finding your personal legend:
 1. being told from childhood that what we want to do is impossible,
 2. being afraid of hurting those around us by abandoning everything in order to pursue our dream,
 3. fearing defeats we will meet on the journey,
 4. and fearing the realization of the dream for which we have fought all our lives.What are some examples of how Santiago meets and overcomes those barriers?
- Santiago is guided by his dreams and by omens that appear to him throughout his journey. Give an example of one of Santiago’s dreams that lead him somewhere. After this write about a noteworthy dream you have had, or about an omen that guided you somehow during the course of your life. How did you interpret the dream or omen, and how did it influence your life? Visit: <http://www.dreammoods.com/dreamdictionary/> and find the interpretation of your dream. Then compare your interpretation with that of the one given from the website. Be sure to put the website’s interpretation in your essay.

**Any word you do not understand in the above assignment, you are expected to look it up in the dictionary.