***The Alchemist***

**Take-home Essay Test**

Choose one of the following questions to answer in a well-composed, typed essay. Remember to use the 2009 MLA manuscript typing requirements, in-text citations, and a Works Cited page.

1. In the Prologue, the alchemist reads an altered version of the story *The Death of Narcissus* where the lake’s grief is emphasized. In beginning the book with this story, what themes and relationships is Coelho telling his readers to watch for throughout Santiago’s story? How does he develop those themes/relationships? Do you think there is an element of “narcissism” in the pursuit of one’s Personal Legend? Why?
2. Coelho once said that alchemy is about pursuing our spiritual quest in the physical world as it is given to us. It is the “art of transmuting reality into something sacred, of mixing the sacred with the profane.” How does this statement apply to Santiago?
3. Read the introduction to *The Alchemist* (pages v-viii). Coelho says there are four obstacles to obtaining our own Personal Legend. What are the four obstacles and how does Santiago experience them in his own journey?
4. One of the first major diversions Santiago experienced from his journey was the theft of his money in Tangier which forced him into taking a menial job with the crystal merchant. There, Santiago learned many lessons on everything from business to patience. Of all the lessons he learned there, which lessons were the most crucial to his pursuit of his Personal Legend and why?
5. When he talked about the pilgrimage to Mecca, the crystal merchant argued that having a dream was more important than realizing the dream. Santiago on the other hand came to believe that achieving his goal, although difficult, was more satisfying. Explain which of the two views you most agree with and why.
6. At one point, the alchemist explains to Santiago the secret of turning metal into gold. He also tells Santiago why so few alchemists have succeeded in doing so. Explain the process and reasons why some alchemists fail. How does this compare to finding one’s own Personal Legend?
7. Throughout *The Alchemist*, Coelho merges several world religions’ beliefs and teachings into his story. Discuss at least two specific references to the Judeo-Christian, Islamic, and/or Buddhist religions. How did Santiago experience and use these lessons during his journey? By using these references, what did Coelho hope to convey?
8. Analyze Langston Hughes’ poem *A Dream Deferred* and explain what the speaker is suggesting about dreams. Choose two images from the poem and relate them to character(s) from *The Alchemist*.