

Literary Analysis and Symbolism in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist and Related Psychological and Philosophical Perspectives

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the principles of optimism in life that are mirrored in the symbols used in Coelho's *The Alchemist*, as well as to explain the symbols employed in the book. This study falls under the category of descriptive qualitative research. Paulo Coelho's book *The Alchemist* serves as the study's main source of data. The process of gathering data involves taking notes. Another classification for this topic is library research. The researcher comes at the following conclusion in light of the facts and discussion. In the first place, the symbols employed in this book reflect the six qualities or ideals that define an optimistic outlook on life. They are the principles of respect, hope, faith, strength, perseverance, and optimistic thinking. Second, *The Alchemist* employs twelve symbols, which are separated into three categories: six symbols of objects, two symbols of events or ideas, and four symbols of characters. According to the study's findings, *The Alchemist*'s twelve symbols represent the author's use of optimism in a narrative about self-discovery. The findings as a whole indicate that the symbols help readers comprehend Paulo Coelho's message that everyone can discover pleasure inside themselves.

Keywords: symbolism, Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*, optimism, psychology, humanistic psychology, semiotics, character development, personal growth

Introduction

Literature is an analysis of a man's life through the use of language. Robert defines literature as writing that conveys and expresses ideas, emotions, and perspectives on life (1993: 1). It has also occurred in a novel, which is a literary genre. The main character in the *Alchemist* novel exhibits an optimistic outlook on life, which is represented in the symbolism of characters, events, concepts, and objects. These traits include hope, faith, power and courage, conflict, positive thinking, and respect. We can draw a comparison between the author's biography and the novel's symbol and its unique hopeful outlook on life.

The researcher illustrates the similarities, contrasts, and differences in the book *The Alchemist* by citing a few sources from the earlier investigation. The first two studies, researchers Puspa (2007) and Utomo (2008), are titled "Santiago's Self-actualization in *The Alchemist* based on Maslow" and "Motivation of a boy to pursue his dream as seen in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*," respectively. A

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review of the same issue of the previous study is reviewed as a reference to support this study. A related theory to Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology is to examine how the characters in the book are characterized.

These four researchers' second study, "Santiago Strives for Success in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist novel (1992)," was written by Farizi (2013). Indrajani (2010) wrote a study titled "The meaning of nature for Santiago in his effort to find the real Happiness in The Alchemist." "Listening to Heart, Pursuing dreams and world's reality, interpretation of symbols used in the Alchemist novel by Paulo Coelho" (D. Nawang, 2010). Hasanah, "Decision Making in Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist," (2008). This researcher uses symbols in the novel to illustrate the similarity concept.

The third study by these three scholars, Christina (2009), is titled "The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho: The Santiago Process of Developing Optimism." Julia Stanford's optimism in Sydney Sheldon's Morning, Noon, and Night: An Individual Psychological Approach, Wibowo (2007) "Optimism of Larry Crowne reflected in Tom Hank's Larry Crowne movie (2011): An individual psychological approach" (Susanti, 2013). These researchers used Optimistic in the novel to get the similarity value.

In this study, the author focuses on the novel's optimistic outlook on life, and the utilization of earlier research by other scholars can aid in the analysis of the data. By examining the character's attitudes toward an optimistic outlook on life, the author can draw comparisons between Paulo Coelho's stance on an optimistic outlook on life and his biography. Additionally, the study aims to examine how the story can influence readers, particularly teenagers, junior-senior high school students, college students, and adults, to adopt an optimistic outlook on life.

Theoretical foundation

The study employs two methodologies: a biographical approach to the analysis of The Alchemist's symbolism and an optimistic outlook on life.

Some academics have given the term "optimistic" multiple definitions in relation to optimism in life. "Optimistic" is expecting the best, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. A confident optimist is someone who is constantly hopeful, sees the bright side of things, and thinks that everything happens for the best. According to Keller (2010: p. 11–13), optimism is the faith that brings success; without hope, there would be no harmony between the human spirit and the spiritual confidence in God's good deeds. Peale (2014: p. 9–21) asserts that faith may boost vitality, accomplish the most amazing feats, and triumph over any challenge. Conversely, optimism, according to Seligman (2006: p. 15), is not a rediscovery of the "power of positive thinking"—thinking positively, anticipating positive outcomes, being confident in oneself, and making a concerted effort to see every event and difficult circumstance that occurs in real life with positive thoughts because of high expectations that never stop the mind and feelings.

The author draws the following conclusions from the aforementioned statements: (a) having a great deal of hope; (b) having a strong faith; (c) building power; (d) challenging to struggle; (e) heightening

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positive thinking; and (f) heightening respect. These traits are those of an optimist.

According to biographical critics, a work reflects the life and times of the author or the characters. According to this method, in order to fully comprehend the works, one must be aware of the author as well as the political, social, and economic circumstances of the era. It looks at the work of literature in light of the author's life. To fully comprehend the work, including its references and symbols, one must relate it to the creator. To contribute more crucial information to the analysis of the work, it is also important to consider the political, sociological, economic, and cultural circumstances of the time it was created. Wellek asserts that literary works have certain inherent components, including story, characters, topic, structure, style, and symbolism. Since he says, "If it persistently recurs, both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol," this paper exclusively discusses symbols in the book. Wellek, 189. He adds other significant points, such as this: "The most popular and successful approach to understanding literature focuses on its setting, surroundings, and external reasons. These extrinsic techniques are equally appropriate to contemporary literature as they are to the study of the past (Wellek, 73).

The website <http://literarydevices.com/content/symbol> defines a symbol as a literary device that represents multiple other features, notions, or traits beyond those that are apparent in the literal translation alone. Symbols sometimes have multiple layers of meaning that are hidden at first glance. The action or item being used as a symbol has a deeper significance than its literal interpretation. The use of symbols to represent concepts and attributes by endowing them with symbolic meanings distinct from their literal meanings is known as symbolism. It can be symbolic in a variety of ways. Usually, an object is used to represent another in order to give it a completely distinct, deeper, and more important meaning. The context in which a symbol is employed does affect its meaning.

The author analyses this book using two methods: first, by examining the author's biography and the significance of the symbols used in the book, the author may uncover the novel's message of optimism.

Research Method

The author analyzes the novel using descriptive qualitative research. A descriptive study is one in which the researcher uses the words and utterances found in *The Alchemist* to describe the data. Since this study's data does not deal with numbers, it is referred to as qualitative. Therefore, since the data are described in a descriptive manner, the author decides that a descriptive qualitative method is the best approach. Identifying the study's subject is the first stage. The identification of the source data is the second. Choosing the data collection method comes in third. The fourth is identifying the data analysis methods. An important source of information is *The Alchemist*. The secondary data source is also derived from additional sources that are relevant to the study, including books on literature, the internet, and psychoanalytic theory.

The writer conducted a few actions to gather the information. The following are the steps involved in

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gathering data: (a) reading the book; (b) investigating and expanding the data from the data source; (c) visiting the library to read a few books as references; (d) reading a few e-books and other study-related references; and (e) analyzing the references and concluding that Paulo Coelho's *Alchemist* is full of symbols that reflect an optimistic outlook on life. Using symbols, the researcher explains the ideals of the optimistic outlook on life.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

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Research discussion and finding

Following the research, the researcher comes to the following conclusions. Examples include the definition of the trait of optimism in life, the symbols that represent this trait, and the symbols which tackle the optimistic outlook on life.

4.1 Paulo Coelho's Optimistic View of Life and Its Properties, as well as the Use of Symbols to Address It

Hope:

The most important component of optimism among the other components is "hope." Since optimism entails having the faith to actualize hope, optimism is fundamentally based on both hope and faith. The optimist views hope as the future of humanity. The fundamental goal of life for an optimist is to

achieve hope. A man's life will be in disarray if he has no hope. Hope will guide the man toward a purposeful existence. Hope serves as a source of inspiration and future advantages. In this book, Santiago, a figure who embodies the importance of hope, serves as a symbol for hope.

Faith:

A stronger belief in one's capacity to achieve hope is faith. People with a positive outlook on life have a strong faith that will help them succeed. They ingrain it in their hearts and thoughts. Faith can produce positive energy and strength, which are necessary for achieving their dream or aspiration. Optimism is the same as faith and achievement, which are equally balanced. This means that the more faith one has, the easier it is for one to succeed or achieve their goals. When faced with danger, grief, or disaster, faith and confidence can overcome uncertainty and fear. The character Fatima, who embodies the importance of hope, serves as a symbol of faith in this book.

Power:

In real life, a person's ability to accomplish their goals is influenced by their strength or power. Men go about their lives by acting, moving, and working. Human power encompasses not just mental and physical prowess but also social and spiritual strength. People who are physically strong will perform tasks that call for a lot of power; people who work in hazardous jobs need to have a strong mentality; and people who are strong in social settings will have a big impact on society. Men can increase their power or strength in a number of ways. A sense of faith develops vitality and soul, while food and exercise can produce physical strength. Relationships will improve as a result of socializing. A man will feel content when he is in good bodily and mental health, and this can lead to the release of energy that can be used to generate power. Because of this, optimists are always powerful. Optimists have the capacity to inspire others as well as oneself. They possess the ability to eradicate pessimistic thoughts. The optimists see everything in life from a positive angle and believe that bad luck is a natural part of it. They believe that everyone has a negative side, which can be eradicated by improving one's capacity and thinking positive, creative thoughts. The optimism value mentioned above is represented by the following symbol. The Alchemist, a character in this book who embodies the importance of power, serves as a symbol for power.

Struggle:

Life presents man with two opposing forces, such as pride and loss, life and death, gift and trouble, etc. Man must fight to overcome any challenge that stands in his way of achieving his goals in order to demonstrate his existence. Weather, terror, war, fate and free will, knowledge and wisdom, love, dreams, hope, plans, and a host of other life-related issues are just a few of the many disruptions that every man encounters in the actual world. These need to be addressed and resolved, not impeded. Men will vie with one another for fulfillment, prestige, and pride. Every triumph is the result of a battle. And it must have taken a lot of effort to obtain the huge victory. Man will be better equipped to combat the disruption thanks to his experiences, mental toughness, and physical prowess. Optimists

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believe that hardship always results in pain, either mental, physical, or both. Every battle cost energy and power and necessitates sacrifice. Struggling is necessary, but so are endurance and perseverance. This type of value is represented by the following symbol. The following series of events, which occurs as Santiago returns to his starting point, illustrates the importance of struggle in this book.

Positive Thinking:

Thinking positively will create a positive environment in men's hearts and minds, allowing them to think clearly and act in accordance with the truth. Additionally, it keeps guys from being arrogant, which can be detrimental to themselves. The ability to rid the mind of negative thoughts is also a part of the power of positive thinking. The optimists approach every facet of life from a positive perspective and believe that bad luck is a natural part of it. Optimists think positively about everything they encounter or encounter. They believe that everyone has a negative side, which can be eradicated by exercising positive thinking skills and learning to think more creatively and positively. One example of positive thinking in this book is the Urim-Thumim stones, which are a symbol of the importance of positive thinking.

Respect:

Those who respect others are the optimists. They believe that gratitude fosters a positive environment between them. A positive outlook on life does not imply that one should compliment another. The optimists radiated warmth and affection to everyone in their vicinity. Every part of life is beautiful to them. Therefore, saying "thank you" is usually done with words or from the heart. The optimists feel a great deal of love, warmth, affection, and tenderness for other people. Regardless of their humanity, they are aware of who deserves respect. One of the traits of optimism is respect, which is represented by the following symbol. In this book, respect is demonstrated by the sheep, which serves as a symbol of the importance of respect.

Conclusion

The theme in *The Alchemist* illustrates the ideals of an optimistic outlook on life, which is the finale. The novel's use of symbols reflects its values. Readers ranging from adults to college students and juniors and seniors in high school will benefit from the excellent human principles presented in this book. These ideals, which are represented in the novel's symbol, might inspire people to act morally toward the environment and other people. In addition, it can help them inspire themselves to succeed in all facets of their lives. Thus, several aspects of this fiction, like topic and symbol as one facet of language, express the great values of this work. It is possible to say that Coelho's book *The Alchemist* has a good style from which readers can gain a lot, particularly life lessons. As a traveller, Coelho has had many wonderful experiences, but he has also had difficult times. That temptation can lead us to give up on the situation, yet doing so can sometimes lead to our own destruction because it prevents us from pursuing our dreams. It is necessary to fight for and pursue dreams or life objectives. It is best and wise to keep going because the more obstacles, challenges, and events that prevent us from

realizing our goals, the more we become stronger, wiser, and more knowledgeable, and ultimately, we will discover our true happiness in the end.

Applying the trait of having an optimistic outlook on life would only improve us as individuals since we want to work toward our goals without giving up and only pause momentarily to make adjustments or when faced with challenges. Surprisingly, we are the ones who truly possess our aspirations and happiness, both in our hearts and all around us.

Lastly, in relation to the issue raised in this book, some people are unable to fulfil their ambitions. In order to contribute to the study's pedagogical implications, the teacher must put out a lot of effort and struggle in order to fulfil the dreams of the junior-senior high school students and college students. We might use the example of Santiago, a person who thinks positively and has an optimistic outlook on life. He works hard and never gives up to overcome obstacles in his path.

Furthermore, by teaching and modelling moral, educational, and social principles that are thoroughly detailed in The Alchemist novel, teachers are supposed to be able to help children develop positive character traits. The character Santiago is a good example of social life since he accepts all types of people, including the alchemist, the Gypsy woman, the ancient Salem man (King Melchizedek), the crystal dealer, an Englishman, Fatima, and the Englishman. People can adopt the values of Pancasila Bhineka Tunggal Ika, which holds that people should never judge others based on their differences and that they can learn a lot from the people they know, particularly about human values and positive traits that contribute to an optimistic outlook on life.

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