Nile Ward

THE ALCHEMIST

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING PHENOMENON
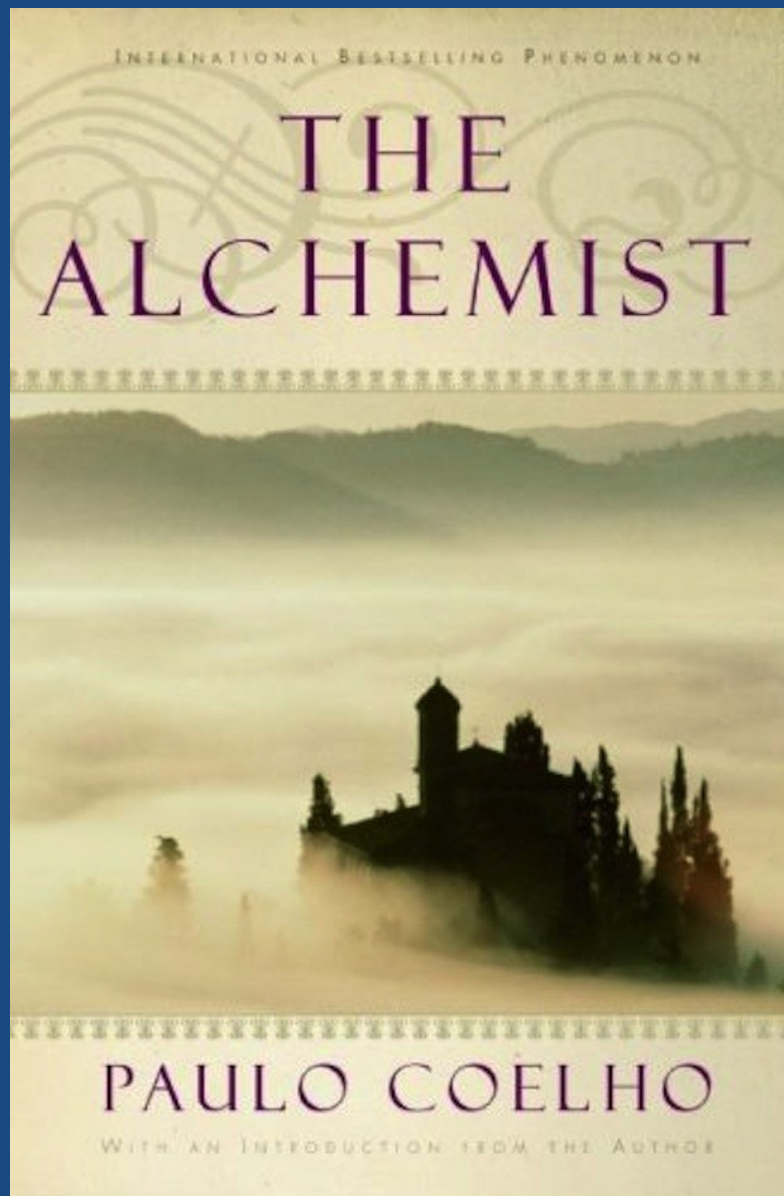
PAULO COELHO

WITH AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE AUTHOR

In "The Alchemist," a boy named Santiago goes out on his God-driven quest to find his Personal Legend, or his dream. On the way, he had used whatever money he had to buy souvenirs, but he had none left to complete the journey ahead of him. He worked for a man who sold ceramics on his dead-end plot of land for one year. The man was able to help him move closer to finding his Personal Legend after finding a caravan that would bring him towards the pyramids. He met an alchemist, who guided Santiago to finally find his Personal Legend.

Time Jumps

Each of the scenes in between time jumps vary in length. Some of the scenes are as short as three brief paragraphs, and others can be over ten pages long. The time jumps are used to talk about a new day for the life of Santiago. Not only a new day, but also an important day, such as if he gets to learn a lesson from another character in the book or encounters armies while in the desert.

The Significance

The time jumps help move the story along without the need for long transitions into the new day in the life of the characters. It makes all of the events in the book concise and to the point since transitions won't be necessary to introduce another scene. The time jumps just guide the reader into a new and important day in the life of Santiago that explain what the author wants the reader to get out of the book.

The Impact

The time jumps impact the reader so the reader doesn't have to read through parts of Santiago's life that don't have an importance to the story. The reader retention is also affected by the time jumps. If the book used irrelevant scenes to transition the reader and the story itself to the next important scene, the reader's attention might be lost.
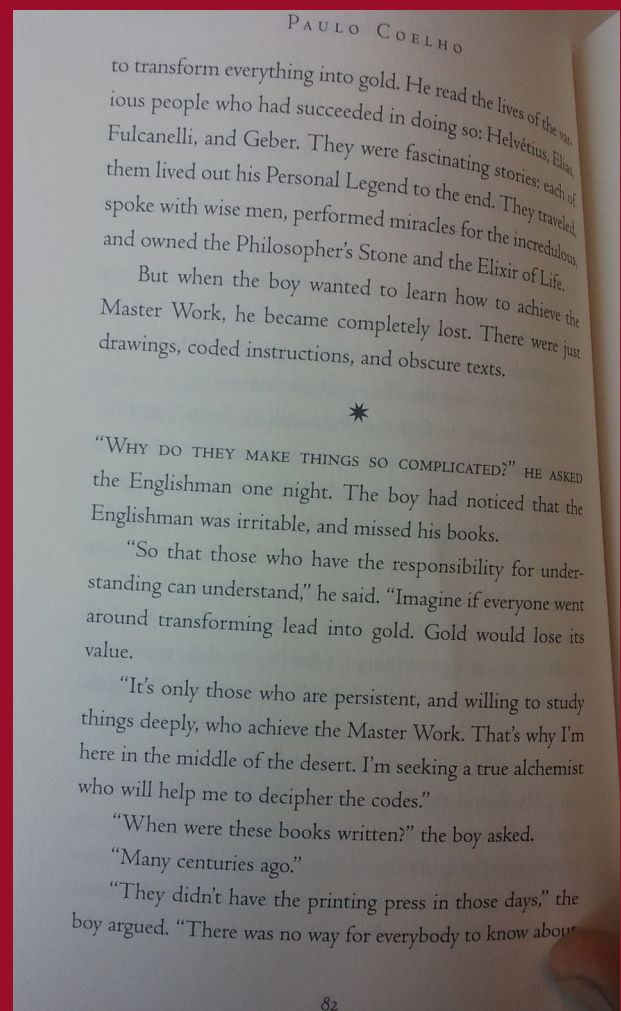
Author's Usage of General Names for the Characters

The author uses general descriptions for the characters throughout the entire book rather than calling the characters by name. For example, instead of saying "Bob wrote a book," it would say "The man wrote a book." The name of the main character is Santiago, which was established at the very beginning of the book, but for the rest of the story Santiago was called "the boy."

The Significance

The subtle removal of almost all names of characters and replacing them with a more general description – the man, the woman, the Englishman – help establish who each of the characters actually are as people who are living in an imaginary society. For example, since the characters aren't called by name, this means the author can further establish a character's personality. The personalities of each of the characters can reflect on their interactions with other characters with differing personalities.

The Impact

The removal of the character's names from the narration allows the reader to figure out one's character without just using a name to tell them who that character is. When the characters are referred to as "the boy" or "the alchemist," the reader will want to know more about the characters so they have an idea of who they are.

Quotes

(pg. 5) "'I need to sell some wool,' **the boy** told **the merchant**."

(pg 87) "**The boy** couldn't believe what he was seeing…"

(pg. 140) "**The alchemist** asked one of the soldiers for tea…"

(pg 118) "To continue his search for the treasure meant that he had to abandon **Fatima**."

Sentence Length

The sentence lengths are in the 10-30 word range. A lot of them have commas since they always offer some more description about a scene, while still getting to the point. There is also a mix of narration and dialogue. The dialogue can sometimes be conversation between characters, or one character telling a story or making a point, so there may be breaks in the dialogue when the author starts another paragraph, which keeps the dialogue from being one enormous paragraph.

The Significance

The medium-length sentences are short enough to keep the attention of the reader, but they are long enough to give the reader the most important information/relevant. The commas allow the author and reader to have more information without the pauses that are made when periods are used. The medium-length sentences help establish the overall lesson of the book, but also to establish a detailed story that doesn't take long to tell.

The Impact

The sentence length in The Alchemist help the reader get a sense of what is currently happening without getting so much description that it becomes redundant and unnecessary. There is just enough description that the author doesn't feel lost, and there's just enough description that the author doesn't feel overwhelmed, either, which helps move the story along at a decent pace.

Quotes

(pg 104) "The alchemist fell as silent as the desert, and answered the boy only after they had stopped to eat."

(pg 162) "He was bruised and bleeding, his clothing was torn to shreds, and he felt that death was near."

"The Accident"

On the cool, rainy morning, a photographer living in a quiet neighborhood was awoken early by the sound of voices on the street in front of his house. He got up and looked out his bedroom window.

"Uh oh," the photographer gasped, "a car accident!" He decided that he would go outside to investigate. He quickly walked outside, grabbing his jacket.

"What happened here?" the photographer asked as he walked towards the three-car wreck.

"This teenager happened!" his neighbor snapped, pointing at the teenager's raggedy Honda, which sat perpendicular to her parked VW. The teenager was sitting on the tailgate of his car, his eyes glued to his phone and his earbuds glued into his ears. He did not pay any regards to them.

The man who was driving the other car, who had a mustache, nodded in agreement. "He was texting and drifted onto my side of the road. I had no room to swerve, so I was hit on the back fender," he explained, pointing to his Volvo, which had a crumpled rear fender. The photographer looked over at the teenager's car, which had most of the front fender torn off.

"Geez, is everyone okay?" the photographer asked, concerned.

"Yes, I am just fine. Just got this small cut on my arm from the airbag, that's all," the man with the mustache said, pointing to the bandage on his arm. He turned to the neighbor, who had her laser-like eyes on the teenager, who was still staring at his phone. She sighed.

The photographer turned around towards his brick house. He had remembered that he installed security cameras, and he figured that he would help his neighbor and the man with the mustache. He announced that he could provide the footage as evidence of the crash.

"That is perfect!" the man with the mustache exclaimed. The neighbor's frown turned into a grin for a split second before she glared back at the teenager, now examining the damage done to his car.

The photographer provided the man with the mustache and the neighbor with his contact information, as well as the footage from his security cameras on his house.

— 1

Two days later, the photographer received a phone call from his insurance company.

He was told that, since he provided footage of a distracted driver striking another driver, he was invited to be a part of the efforts to push for stricter distracted driving laws by voting, rallying, and possibly even talking with lawmakers to make the efforts into progress!

Annotations

1 A time jump was used in this scene to build off of what conflict had occurred earlier in the day of the photographer. Instead of following the photographer around to get to the second part of the story, it fast forwards so the reader can get important information that matter to the first part of the scene.

2 The abstract descriptions of the characters in this scene allow the reader to be able to pick up some cues on the character's actual personality. When the characters are called "the neighbor," "the man with the mustache," the reader may not be able to remember these descriptions as well as if the neighbor were named Mary and the man with the mustache were named Phil. So, the reader will be able to remember the characters based off of their personality and their interactions with other characters in the story.

3 The medium length sentences in this scene allow for just the right amount of description about a specific moment in the scene, or the right amount of description about a character or place in the scene as well.

About The Authors

Paulo Coelho is an author from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He was interested in literature at a young age, but his parents decided otherwise. As he was growing up, he committed himself to be a writer, which Coelho's parents saw as "mental illness." He was put into therapy twice after he participated in journalism and theater. Coelho was involved in several movements in Brazil, including guerrilla and hippie movements and the Alternative Society, which defended the rights of free expression. Later, he wrote his first book about his experiences of completing pilgrimage, and soon after "The Alchemist."
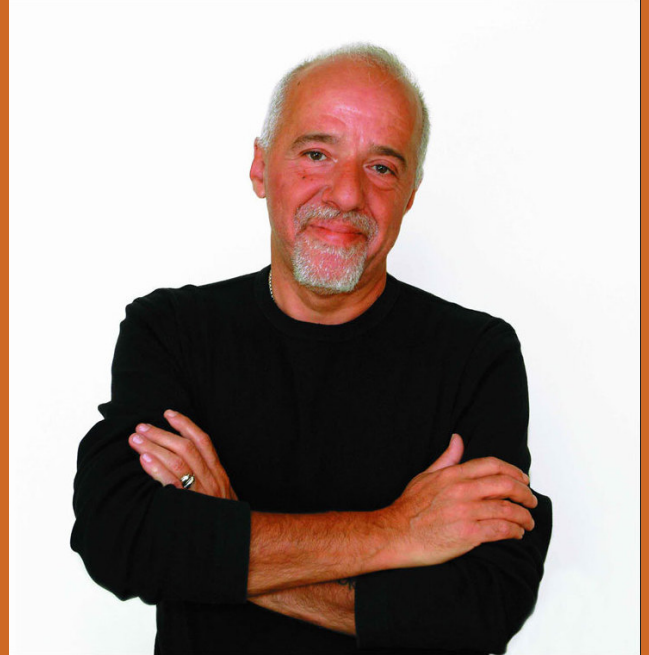
Nile Ward is a student at Science Leadership Academy. He's had an interest in cars, computers – anything that involves engineering and science. Nile was known in middle school for being the "car genius" since he was always rolling off information about specific makes and models of cars off the top of his head. More recently, he's found an interest in computers after hearing that a family-friend was considering getting rid of an old computer. He immediately wanted it, and this started his collection of old Macs. He never saw himself as an author, but would occasionally free-write stories with no real purpose but entertainment and relaxation.