Symbols And Narrative Features In The Alchemist

How does Paulo Coelho construct characters and use symbols and narrative features in ‘The Alchemist’ to inspire new ways of thinking?

Introduction

‘The Alchemist’, a book from Paulo Coelho, creates a very set mindset for the reader; and that is ‘new ways of thinking’. He creates and brings distinct characters to life through his individual experiences, like the hardship he went through trying to publish his book. Like his own personal legend, which was to get a successful novel published. Coelho uses narrative techniques in his book to enhance the reader’s understanding of personal legends, trust, and persistence. The book is about a shepherd who wants to unveil the depths of his personal legend, or his treasure. On the journey, he overcomes many obstacles and never gives up, and in the end is rewarded with true happiness and the indefinite meaning of life.

Trust

Coelho uses techniques such as personification to inspire the reader and develop the idea of trust. Along the way, he made some poor decisions, but in the end, the decisions helped him, as he, later on, thinks more carefully about his actions. The eagles in the desert are another motive that the boy trusts and follows, which show the boy good and bad events that lie ahead. Without believing these symbol and motives, it could have affected his preparation for the future. The last part of his personal legend was to trust in his heart and follow it

Personal Legend

In ‘The Alchemist’, Coelho tries to create a very fixed thought on personal legends, and how the journey teaches you more than the destination. Those who are thinking only of the future will never do as well as those in the present. In the context of the book, this means those who aim only for the treasure at the end of their personal legends, will never succeed as those who focus and the present and journey. This is shown by the Englishman, he was so focused on the books about alchemy (his personal legend), but never his desert surroundings (the journey) that of which the boy took notice of. Therefore, making the alchemist believe the Englishman was not ready to reach his personal legend. The crystal merchant is an example of someone who didn’t follow their personal legend. Instead, he dreams of other’s reaching theirs'. 'Everyone seems to have a clear idea of how other people should lead their lives, but none about his or her own.' – is very like to the crystal merchant’s personality. The flock of sheep were another symbol of people who didn’t follow their personal legend. They were very simple and followed a certain routine every day: eat, drink, and sleep.

Persistence

Persistence is a concept created by Paulo Coelho through the use of symbols and quotes. At the start of the boy’s quest for his personal legend, a man approached him and said he could

help him reach the Pyramids. He told the boy: “ We could get to the Pyramids by tomorrow, but I’ll have to buy two camels.” So he handed over enough money to buy them, but the man was never to be seen again, but did he give up on his personal legend? No, he continued to pursue his personal legend even with the setback. It took numerous times for people and symbols to make the boy toughen up and never give up, even if he was near defeat. When Santiago and the Alchemist were captured, he was asked to transform into the wind. He had been given three days, and on the second day, he was ready to face his end. When it was time, he finally got the courage to talk to the wind and help him become one with the wind. “The secret to life is to fall seven times, but to get up eight times.” - is something the boy follows to this day.

Conclusion

Paulo Coelho creates everyday objects into symbols to help develop the story. He makes meaningful characters that convey opinions on trust, personal legends, and persistence, using his own life to bring out their expressions of them.