

PROHUMAN CURRICULUM - GRADE 8

OVERVIEW OF UNITS:

Unit 1	September	Optimism
Unit 2	October	Grit
Unit 3	November	Gratitude
Unit 4	December	Curiosity
Unit 5	January	Courage
Unit 6	February	Compassion
Unit 7	March	Fairness
Unit 8	April	Understanding
Unit 9	May	Humanity

UNIT 1: OPTIMISM

LESSON 1: LEARNING OPTIMISM FROM LITERATURE

SUMMARY:

The Prohuman Grade 8 curriculum is aligned to two sets of standards: [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts](#) and [Character and Social Emotional Development \(CSED\) National Guidelines](#). The full collection of units introduces all nine of the prohuman character strengths: optimism, grit, gratitude, curiosity, courage, compassion, fairness, understanding, and humanity.

In Unit 1, Lesson 1, “Learning Optimism from Literature,” students will learn examples of optimism from a classic work of literature, [The Alchemist](#) by Paulo Coelho. Students will develop their critical thinking and writing skills by answering questions about the text. Additionally, students will advance their academic dialogue skills by discussing the book with classmates.

SUGGESTED TIME:

- 1 class period to introduce the text; 1 class period to discuss the text
- If desired, additional class periods can be devoted to in-class silent reading of the text
- Page numbers of different editions of [*The Alchemist*](#) by Paulo Coelho will vary. Suggested reading assignments are approximately 25 pages per session, for a total of 7 reading sessions, for either in-class silent reading or homework:
 - Assignment 1: Beginning to the middle of Part One to “And he vanished around the corner of the plaza.”
 - Assignment 2: Begin with “The boy began again to read his book...” to the end of Part One
 - Assignment 3: Beginning of Part Two to ““And I’d better read your books,’ said the boy.”
 - Assignment 4: Begin with “They were strange books” and end with “And he decided he would go to see the chiefs of the tribes.”
 - Assignment 5: Begin with “The boy approached the guard at the front of the huge white tent at the center of the oasis” to ““Listen to your heart. It knows all things, because it came from the Soul of the World, and it will one day return there.””
 - Assignment 6: Begin with “They crossed the desert for another two days in silence” to “And that he, a boy, could perform miracles.”
 - Assignment 7: Begin with “The simum blew that day as it had never blown before” to end
- Students should complete the short-answer questions on the worksheet as they read the book.
- Allow at least 50 minutes for in-class discussion of the short-answer questions on the worksheet.

RELATED SUBJECT: English Language Arts

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Read a classic work of literature
- Identify and analyze the book's genre, point of view, characters, setting, and plot
- Identify and analyze the book's central ideas
- Write answers to questions about the book, demonstrating an understanding of standard English sentence structure and grammar
- Engage effectively in collaborative discussions about the book

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Book: [*The Alchemist*](#) by Paulo Coelho
- Video: [What Is a Personal Legend—and Are You Living It? \(Interview with Paulo Coelho\)](#) by [Oprah Winfrey Network](#) (~2 min)
- Prohuman Grade 8 Unit 1 Worksheet 1: Learning Optimism from Literature

ELA COMMON CORE STANDARDS MET

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.	✓

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.A	Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.B	Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.C	Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.	✓

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.D	Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.3	Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	✓

CHARACTER AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL (CSED) NATIONAL STANDARDS MET

Performance Character A5	Explain why goal setting is a character strength	✓
Performance Character A6	Describe a role model who demonstrates a positive attitude, effort, and grit	✓
Social-Awareness A1	Experience and demonstrate empathy	✓
Social-Awareness A3	Demonstrate respect for other people's opinions and perspectives	✓
Social-Awareness A5	Practice "perspective taking" as a strategy to strengthen your acceptance of others	✓
Social-Awareness A6	Demonstrate awareness and understanding that despite differences, all people have similar needs, feelings and wants	✓

Responsible and Ethical Decision-Making A3	Write about and share a principle you want to live by that you learned from a family member, book, movie, or personal experience	✓
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LESSON PROCEDURE

Step 1:

- Introduce the novel [The Alchemist](#) by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, first published in 1988. Originally written in Portuguese, it became a widely translated international bestseller.

Step 2:

- Explain that this brief excerpt from an interview with the author explains the central concept of the novel. Play video: [What Is a Personal Legend—and Are You Living It? \(Interview with Paulo Coelho\)](#) by [Oprah Winfrey Network](#) (~2 min)
- Ask students to freewrite for 5 minutes in response to the following questions:
 - What makes you feel enthusiastic?
 - How might this be your personal legend?
 - What is the next step you can take to honor your personal legend?

Step 3:

- Explain that there is a website that traces the protagonist's journey. Show the website: [The Alchemist Journey Map](#)

Step 4:

- Have students complete the book, [The Alchemist](#) by Paulo Coelho, either through multiple in-class silent reading sessions or as homework. Students should complete the short-answer questions on the worksheet as they read the book.

Step 5:

- After students have completed the book and short-answer questions, set aside 50 minutes for in-class discussion of the short-answer questions on the worksheet.

GRADE 8 UNIT 1 WORKSHEET 1: LEARNING OPTIMISM FROM LITERATURE

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER WHILE READING [The Alchemist](#) by Paulo Coelho:

AS YOU READ, A HELPFUL RESOURCE IS: [The Alchemist Journey Map](#)

1.) The Hero's Journey is a narrative structure identified by mythologist Joseph Campbell. It is a story arc with a protagonist or main character who faces challenges, overcomes adversity, and returns transformed ([Rogers et al. 2023](#)). There are 7 core elements of a Hero's Journey. Identify each of them for *The Alchemist*:

- 1.) Protagonist: The central character of the story**
 - 2.) Shift: A change in setting or life circumstances that initiates the journey**
 - 3.) Quest: A clear goal or mission**
 - 4.) Challenge: Obstacles or difficulties that must be overcome**
 - 5.) Allies: Friends, mentors, or supporters who aid in the journey**
 - 6.) Transformation: Personal growth or change resulting from the journey**
 - 7.) Legacy: How the hero's journey positively impacts himself and others**
- 2.) What is a principle about optimism you learned from this book that you would like to live by?**