

**DSST: Cedar Incoming 8th Grade Reading Project
Summer 2026**

In DSST: Cedar 8th grade reading, we will examine a variety of topics, from life/death, morality, family, good & evil, corruption, etc. This summer, you will prepare for your 8th grade reading class by reading *The Alchemist*, an accessible parable with meaningful, symbolic and fantastical narrative elements, attuning students immediately to genre and how it influences an author's craft and commentary. You will write an essay that analyzes a theme of your choosing.

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho ISBN: 0062315005 or 978-0062315007

- [PDF Version](#)
- Borrow a copy from the front desk
- Available at your local library
- For purchase at [Barnes & Noble](#)

Additional Request:

- Instead of mastery mints, 8th graders receive fun-sized candy for finishing independent reading books. Please bring in 1-2 bags of fun sized candy on the first day of school to help us stock our candy supply! ABSOLUTELY no nuts or gum!

Essay Response Requirements:

- **Prompt:** How does *The Alchemist* use literary devices to develop the theme of the book ?
- Follow the formatting below with TWO direct quotes
- Typed or hand-written
- MLA header and format
- Highlight (or underline) all quotes

Essay Requirements: Your essay should be 5 paragraphs in length and is due the first day of school. Your essay must be submitted via paper copy, with the rubric attached. This essay will count as a **formative grade** in your first quarter gradebook and we will begin lessons over this novel within the 1st week of school. Use the following guidelines to format your SCR:

Intro Paragraph/Assertion:

- Introduce the most important elements of the novel – what is the setting/context of the novel, who are the main characters and what are the basic elements of the plot.
- Write an assertion statement in the following format:
The novel The Alchemist develops the theme of _____ through the use of _____ (literary device) and _____ (literary device).
 - Students may consider using the literary devices of characterization, word choice, setting, figurative language, foreshadowing, point of view, or imagery.

Body Paragraph 1:

- What is the theme or message that the author develops through the character's growth over the course of the novel? How do they teach that theme, and how do they hope their audience is impacted by the theme?

Body Paragraphs 2 and 3:

Topic Sentence (Answer):

- Name the theme and the FIRST literary device you named in the thesis and BRIEFLY connect them

Cite Evidence:

- Student should pick a piece of evidence that supports their assertion
- When students introduce evidence, they should do so smoothly and with relevant context

Explanations & Analysis :

- After each piece of text evidence, students should explain the meaning of the evidence and how it directly connects to the assertion

Closure:

- Restate and summarize the main ideas of your essay in a new way and summarize your thesis statement

Consult the rubric to see how your essay will be graded!

Summer Reading Project Grading Rubric (turn in with your essay)

Student Name: _____

Total Points out of 25: _____ (multiply by 4 for final grade)

	5	3	1
Assertion	An appropriate and thoughtful theme is selected from the book that indicates true close reading and comprehension of the novel	Theme is present, but lacking in accuracy or intellectual development	Theme not present
Structure/ Organization	Paragraph is clearly organized Writing is contained within the margins Essay is double-spaced Quotes highlighted	1-2 criteria are lacking from column 1	3 or more criteria are lacking from column 1
Editing/ Conventions	Few or no errors in grammar and conventions present, a clear effort at editing was made	Errors in formatting, spelling or grammar are noticeable, but do not impact comprehension of essay	Errors in formatting, spelling or grammar are substantial and significantly impact readability of essay
Quotes and Text Usage	Essay references text 2x with direct quotations Quotes chosen support key points made in argument and are thoughtfully selected and explained Quotes are introduced smoothly with relevant background information	Essay references text 2x with direct quotations but quotes do not fully connect to the assertion OR are not introduced smoothly with background information.	Text Evidence is lacking
Explanation and Analysis	Both quotes are thoughtfully explained for meaning and analyzed to demonstrate how they develop the assertion	Thoughtful explanation or analysis is present, but not both.	Quotes are not analyzed or explained

Sentence Order	Sentence Stems to Consider
Assertion	The novel <i>The Alchemist</i> develops the theme of _____ through the use of _____ (literary device). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students may consider using the literary devices of characterization, word choice, setting, figurative language, foreshadowing, point of view, or imagery.
Cite Evidence	In the scene where _____, _____ (character name) explains/writes/shows that, “_____” (pg #)
Explain & Analyze	Clearly, this quote reveals _____ because _____, which highlights how the author is using the literary device of _____ to develop the theme of _____ because _____.
Cite Evidence	In the scene where _____, _____ (character name) explains/writes/shows that, “_____” (pg #)
Explain & Analyze	Additionally, this quote demonstrates _____ because _____. The author develops the theme of _____ through the literary device of _____ because _____.
Summary	Restate assertion