

The Pilgrimage Study Guide

The Pilgrimage by Paulo Coelho

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Plot Summary

Paulo is a thirty-eight year old, intelligent man who feels he has successfully completed his training to become a Master in an ancient and mysterious religious tradition. Paulo has survived many trials and learned many lessons in order to reach the point of being awarded a new sword: an emblem of his achievement. However, Paulo has failed to learn one final and very important lesson: what he is to do with his sword. As a result of not understanding this lesson, Paulo must undertake one final journey. If he does not succeed, he will not receive his sword and the title of Master.

Paulo is instructed by his Master to undertake a pilgrimage of seven hundred kilometers from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in France to Santiago in Spain. The route is one that has been followed by pilgrims for centuries. Paulo's destination is the town of Compostela, also referred to as Santiago, and the tomb of San Tiago. San Tiago was an evangelist, who spread the word of Christ following the crucifixion. Visiting San Tiago's tomb is one of three holy pilgrimages people can make. The other two are to Rome and Jerusalem.

Along his journey Paulo is guided by a man named Petrus. Petrus has achieved the title of Master and is now called upon to lead other prospective masters during their pilgrimages. Petrus teaches Paulo eleven different RAM exercises meant to enhance his search for the sword. The exercises include methods for reaching relaxation; for calling upon a messenger for help; for facing death; for discerning the correct solution to a problem, and for increasing the amount of love one has for the world. The exercises are taught in a specific order along the Road to Santiago and progress according to the trials Paulo faces.

During his quest Paulo meets many interesting people, who both help and hinder his efforts. Mme Lourdes, Father Jordi, Alfonso, Andrew, and a lamb all offer assistance. Legion, a gypsy, and a couple of small boys try to divert Paulo from reaching his goal. Astrain functions in both capacities. He is helpful in some instances, but in times of great need, Astrain offers bad counsel. Part of Paulo's job during his quest is to filter through all the pieces of advice and compile the pieces which will lead him to his sword.

Paulo's journey isn't only a mental one but also a physical and spiritual one. Paulo must walk the entire seven hundred kilometers. He cannot take any short-cuts, or he will risk being denied the acquisition of his sword for the final time. Besides walking the entire road Paulo must climb up a fifty-foot waterfall, battle a demonic dog, and raise a fallen wooden cross. In the midst of these physical tests Paulo must learn to search his spirit for the wisdom to understand the truth behind his sword.

Paulo's journey is one of discovery. He is searching for enlightenment in order to complete his Master training and obtain his sword. Paulo seeks to free himself from the confines of reality, to find the purpose of his sword, and learn how to integrate the RAM practices to his advantage.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

Paulo is a thirty-eight year old, intelligent man who feels he has successfully completed his training to become a Master in an ancient and mysterious religious tradition. Paulo has survived many trials and learned many lessons in order to reach the point of being awarded a new sword: an emblem of his achievement. However, Paulo has failed to learn one final and very important lesson: what he is to do with his sword. As a result of not understanding this lesson, Paulo must undertake one final journey. If he does not succeed, he will not receive his sword and the title of Master.

On a January night on a mountain-top in Brazil, six people gather together to take part in a sacred ritual. The narrator is being ordained as a Master in the Order of RAM and will receive a special sword as evidence of his new position within the mysterious religion referred to as "the Tradition." After the narrator buries his old sword and reflects on the many trials he endured to achieve this honor, he reaches for the new sword, but instead of holding the weapon the Master steps on his hands. The Master gives the sword to the Narrator's wife along with whispered instructions. The Master then tells the Narrator that he has been deceived by his hands. The Narrator's greed has kept him from obtaining the sword, and the Narrator will have to endure further struggle to find his sword again. As the Narrator and his wife drive away from the mountain, she tells him that the Master said to seek out the Strange Road to Santiago on a map of Spain.

Prologue Analysis

The sword ceremony is a very solemn occasion and serves to set the tone for the entire book. The gravity of the situation becomes apparent to the reader the instant the narrator reaches for his sword. This man has endured countless and indescribable trials in order to reach this climatic moment. The narrator's astonishment and disappointment are palpable in the moment. The reader begins to wonder what further tribulations the narrator will have to overcome in order to wholly comprehend the truth of RAM and obtain the symbol of his lessons: the new sword.



Chapter 1, Arrival

Chapter 1, Arrival Summary

Seven months have passed since the night of the failed ceremony in Brazil. The Narrator and his wife share a meal at Bajadas airport before she continues on with her mission to hide the sword as instructed by the Master, and he travels to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port to find Mme Lourdes and begin his quest. The Narrator tries to blame his wife for their presence in Spain, but she calmly states that if he truly did not wish to make the journey to find his sword then he would not have come.

After his wife departs, the Narrator reviews everything he knows about the Road to Santiago. First millennia Christians considered three roads to be sacred for pilgrimages. The first led to Saint Peter's tomb in Rome; the second led to Christ's Sepulcher in Jerusalem; and the third led to Compostela, where the apostle San Tiago, or Saint James, had traveled bearing Christ's message. Charlemagne, Saint Francis of Assisi and Pope John XXIII made the pilgrimage from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Compostela. In the twelfth century the invasion of Moors into Spain led to a significant decline in the number of travelers along the road, but a few artistic representations kept the memory of the road alive. Remembering the history surrounding the Road to Santiago calms the Narrator so that he is able to continue his travels towards Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port and the start of his long search for his sword.

Chapter 1, Arrival Analysis

Chapter 1 continues the thread of trepidation that began to spread in the prologue. The narrator is still wavering in his resolve to undertake the search for his sword - despite having spent the previous seven and a half months considering the decision. The fear of failure appears to engulf the narrator as he tries to convince his wife that the task is impossible. The reader realizes that this self doubt is the reason the narrator did not receive the sword in Brazil. However, many notable figures in history have traveled the same road with profitable consequences. So it seems that the narrator will be in good spiritual company.

Twice the narrator mentions the period of time it took him to commit to the journey: seven months. In some religions the number seven often carries some significance. The number three is also a spiritual number, as in the Holy Trinity, or in this instance, the three holy roads traveled by pilgrims.



Chapter 2, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port

Chapter 2, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port Summary

As a parade files through the streets of Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, the Narrator arrives at Mme Lourdes' home. After several knocks on her door fail to arouse an answer, the Narrator fears that he has failed in his task before the journey has begun. A small child bursts through the unanswered gate and directs the Narrator to a house across the courtyard.

Inside the house an elderly woman yells at a small boy. When the woman finishes her tirade she takes down a book and begins to record the Narrator's name as a pilgrim on the Road to Santiago. The woman asks for 'the Scallops,' or tokens used to identify those making the pilgrimage. The Narrator's scallops form the base of a statue of Our Lady of the Visitation, which the woman deems 'pretty but not very practical.' The woman, Mme Lourdes, continues with her routine of signing the pilgrim in, while the Narrator asks after his guide.

The mention of a guide and the recitation of the Ancient Word quickly alter Mme Lourdes' actions. She instructs the Narrator to stand in the middle of the floor as she places a cape about his shoulders and a hat on his head. Mme Lourdes recites several prayers while the Narrator swears to be obedient to his guide. Following the ritual Mme Lourdes says that the Narrator can find his guide outside of the city because he does not like band music.

Outside the city by an abandoned well the Narrator meets an old man searching through a knapsack, who looks like a gypsy. The Narrator introduces himself as Paulo. The man's manner is a little disconcerting to Paulo, who senses that he knows the man from somewhere. The gypsy says he can find Paulo's sword if desired. As Paulo is about to answer, a voice from behind him speaks a phrase that guides and pilgrims use as a password. The gypsy and the newcomer stare at one another before the gypsy rises and hurries off toward the city.

The man states his name as Petrus and tells Paulo to be more cautious. Picking up his knapsack, Petrus says they should move on, but Paulo wants to know how Petrus knew the old man. When Petrus only gives a smile in answer to Paulo's question, the Narrator realizes that the gypsy was really a devil. As the men walk they discuss the gypsy. Petrus assures Paulo they will meet many more devils along the road. The conversation turns to miracles, and Petrus explains that Paulo's inability to explain his Master's power to perform feats is the reason that he did not receive his sword. Petrus continues to inform Paulo that over the course of the journey Paulo will learn exercises and rituals important to RAM. Everyone has access to these practices just as anyone can travel the Road to Santiago and bring about true wisdom.



The first exercise Petrus teaches Paulo is the Seed Exercise. This exercise will help free Paulo from the burdens he carries through life. Petrus then tells Paulo to perform the exercise for the first time right then. After Paulo completes the Seed Exercise, the two men make camp for the night under the open sky. The immensity of the undertaking causes Paulo to worry that he will be unable to succeed in his task, but the new knowledge of how to achieve rebirth gives him hope.

Chapter 2, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port Analysis

Twice in this chapter the narrator exhibits rash behavior that almost ruins his journey before it is begun. Paulo forgets to speak the ancient words both to Mme Lourdes and the man he assumes to be his guide. The omission with Mme Lourdes would have sent Paulo on the road as no more than a generic traveler wishing to visit San Tiago. His token scallops support this assumption, since they are "pretty but not practical" and appear to be something a tourist would purchase.

By forgetting to speak the code phrase to the old man, Paulo places himself in danger of being overcome by an evil spirit. Paulo fails to be discerning—another reason he did not receive his sword. Paulo is too concerned with the obvious to understand the subtleties of the Tradition necessary to obtaining the sacred object. In order to achieve complete understanding, Paulo will have to shed the burdens of ordinary life and open himself up to the spiritual realm. This is where the RAM practices come into play.

Sevens and threes continue to appear in this chapter. Paulo realizes that it is useless to hound Petrus with questions, since they have seven hundred kilometers to traverse together. The book in which Mme Lourdes initially begins to write Paulo's name is the first of three books where his name will be recorded. Petrus tells Paulo that there are three things which identify the true path to wisdom. Finally the first RAM practice, the Seed Exercise, is to be performed for seven consecutive days. This last mention of the number seven is notable because the exercise is meant to enhance rebirth and relaxation, an action very similar to the seven days of Creation in the Christian tradition.



Chapter 3, The Creator and the Created

Chapter 3, The Creator and the Created Summary

As the men continue their travels over the Pyrenees Mountains, Petrus discusses the RAM practices. The guide explains that he does not worry over the responsibilities at home because each time one travels it is a practical act of rebirth. Every place, every language, every person is new. Petrus also comments that since everything is new, people only see beauty and feel happiness. This is the very reason why religious pilgrimages have been a way of achieving insight.

On the seventh day of their journey on top of a mountain where Charlemagne said his prayers for the first time on Spanish soil, Paulo performs the Seed Exercise for the last time. At the point where Paulo is fully extended and reaching his arms to the sky Petrus slaps him out of the trance. The guide tells Paulo not to lose sight of his objective. Paulo must learn many more things before he can find his sword.

At the top of another mountain overlooking a village below, Petrus instructs Paulo on how to perform the second RAM practice known as the Speed Exercise. Before Paulo begins Petrus asks how Paulo feels about the crossing of the Pyrenees. Petrus states that the journey, which took them six days, could have been accomplished in one but was longer because Paulo is too absorbed in the details of finding his sword. Paulo realizes that one of the mountain peaks had sometimes been on his right and other times on his left but without their moving away from it. Paulo then begins the Speed Exercise.

Petrus and Paulo pick up their knapsacks and continue moving towards the small village, but in accordance with the exercise they move extremely slowly. Paulo begins glancing at his watch every few seconds but Petrus tells him that this will only make the process longer. Instead, to pass the time Paulo begins to imagine his surroundings through new eyes. Paulo sees the village filled with people and a historic monument where knights fought great battles. Following this method Paulo finds that even at their slow pace they soon arrive at the village of Roncesvalles.

The following morning Petrus wakes Paulo early, and, after some breakfast, the two men walk to the Collegiate Church. Here Petrus says that here they will meet a great sorcerer. Inside the church Petrus indicates a thin monk wearing glasses sitting near the high altar. After the mass, Father Jordi gives Paulo the blessing of the Virgin of Roncesvalles and of San Tiago of the Sword. Father Jordi also tells Paulo that a pilgrim is like the outer layer of a shell and inside is a life full of agape. Father Jordi bids Paulo good-bye and counsels him to follow the yellow markers along the road.



Chapter 3, The Creator and the Created Analysis

Despite practicing the Seed Exercise, Paulo is having difficulty letting go of his commitments in Brazil. Paulo also has a penchant for insisting that his questions be answered plainly instead of with what seem to him to be rambling digressions. Paulo must start truly listening to his guide if he is ever going to understand the need for his sword. A brief footnote at the beginning of the chapter explains that Petrus is a famous designer. Although the note reveals that Paulo did not know this about his guide at the time of the journey, the reader realizes that Petrus has been able to free himself from his personal life in order to act as a mere guide to an inexperienced pilgrim. Paulo must come to this understanding for himself before he can receive his sword.

Three days into the journey the men pass a yellow marker that denotes their exodus from France into Spain. On the seventh day of their journey they reach a mountain peak where Charlemagne once prayed. During the seventh session of the Seed Exercise, Petrus warns Paulo not to lose sight of his objective. The warning is closely followed by the revelation that they have been walking seven days to cover a distance of seventeen kilometers that should have only taken one day. Paulo may have once completed enough trials to be eligible for the Master's ceremony, but now he acts like a new pledge to the Tradition.

The Speed Exercise is meant to slow Paulo down so that he can focus on the real purpose of his journey. The exercise also continues the theme of rebirth and relaxation, since it is performed for seven consecutive days. Paulo enjoys the feeling of re-engaging his imagination but still has a long way to go on his quest. Paulo is impatient to meet Father Jordi, and so the lesson taught by the monk is about obtaining the treasures of one's heart. Paulo desires his sword, but is so infatuated with the object that he fails to understand the importance of his journey. The sword would not mean as much to him if it suddenly appeared before him after only seven days journey. The journey is often more important than the actual goal. Paulo may think that his objective is to obtain the sword, but his Master's point in assigning the quest seems to be that there is still plenty to be learned.



Chapter 4, Cruelty

Chapter 4, Cruelty Summary

One afternoon while Petrus and Paulo rest in an olive grove an old man approaches them and tells the story of how love was murdered at a small church nearby. A young princess coming back from Compostela decided to give up everything and care for the sick and poor. The princess' brother came to bring her home, but when she refused he stabbed her out of desperation. As penance the duke was made to walk the road to Compostela and on his way back was filled with the same feeling that had overcome his sister. When the old man finishes, Petrus comments that the story is an example of the law of retribution. Petrus goes on to explain that the brother was "forced to continue the good works he had interrupted" because anyone who tries to destroy love must re-create it.

After several more days of walking the two men climb the Peak of Forgiveness. Paulo is astonished to find tourists sunbathing at the summit, but Petrus shrugs off the tourists' behavior as a consequence of modern living. Petrus tells Paulo to fixate on a point while the guide presses a finger into the base of Paulo's neck. Petrus explains the meaning of the good fight. He states that the good fight is one we engage in because our hearts ask us to, because we desire to defend our dreams. Time can begin to kill our dream because we become too wrapped up in the business of each day. Additionally, our certainties about life prevent us from seeing that winning the battle is not as important as simply fighting. Finally, Petrus says that the good fight is abandoned because we accept peace and do not continue to seek increasing greatness.

As Petrus talks Paulo sees the cross on the church's steeple change into an angel. When Petrus releases the pressure on Paulo's neck the angel disappears, and the two men discuss Paulo's vision. Petrus correctly states that Paulo's reaction to the angel was to deny it because it was outside the realm of reality. Paulo's doubt regarding the vision of the angel means that he chose not to fight the good fight. Petrus then teaches Paulo the Cruelty Exercise. The guide tells his follower that by transforming spiritual pain into physical pain one can learn what harm it can cause us. Each time Paulo commits an act of cruelty against himself he must dig the nail of his index finger into the cuticle of his thumb until the cruel feeling goes away.

Chapter 4, Cruelty Analysis

The story of the murdered princess teaches that one often finds more than one expected or something completely unexpected along a known path. Many of the stories told by Petrus or a wayward person along the journey teach a lesson that Paulo needs to learn. However, many times Paulo seems too dense to look past the basic words to the deeper truth. The princess wasn't looking to minister to the poor, just like most people don't look for God but often find Him in unexpected places.



Being able to look beyond the obvious enables one to fight the good fight. Cares of the world and personal thoughts of cruelty must be shoved to the side before they endanger one's strength to fight the battle. These are the lessons taught in the Cruelty Exercise and Paulo's experience of staring at the cross while Petrus presses a finger to his neck.



Chapter 5, The Messenger

Chapter 5, The Messenger Summary

The evening before arriving in Puente de la Reina, Paulo and Petrus spend the night in a monastery where they are prohibited from speaking a word during their stay. Their accommodations are meager: a hard bed, clean sheets, a pitcher of water and basin for washing. Paulo observes the monks during the evening meal and learns that they only communicate with their eyes.

Before crossing the bridge into town Petrus stops upon seeing two boys playing with a ball. The guide sits off to the side and watches how Paulo reacts to the children. When the ball lands near Petrus he picks it up and tosses it to Paulo. One of the boys asks for the ball back, but Paulo refuses. The boy tries a different tactic by offering to show Paulo the whereabouts of a sacred relic. Paulo continues to refuse the boy's requests until his vision blurs. Paulo does not see anything distinctly in his vision but senses that the desert is threatening. As Paulo's vision dissolves, Petrus returns the ball to the boy and asks where the relic is located. The boy appears not to know what Petrus is referring to and runs off with his companion.

Later, as Petrus and Paulo sit beside another bridge eating food from the monks, the two men discuss the encounter with the two boys. Paulo seems confused about the meeting, but Petrus notes that it was a warning for Paulo of a coming battle with his personal devil. Petrus then explains that Paulo will need to learn how to call his personal devil back to him and how to communicate with it. Petrus states that even devils can provide useful information when all other help is gone. Petrus warns Paulo against becoming mesmerized by the devil's power or the messenger's power because then Paulo will be prevented from fighting the good fight. Petrus likens the messenger to a sword, which can be useful in battle but can also be used to kill a friend or oneself.

That night in the town of Estella Paulo sits down overlooking the river and performs the Messenger Ritual. In his vision Paulo sees the face of his messenger and learns the messenger's name: Astrain. Paulo ends the first encounter with his messenger and the two men return to their hotel.

Chapter 5, The Messenger Analysis

The focus of this chapter is communication. The monks make speech seem an unnecessary complication to life, since they are able to understand one another without speaking. Their lives are spent in a deeper communication with the world around them that cannot be achieved by people whose lips are constantly in motion. Observation is often a more difficult, but useful, skill to learn than talking. Petrus is able to discern that the boys have no knowledge of any relic simply by observing them, while Paulo interacts with the boys and does not realize they are taunting him.

The Messenger Exercise is an exercise in concentrating on communicating through one's thoughts. Although Paulo is instructed to "speak" to his messenger, he does not do so out loud. The conversations between pilgrim and messenger are silently contained within Paulo's mind. Remaining silent becomes important because that is the only way to discern between helpful and hurtful advice from the messenger.



Chapter 6, Love

Chapter 6, Love Summary

Paulo and Petrus stop at a local bar one afternoon where they discuss Christ's miracles. The barkeep accuses the men of blaspheming Jesus and brings a priest to confront the pair. When the priest sees the scallop shells on Petrus' knapsack he relaxes his accusations. The barkeep then tells Paulo and Petrus the story of a curse that has plagued the town for many years.

Intrigued by the tale, Petrus asks to be shown the house where the current curse victim lives. An elderly woman, accompanied by a large black dog, answers Petrus' knock. Petrus invokes the privilege of all pilgrims to receive aid along the road, and, although irritated by the request, the woman invites Paulo and Petrus inside. While Petrus talks to the old woman, Paulo locks eyes with the dog. Paulo drinks a bit of tea but is unable to break his gaze with the dog. As Paulo begins speaking in a strange language the dog throws himself on Paulo. The dog gives one final glance at Paulo before running out of the house. Petrus pulls Paulo from the house.

Late in the evening the two men arrive at a hotel where Paulo asks to know exactly what happened that afternoon. Petrus explains that Paulo exorcised the demon from the dog and, in the process, upsets the balance of the old woman's life. The old woman had given up the good fight and accepted her way of life. Petrus then asks Paulo to explain what he is doing on the Road to Santiago. Paulo answers that he is seeking his sword in order to gain the power and wisdom of the Tradition. Petrus notes that Paulo needs to have a better understanding of what he will do with the sword. Paulo has been able to apply each RAM exercise so far, but he must learn to combine them with his intuition. Petrus tells Paulo that the gift of tongues is a good omen but one that will not reoccur on the Road to Santiago.

Before retiring to his room for the night Petrus teaches Paulo the Water Exercise and tells him to perform it now. Paulo becomes lost in a puddle of water, feeling that he has been given a new means of communicating with the world. In his room Paulo invokes Astrain to speak with the messenger about his search for his sword.

Chapter 6, Love Analysis

As Paulo meets his demon for the first time, communication becomes even more important. Paulo and the black dog lock eyes, and this simple action cements their future relationship. Although the dog does not possess the power of speech, the reader waits for Legion to speak because the dog's presence is so commanding.

Paulo is the one to speak. However, his speech is unintelligible. As Petrus notes, the gift of tongues is a form of higher communication used with the Holy Spirit. Paulo is slowly learning to communicate with his inner self. The Water Exercise further extends Paulo's

ability to commune with himself. Splashing aimlessly in puddles of water becomes a strong exercise in examining one's thoughts and learning to trust gut feelings. The journey is intensifying, and Paulo's understanding is increasing accordingly.



Chapter 7, Marriage

Chapter 7, Marriage Summary

Paulo and Petrus decide to stay in the city of Logroso upon learning that a wedding is about to take place. While Petrus scouts out a hotel, Paulo engages in a conversation of politics with a local popcorn vendor. Paulo tells Petrus about the exchange, and the guide cautions Paulo to remember the popcorn man because the encounter is an example of mistaken behavior. Petrus further explains that people are always trying to convert others to their way of thinking. The guide then points to the stars as an example of the differences among people.

Later when a party-goer mentions the love between the bride and groom Petrus asks whether he means eros, philo, or agape. Petrus then asks Paulo to follow him while he explains the differences between the three types of love. Eros is love between two people such as the bride and groom, but it can fade. Eros is different for each person and can have a positive and negative side. Philos is the love between friends. When eros dies philos keeps a couple together. When Paulo asks for an explanation of agape, Petrus says that this is not the time to discuss agape. Petrus continues to drink until Paulo must carry him back to the hotel and care for him.

Chapter 7, Marriage Analysis

Love consumes us all at one point or another. Young lovers are coy and bashful until they reach the stage of true passion. However, many then progress not to true, enduring love but to friendship. Comfortable routine takes over the flame of passion. Learning to discern the nuances of love takes time and observation rather than rash judgments placed on new couples who outwardly appear happy.



Chapter 8, Enthusiasm

Chapter 8, Enthusiasm Summary

On the day following the wedding festival Petrus and Paulo sit fishing. Paulo asks to learn more about agape but Petrus says agape is something to be experienced, not discussed. Petrus states that if luck is on their side things will fall into place so that Paulo can live the definition of agape.

As night descends the two men come upon a small building, which Petrus seems to know. The guide calls out a name but receives no answer. Petrus suggests they go inside anyway to wait. Inside Petrus begins to talk about the two manifestations of agape. The monk who lives in the hermitage is named Alfonso, and he exhibits the purest form of agape. Petrus explains that agape is total, consuming love such as Jesus had for humanity.

Most pilgrims experience the second form of agape—enthusiasm. Petrus tells Paulo that "enthusiasm is agape directed at a particular idea or a specific thing." This kind of agape is like the all-encompassing love children feel for everything around them. However, most people fail to recognize enthusiasm as a strength and allow it to fade away. The less enthusiasm a person has, the harder it is to fight the good fight.

For the first time on their journey together Petrus says he will participate in a RAM practice with Paulo, the practice of the Blue Sphere Exercise. When Paulo hears his guide's statement, he immediately feels unworthy of Petrus' praise and begins to doubt himself. Petrus seems to sense Paulo's thoughts and cautions his follower to remember the Cruelty Exercise. Sitting together under the night sky Petrus and Paulo begin to clap their hands and sing a melody that flows freely from them.

As the two men continue to clap and sing Paulo sees all the things he loved as a child. The sky glows a brilliant blue as a cleansing sensation spreads through Paulo. As the experience reaches a crescendo Paulo feels a presence near him. Exhausted and relaxed Paulo opens his eyes to find Petrus holding one of his hands, and Alfonso holding the other. Alfonso quietly bids the men good night and continues his journey through the dark night. Petrus instructs Paulo to perform the exercise often so that agape will live in him once again. The two men then take shelter in the monk's hut for the night.

Chapter 8, Enthusiasm Analysis

Love occupies Paulo's mind, and he desires to learn more. However, love is not something that can be discussed; it must be experienced. Agape and enthusiasm take time to cultivate, but when one can truly open up and express these highest forms of love the world becomes a relaxing place.



Alfonso is willing to share not only his home but also himself with Paulo. Truly giving of oneself is the greatest and hardest gift. Opening up to others without fear of rejection or without expecting something in return and being able to completely let go of oneself is the ultimate lesson of Paulo's journey. The Blue Sphere Exercise embodies this process and the results of achieving such freedom. This exercise should be performed in the company of others. It is the only exercise that has this advisement attached to it because it is the hardest, and the performer needs all the help he can get from experienced enthusiasts.



Chapter 9, Death

Chapter 9, Death Summary

As the two men set out one morning from a small village, Paulo is beset with a feeling of urgency coupled with tension and fear. Paulo tries to ignore the feelings, but Petrus demands that the pilgrim stop and confront the presence. Looking around the abandoned houses, Paulo sees the black dog he cast out of the old woman's house a few days earlier. Paulo locks eyes with the dog for several minutes before a nun crosses their path. Once the nun passes the dog lowers his eyes and runs away. Paulo is dizzy and believes that the nun gave him the strength to defeat the dog. Petrus allows Paulo to rest before they continue the journey.

While Paulo rests Petrus tells him that fear hurt him more than the dog. Petrus has known since the beginning of the journey that Paulo would have to confront a demon but did not know until they arrived at the old woman's house that the demon existed in a dog. Now that Paulo has exorcised the demon from the woman's home Paulo will have to give it some place to go, or it will continue to follow them. If Paulo fails to contain the demon in another object it will dominate Paulo. Before continuing on the road Petrus reveals that the demon's name is Legion because he is many.

Just outside the city of Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Petrus stops and begins to answer several of Paulo's questions. Petrus says that Paulo must not count on his messenger to help him defeat the demon. Legion is many because the messengers of dead people can inhabit the body of someone consumed by fear. Petrus then walks around a leafless tree while whispering some sort of incantation. The guide tells Paulo to stay beneath the tree and confront death. Petrus instructs Paulo on how to perform the Buried Alive Exercise before going into town.

Paulo sits beneath the tree contemplating death and all the things he would leave behind. As sounds of the night begin, Paulo decides to perform the ritual and hurry on to the hotel. Paulo imagines being nailed into a coffin; being unable to communicate with mourners at his funeral and dirt being shoveled onto the coffin's lid. Paulo envisions each stage of burial until worms are crawling through his body and the air is almost gone. With one last burst of strength Paulo pictures himself bursting out of the coffin to escape death.

Paulo sits shaking beneath the tree where he sees the face of his true death. Paulo takes comfort in the knowledge of how and when he will die. He gathers strength from this information that will later aide him when he battles Legion. Paulo stops trembling, washes his dirty shorts in a nearby pump and then decides to spend the night beneath the tree instead of the hotel.



Chapter 9, Death Analysis

The Buried Alive Exercise is one that should only be performed once. The experience is too powerful and once one has seen his death there is no reason to relive it multiple times. However, it is imperative that Paulo complete this exercise if he is to battle and defeat his personal demons. Most people are afraid of dying or at least of the way they will die. Once the fear of death has been eliminated one can conquer everything else. Legion seems to realize this and does not pursue a head on attack at their second meeting, but the final showdown is coming. The brief stare down between Paulo and the dog serves as a preview of their eventual battle. Paulo is still learning the necessary tools to enable him to beat the demonic animal.



Chapter 10, Personal Vices

Chapter 10, Personal Vices Summary

At two o'clock one afternoon Petrus and Paulo come across a medieval column supporting a cross; it is a road marker for pilgrims. Petrus tells Paulo to kneel before it so that they can offer a prayer concerning Paulo's personal vices. These vices are the only thing that could potentially defeat Paulo after he finds his sword. Petrus then speaks a lengthy prayer asking God to pity people who eat and drink but are still unhappy; who fear death; who consume themselves with affairs of the heart; for those who do not believe in anything spiritual, and for those who are concerned only with their own lives. When he finishes praying Petrus sits quietly staring across the surrounding wheat fields.

Chapter 10, Personal Vices Analysis

Petrus' prayer is a little out of place and disconcerting. The guide rambles on naming every vice that may possibly seize a person throughout their lifetime. The prayer is like asking for permission to commit many of these sins, since forgiveness has been asked in advance.



Chapter 11, Conquest

Chapter 11, Conquest Summary

One afternoon Petrus and Paulo stop to rest at a ruined castle. A shepherd and his flock pass by and seem to prompt Petrus to move on. The guide pushes Paulo to maintain a steady pace for two days until they reach a basin in the middle of a plateau. The basin contains a waterfall and a stream running across the basin floor. Petrus decides they should climb down the side of the basin to the pool below.

As soon as the two men reach the bottom Petrus suggests they climb back to the top by way of the waterfall. Paulo recalls a time when his Master told him about Magi who become insane and are no longer able to distinguish their powers from their disciples. Paulo begins to wonder if Petrus is becoming like these Black Magi. Paulo tells Petrus that he will not climb the waterfall because it is too dangerous. Petrus says that he will climb the waterfall and if he succeeds then Paulo will also have to make the ascent. Petrus begins to disrobe while giving advice to Paulo regarding the climb. The guide says that in order to complete the difficult climb Paulo will have to utilize all the skills he has learned so far. Furthermore, since Paulo will be unable to see Petrus' hands and feet during his climb, Paulo's climb will teach him how to be a Master.

Once Petrus is safely standing at the top of the waterfall, Paulo removes his clothes and offers a prayer to the Virgin of the Road. As Paulo steps into the water he discovers that there is an open space between the rock wall and the waterfall that is pock marked with numerous hand- and footholds. The most difficult portion of the climb occurs when Paulo reaches the top of the waterfall and must find a handhold in the smooth bottom of the stream. If Paulo fails to find a hold that will support his weight, he will fall all the way back down the waterfall to the basin floor.

Doubt floods Paulo's mind as one hand searches for a protrusion to latch onto. Paulo's muscles are screaming in pain, and his self-confidence begins to ebb away while thoughts of drowning flash through his mind. Finally the hand finds a small gap in the rock floor. Paulo gathers his strength for the final push before bursting through the water and landing next to the stream safely away from the waterfall. Petrus tells Paulo to rest. The guide then teaches Paulo the Breathing Exercise in order to draw energy from the surroundings. After five minutes of the exercise Paulo is revived enough to continue the journey.

Chapter 11, Conquest Analysis

Petrus seems to be slowly losing his mind. The joy of seeing the beautiful waterfall sinking to the bottom of the basin is quickly replaced with fear and incomprehension. Petrus' request to climb up a fifty-foot raging wall of water and seems to be the raving of a man who has spent too many hours marching through the hot sun.



After confronting his own death it seems that Paulo should be able to perform this task without fear. However, Paulo's lessons on taming his personal fears are still being taught. Chapter 13 is titled "Command and Obedience," but that descriptor may be more appropriate at this stage. Not only must Paulo obey Petrus' challenge to ascend the falls but he must instruct his own body to obey the incongruent commands that will allow him to reach the top of the waterfall safely. Everything in Paulo's body and soul tell him to remain firmly planted on the ground, but, like the rest of his journey, this experience is about overcoming the impossible and stretching himself beyond preconceived limits.



Chapter 12, Madness

Chapter 12, Madness Summary

For three days Petrus has kept Paulo marching at an intense pace. Unable to maintain the tempo, Paulo asks to rest. Petrus refuses to explain his reason for hurrying along, but Paulo decides not to press the issue. Finally, as the ruined village of Foncebadon comes into view Petrus slows the pace. Paulo realizes that not far from the village is a very important landmark, the Iron Cross. He desires to continue on to the attraction, but Petrus now refuses to move along.

As the two men sit resting Petrus begins a discussion centered on making choices. The guide mentions that the only way to make a right decision is to know the wrong decisions. Petrus then teaches Paulo the Shadows Exercise and instructs Paulo to perform the exercise while Petrus takes a walk. When Petrus returns he asks Paulo about the results of his first examination of the shadows. Petrus wants to know if Paulo has discovered where the sword is hidden. Paulo says that he knows that it is not in an open space. Paulo feels that the sword may be secreted in a church and vows to visit every church along the Road to Santiago.

Petrus still hesitates to move forward. Paulo looks around the ruined city and sees the dog Legion. The final battle between Paulo and the demon is about to take place and there can only be one winner. Paulo realizes that if he breaks his gaze with the demon or flees, he will forever be plagued by the fear that the dog will reappear someday. Paulo also senses that Petrus has left him alone with Legion. As Paulo considers these things the dog rushes at him knocking him to the ground. The animal bites Paulo as Paulo struggles to protect his face and neck.

During the fight Paulo thinks he hears Astrain advising him to give in to the demon. A shepherd then distracts the dog, giving Paulo enough time to regain some strength for a second attack. Astrain returns, this time advising Paulo that the battle can only be won if he learns to fight like a dog. Paulo realizes that he has suddenly become Legion; the demon has taken up residence in Paulo. Once again Astrain gives Paulo poor counsel by telling him to accept the demon and become the Prince. Paulo refuses to listen to his messenger. Instead he falls face first in the dirt and expels Legion into the earth.

Petrus returns to find Paulo doubled over vomiting. Paulo insists on continuing to the Iron Cross despite being filthy and torn apart from the fight.

Chapter 12, Madness Analysis

Petrus' madness is increasing. The guide gives no explanations for his actions and is surly toward his disciple. Petrus is often a hard person to read in the book. His motivations and thoughts are not explained like Paulo's. However, the reader, like Paulo, must trust in Petrus' choices to lead them to the final destination. As frustrating



as Petrus' incoherent moods can be, the reader also realizes that he acts with the best intentions to aid Paulo. Petrus' craziness is a result of agape.

Legion is Paulo's demon, but Paulo has not formed a strong connection with the animal as Petrus has done. Petrus' mood mirrors Legion's close proximity, while Paulo remains oblivious to the fact that the time for containing the demon has come. Three days after conquering the waterfall Paulo confronts Legion for the final time. All battles between good and evil are exhausting and brutal. If evil could be easily overcome, it would not exist. Instead, the difficulty comes not from battling the actual evil shape but from resisting the desire to succumb, which would end the struggle. Evil gains power when people choose to give up the good fight because it is often easier than fighting for truth.

Evil is a master of disguise. Astrain offers assistance to Paulo, but his words only lead to Paulo's defeat. Discernment is a strong tool for good and a severe enemy to evil. Paulo's ability to pull together all the lessons he has learned so far allow him the victory but not without suffering some serious wounds to his personal self. At the same time these physical wounds are spiritual triumphs.



Chapter 13, Command and Obedience

Chapter 13, Command and Obedience Summary

After visiting the Iron Cross, Petrus realizes that Paulo's wounds are more severe than originally thought. The men find shelter at a blacksmith's shop in a nearby village. Petrus and an old woman from the village care for Paulo's wounds by placing herbs on the cuts and making him drink bitter tea. After several days the blacksmith asks the travelers to move on because the people fear that Paulo will become rabid following his encounter with the dog.

As Petrus and Paulo continue their journey, Paulo wants to know why Petrus first hurried them along and then brought them to a halt. The guide explains that he knew the time for Paulo's final battle with Legion was at hand. Petrus had to hurry them along in order to arrive in Foncebadon at the precise moment. Petrus then tells Paulo that he is too concerned with power and the sword. This obsession almost cost him the battle. Petrus begins a long discussion of the correct way to wage a battle and the circumstances which cause a person to lose the good fight. When Petrus stops talking the men are standing in front of a line of large wooden crosses, one of which has fallen over.

Paulo continues to look over his shoulder for the dog. Petrus then teaches him the Listening Exercise and commands Paulo to perform it right there. Petrus tells Paulo to raise the fallen cross with his thoughts. When Paulo is unsuccessful in the task, Petrus becomes abusive. The guide yells at Paulo telling him to raise the cross with his hands. Petrus gives Paulo the option of raising the cross or abandoning the Road to Santiago and his search for the sword. Petrus then sits down to take a nap.

Paulo begins searching for a way to raise the fallen cross. It is too heavy to be simply lifted back into place. Paulo's first course of action is to use a sharp rock to cut away the remaining wood fibers that are keeping the cross attached to its stump. The rock cuts into Paulo's lacerated hands, reopening the dog wounds. After trying to dig the cross lower into the ground, Paulo considers the wrong solutions in order to find the correct one. Finally Paulo stacks rocks up to create a lever and is able to brace his back against the cross and push it back into place. Excited by his accomplishment, Paulo nudges Petrus with his foot to wake him. The guide surveys the cross and observes they will change Paulo's bloody bandages in the next village.

Chapter 13, Command and Obedience Analysis

In many ways it seems that this chapter should have been titled "cruelty." Paulo has just fought against his own personal demon and won, but his wounds are still fresh. He seems unprepared for another encounter. The reader may feel that Paulo should be allowed a time of recuperation where he simply continues to walk without having to face



further trial. However, this is never the way life works; often we do not gain a rest after overcoming one hurdle before facing the next. Trials come where and when they may and we must face them no matter what, or there is no reason to continue the journey.

As vicious as the battle with Legion was, the battle to raise the cross is even more brutal. Petrus bellows at Paulo to perform the exercise or quit. Petrus' cruelty is actually a form of tough love. Paulo will soon have to complete his journey alone. As a good guide Petrus needs to know that his disciple is ready for what lies ahead. For Paulo the experience proves that he accepts and understands how to use all the practices taught up to this point.



Chapter 14, The Tradition

Chapter 14, The Tradition Summary

In Ponferrada Petrus secures a luxurious suite for the men to share. After dinner the two men walk through a locomotive yard. Petrus tells Paulo that their time together will soon end. Paulo will have to complete his search alone. Petrus instructs Paulo to close his eyes and perform the Breathing Exercise while listening to Petrus' voice.

Petrus gives Paulo instructions for the completion of this journey, as well as future journeys. On the following day Paulo will join Petrus at a group initiation ceremony and then their ways will separate. Petrus then teaches Paulo the Dance Exercise, which will be performed at the ceremony. This is the last RAM practice Paulo will learn.

The following evening at 7:00 P.M. Paulo arrives at the Castle of the Templars. There he meets seven other pilgrims. The pilgrims are instructed to remove their clothes and put on the vestments provided by their Masters. After several invocations and ritual words, the time for the dance arrives. When the dance is called to an abrupt end, one of the pilgrims, Andrew, is called forward to receive his sword to become a member of the Knights of the Templar. The Masters and the new inductee disappear, leaving the others to return to the city and their individual quests.

Chapter 14, The Tradition Analysis

Paulo gets to see how his first sword ceremony should have proceeded. Now that Paulo is nearing the end of his own journey he is able to take part in the joy of another's culminating experience. He may never see Andrew again and does not know anything about the Australian, but they share an unbreakable connection because they are participants in the same experience. During the initiation ceremony Paulo sees how far he has traveled and how much farther he has to journey.



Chapter 15, El Cebrero

Chapter 15, El Cebrero Summary

In Villafranca del Bierzo Paulo is approached by a young girl of about eight years old. The girl asks if Paulo is a pilgrim and offers to take him to the Gates of Forgiveness. Paulo tries to pay the girl to go away, but she refuses the money. Paulo considers that maybe this girl has been sent to lead him to his sword and agrees to follow her.

At the top of the mountain Paulo realizes that the young child is simply excited to share the history of her hometown. As Paulo walks through the streets of the village once again he is met by a man named Angel. Angel offers to lead Paulo to the Church of Saint Joseph the Carpenter. However, the encounter turns out no differently than the detour with the young girl. Later that evening Paulo finds lodging in a small village. In his room Paulo decides to invoke Astrain to discuss the battle with Legion. Astrain tells Paulo what Paulo already suspected: Astrain and Legion are brothers and will not fight against one another.

The next day after climbing hill after hill Paulo stumbles upon the realization that the secret of his sword is what he will do with it once it's found. Paulo finally comes to understand that the point of his journey is not to find the sword but to discover what he is meant to do with it. Excited by the revelation Paulo walks along singing and talking to his surroundings.

Finally Paulo comes to the last mountain he will need to cross in his quest: El Cebrero. The sky has darkened as clouds gather, and fog rolls across the mountain. Paulo continues on towards Compostela listening to his environment. As he listens, Paulo hears a woman's voice. Paulo follows the advice of the woman's voice until he arrives at the top of El Cebrero. There Paulo feels the urge to pray at the base of a cross. As Paulo looks at the cross, a lamb walks in front of it, and Paulo feels the desire to follow the small animal.

Paulo follows the lamb to a small chapel where he meets his Master inside. The Master recites a ritual incantation before extending Paulo's sword towards the pilgrim. Paulo takes the sword confident that this time he is worthy of the weapon because he now knows what to do with it. As Paulo grasps his sword the sky opens up, and it begins to rain.

Chapter 15, El Cebrero Analysis

When Paulo is finally able to release his focus on obtaining his sword, he quickly discovers its hiding place. This is the lesson Paulo was meant to learn over the course of his journey. This is the lesson that everyone must learn in order to obtain their desires. When it ceases to be an obsession then the lamb, or a spiritual being, brings whatever was wished for into grasp. As Petrus said many miles ago, the wishes of our

heart can be achieved but not always on our timeline. Often the desired object is not received in the way one expects. Paulo thought the reason for his journey was to find the hidden sword, but in truth he needed to discover what to do with the sword before he could unearth it.

There is no grand ceremony surrounding Paulo's receiving of the sword this time. It is merely handed over, and his Master is on his way. At the beginning of the book a man in the airport told his wife that tourist shops were full of swords that could be easily bought. At the time the comment seemed offensive given the importance Paulo attached to his sword, but now that the journey is finished the comment seems appropriate. It does not matter whether Paulo's sword came direct from the sword maker or from a cheap tourist shop; what matters now is how Paulo will use his sword.



Epilogue: Santiago de Compostela

Epilogue: Santiago de Compostela Summary

Paulo sits gazing out the window of his hotel following the completion of his journey. In a short while he will catch a flight back to Brazil where he will return to business of everyday life. Paulo thinks back on his experiences and contemplates writing a book to commemorate his journey along the Road to Santiago. Paulo recalls how he wrote the secret of his sword on a piece of paper and left it under a stone. Paulo also remembers how he had asked his Master how he knew that Paulo would arrive at the exact time he did. The Master said that he did not know leading Paulo to realize that people arrive at the right moment wherever someone waits for them.

Epilogue: Santiago de Compostela Analysis

Paulo's journey is complete. Although he is now able to return to Brazil and his work commitments, Paulo seems reluctant to begin that journey. He takes the time to place the secret of his sword under a rock and reflect on his journey. Paulo has finally learned all the lessons necessary to be a RAM Master, but, more importantly, he has learned what is important in life. Paulo has learned to relax in order to appreciate the world around him. The immensity that scared him at the beginning of the journey is now something that Paulo wishes to commemorate.



Characters

Paulo

Paulo is the author and narrator of the book. This story is a true account of Paulo's journey on the Road to Santiago. The story is about Paulo's search to retrieve a hidden sword, and the lessons he must learn along the way. In order to receive the sword, Paulo must learn to become one with nature, to listen to his intuition, to discern between good and bad advice, to overcome his fears, and, most importantly to learn that physical objects are often not as important as spiritual lessons. Paulo's journey is one of rebirth and growth.

Paulo is thirty-eight years old. He is married and a successful writer with numerous business commitments in his homeland of Brazil. There is very little physical description of Paulo, but the reader gets the impression that he may be a slight, but athletic, man capable of undertaking a long journey. Paulo is an intellectual man. Petrus often tells Paulo that he needs to learn to be more child-like in order to succeed. Paulo demands explanations to all his questions and becomes frustrated when the answer is delayed or given in a less-than-straightforward manner. Despite being a bright man, Paulo often makes bumbling mistakes that could land him in trouble along the journey. His excitement about finding his sword keeps him from maintaining his composure and following simple rituals.

Paulo's biggest difficulty comes from not being able to let go. He is full of fears and self doubt. He is also obsessive in his quest for his sword but takes almost the entire journey to discover that the sword itself is not as important as what he must do with it. Paulo is the quintessential human being searching for meaning in his life. His quest brings him to his sword, but along the way he learns to relax, to accept, and to let go.

Petrus

Petrus is not even the guide's real name. Paulo Coelho changes Petrus' real name for purposes of the book. Petrus is about forty, gray-haired, and has been browned by the sun. He speaks in heavily-accented Spanish and smokes what Paulo calls vile tasting cigarettes. A footnote to the beginning of Chapter Three informs the reader that Petrus is actually a well-known designer.

Throughout the journey Petrus is an infallible source of guidance and wisdom. Petrus imparts spiritual wisdom at each step of the journey. He challenges Paulo to push himself past his physical, mental, and spiritual limits. At times Petrus comes across as a crazed man asking Paulo to do the impossible: climbing a waterfall and raising a fallen cross. Petrus often comes across as a hardened man who has been asked to take time out of his busy schedule too, but several times Petrus exhibits emotion that belies his rough exterior.



One of the most notable things about Petrus is that this is the first time he has guided a pilgrim along the road to Santiago. Paulo puts a lot of import on Petrus' guidance. He places the guide on a type of pedestal and almost worships him as an all-knowing guru. In reality Petrus is only slightly further along the spiritual road than Paulo. He is flying by the seat of the pants, but his main concern is for Paulo's success. Petrus is a teacher trying to do his best to instill as many lessons into his pupil before setting Paulo free to test his knowledge.

Astrain

Astrain is Paulo's messenger. He is also a devil/fallen angel. Astrain is not wholly evil. Astrain can be a source of support for Paulo as long as Paulo learns to differentiate between Astrain's good and bad advice. Several times during the long journey Paulo consults with his messenger to learn what he can. Astrain shows his connection to evil when Paulo battles Legion, and the messenger suggests that Paulo simply give in to the demon animal. When Paulo hears this advice from Astrain it seems to be the last time that Paulo summons the messenger. Astrain does not appear to offer any assistance to Paulo regarding the location of his sword. It is uncertain whether Paulo ever calls up his messenger again, or whether Paulo has grown enough in his own self-confidence to trust his own intuition instead of the advice of an angel/devil.

Legion

Legion is two characters in one. In the physical form Legion is a black dog, which Paulo drives out of an old woman's house, and which Paulo encounters several more times during his journey. At the same time Legion is the name of a group of demons, which have taken up residence in the black dog. It is these demons that Paulo battles in order to drive them into a more permanent home where they can no longer harm people.

Mme Lourdes

Mme Lourdes is the first person Paulo encounters on his journey to recover his sword. Mme Lourdes is an elderly, obese woman who takes a no-nonsense approach to life. She goes about her business of registering Paulo as a pilgrim without ceremony. Mme Lourdes is slightly irritated when she learns that Paulo is a "special" traveler. Finished with her duty, she advises Paulo on how to locate his guide and sends him on his way as she returns to berating a small boy.

Father Jordi

Father Jordi is a monk who Petrus calls a "great sorcerer." He teaches Paulo about finding the treasures of his heart. The time Paulo spends with Father Jordi is very brief, but the monk teaches him a very important lesson about the root of all journeys. Father



Jordi bestows a blessing on Paulo and tells Paulo to follow yellow markers that line the Road to Santiago.

Alfonso

Alfonso's part in the story is very brief but no less significant. Alfonso quietly takes part in the Blue Sphere Exercise with Paulo and Petrus. Alfonso's silent actions and Petrus' revelation about the monk are what make him integral to Paulo's journey. Alfonso is a wholesome example of the purest, but hardest to achieve, type of love: agape.

The Master

The Master is the man who has taught Paulo almost everything necessary to obtain his sword. The Master has been a teacher and mentor to Paulo in his desire to become a member of the RAM Tradition. The real identity of the Master is never revealed, but this information is not important to the story. In many ways Petrus and the Master serve the same function: to provide guidance to Paulo as he searches himself for the truth about life in order to obtain his sword.

The Wife

Paulo's wife accompanies him during the ceremony in Brazil. It is she who receives instruction from Paulo's Master for hiding the new sword. However, Paulo's wife is never named and there is no physical description of her. She does not factor into the narrative as a main character, but her presence is felt throughout the book. Several times Paulo recalls his wife and seems to draw strength from the thought of her.

Andrew

Andrew is the Australian pilgrim who receives his sword at a group initiation ceremony. There is no special connection between Paulo and Andrew, except that Paulo distinctly remembers seeing the Australian whirl past him during the dance. Paulo also remembers Andrew as he walks on to Compostela. Paulo feels certain that Petrus would have preferred to have Paulo receive his sword at the ceremony alongside Andrew. Paulo's reflections on Andrew and the whole ceremony suggest a tinge of jealousy that Andrew's quest has ended successfully.



Objects/Places

The Sword

Two swords are mentioned in the book. The first is noted briefly in the prologue when Paulo buries it during the Master ceremony. This sword was used in all of Paulo's trials up to this point. However, since Paulo is beginning a new stage of discipleship in the Tradition, he no longer needs this sword.

The second sword is the new one Paulo was supposed to receive at the Master ceremony in Brazil. Paulo failed to receive this sword because he was too greedy. As a result, Paulo must now pass one final trial: travel the Road to Santiago and locate the hidden sword. If Paulo fails to obtain the sword this time, he will be unable to complete his Master training and will have to forget about the Order of RAM.

Road to Santiago

The Road to Santiago is one of three sacred roads traveled by religious pilgrims. Travelers to Santiago seek the tomb of the apostle, San Tiago, or Saint James. Legend maintains that San Tiago journeyed to the Iberian Peninsula in order to spread the word of Christ shortly after the Crucifixion. The other two roads are the Road to Rome and the Road to Jerusalem.

Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port

One of the starting points for pilgrimages to Compostela. Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port is located in France. A footnote to the text mentions that there are three different starting points for traversing the Road to Santiago. Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port is not the most important city for beginning the journey, but it is where Paulo was required to meet Mme Lourdes.

Compostela

Compostela is the destination city for Paulo and every pilgrim on the Road to Santiago. Located in Spain, the name refers to a vision witnessed by a shepherd. When San Tiago died a brilliant star was seen shining in the night sky by a lone shepherd. Compostela means "star field."

The Scallop Shells

The scallops are used to identify pilgrims on the Road to Santiago. Every pilgrim must have scallop shells before beginning their journey. Mme Lourdes asks for proof of the



shells when she records the pilgrims name in her book. At the completion of the pilgrims journey the shells are left at the tomb of San Tiago: the destination for travelers on the road to Santiago.

The Gates of Forgiveness

These gates are located in a city not far from Compostela. Pilgrims who are unable to continue to the end of the road can pass through the gates and receive the same blessings as pilgrims who complete the journey.

The Seed Exercise

The Seed Exercise is performed to achieve rebirth and freedom from burdens carried through life. The exercise should be performed at the same time for seven consecutive days. The person performing the exercise should kneel on the ground, seated on their heels, and bent forward so that their head touches their knees. The person should breathe deeply and relax until all tensions are released. Starting with a finger the person should begin to rise slowly as if a shoot spreading out from a seed. The person should continue to rise slowly until kneeling and about ready to break through the earth. When a standing position is achieved the person should imagine the sun, the water, the wind, and the birds around them as if they are a shoot beginning to grow. The person should raise their arms to the sky and tense all their muscles until it becomes painful. When the pain can be tolerated no longer the person should scream and open his/her eyes.

The Speed Exercise

The Speed Exercise should be performed for seven days. The person performing the exercise should walk for approximately twenty minutes at half their normal speed. As they walk, the person should observe the details of their surroundings: people, objects, sounds. It is suggested that the exercise be performed after lunch.

The Cruelty Exercise

The Cruelty Exercise should be performed each time you have a thought that makes you feel bad about yourself. Each time such a thought occurs the person should dig the nail of their index finger into the cuticle of the thumb on the same hand until they feel intense pain. The pain is a physical representation of spiritual suffering and pressure should be eased only when the cruel thought has passed. The exercise should be repeated as many times as necessary. Eventually the cruel thought will disappear as long as the exercise is performed every time the thought appears.



The Messenger Ritual

The person who desires to summon their messenger should sit down and relax completely by repeating, "Now I am relaxed, and I am in the deepest kind of sleep." When the mind is completely relaxed the person should imagine a billow of fire to their right and then order their subconscious to show itself. The person should then imagine another billow of fire to the left and invoke their messenger. The messenger should appear between the two fires. The person is free to ask their messenger questions, discuss problems, and give him orders. The person must dismiss the messenger and ask him to return whenever called. The messenger should reveal his name during the first meeting but if the messenger does not do so, the messenger should be referred to as "he" until the name is known. The more a person performs the ritual the stronger the messenger's presence becomes.

The Arousal of Intuition or The Water Exercise

Find a puddle of water on a non-absorbent surface. Stare into the puddle for awhile. Then begin to play with it, without any particular objective. Do this exercise for about ten minutes every day for a week. There are no practical results from this exercise; it is only a means of summoning your intuition. When your intuition begins to manifest itself at other times, trust in it.

The Blue Sphere Exercise

Sit comfortably and try not to think about anything. Concentrate on how good it feels to be alive and free of problems. Begin singing a song from your childhood while imagining that your heart is growing. As your heart grows it fills with a shining blue light. At this point you will begin to sense the presence of the beings that you believed in as a child. Imagine these beings approaching you and laying hands on you. As the sensation increases feel that the blue light is spreading through your house, your town, your country until it envelops the whole world. Keep the light around the world for as long as you can. You are spreading love. Slowly come out of the trance. The beings will remain nearby, and the blue light will continue to encompass the world. This exercise should be done with other people and all participants should hold hands.

The Buried Alive Exercise

Lie on the floor with your arms crossed over your chest. Imagine all the details of your burial as if you died tomorrow. As the situation progresses all your muscles tense, and you try to escape. Keep trying to escape until you cannot handle the tension anymore. Then with a movement that involves your entire body break free of the coffin, breathe deeply, and realize you are free. The movement will be more effective if you scream from the depths of your body at the same time.



The RAM Breathing Exercise

All air should be expelled from the lungs. As you raise your arms as high as possible slowly inhale. Concentrate on letting the love, peace, and harmony of the universe enter your body. Hold the inhale and keep arms stretched for as long as possible. When you cannot hold the inhale any more, exhale all the air rapidly while saying the word, "RAM." The process should be repeated for a period of five minutes each time the exercise is performed.

The Shadows Exercise

Relax completely. Study the shadows of objects and people around you for five minutes. Attempt to identify the source of each shadow. For the next five minutes continue to study the shadows while focusing on the problem troubling you. Look for all possible wrong solutions to the problem. Spend five more minutes studying the shadows and considering the correct solutions. Eliminate each solution until only one is left. This is the correct solution.

The Listening Exercise

Close your eyes and relax. For several minutes concentrate on all the sounds around you. Try to separate each sound from the others. Concentrate on one sound at a time while eliminating the others from your consciousness. If you do this exercise everyday, you will start to hear the voices of people from your past, present, and future. Perform this exercise only after you know the voice of your messenger. The exercise should be done for ten minutes each session.

The Dance Exercise

Relax and close your eyes. Remember the first songs you heard as a child. Sing them in your thoughts and slowly let one part of your body begin to dance to the melody. After five minutes stop singing and listen to the sounds around you. Use these sounds to compose a new melody and dance to it with your whole body. Try not to think about anything specific but attempt to memorize the images that appear. The dance allows for almost-perfect communication with the Infinite Intelligence. The exercise should last fifteen minutes.



Themes

The Importance of Certain Numbers

Sevens and threes are significant numbers in the Christian tradition. The most widely known examples are the Holy Trinity, the three days Christ lay dead before arising, and the seven days God spent creating the world and resting. Sevens appear several times in the beginning of the book: Seven-hundred kilometers from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port to San Tiago; seven days spent traveling what should have taken one; many of the RAM practices are to be performed for seven consecutive days, and Paulo took seven months to decide to undertake the journey. There are also several mentions of threes: three holy roads that pilgrims can travel; three different routes to San Tiago; three days of travel before they come across a yellow marker; and three days after Paulo climbs the waterfall he confronts Legion.

The book does not make clear what the RAM Tradition is but many times Petrus quotes Saint Paul and the two men engage in discussions centered on Christ. Whether there is a direct correlation between RAM and Christianity, there seems to be some significance to the use of these numbers. Each time one of the numbers is mentioned an important event follows or the number refers to a key piece of the journey. However, the mention of sevens and threes decrease as the journey reaches half-way and on. The spiritual aspects of the journey increase as Paulo travels farther. Possibly the numbers are markers used to draw the readers attention to essential moments. After all the reader at the beginning of the novel is as inexperienced as Paulo and must also be taught along the Road to Santiago. As the reader's acuity grows, the reference numbers decrease.

The Passage of Time

Time is always an issue for everyone. At times we want things to go faster and other times we want things to slow down. Time is an uncontrollable force in life, but once one can learn to relax and cease worrying about time it fails to control life.

Paulo is often concerned about time. He is happily oblivious to the fact that for seven days he has traversed the same terrain several times. However, when a city comes into view following a particularly difficult trek he wants to speed up the pace in order to reach the town quickly. Petrus constantly reminds Paulo that he needs to learn how to let go of time and watching his watch tick away seconds only prolongs the agony of something unpleasant.

Time can also be harnessed for brief periods for one's benefit. Petrus speeds up their progress in order to reach the ruined village in time for Paulo to meet Legion. He also slows down their steps so that Paulo can learn the importance of observing his surroundings. Time can be an enemy or it can be a friend; everything depends on how one chooses to view the situation. Learning to slow down in the middle of a hectic day



can bring clarity and relaxation, while learning to ignore time may speed up an uncomfortable situation by allowing one's imagination to play games. Paulo is able to exert this mild form of control over time, thereby releasing himself from the confines of reality long enough to discover the truth of his sword.

The Imagined Significance of Objects

Baseball players wear the same socks for a series of games because they're winning. Some people carry a rabbit's foot or search for four-leaf clovers. These examples are instances of superstition, of people attaching significance to inanimate objects. The object itself holds no power to do anything for the person. Dirty socks cannot win a baseball game, but that does not stop players from wearing the same pair for an entire season.

Paulo is obsessed with obtaining his sword, but he cannot explain why. All he knows is that he wants to possess the object. For most of his journey Paulo fails to understand that the sword holds no significance; it is merely an object that can do nothing unless its wielder knows how to use it.

This is the problem with people attaching significance to objects: the object has no power to do anything. The power comes from the person figuring out how to best utilize the object. A baseball player may win a game or two while wearing the same pair of socks, but if he does not know how to swing a bat the team will eventually lose. Until one learns that power comes from a higher power to be funneled through themselves, they will be unable to obtain the desires of their heart or fight the good fight with success.



Style

Point of View

The story is in the first-person, since the author is also the narrator. The thoughts and feelings of other characters are not known unless verbalized to the narrator. In fact, very few people are referred to by their proper names. The use of the first-person allows the reader to become intimately associated with Paulo and gain a deep understanding of his quest for his sword. The first-person also enables the reader to place himself in Paulo's place within the story and to make the journey alongside him. The closeness created between the reader and Paulo permits the reader to be a third pilgrim on the Road to Santiago.

Setting

The story opens on a mountain top in Brazil but quickly moves to the mountains and fields of northern Spain and southern France. The scenery changes from chapter to chapter as Paulo and Petrus advance their journey. As the setting changes, so, too, does the main characters' moods. Depending on where they are Petrus is pensive, happy, talkative, or brusque. Petrus' shifts in mood seem to have a spiritual connection with the landscape. Paulo's mood appears to change based on his physical state. When he is tired, he wishes to rest, when he sees a landmark that he would like to visit, he wants to hurry. Paulo rarely intuits the same sensations from his surroundings that Petrus feels.

Each new town brings not only a change of physical scenery but a new spiritual experience as well. The spiritual realm is as much a part of the setting as the trees and towns passed on the journey. The RAM practices require the performer to transcend reality in order to achieve enlightenment and understanding. Paulo's biggest journey takes place not on the Road to Santiago but within himself.

Language and Meaning

For the most part the language of the book is clear and easily understood. However, several passages that attempt to clarify the Tradition of RAM are difficult. The obscure religion can create instant frustration with the words that attempt to explain it.

Petrus often quotes from the Bible or discusses religious matters in long monologues. The metaphysical nature of the quest, and therefore the book, makes philosophical discussions commonplace between Petrus and Paulo. The search for the sword at first appears to be a physical journey, but one soon realizes that the journey is a personal soul-search that must take place before Paulo can obtain the object.



The book abounds with descriptions of the vast landscapes through which the men travel. Villages and towns are only named or described in detail if they have a significant role to play; either they are religious landmarks or something important happens to Paulo. Paulo's learned connection to nature becomes an increasingly important aspect of the book.

Structure

The story is told in twenty-five chapters, a prologue, and an epilogue. Each chapter is named for the lesson or objective learned during that part of the journey. All but four chapters include instructions for a specific RAM exercise. The progress of the story is linear except for the prologue, which flashes back seven years to describe Paulo's initial Master ceremony. The epilogue provides a brief foreshadowing of Paulo's plans for writing the book.



Quotes

"Even if I were not able to find my sword, the pilgrimage along the Road to Santiago was going to help me to find myself." Chapter 1, p. 14

"In my haste, I had forgotten the most elementary rules of self-protection and had thrown myself body and soul into the arms of the first stranger I had met." Chapter 2, p. 22

"This immensity made me very anxious; it created a terrible fear that I would not be able to succeed - that I was too small for this task." Chapter 2, p. 32

"It is the road that teaches us the best way to get there, and the road enriches us as we walk its length." Chapter 3, p. 40-41

"Petrus thought my relationship to God was based too much on concept, on intellect and on reasoning; I felt that his was too simplistic and intuitive." Chapter 4, p. 52

"What appear from down here to be a huge number of bodies that are similar to each other are really a million different things, spread over a space that is beyond human comprehension." (In reference to stars) Chapter 7, p. 105

"It's a good idea always to do something relaxing prior to making an important decision in your life." Chapter 8, p. 114

"Death is our constant companion, and it is death that gives each person's life its true meaning." Chapter 9, p. 139

"In the same way, a disciple such as you can never imitate his guide's steps. You have your own way of living your life, of dealing with problems, and of winning. Teaching is only demonstrating that it is possible. Learning is making it possible for yourself." Chapter 11, p. 163

"The only way to make the right decision is to know what the wrong decision is." Chapter 12, p. 181

"What good is a sword if you don't know where you are going to run into your enemy?" Chapter 13, p. 198

"And we wind up defeated because we allow what should never be allowed: we let the enemy choose how the battle will be waged." Chapter 13, p. 199

"The person who does not know how to listen will never hear the advice that life offers us all the time. And only the person who listens to the sounds of the moment is able to make the right decisions." Chapter 13, p. 203



"All of my efforts had been bent on reward; I had not understood that when we want something, we have to have a clear purpose in mind for the thing that we want. The only reason for seeking a reward is to know what to do with that reward." Chapter 15, p. 248

"I have walked so many miles to discover things I already knew, things that all of us know but that are so hard to accept." Chapter 16, p. 258



Topics for Discussion

Paulo asks many questions but often does not truly listen to the reply. Instead he repeats the question or reminds the person that they have not answered him. How does Paulo's inability to hear the initial response affect his quest?

The book is categorized as fiction but chronicles the author's own spiritual journey. Why is the book not considered autobiography or non-fiction?

Paulo's main concern for most of the journey is for finding his sword. By the end of the road, is the acquisition of the physical sword as important?

Paulo mentions that during the Speed Exercise in Chapter 3 his imagination awakens and becomes an advantage. What does Paulo mean by this statement?

The Tradition and RAM never seem to be fully explained in the book. However, RAM is said to stand for Rigor, Adoration, and Mercy. How do these three principles apply to Paulo's journey?

Petrus teaches Paulo the RAM exercises in what appears to be a particular order. Speculate on a possible reason for learning the practices in this order.

Which RAM exercise do you feel to be the most beneficial to the success of Paulo's journey? Support your answer with evidence from the book.