



# The PILGRIMAGE

## READING GROUP GUIDE

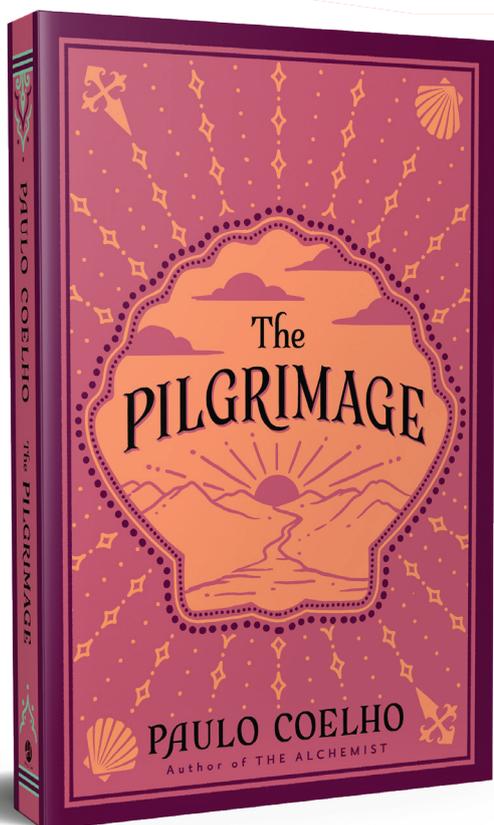
*The Pilgrimage* is the story of Paulo Coelho's journey along a medieval pilgrim's route, the Road of Santiago de Compostela. In seeking to become one of a chosen few, he realized instead that the lessons of the road and the extraordinary life it conferred upon its pilgrims were available to everyone. He wrote *The Pilgrimage* in 1987, one year after completing the journey which paved the way for him to write his beloved *The Alchemist*.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Just as Coelho is on the cusp of receiving his new sword and being ordained as a master in the Order of RAM, his master takes the sword away. Why? How do you think this experience ultimately affected the way Coelho felt about the sword? When have you ever been so close to an achievement you really wanted and lost it? How did you proceed?
2. Once he finally (and with some reluctance) prepares to begin the pilgrimage, Coelho starts to anticipate that this journey of traveling toward the unknown might help him find himself (p. 14). What is the most significant journey you have been on in your life? What did it teach you about yourself?
3. Petrus explains to Coelho that his master refused him the sword because Coelho had forgotten that “the path to knowledge is a path that’s open to everyone, to the common people” (p. 27). What are the dangers of forgetting this truth? Why is this insight so important?
4. What are the three things that identify the true path to wisdom (pp. 27-8)?
5. Coelho is so focused on his objective of finding his sword that he fails to notice when Petrus leads him in circles for days. Why is it so important to pay attention to the details of the road as we move forward in our journey? Why does travel often allow us to better observe the world around us?
6. As Coelho is learning the Speed Exercise, Petrus says, “Changing the way you do routine things allows a new person to grow inside of you” (p. 43). Why is slowing down such a radical lesson for us?
7. Why must we never stop dreaming? How will we know if we have killed our dreams (pp. 57-8)?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

8. Petrus teaches Coelho many exercises: the Seed Exercise, the Speed Exercise, the Cruelty Exercise, the Water Exercise, the Blue Sphere Exercise, the Buried Alive Exercise, the RAM Breathing Exercise, the Shadows Exercise, the Listening Exercise, and the Dance Exercise. Which of these exercises stood out to you? Which, if any, have you attempted? Will you try any in the future?
9. When Coelho exorcised the demons of the old woman as represented by her dog, she did not like it and reacted by pushing them out of her house. As Petrus put it, he had “unbalanced her universe” (p. 92). What demons have you accepted as part of your life? What would it change for you if they were no longer part of your existence?
10. How can you view the world “as if it were a marvelous treasure waiting to be discovered and won” (p. 93)? What does that have to do with fighting the good fight?
11. Coelho notices that Petrus never makes any effort to appear wiser, holier, or better than Coelho. He is a guide but also just another pilgrim (p. 113). What guides have you had in your life? Did recognizing their humanity make you respect them more or less as guides?
12. Petrus says, “Life always teaches us more than the Road to Santiago does. But we don’t have much faith in what life teaches us” (p. 201). Do you agree with Petrus? If so, why are we reluctant to learn lessons from life rather than lessons from something more overtly spiritual?



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14. Petrus says, “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 can make the right decisions” (p. 203). How good are you at listening? What kind of listening is Petrus talking about here? How might it differ from the way we typically think of listening?
15. Coelho was told he had to obey his guide, Petrus, without question, yet there were times when what he asked seemed impossible, even cruel—climbing the waterfall, raising the cross when his hands and arms were covered in bandages. Why was complete obedience so important? When have you learned from obeying in this way even when you did not understand why?
16. At the end of their journey, Petrus says, “In teaching you, I truly learned. By taking on the role of guide, I was able to find my own true path” (p. 222). Why is it only in teaching you can access “all the answers you have in your heart” (p. 222)?
17. It is only when Coelho realizes what he will do with his sword that he is able to receive it. Why is understanding the purpose of his reward the key to finally receiving it?
18. Throughout the book, Petrus emphasizes that the road is not for a chosen few but for everyone, and in his Author’s Note, Coelho reflects on how that disappoints him. Why do we long so much to be set apart? What does it teach us that we are instead just like everyone around us?
19. Coelho writes that the “gateway to Paradise” lies in doing that which sparks enthusiasm in our hearts (p. 269). What is that for you?

