

What to do today

IMPORTANT Parent or Carer – Read this page with your child and check that you are happy with what they have to do and any weblinks or use of internet.

1. Listen to the story again

- Listen to the reading of *The Last Alchemist* again.
<https://youtu.be/rlRh0qgKPyl>
- What do you notice new when you hear the story a second time? Try to think of 3-5 things.

2. Imagine the trial of Spinifex

- Imagine that Spinifex has been put on trial for what he did.
- What could be said against him? What might he say from his point of view? Write your ideas on *For/Against*.
- Look at both sets of ideas and write a *Summary Paragraph* that the judge could read, summing up and deciding whether Spinifex is innocent or guilty.

3. Read a poem

- Read *Alchemy by Sara Teasdale*. Read it twice, once in your head and once out loud.
- Read through *Some Reflections on Alchemy Poem*. Do you agree with these thoughts? How does the poem make you feel?
- Try learning the poem off by heart. Use the *Tips for Learning a Poem by Heart* to help you.

Well done. Show your Summary Paragraph to a grown-up. Explain to them what Spinifex did in the story.

Try the Fun-Time Extras

Alchemists dreamt of turning lower metal into pure gold. What magical powers would you most like to have? Describe these and explain how you would use them. Interview others to find their choice of powers.

For/Against

*Why might someone argue that Spinifex was wrong? What might he say in his defence? Add to the ideas started here.
Write five or six ideas on each side of the argument.*

For Spinifex


*He was trying to do what the king wanted...
The task set for him was REALLY difficult!*

Against Spinifex

*He did not listen to what people were trying to tell him...
He was silly not to listen to his apprentice...*

Summary Paragraph

What might a judge say at the end of Spinifex's trial?



Alchemy



Sarah Teasdale noticed how a flower colours clear rain-drops. This is her poem:

I lift my heart as spring lifts up
A yellow daisy to the rain;
My heart will be a lovely cup
Altho' it holds but pain.

For I shall learn from flower and leaf
That colour every drop they hold,
To change the lifeless wine of grief
To living gold.

by Sara Teasdale

Some reflections on Alchemy – Poem

Some reflections – yours will be different of course!

I lift my heart as spring lifts up
A yellow daisy to the rain;
My heart will be a lovely cup
Altho' it holds but pain.

For I shall learn from flower and leaf
That colour every drop they hold,
To change the lifeless wine of grief
To living gold.

*Sarah is saying that her heart is full of pain – she is sad –
But Spring, the yellow daisy lifting its face to the rain, makes her heart lift up.*

The poet says that she will learn from the flowers and the leaves that produce colour and beauty.

What she calls 'the lifeless wine of grief' – that is the pain that goes with grieving – is made more bearable by learning how nature colours the world with gold.

by Sara Teasdale

Top tips for learning a poem by heart

- Read the poem aloud several times slowly.
- Copy the poem out a couple of times.
- Be strategic. Pick a poem with a pattern, metre and rhyme are much easier to learn by heart than free verse.
- Learn and internalise the “story” in the poem
- Understand the poem by knowing every word’s meaning
- With a card, cover everything but the first line of the poem. Read it. Look away, see the line in the air, and say it. Look back. Repeat until you’ve “got it.”
- Uncover the second line. Learn it as you did the first line, but also add second line to first, until you’ve got the two.
- Then it’s on to three. Always repeat the first line on down, till the whole poem sings.

