

The Alchemist Beta version 3/7/2011 by Bryan

The Alchemist is a story game set in a world where lead can become gold. You and your friends make a story about how the alchemist and his minions attempt to make gold against all odds. While the minions gather the secret ingredients and toil away, the alchemist kicks back in his lab and hands out sage advice. Find out what gets in the way as you play.

Stuff Needed For Play

- Three to five players
- Three coins with one side gold and the other lead
- List of ingredients

Set Up

Each player names his minion. Use a name such as Grout, Toady, Slimy, Drip, and Olaf. A minion and toil always use third person. The alchemist always starts with “The alchemist says...”

The oldest player starts first and turns proceed clockwise.

How to Play

On your turn, you’re the alchemist. The player to your right is your minion. The player to your left is the toil.

Step 1: Tell the minion what to get by saying “Minion [name], get me a [ingredient].” Use any ingredient not circled or crossed off the list.

Step 2: Flip three gold coins.

Step 3: Make the story according to the coin flip.

Three gold sides: The minion says a sentence about how he found the ingredient and brought it to the lab. The alchemist describes what the ingredient looks like in flowery prose. Circle the ingredient.

Three lead sides: The toil says a sentence about how the minion screwed up and lost the ingredient forever. The alchemist describes what punishment he inflicts. Cross the ingredient off the list.

Two gold, one lead: The minion says where he found the ingredient in one sentence. The toil says what must be done to get the ingredient. Using the conjunction “but” helps. The minion says a sentence about what he did to complete the toil and bring the ingredient home. The alchemist teaches a lesson on how to avoid the toil.

One gold, two lead: The toil says a sentence about what toil stands in the way. The minion says a sentence about what he does to solve the toil. The toil says how some new toil comes about. The alchemist says a flowery lament about how hard it is being an alchemist. A special circumstance occurs. Demote the minion to “Sub-minion.”

Step 4: End of turn. The next player goes.

Special Circumstance

In a special circumstance, the last toil remains unfinished, so the alchemist sends a new minion out to help finish it. If he does finish it, he becomes “Master Minion.”

Step 1: The minion and the toil trade places at the table and the minion becomes the toil and the toil becomes the minion. The alchemist says, “Minion [name], go help minion [name] retrieve the [ingredient].”

Step 2: The alchemist flips two coins.

Both coins agree: The toil says a sentence about how sad the sub-minion is. The new minion says a sentence about how he helped finish the toil and retrieved the ingredient. Circle the ingredient. The alchemist praises the minion and promotes him to “Master Minion.”

Coins disagree: The new minion says a sentence about how he finished the toil. The toil says a sentence about how he lost the ingredient despite finishing the toil. Cross the ingredient off the list. The alchemist denigrates the minion and demotes him.

Step 3: End of turn. The next player goes.

Ending the Story

The story ends when all the ingredients are either circled or crossed off. Each player describes in a sentence what happens as the alchemist adds circled ingredients to the potion. Go around the table until he adds the last ingredient. Use a conjunction to join the sentences.

Start the description with these words, “The alchemist adds [ingredient] to the formula and [something happens]...” follow it with “and adds [ingredient] which [does something],” etc...

The Conclusion

During the conclusion, you finish up the story in one of three ways.

Made Gold: If more ingredients are circled, then the alchemist made gold from lead using the found ingredients. Read, “After the ingredients mixed together, gold appeared.” Each player says a sentence about what his minion did with his cut. Any sub-minions get only half his share in gold. A Master Minion gets twice his share.

If more ingredients are crossed off, flip a number of coins equal to ingredients circled and use one of these results:

Miracle: If all coins come up gold, then the alchemist made gold in secret. Read, “Many days later, the alchemist made gold in the secret spaces of his hidden laboratory.” Each player says a sentence about how his minion got shafted.

Got Lead: If any coin comes up lead, then the alchemist ended up with lead. Read, “The alchemist let out a long sigh as the potion turned to lead.” Each player says a sentence about how the alchemist punished the minion for his failure.

On the Web

www.emptygamebox.com

Ingredient Lists

To set up, randomly pick out objects from the dictionary or make up an odd number of objects. The length of the list equals the number of turns. Here’s a seven ingredient list leaning towards the humorous. You could be very serious about this, too.

1. Pickle
2. Pixie dust
3. Exercise machine
4. Pool water
5. Pancakes
6. A newt
7. Elephant

Serious objects:

lead • tin • iron • copper • mercury • silver • gold • phosphorus • sulfur • arsenic • antimony • vitriol • quartz • cinnabar • pyrites • orpiment • galena • magnesia • lime • potash • natron • saltpetre • kohl • ammonia • ammonium chloride • alcohol • camphor • sulfuric acid • hydrochloric acid • nitric acid • acetic acid • formic acid • citric acid • tartaric acid • aqua regia • gunpowder • carmot • blue vitriol • vinegar • salt

Two Player Variation

One player takes the alchemist and the toil role, and the other takes the minion. They switch when the turn is over.

Write a Story Variation

Write down every sentence said and see what it reads like. The alchemist does the writing.

Acknowledgments

While not a complete rip-off of Daniel Solis’ [Do: Pilgrims of the Flying Temple](#) and his [Leftovers](#), it definitely uses parts of it.