The Alchemist
By: Ben Jonson

Jessica Shields, Kelly Goodman, Caroline Hagerty, Chelsea Weidanz, Kristen Hartwick, Nicole Nersten, Alexander Soto-Roman, Charlotte Gillespie.
Did you understand the plot after you read the Alchemist?

A. Yes
B. No
C. I didn’t read
Did you find the Alchemist to be funny?

A. Yes, I was rolling on the floor
B. It made me chuckle
C. It was not funny
Ben Johnson;

- Similar to Shakespeare
- An English Renaissance Dramatist
- Said to be the greatest significance to the study of the Jacobean and Elizabethan period.

- Wrote in almost every genre; Drama, comedy, tragedy and masque, poetry, lyric, and epigram.
- Produced over 60 plays
- He was the first to expand on Literary achievements.
- His plays were not always a success on the stage
- Wrote series of masques

- Laid the foundation for a lot of 17th century poetry.
First performed in 1610 by the King’s Men
Theaters closed due to plague, had to tour
Popular in London
Court performances in 1613 & 1623
1642 (English Civil War)
Theaters closed, The Alchemist secretly performed (The Imperick)
Restoration reopened theaters—most popular old play
Actors gained immense fame from this play
Revived in 1899, restored to professional stage in 1916
Still performed today
Lovewit travels to London to avoid an outbreak of the Plague.

Subtle and Face argue about who will be the greater conman—each believe that without their help in the scheme, the other would be nowhere without each other.

Subtle, who also goes by “the Doctor,” Dol Common, and the Face come together as con artists to make money. Subtle uses promises of money, anger, and scientific terminology to outwit everyone who comes in.

Dapper comes and wants a shortcut to get better at gambling with the help of a spirit—he’s tricked into leaving money for Subtle’s services.

Drugger comes in and wants to know how to do well in his shop—he’s tricked into leaving money also.
Sir Epicure Mammon comes in hopes of becoming extremely wealthy through the philosopher’s stone, as well as having many women to have sex with and a lot of food to eat. While he talks to Subtle and Face, he sees Dol and wants to meet her immediately. He also says he will send metal to the two conmen.

Surely, at this point, is cynical and does not believe everything that’s going on.

Tribulation Wholesome and Ananais are both Puritans, but wan help from the con artists to get money to have people convert to their religion. Ananais argues with Subtle, and is thrown out.

Drugger comes back asking for a sign for his shop-again hands over more money. He also talks about a rich widow he wants to marry.
Kastril comes to learn how to fight better.

Dame Pliant (Kastril’s sister) and recent widow, wants to know her fortune in marriage.

Dapper is gagged and taken away after the scene with the “Fairy Queen” and Dapper hands over all his belongings.

Mammon talks to Dol Common but is talking too loud so Face takes him away.

Face and Subtle argue about who will get to sleep with Dame Pliant, the rich widow

Surely, dressed as a Spaniard, appears—the conmen try to mock him, they tell Dame that she will have sex with the Spaniard, but she refuses.

Dol comes in talking “mad” Mammon Panics then leaves

The furnace is destroyed, Surly comes in as himself to tell the widow what’s really going on.

Face gets Kastril to fight Surly while Lovewit comes home to realize what Face did.

Lovewit decides to be with the Widow in the end.
In your opinion, who is the most important character?

A) Subtle
B) Face
C) Dragger
D) Lovewit
Audience knows more than a character, and therefore feels superior

Examples in the Alchemist:
1. The audience feels superior to Dapper and Drugger
2. Audience knows Face and Subtle are conmen
3. Audience feels superior to all customers of Subtle and Face
Laughter resulting from the release of excessive nervous energy or tension.

Face, Subtle, and Dol provide us with the majority of the tension in the play. They keep disguising themselves and swindling the guests that come into the house, the tension slowly builds throughout the play. Surly gets close to exposing their plans, but is always beaten, making the tension peak during the play.

When guests exit through or at the end of each scene, relief is created through mostly Face and Subtle joking about how they conned the guests. With each successful deception, they have more guests arriving to visit the house adding more schemes throughout the play.
As Surly tries to tell Dame Pliant that Face, Subtle, and Dol are running a scam, Surly reassures her that he will see the matter to himself. He starts confronting Subtle, who still thinks that Surly is the Spanish Don and speak no English. Subtle tells Surly that he will pick his pockets only to have Surly answer in English, startling Subtle. Surly starts fighting Subtle only to have Face enter shortly after. Surly decides to give a long speech about the scam while Face quietly slips away during the conversation. Face returns with Kastril, telling him that Surly was an impostor. Kastril starts quarreling with Surly.

Later in the play Lovewit returns to the house and Face has to shave to look like Jeremy the Butler again. Mammon and Surly return to accuse Face, but only for him to deny it. Face eventually risks exposure.
The Practice of alchemy

Philosopher’s stone

Elixer of life

Subtle’s use of scientific terminology to trick his customers.

“I fart at thee!”

The Alchemist
What theory do you think was the most prevalent throughout the whole play?

A) Superiority
B) Relief
C) Incongruity
Directed By Ridley Scott

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24JoNlaOqps

- Roy Waller (Nicholas Cage): Con artist
- Frank Mercer (Sam Rockwell): Roy’s Partner, Protégé
- Angela (Alison Lohman): Roy’s 14 year old daughter
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http://cco.cambridge.org/uid=1824/book?id=ccol0521641136_CCOL0521641136


http://www.iep.utm.edu/humor/

http://www.gradesaver.com/the-alchemist-jonson/