Moon Palace

1. Identity card

Title: *Moon Palace*

Author: Paul Auster

Date of publication: 1989

Genre: Coming-of-age novel / Postmodern fiction

Historical and Cultural Context: Set mainly in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the novel reflects a period of social change, self-discovery and questioning of the American Dream. Blending realism and symbolism, Auster explores identity, family history and the role of chance in shaping human lives.

2. Plot summary

In a nutshell: the novel follows Marco Stanley Fogg, a young man whose life changes after the death of his uncle. Living in poverty and isolation in New York, he gradually rebuilds his life when he becomes the companion of Thomas Effing, an elderly artist with a mysterious past. As Marco uncovers hidden family connections, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery, learning about his origins and his place in the world.

Key Moments:

- ➜ Uncle Victor dies, leaving Marco alone.
- ➜ Marco becomes homeless in Central Park.
- ➜ He is hired by Thomas Effing.
- ➜ Marco discovers the truth about his family.
- ➜ He sets out on a journey across the American West.

3. Main characters

Name	Role	Symbol
Marco Stanley Fogg	protagonist	identity, self-discovery
Thomas Effing	Elderly artist	memory, reinvention
Solomon Barber	Marco's father	reconciliation, family
Kitty Wu	Marco's girlfriend	love, stability

4. Major themes and links to the LLCER program

Première – Rencontres

How does the novel illustrate this theme?

- ➜ Encounters transform Marco's life and shape his identity.
- ➜ Relationships reveal hidden truths about the past.
- ➜ Chance meetings influence the characters' destinies.

Key examples

- ➜ Marco meeting Thomas Effing.
- ➜ His relationship with Kitty Wu.
- ➜ Marco discovering Solomon Barber.

Terminale – Voyages, territories and borders

How does the novel illustrate this theme?

- ➜ The novel presents travel as a journey of self-discovery.
- ➜ It explores the symbolic importance of the American West.
- ➜ Physical and emotional frontiers shape the characters' lives.

Key examples

- ➜ Marco's journey across America.
- ➜ His period of homelessness in New York.
- ➜ The exploration of the American frontier through Effing's story.

5. Key quotes and key words

"Every journey is an invention."

journey – identity – frontier – memory – family – chance – belonging

6. Author's message

- ➜ Identity is built through experience, memory and relationships.
- ➜ Family history helps us understand who we are.
- ➜ Chance can profoundly influence the course of a life.
- ➜ Personal growth often begins with loss and uncertainty.