



STUDY GUIDE

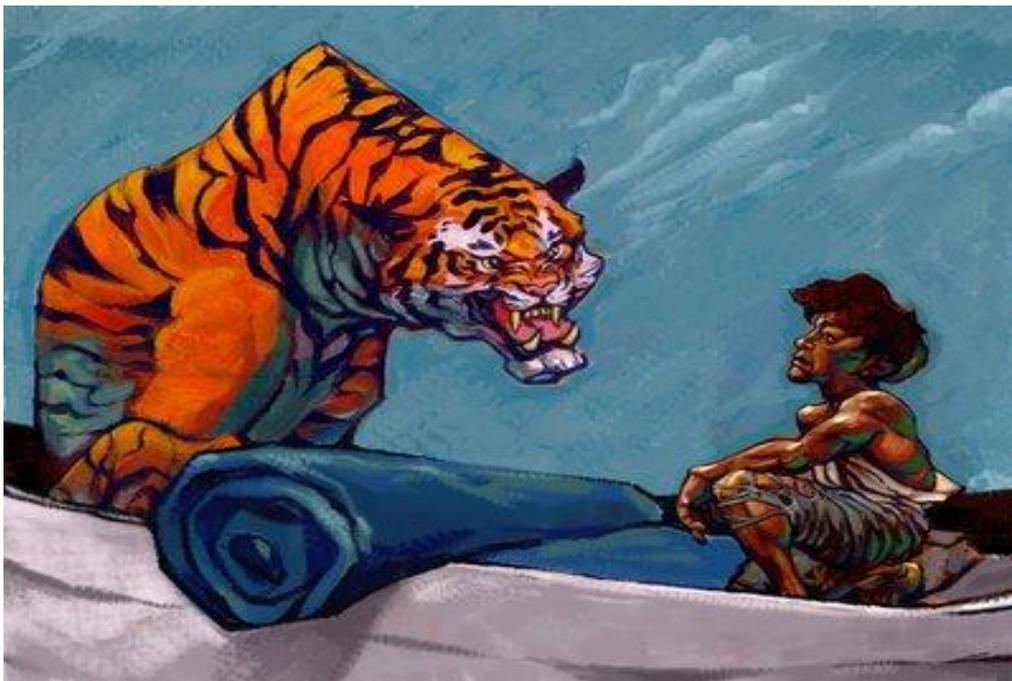
ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

Life of Pi – Yann Martel

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The author: Yann Martel



- He was born on June 25, 1963, in Salamanca, Spain, to Emile and Nicole Martel.
- He spent his childhood living in a variety of different countries, including Costa Rica, France, India, Iran, Mexico, Turkey, Canada and the United States.
- Yann attended Trent University from 1981 to 1984, but graduated from Concordia University with a BA in philosophy in 1985.
- He worked many different odd jobs – librarian, tree planter, dishwasher, security guard, and parking lot attendant.
- At the age of 27, he committed himself to writing.
- Martel travelled to India to work on a third novel, realized the novel was going nowhere – but then he remembered something he had read before, and the idea of Life of Pi came to him.
- Life of Pi was published in 2001 – he was awarded the Man Booker prize and the novel became an international best seller.

The Plot

- ✚ The novel tells the fantastical story of Pi Patel, a sixteen-year-old South Indian boy who survives at sea with a tiger for 227 days.
- ✚ Pi, born Piscine Molitor Patel, grows up in the South Indian city of Pondicherry, where his father runs a zoo.
- ✚ A precocious and intelligent boy, by the age of fifteen Pi – Hindu from an early age – has also adopted Christianity and Islam, and considers himself a pious devotee of all three religions.
- ✚ Pi's father decides to close the Pondicherry zoo and move to Canada as he is distressed about the government upheaval in his country. At this time, Pi is sixteen.
- ✚ Pi, his mother, father, and brother Ravi all board the Tsimtsum along with the zoo animals (who are on the way to be sold around the world).
- ✚ The ship sinks and Pi is the only human to make it onto the lifeboat and survive.
- ✚ The lifeboat also contains a hyena, a zebra, Orange Juice, the orangutan, and Richard Parker the tiger.
- ✚ The hyena kills and devours both the zebra and Orange Juice, before Richard Parker kills the hyena.
- ✚ Pi is left alone on a lifeboat with an adult male tiger.
- ✚ There is no land in sight and the ocean is shark-infested, so Pi builds a raft which he attaches to the lifeboat, to keep himself at a safer distance from the tiger.
- ✚ Eventually, however, life on the raft proves too exhausting, and Pi realizes that if Richard Parker gets hungry enough, he will swim to the raft and kill him.
- ✚ Pi decides that he must tame the tiger.
- ✚ Using a whistle, seasickness, and a turtle-shell shield, Pi manages to assert his authority over Richard Parker and delineate his own territory on the lifeboat, where he is comparatively safe from the tiger.
- ✚ While at sea, Pi and Richard Parker face many challenges, traumas, tragedies and miraculous occurrences.
- ✚ They never have sufficient food and fresh water, and the constant exposure to the weather elements is painful.
- ✚ A severe storm, which they miraculously survive, destroys the raft.
- ✚ Pi manages to capture and kill a bird.
- ✚ They are almost crushed by an oil tanker, which passes by without seeing them.
- ✚ During an especially severe period of starvation, Pi and Richard Parker both go blind.

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- ✚ While blind, Pi hears a voice, and realizes that they have drawn near another lifeboat that contains a similarly starving and blind Frenchman.
- ✚ Pi and this man converse for a while, and bring their boats together.
- ✚ The Frenchman climbs onto Pi's boat, and immediately attacks him, planning to kill and eat him.
- ✚ He doesn't realize that there is a tiger on the boat and steps into Richard Parker's territory.
- ✚ The tiger immediately attacks and kills him.
- ✚ Pi, saved at the cost of his attacker's life, describes this as the beginning of his true moral suffering.
- ✚ Pi and Richard Parker comes upon a weird island that is made of algae with trees protruding from it, teeming with meerkats but no other life.
- ✚ Pi and Richard Parker stay on the island for weeks, eating the algae and the meerkats, growing stronger, and bathing in and drinking from fresh water ponds.
- ✚ They never stay on the island at night, however, Pi because he feels safer from the tiger in his delineated territory, and Richard Parker for a reason unknown to Pi.
- ✚ Pi eventually starts to sleep on the island, and while doing so realizes that the island is carnivorous – it emits acid at night that dissolves anything on its surface.
- ✚ Pi takes Richard Parker and they leave the island.
- ✚ Pi and Richard Parker eventually land on a Mexican beach.
- ✚ Richard Parker immediately runs off into the jungle without acknowledging Pi, which Pi finds very hurtful.
- ✚ Pi is found, fed, bathed, and taken to a hospital.
- ✚ There, two Japanese men come to question Pi about what caused the Tsimtsum to sink.
- ✚ He tells his story, which they do not believe, so he offers them a more plausible version, with the animal characters replaced by other humans, which casts doubt on the original story.
- ✚ Throughout the novel, the story is interrupted by the author's notes on Pi as he is now, telling this story to the author.
- ✚ After recovering in Mexico he went to Canada, where he spent a year finishing high school and then studied Religion and Zoology at the University of Toronto.
- ✚ At some point, he got married, and he now has two children. He still thinks of Richard Parker, and is still hurt by his final desertion.

Characters

Piscine Molitor Patel (Pi)



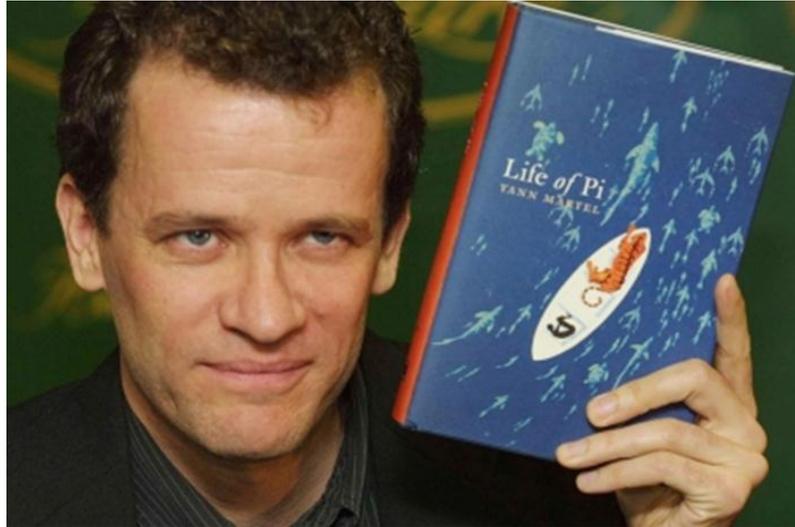
- ✚ The narrator and protagonist.
- ✚ Known as Pi.
- ✚ He is a small, slim man, with dark hair and eyes and an expressive face.
- ✚ He grew up in Pondicherry, but in his teens left for Canada with his family.
- ✚ He is deeply interested in religions, and considers himself a Hindu, Christian, and Muslim.
- ✚ At the University of Toronto he double-majors in Zoology and Religion.
- ✚ He survives 227 days at sea before he is rescued.

Richard Parker



- ✚ He is a three-year-old Bengal tiger who is Pi's only companion at sea.
- ✚ He was captured as a cub with his mother, and ended up in the Pondicherry Zoo.

The author



- ✚ He is unnamed in the text, but throughout he included descriptions of his interviews with Pi, and Pi as he is now in Canada.

Santosh Patel

- ✚ He is Pi's father.
- ✚ He ran a large hotel in Madras, before moving to Pondicherry to found and direct the Pondicherry Zoo.
- ✚ He has an intuitive understanding of his animals, and a great respect for them.
- ✚ He considers himself a modern, secular businessman, and so is surprised by Pi's religious pursuits.
- ✚ He dies in the sinking of the Tsimtsum.

Gita Patel

- ✚ She is Pi's mother, a normally calm and unruffled woman.
- ✚ She is a big reader, but unlike Pi takes no interest in religion.
- ✚ She dies in the sinking of the Tsimtsum.

Ravi Patel

- ✚ Pi's older brother.
- ✚ He is different from Pi – popular, a talented sportsman.
- ✚ He is a merciless teaser.
- ✚ Ravi is the captain of the cricket team.
- ✚ He dies in the sinking of the Tsimtsum.



The Frenchman

- ✚ He is another castaway, who meets Pi while rowing while they are both suffering from blindness.
- ✚ He tries to kill and eat Pi.
- ✚ He steps into Richard Parker's territory and is killed.

Orange Juice



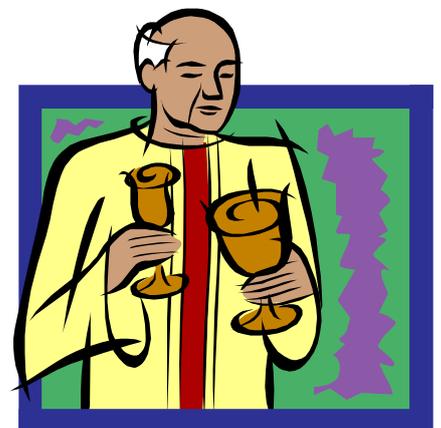
- ✚ She is an orangutan who survives the shipwreck to end up in the lifeboat with Pi.
- ✚ She is forlorn over the loss of her beloved son.
- ✚ She dies in a fight with the hyena.

Satish Kumar (teacher)

- ✚ He is Pi's biology teacher at Petit Seminaire.
- ✚ He is an active communist, and a weird-looking man with a bald and pointy head.
- ✚ He is Pi's favourite teacher, and the first avowed atheist that Pi ever meets.
- ✚ A great fan of the zoo, he sees it as his temple.

Father Martin

- ✚ A kind priest who Pi meets in Munnar.
- ✚ He serves as Pi's introduction to Christianity.
- ✚ He tells Pi the story of Christ's death on the cross.
- ✚ He explains that it was all inspired by love.



Satish Kumar (baker)

- ✚ He is a Muslim mystic and a baker.
- ✚ He has the same name as Pi's favourite biology teacher.
- ✚ He teaches Pi about Islam.
- ✚ He is poor, but very kind and generous.
- ✚ He is so plain-looking that Pi does not always recognize him.



Francis Adirubasamy (Mamaji)

- ✚ He is one of Pi's father's earliest business contacts.
- ✚ He is a good friend of the family.
- ✚ He is a former champion swimmer whose love for the sport never dies.
- ✚ He tries to teach this love of swimming to Pi's parents and Ravi, but Pi is the only one who he ever convinces.
- ✚ Francis is the one who introduces the author to Pi's story.

Auntie Rohini

- ✚ She is an older sister of Pi's mother.
- ✚ She is of a more traditional mind than Gita Patel.
- ✚ She takes Pi to a Hindu temple as a small baby.



Tomohiro Okamoto



- ✚ He is a member of the Maritime Department in the Japanese Ministry of Transport.
- ✚ He goes to interview Pi in hopes of discovering what happened to the Tsimtsum.

Asuro Chiba

- ✚ He is Tomohiro Okamoto's junior colleague at the Maritime Department in the Japanese Ministry of Transport.
- ✚ He accompanies Tomohiro Okamoto to Mexico to interview Pi.

Meena Patel

- ✚ She is Pi's wife.
- ✚ She works as a pharmacist and is a second generation Canadian.

Nikhil Patel

- ✚ He is Pi's son.
- ✚ He plays baseball.

Usha Patel

- ✚ She is Pi's four-year-old daughter.

Auntieji

- ✚ She is Pi's foster mother in Toronto.

Sitaram

- ✚ He is Pi's favourite zookeeper.
- ✚ He is in charge of the orangutans.

The zebra and hyena



- ✚ Pi's other companions on the lifeboat.
- ✚ The hyena kills the zebra and the orangutan but is then killed by Richard Parker.

Summary and discussion

Part 1

Chapters 1 -11 (pp 3 – 42)

- The novel opens with a fictional author's note, explaining the origins of the book. The author, Yann Martel explains that while in India he travels to Pondicherry, where an elderly man, Mr. Adirubasamy, tells him he has a story for him that will make him believe in God. He tells Yann about Pi, who the author manages to find in Canada, where Pi tells his story.
- The story begins in Chapter 1. Pi describes his education at the University of Toronto, his double major in religion and zoology, and why he is so fascinated by the sloth, an incredibly indolent creature. He says that his great suffering has made all subsequent pains both more unbearable and more trifling. He loves Canada, although he misses India.
- In Chapter 2, Yann intervenes as narrator, describing Pi telling his story. In Chapter 3 we learn Pi's full name, **Piscine Molitor Patel**. And how he got it: he was named for a great pool, called the Piscine Molitor, in which his father's business associate and close friend, Francis Adirubasamy, swam while in Paris.
- Pi's father was a hotel manager, but left the business because he wanted to start a zoo, which he did in Pondicherry. Pi defends the zoo and attacks the common understanding of animals in the wild as free, and the animals in the zoo as 'unfree', for freedom in the wild is a myth: animals are restricted by their survival needs and their instincts.
- When Piscine is 12, one of his classmates starts calling him "**Pissing**", so when Piscine graduates to Petit Seminaire, he shortens his name to PI. At Petit Seminaire Pi has a biology teacher, Mr. Kumar, who comes to the zoo often and talks to Pi about his atheism. He becomes one of Pi's favourite teachers.
- Pi describes the danger man poses to the animals in a zoo – the bad things man feeds them, the way he harms, tortures and kills them. One day, Pi's father takes him and Ravi to the big cat house and makes them promise to never touch or in any way go near a tiger. To make sure they understand the full danger, he makes them watch as the tiger kills and eats a goat. This is just

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the first of many similar lessons he gives to his sons regarding the dangerous animals in the zoo.

- Pi explains that the key to the science of zoo keeping is to get the animals used to the presence of humans by diminishing their flight distance – the minimum distance at which an animal wants to keep a perceived enemy.
- Pi explains that, no matter what, there will always be animals who try to escape from zoos, even though generally animals do not wish for “freedom”. The escape attempts are often because the offending animal’s enclosure is unsuitable, or because something within its enclosure has frightened them. Animals are always escaping from something, never to.

Discussion:

- *The opening section of the novel introduces many of the major themes of the novel, while providing a frame for the core of the story.*
- *The importance of storytelling as a theme is apparent, as the line between fiction and reality is blurred in the opening Author’s note, a semi-fictional, semi-true account of Yann’s writing of Life of Pi.*
- *It also contains the claim that is the heart of the novel – **which this story will make you believe in God.***
- *The author / narrator, who never seems too sceptical, becomes a full-fledged believer.*
- *Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba, who at first have little faith in Pi’s tale, at the end accept it, and by extension, God.*
- *In the first section, the reader knows none of it, nor has any idea how the story to come will instil faith.*
- *Foreshadowing is used extensively. The reader does not know much of the fantastic story to come, nor who Richard Parker is, but it becomes clear that animals, survival, and freedom will all be important in the tale.*
- *Pi argues against the belief that zoo animals are unhappy because they are not free, explaining that freedom in the wild, where one must always fight to survive, is a myth. This assertion foreshadows Pi’s own later loss of freedom while at sea, and the ways that he fights to survive diminish his humanity.*
- *The danger of wild animals is also previewed here: Richard Parker will embody this danger.*
- *Literal – the knowledge Pi and the reader gain regarding the brutality of tigers will make Pi’s journey and survival miraculous.*
- *Symbolic – this section foreshadows how dangerous Pi himself will become as he loses his humanity in his fight to remain alive.*

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- *This section also discusses the connections between religion and science. Pi's favourite teacher sees the zoo as a temple. Pi compares the misconceptions involved in zoos, and freedom, as similar to the misconceptions many have about religion.*
- *Thus, Pi opens the reader to the idea that belief in anything can be belief in God.*

Chapters 12 – 28 (pp 42 – 77)

- Yann mentions that Pi sometime gets agitated by his own story, and that he is tortured by the spiciness of the food Pi makes for him.
- Pi explains that an animal will attack you for entering its enclosure only because you have threatened its territory, and that most hostile behaviour is the expression of social insecurity. The socially inferior animals will make the greatest effort to befriend the alpha-human, be he the lion tamer or zookeeper, because they have the most to gain from his friendship and his protection from the other animals.
- Yann describes Pi's house, which is filled with religious symbols and idols and articles of devotion – but of many different religions. Pi describes the time when his Auntie Rohini takes him, as an infant, on his first trip to a temple, thereby beginning his religious life. Pi describes what it is that makes him a Hindu, and why he has been a Hindu his whole life, but why that does not have to mean he is closed off from ideas outside of Hinduism, and why all religions are connected.
- When Pi is fourteen, he and his family go on a trip to Munnar. While exploring the place, Pi comes upon a Christian church. He watches the priest, then returns to the church the next day and has tea with Father Martin. The priest explains the story of Christ and His death, but Pi finds the story irritating: he cannot believe it.
- He meets with Father Martin for the next three days, continuing to ask questions. On his last day in Munnar, Pi tells Father Martin that he wants to be a Christian, and the priest tells him that he already is, for he has met Christ in good faith.
- When he is fifteen, Pi comes upon the Muslim section of Pondicherry while exploring his neighbourhood. He ends up in a small bakery, and while he is talking to the baker, the call to prayer comes and Pi watches the baker pray. He finds the physicality of it satisfying.

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- Pi returns to the baker and asks him about Islam, which he finds beautiful. The baker, Satish Kumar, allows Pi to explore his faith, and Pi recounts two experiences during which he encounters God.
- Yann Martel considers what Pi has said about religion in an aside, and then Pi imagines an atheist and an agnostic on their respective deathbeds, which for him exemplifies why he can respect the first but not the second – one has belief where the other has doubt.
- Pi's parents find out that he is a practising Hindu, Christian and Muslim, when they run into his priest, imam and pandit at the same time. The three religious men, upon realizing that each has only a third of Pi, break into heated arguments over whose is the true religion. Pi says that he just wants to love God, which quiets the three of them. Ravi then finds out about Pi's tri-piousness, and mocks him for it. Pi finds it harder to practise his religions as people react to his multiplicity of beliefs.
- Pi asks his father for a prayer rug and to be baptised. His father tries to convince him to pick one religion, and tells him to talk to his mother, who tries to convince him of the same thing. He is unswayed. Pi overhears his parents discussing his religious fervour. They decide to just accept it, and wait for it to pass. Pi gets his prayer rug and is baptised.

Discussion

- *This section deals with one of Pi's central characteristics – his piousness.*
- *Pi here tells the story of how he became Hindu, Christian and Muslim, and it becomes clear that God is central to Pi.*
- *That this kind of piousness is unique becomes evident when we see the three holy men in Pi's life fight with each other over whose religion is best.*
- *This section also emphasizes Pi's devotion to his religions, for we see him up against many obstacles.*
- *The holy men themselves do not want to share him with other religions, his parents would prefer he were as secular as they were, and his brother mocks him.*
- *Even the religious communities see him differently once they know that he is not solely devoted to any one of their respective creeds.*
- *After this section, Pi's piousness is never again quite as central to the narrative, and during his suffering at sea, though he makes allusions to spirituality, his physical fight for survival dominates.*
- *His dedication to God serves to emphasize the overpowering nature of his fight for survival later, as that fight seems to diminish his devotion to God.*

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- *This section also reiterates the theme of storytelling. In one chapter Yann Martel describes his own writing of the story, trying to remember Pi's exact words and the impression they left on him.*
- *The next chapter contains those words the author was trying to remember – he exists as a figure standing between the story and the reader; even if he remembers and tells it perfectly, he is nonetheless controlling our perspective of it.*
- *It also becomes clear here – in Chapter 21 – that the author is already beginning to open up to Pi's story, to find faith in Pi's words. Storytelling and belief in God are linked; both require faith.*

Chapters 29 – 36 (pp 77 – 93)

- February 1976: Mrs Gandhi's government brings down the Tamil Nadu government. This deeply worries Pi's father. The stress of trying to keep his zoo profitable during this period leads him to decide to move his family to Canada.
- Yann Martel finds out for the first time that Pi is married, and meets his wife, Meena. He will also meet his son, daughter, dog and cat, none of whom he at first knew existed.
- Mr. Kumar, the baker asks Pi to visit the zoo. Pi shows him around. While there, they run into Mr. Kumar, the teacher. Together they each feed a carrot to a zebra. Pi describes instances of animals becoming companions across species.
- Yann describes Pi showing him photographs and other memorabilia. There are very few pictures from Pi's life in India, and those he has were sent over by Mr. Adirubasamy, after the sinking of Tsimtsum.
- The Patels sell the zoo and all its animals, but takes a year to complete the process of moving the animals. On June 21, 1977, the Patels board the Tsimtsum and leave India.

Discussion

- *This section contains the turning point of the novel, when Pi's life goes from fairly normal to tragic.*
- *At the end of Part 1, Pi's family has just begun what appears to be an exciting journey to a new country.*
- *Instead, Pi soon becomes an orphan, with everyone and everything he has known sunk into the ocean.*

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- *The end of Part 1 contains more clues for what will happen in Part 2.*
- *Pi helps his Muslim mentor and his favourite teacher feed a zebra together, who they view as a beautiful and noble creature.*
- *This may be true here at the zoo, but after the sinking of the ship, the zebra will suffer agonizing pain. The scene with the zebra in the zoo can thus be interpreted as symbolizing the last moment of Pi's innocence, before he too is made ugly by suffering.*
- *Toward the end of Part 1, the author offers clues hinting that the crossing of the Pacific will serve as a profound loss of innocence and fundamental change for Pi.*
- *The author is shown pictures from Pi's life.*
- *The final line of Part 1 is also significant: **"This story has a happy ending."** - Ironically, this declaration of hope and optimism spells doom, foreshadowing the devastating trials and tribulations Pi must soon encounter.*



Part 2

Chapters 37 – 41 (pp 97 – 111)

- Part 2 begins with the sinking of the Tsimtsum. Prior to this tragedy, Pi has enjoyed the trip immensely, tracking the boat's daily progress with gleeful precision. Then, four days out into the Pacific, some noise, possibly an explosion, wakes Pi in the middle of the night. Pi goes out to explore what the noise was. Out on the main deck Pi finds there is a severe storm, but, as that is nothing usual for the journey, he is only excited. It doesn't take long, however, for him to notice that the ship is listing severely. He goes back inside and tries to get back to his family, but he finds flooding in his way. It becomes clear that the ship is sinking, and what is more, the animals have somehow gotten loose. Pi finds some crew members, who put a life jacket on him and throw him overboard.
- Pi lands in a partially lowered lifeboat. A zebra jumps in after him, which causes the boat to drop into the water.
- Pi sees Richard Parker, the tiger, and helps him. At the last minute he realizes it is very stupid to share a lifeboat with a tiger, but it's too late. Richard Parker has already gotten on. Pi jumps off and grabs the lifebuoy. Just then, he sees a shark coming. He uses an oar to create a projection, and hangs between the water and the boat, the tiger and the sharks.
- Pi watches the Tsimtsum sink, but sees no other signs of life. Eventually he must get further back into the lifeboat, where he finds the zebra still alive but suffering from a broken leg. Pi wonders why Richard Parker has not killed it. Then he sees a hyena on the boat too, which he believes means that Richard Parker must have fallen off.

Discussion

- *The beginning of Part 2 jumps around chronologically, but only for a small period of time.*
- *It opens with Pi encouraging Richard Parker to enter the lifeboat.*
- *That, and not the ship's sinking, is in effect posited as the representative turning point.*
- *If we read Richard Parker as a symbol for Pi's survival instinct, it is interesting that Pi invites him to the lifeboat – it is an active choice, to survive, to become part beast.*
- *That he quickly regrets his decision, and realizes that it may imperil his spirit, is also significant.*

Chapters 42 – 56 (pp 111 – 162)

- Pi finally sees another sign of life – Orange Juice, the orangutan, floating on a net filled with bananas. She steps into the boat, and Pi pulls the net aboard. The hyena runs in circles around the boat all morning. Pi remains tense the whole time, but eventually the hyena stops, vomits and lies down.
- There are flies everywhere, and night falls. Pi hears all kinds of noises that terrify him, but he makes it to the next morning. As the sun rises again, Pi regains hope. Then he notices that the hyena has ripped off the zebra's broken leg, and is eating it. Pi notices that Orange Juice is very sea-sick. In the afternoon, a sea turtle appears.
- As the sun starts to set again, Pi notices there are sharks circling. Orange Juice looks mournfully for her son, and the hyena attacks the zebra again, essentially eating her from the inside out. When the sun sets, Pi realizes that there is no longer any hope that his family is still alive.
- The next morning, the zebra is still alive, but by noon it finally dies. Tension rises between the hyena and Orange Juice, and the hyena attacks. Orange Juice defends herself impressively, but eventually the hyena kills her. When Pi prepares to fight the hyena to his own death, he sees Richard Parker is still on the boat.
- Pi tells the story of how Richard got his name. He was captured as a cub with his mother, and the hunter who caught him intended to name him Thirsty. The paperwork got mixed up, however, and somehow the hunter's name wound up listed as Thirsty, while the tiger was given the hunter's name – Richard Parker.
- Pi has now lost all hope – he paradoxically perks up – he has nothing to lose. He realizes that he is dying of thirst, and, hoping to find fresh water on the boat, begins to explore. While investigating the boat, Pi finds fresh water, and after drinking two litres feels infinitely better. He then eats for the first time in three days.
- Pi considers his options, and realizes he has no chance of survival either staying in the boat with Richard Parker, or leaving the boat and trying to swim to safety. He decides that he is not going to give up hope and accept death. He builds a raft using oars, life jackets and rope.
- Right as Pi is about to finish, Richard Parker emerges, and swiftly kills the hyena. As the tiger then turns toward Pi, a rat suddenly appears and runs up Pi's body to the top of his head. As Richard Parker hesitates to step onto the

tarpaulin toward Pi, he throws the rat into his mouth and descends back under the tarpaulin, seemingly satisfied. Pi manages to finish the raft and throws it overboard; it floats, so he gets on it and, using a rope, keeps it about thirty feet from the boat.

- During Pi's first night on the raft, it rains from dusk to dawn. While he is kept awake by the downpour, Pi considers possible plans to rid the boat of Richard Parker. He realizes that his best chance of survival is simply to wait for Richard Parker to die of starvation or dehydration, as Pi's supplies are likely to last much longer.
- In the morning the rain eventually clears and Pi gets some sleep. Upon waking, he realizes how vast the sea is, how small his raft is, and it occurs to him that Richard Parker can both survive on saline water, and will likely swim to Pi's raft and kill him if he gets hungry enough. Pi describes the utter power of fear.

Discussion

- *This section will by the end of the novel emerge as thematically very important: it contains the portion of the story paralleled in Pi's second telling, yet to come.*
- *In this first telling, the events – the deaths of the zebra, Orange Juice, and the hyena - are clearly traumatic, but not devastating.*
- *In Pi's second go-around, however, the moments of narrative are imbued with the horror of a 227-day ordeal – the cruel murder of a sailor, cannibalism, a mother's brutal murder, and Pi's choice to kill another man in retaliation and for survival.*
- *The primary concern in this section is **survival**. From here until the end of the novel, survival will be Pi's, and the story's, driving force; here it is a new burden, and Pi learns for the first time how it will change him.*
- *It is not all bad – it allows Pi to be distracted from the tragic and awful loss of his whole family – but is more all-consuming than he could have expected.*
- *The motif of naming comes up again in this section, too, when we learn the origin of Richard Parker's unusual name. Throughout the novel, Pi always refers to Richard Parker by name – he is never “the tiger”.*
- *That this name is meant for a human adds to the feeling that Pi has humanized Richard Parker.*
- *He manages to survive with him for so long, but does, in the end, pay for it emotionally, because he expects a human-like goodbye from the tiger – something he does not receive.*
- *This section also emphasizes Pi's profound isolation.*

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- *The size of the ocean, the overwhelming power of nature as it rains down on him, make his odds of survival seem bleak, his situation dire.*
- *Pi does not accept this and makes the choice to survive.*
- *The power of nature is also emphasized in terms of emotional toll.*
- *Pi loses all hope, accepts his parents' and brother's deaths, and feels true, overpowering fear.*
- *He also finds freedom in his hopelessness, and he discovers that he has an ultimate will to survive that cannot be squelched.*

Chapters 57 – 72 (pp 162 – 207)

- Richard Parker watches Pi contentedly after finishing his hyena meal. He then makes a sound Pi has heard of but never heard – “**prusten**”, a puff through the nose used to express friendliness and harmless intentions. This leads Pi to realize that his only choice for survival is to tame Richard Parker. This is a relief to him, because he had realized his chances of outliving the tiger were very low, and somehow Richard Parker's presence kept him from thinking too much about his family and his hopelessness. Pi begins the training from his raft.
- Pi reads over the boat's survival manual, then thinks over all the things he has to do with long-term survival in mind. He realizes that he can use the raft to change the orientation of the boat, leading it to rock more unpleasantly side to side. He also sees cockroaches, the last remains of life on the boat besides Richard Parker, jump overboard. Pi uses the solar still to make fresh water from the sea water, and then spends the day improving his raft. When he is finished, he looks down and realizes the sea is teeming with life, which he watches until the sun sets.
- Pi wakes during the night, and realizes that his suffering is taking place in a grand setting, and accepts, temporarily, that it, and he, is significant in the grand scheme of things.
- He decides to fish. He cuts up his remaining shoe to use as bait, but loses all of it to the fish, who avoid the hook. Pi goes onto the lifeboat to search for something else to use as bait, however, and he manages to catch a three-foot Dorado, which he has much less psychological trouble killing. He then gives it to Richard Parker.
- Pi starts to worry about the water situation, as Richard Parker is showing signs of thirst. He checks the solar stills without much hope, but finds that they have indeed created a fair amount of salt-free water. He pours water into a bucket and gives it to Richard Parker.

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- Pi reports that, all told, he survived 227 days at sea. He describes his average day, and how he managed to keep busy. He describes the salt water boils that he would get after his clothes fully disintegrated. He tried to learn about navigation from his survival manual, but it assumed a basic knowledge that he did not have, and he did not have the strength to alter the boat's course much anyway.
- Pi describes how his fishing ability improved as time passed. He started to use his cargo net as a lure, which attracted fish to his raft. He also realized it was easy to catch turtles, although not at all easy to haul them aboard. The underside of the raft became a small sea community, which Pi used for snacks and as something to watch to calm his nerves.
- After time, Pi gets used to the motion of the sea and the wind, but he still cannot ever sleep well because of his anxiety. He gives up completely on being rescued by a ship, and just hopes for land.
- The first time Pi kills a sea turtle, it is because the survival manual recommends their blood for drinking. Richard Parker has started to tolerate Pi on the tarpaulin when it is hot out, but Pi is tired of having to fear him, and decides it is time to impose himself and carve out his own territory.
- To do this, Pi intentionally provokes Richard Parker to step into Pi's territory, at which point he blows his whistle furiously and uses the raft to make the lifeboat go broadside – and thus rock uncomfortably for Richard Parker – so that the tiger will associate his nausea with the sound of the whistle. He allows Richard Parker to recover, then repeats the process until the whistle alone is enough to make the tiger retreat.

Discussion

- *This section marks both the beginning of Pi's descent into more beast-like behaviour, driven by survival needs to a greater degree than Pi would have believed himself capable of, and the beginning of Pi's control over Richard Parker, who represents the truly wild and bestial.*
- *Pi, a lifelong vegetarian, is here driven both to eat meat, and to wilfully take life for the first time in his life.*
- *He adjust to this quickly – the flying fish that he reluctantly kills to use as bait catches him a Dorado, which he beats to death.*
- *He is driven to kill a sea turtle, which he finds to be wonderful and one of his favourite foods.*

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- *As Pi grows more carnivorous, he comes to realize that he must tame Richard Parker.*
- *He begins the training that he has devised so that he can have his own territory on the lifeboat and feel relatively safe there.*
- *He eventually manages to mark out his own territory and exert a certain amount of dominance over Richard Parker.*
- *Time loses meaning.*
- *Before this, even at sea, there has been some feeling of chronology in Pi's story – within this section, Pi declares that he was at sea for 227 days, and with that the chronology stops.*
- *Pi, who can no longer keep track of time – which proves something of a blessing.*
- *The danger of loneliness also rears its head.*
- *Pi's isolation is so extreme that he finds comfort in the sea-life communities that come to grow around his raft.*
- *Part of Pi's desire to train, rather than kill Richard Parker comes from his deep loneliness.*
- *Richard Parker may not be much of a companion, but he distracts Pi from his greater troubles, and in this takes on a great importance.*



Chapters 73 – 85 (pp 207 – 232)

- Pi's training of Richard Parker is only successful because Richard Parker does not actually want to attack him: all animals know that the risks of physical violence are great, so they avoid it when possible.
- Pi's greatest wish, above salvation, is for a book – but all he has is his survival manual and the diary he keeps for himself. He adapts his religious rituals to the circumstances, and does his best to fight the despair that so often comes. Pi sings 'happy birthday' to his mother on the day he estimates to be her birthday.
- Pi notices that Richard Parker tries to hide his feces, which is a sign of deference to Pi, so he makes a show of collecting the feces as a psychological ploy.
- Pi's store of survival rations diminishes, and so he has to eat less and less. His mood grows more and more closely associated with how big a meal he has been able to have. One time he even goes so far as to try to eat Richard Parker's feces, but he can tell there is nothing nutritious in it, so he spits it out.
- The sharks are always around, but never do anything that really threatens Pi, and so he grows to like them. One day he manages to pull a smaller shark into the boat, where it gets into battle with Richard Parker. After that Pi only goes for baby sharks, which he kills by stabbing in the eye.
- One day, while a school of flying fish is jumping over the boat, Pi manages to catch a Dorado, and faces off with Richard Parker over it. Richard Parker eventually backs down, and Pi feels that his mastery of the tiger is complete.
- It is not just Pi's use of seasickness that keeps Richard Parker from killing him, but the fact that Richard Parker is a zoo animal, and Pi was his source of fresh food and water most of the time.
- Pi explains that the scarcity of fresh water is the largest problem throughout his entire journey. He also has to give most of his food to Richard Parker, so he learns to eat more indiscriminately and quickly.
- One day comes a storm worse than any Pi has faced. Pi is forced to roll the tarpaulin down and get under it, and into Richard Parker's territory, to avoid drowning. The storm lasts all day and into the night, and when it finally ends Pi realizes that his raft is gone except for a piece or two. The boat is also damaged, and much of the food and supplies are lost. Luckily, one whistle remains.

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- Pi describes the whales that he sees which always lift his spirits. He and Parker are also visited fairly regularly by dolphins, and very rarely by birds, one of which Pi manages to kill.

Discussion

- *In this section, we see Pi's continued descent toward the bestial.*
- *As the food becomes scarcer, he notices that his own eating has become to resemble Richard Parker's – fast, savage, indiscriminate.*
- *He also becomes more courageous in his choice of prey, going after baby sharks, and at one time even an adult shark.*
- *This section also shows Pi achieving real dominance over Richard Parker.*
- *Richard Parker tries to hide his feces from Pi and backs down when Pi fights him for a Dorado – all signs that, even as Pi is becoming more animal-like himself, he is dominating Richard Parker more fully.*
- *This section also stresses Pi's proximity to death – the storm is a prime example: Pi is saved by luck but left with only one whistle; that whistle in turn represents all that stands between life and death at the jaws of Richard Parker.*
- *Yann Martel also dwells here on the more peaceful side of the animal kingdom as well – the whales, dolphins, and even sharks come to provide a kind of companionship for Pi.*
- *His description of these animals, however, further emphasizes how much struggle for survival has altered him.*
- *Even when it comes to the peaceful dolphins and beautiful birds, Pi thinks of animals as, above all, food.*
- *This seems to foreshadow what will come with the introduction of the Frenchman, when Pi descends so far as to eat human flesh.*
- *Of his animal companions, only Richard Parker is still safe from becoming Pi's food, because Pi would be incapable of killing him.*

Chapters 86 -91 (pp 233 – 256)

- One day Pi sees an oil tanker coming toward him and Richard Parker. All too quickly it is bearing down on them, and Pi only just misses getting crushed. Unfortunately, the tanker passes without ever seeing Pi, and his ordeal continues. Another day, Pi comes upon a large amount of floating garbage. He pulls an empty wine bottle from the refuse and places a message inside.
- When he needs escape, Pi covers his face with a wet cloth, which asphyxiates him just enough to put him in a dream-like state.

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- Slowly, Pi and Richard Parker waste away as do all their supplies. They are losing weight and becoming more and more dehydrated. Excerpts from Pi's dairy show more and more loss of hope, until he writes "I die" and his pen runs out of ink.
- After one three-day span of not having anything to eat, Pi notices that Richard Parker has gone blind. Then his own eyes start to itch, and soon he cannot see anything. He becomes sure that both he and Richard Parker will die.
- As he lies down and prepares for death, he hears a voice. He is sure it must be a hallucination, but he enters into conversation with it all the same. He and the voice discuss what they would eat if they could have anything, and Pi realizes that he is talking to Richard Parker.
- He drifts out of consciousness, then hears a voice again, and returns to conversation. He realizes now that the voice is that of another man, a Frenchman, also blind, also in a lifeboat rowing beside him, also starving. Pi and the Frenchman manage to draw up next to each other, and the stranger climbs into Pi's boat. He immediately dives onto Pi and tries to kill him, with the intention of eating him, but the Frenchman is attacked and killed by Richard Parker.
- Pi explores the dead man's boat, and finds some food and water. As he manages to rehydrate, his vision slowly comes back. He finds the remains of the man still in the boat, and uses some of his flesh for fish bait. He goes so far as to eat some of it, but stops the minute he catches a fish again.

Discussion

- *This section represents a decisive turning point in Pi's narrative and arc.*
- *Here Pi truly loses his innocence, survival exacts the dearest cost, and his suffering becomes tangible.*
- *Ironically, this section also continues sparks of real hope.*
- *Pi encounters two boats – a miraculous stroke of good fortune that comes to naught.*
- *The dashing of these hopes comes almost as soon as Pi can appreciate them.*
- *First, the oil tanker that could save him almost kills him, then continues on into the distance without ever seeing him.*
- *Second, and most horribly, Pi's first interaction with another human being since the ship sank brings not the companionship he is so excited for, but instead attempted murder and brutal death – and with it, profound guilt.*

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- *Pi makes it clear that whether the first story is taken symbolically or literally, the Frenchman's death is in either way caused by Pi's own fight for survival.*
- *He must accept that his survival came at the cost of another's life.*
- *The despair and suffering that follow the Frenchman's death are highlighted by the excitement that precedes it, though that excitement is tinged with surrealism.*
- *Since Part 2 and Pi's loss of all human companionship, the novel has had little dialogue.*
- *The arrival of the Frenchman, who Pi and the reader both first assume to be some kind of hallucination, changes the novel's form in dramatic fashion.*
- *This sudden proliferation of dialogue, combined with Pi's extremely weak state and blindness, and confused belief that he is speaking to Richard Parker, make this scene the least believable of Pi's tale.*
- *The scene's ending however makes it clear that this is also the scene that Pi would be least likely to make up – its horror would serve him no purpose.*
- *Here is one of the few instances in which Pi does not try to tell the better story – he cannot incorporate God into this awful memory.*

Chapters 92 – 94 (pp 256 – 286)

- One day Pi sees trees, which turn out to be part of a low-lying island. He assumes the vision is a mirage, until he tests the island with his foot and smells the vegetation. The island is made largely of a kind of tubular seaweed, which Pi discovers is edible, and even delicious. He eats his fill and explores the island as much as he can. Richard Parker ventures on to the island too, prompting Pi to return to the lifeboat to sleep, in case the new surroundings make Richard Parker dangerous again.
- After two days Pi regains the ability to walk. Once he is strong enough to explore beyond the edges of the island, he finds that it is full of meerkats. It is also covered with ponds that Pi discovers to be fresh water, and from which the meerkats pull dead fish. It occurs to Pi that the algae somehow desalinate the water. Pi bathes himself and cleans out the lifeboat using the fresh water.
- Pi finds that the island possesses nothing but algae, trees and meerkats; no other life whatsoever. Both Pi and Richard Parker manage to revive themselves. Pi with the algae and Richard Parker with the meerkats, and both with fresh water and exercise. Richard Parker starts to get more aggressive, so Pi goes back to training him.
- One night Pi finally decides to sleep out of the boat, and with his net makes a bed in one of the trees. While there, he sees all the meerkats suddenly desert their ponds and run to the forest, and all climb up into the trees. Pi enjoys

sleeping with the meerkats, so he continues to do so, until the day he finds a tree at the centre of the forest that appears to be the only tree to have fruit. When he tries to eat the fruit, he finds that each piece of fruit is actually layers and layers of leaves wrapped tightly around a human tooth; what's more, together the fruit form a full, perfect set of teeth. Pi's curiosity gets the better of him, and he tries to plant his feet on the island by night. The soil burns him terribly. It turns out that the island is carnivorous; it emits acid at night that dissolves anything on its surface. Pi must leave his semi-paradise, and is utterly weary as a result. He turns wholly to God.

- Some time later, Pi and Richard Parker come upon land in what turns out to be Mexico. Richard Parker goes immediately off into the jungle without any kind of goodbye or acknowledgement to Pi. Soon Pi is found by Humans, but he weeps over Richard Parker's desertion. The people who find him bathe him and feed him, and he is taken to hospital. He proclaims this is the end of his story.

Discussion

- *This section continues the pattern created in the previous one, of great hopes followed by great disillusionment.*
- *When Pi discovers his island, it seems too good to be true – it has plenty of food, fresh water, meerkats for companionship, and protection from the weather.*
- *It is even moving, so there exists the potential that Pi could meet a ship, or other, human-inhabited land.*
- *Pi regains his strength, and some degree of happiness.*
- *While Pi seems to believe this island is a paradise, Yann Martel's (and Pi the storyteller's) significant use of foreshadowing prevents the reader from ever truly believing it.*
- *Richard Parker's sore paws and refusal to stay on the island at night, the meerkats' panicked run to the trees, the disappearing fish, all foretell that something sinister is afoot.*
- *Pi does not give up his belief that this island is his perfect new home until he physically encounters the truth.*
- *Pi the storyteller transitions abruptly from this realization to his coming upon land in Mexico.*
- *What happens between – Pi's utter loss of all hope, his final turn to God – is told to us in one brief sentence. That is all.*
- *How and when Pi comes upon land is left unsaid; this again emphasizes the depth of Pi's loss of hope after learning the truth about the island.*
- *Pi, who normally cannot say enough about God and the rituals he uses to worship him, here says only he, turned fully to him.*

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- *This section also marks the betrayal by Richard Parker, a betrayal Pi can never forgive – not the killing of the Frenchman, but the act of leaving Pi without any indication of a goodbye.*
- *The resulting feeling of loss and sadness, rather than any excitement or relief at having finally returned to land, is what Pi emphasizes at the end of his story.*
- *The reader is thereby reminded that, although Pi has survived, he has lost all his family and everything he cared about, and now must face that loss within the human world.*
- *Pi's declaration that this is the end of his story is also significant – much in fact happens after his recuperation in Mexico.*
- *Positing “the end” when he does is a choice: the author, after all, does not end the story there, but instead includes an additional five chapters.*
- *Storytelling thus implies the ability to choose one's own story.*



Part 3

Chapters 95 – 100 (pp 289 – 319)

- The author explains that what follows are transcripts of a recorded conversation between Pi and two men, Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba, of the Maritime Department in the Japanese Ministry of Transport, after they come to see him in the hospital in Tomatlan, Mexico.
- Mr. Okamoto gives Pi a cookie, and asks if he would be willing to tell them everything that happened to him. Chapter 97 says simply, “The story.” After the story Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba think Pi is fooling with them. They take a break, and Pi asks for another cookie.
- Mr. Okamoto tells Pi that they don’t believe his story because bananas do not float. Pi says they do, and insists that they test it. They do, and it becomes clear that bananas do float. They tell Pi that they also don’t believe him about the island, or about Richard Parker. Pi tries to convince them, and they remain hard to persuade. They insist that they want the true story, which leads Pi to tell them a completely different story.
- In this new story, Pi (Richard Parker) ended up in a lifeboat with his mother (the orangutan), the cook (the hyena), and a sailor (the zebra). The cook was voracious, and ate things like flies and rats even when he still had plenty of rations left. The sailor was young, and had broken his leg getting into the lifeboat. He only knew Chinese and suffered greatly.
- As the sailor’s leg got infected, the cook said they must amputate it to save his life. This they did, using only surprise as an anaesthetic. The cook later let it slip that he had amputated the leg to use it as fishing bait, but it was too decayed and did not work effectively. The sailor died, and the cook butchered him. He claimed this was for bait, but after a few days he started eating the flesh himself. Pi and his mother never ate any of it, but they did start to eat the fish and the turtles that the cook captured from the sea.
- One day Pi was too weak to pull in a turtle, and the cook hit him. His mother hit the cook back, and sent Pi to the raft. The cook killed Pi’s mother.
- Eventually, Pi got back onto the boat with the cook. They shared a turtle, and then Pi killed the cook with the knife the cook left out. Pi subsequently ate some of the cook’s organs and flesh.
- Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba notice parallels in the two stories. They continue to question Pi about how the boat actually sank.

- The final chapter contains Mr. Okamoto's report after the interrogation, in which he says that the cause of the Tsimtsum's sinking is impossible to determine, and references Pi's amazing feat of having survived 227 days at sea with an adult tiger.

Discussion

- *Part 3 of the novel revisits and reemphasizes themes raised earlier in the novel, as well as complicating and redefining them and the story itself.*
- *Pi tells Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba that everything in life is inherently a story – even facts, because they are being perceived by someone, and thus can never be truly objective.*
- *Yet, in their unwillingness to believe Pi's story, they weaken his control over it.*
- *Even faced with evidence – the floating bananas, the meerkat bones – they stand firm in their disbelief.*
- *In response, Pi tells another story, one which should be more believable to them.*
- *In being forced to do so, he is in essence losing his control as storyteller – for the men's dislike of zoo animals being involved must define how he tells the story.*
- *Pi's second story is, seemingly, more realistic, as well as significantly more tragic and horrifying.*
- *In both stories, he survives a long and terrible ordeal, but in the second, he seems to contain both his own, rational self, and the ferocious, wild and very dangerous Richard Parker.*
- *Even if this is not the 'true story', the possibility of such a division of Pi's personality is made clear by his doing so here – throughout his ordeal, we see his need to survive slowly overpowering his rational (vegetarian) self.*
- *Yet while the second telling of the story may cast doubt for the reader on the first story, it is not meant to do so for more than a moment.*
- *Even the highly sceptical Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba in the end choose to believe the first – the better story – because Pi tells them that they may.*
- *Neither story affects their investigation, so there is no reason not to take the less tragic and more "enjoyable" story as the true story.*
- *This is how Pi finally defines his belief in God, and why Mr. Adirubasamy tells the author that this story will make him believe in God.*

Quotes

Quote	Meaning
<p>“Animals in the wild lead lives of compulsion and necessity within an unforgiving social hierarchy in an environment where the supply of fear is high and the supply of food low and where territory must constantly be defended and parasites forever endured. What is the meaning of freedom in such a contest? Animals in the wild are, in practice, free neither in space nor in time, nor in their personal relations.” Chapter 4, page 16</p>	<p>This passage is at the core of Pi’s philosophy on freedom. He does not define freedom by lack of bars, but by the ability to exercise free will with one’s time, space and relations. Animals, and anyone whose survival is continually threatened, do not have this luxury. This passage also foreshadows Pi’s own prolonged fight for survival, which restricts his freedom and brings him down to the level of animals in other ways as well.</p>
<p>“I can well imagine an atheist’s last words: ‘White, white! L-L-Love! My God!’ – and the deathbed leap of faith. Whereas the agnostic, if he stays true to his reasonable self, if he stays beholden to dry, yeastless factuality, might try to explain the warm light bathing him by saying, ‘Possibly a f-failing oxygenation of the b-brain,’ and, to the very end, lack imagination and miss the better story.” Chapter 22, page 64</p>	<p>Pi here, in a short chapter, elucidates his opinion on atheists and agnostics. He sees an atheist as capable of belief in God, for they have always had faith, just faith in science rather than in God – which Pi believes is not inherently incompatible. On the other hand, the agnostic’s doubt is to him an active choice not to believe, not to have the ‘better story’.</p>
<p>“This was the terrible cost of Richard Parker. He gave me a life, my own, but at the expense of taking one. He ripped the flesh of the man’s frame and cracked his bones. The smell of blood filled my nose. Something in me died then that has never come back to life.” Chapter 90, page 255</p>	<p>This passage shows Pi in one of his darkest moments. The relatively shorter sentences here seem to imply a closing off. Pi can only bear to remember so much; he can list the sensations but he does not delve into the awful event’s effect on his psyche. This moment, more than any other in the text seems to mark an absence of God; it is also the moment where Pi’s life is most explicitly threatened. Pi’s guilt here is more easily understandable in the second version of the story, where it is he who kills the Frenchman. Either way, if Richard Parker is seen as a symbol of the pure survival instinct, this is the one moment in the text where that instinct wins out completely over morality and control.</p>

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Quote	Meaning
<p>“So tell me, since it makes no factual difference to you and you can’t prove the question either way, which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with animals or the story without animals?’ Mr. Okamoto: ‘That’s an interesting question?’ Mr. Chiba: ‘The story with animals.’ Mr. Okamoto: ‘Yes. The story with animals is the better story.’ Pi Patel: ‘Thank you. And so it goes with God.’ “ Chapter 99, page 317</p>	<p>This quote is essential to the story – Yann Martel himself has described ‘the better story’ as the novel’s key words. Here Pi enlarges the themes of truth, and story versus reality to encompass God, and all of life. If there is no way to prove that God’s existence is true or untrue, and if the assumption of the truth either way in no way makes a factual difference, then why not choose to believe what Pi believes to be “the better story” – that God exists? This passage thus connects these central themes in the book, and so weaves everything together.</p>
<p>“As an aside, story of sole survivor, Mr. Piscine Molitor Patel, Indian citizen, is an astounding story of courage and endurance in the face of extraordinary difficult and tragic circumstances. In the experience of this investigator, his story is unparalleled in the history of shipwrecks. Very few castaways can claim to have survived so long at sea as Mr. Patel, and none in the company of an adult Bengal tiger.” Chapter 100, page 319</p>	<p>This passage is the last paragraph of the novel. It is an appropriate ending, because it essentially represents Mr. Okamoto accepting Pi’s first story, and by extension God. Pi presents Mr. Okamoto with the possibility of shaping life as one would like to, seeing it in its most beautiful form. While Mr. Okamoto believed Pi’s second, more tragic and horrible story, he prefers the first, and so Pi tells him to believe that one. It is not clear what choice Mr. Okamoto makes, until this final paragraph, which shows him accepting the tiger story which he at first finds so hard to believe.</p>

Other quotes to look at:

“Life is so beautiful that death has fallen in love with it, a jealous, possessive love that grabs at what it can. But life leaps over oblivion lightly, losing only a thing or two of no importance, and gloom is but the passing shadow of a cloud” – Chapter 1, page 6

“My alarm clock during my childhood was a pride of lions” – Chapter 4, page 14

“It was my luck to have a few good teachers in my youth, men and women who came into my dark head and lit a match.” - Chapter 7, page 25

“Life will defend itself no matter how small it is” – Chapter 8, page 38

Themes

❖ Belief in God

- This is clearly a major theme in the novel.
- Throughout the novel, Pi makes his belief in and love of God clear – it is a love profound enough that he can transcend the classical divisions of religion, and worship as a Hindu, Muslim and Christian.
- Pi, although amazed by the possibility of lacking this belief, still respects the atheist, because he sees him as a kind of believer.
- Pi's vision of an atheist on his death bed makes it clear that he assumes the atheist's form of belief is one in God, without his realizing it until the end.
- It is the agnostic that bothers Pi: the decision to doubt, to lack belief in anything, is to him inexcusable.
- This is underscored in that essential passage in the novel when Pi asks the Japanese officials which of the two stories they preferred – he sees no reason why they should not believe the better story.
- Pi's devotion to God is a prominent part of the novel; it becomes, however, much less prominent during his time aboard the lifeboat, when his physical needs come to dominate his spiritual ones.
- Pi never seems to doubt his belief in God while enduring his hardships, but he certainly focuses on it less.

❖ Loss of innocence

- This theme is closely related to the theme of the Primacy of survival.
- Its significance is reflected in the geographic structure of the book – in Part 1, Pi is in Pondicherry, and there he is innocent. In Part 2, Pi is in the Pacific Ocean, and is there that he loses his innocence.
- That Part 2 begins, not chronologically with the Tsimtsum sinking, but with Pi inviting Richard Parker onto the lifeboat, also reflects this, for it represents Pi reaching out for what Richard Parker symbolizes – his own survival instinct.
- It is this survival instinct that is at the heart of Pi's loss of innocence; it is this survival instinct that drives him to act in ways he never thought he could.
- Throughout Part 2 there are other representative moments of a loss of innocence, besides the symbolic one of bringing Richard Parker onto the lifeboat.
- The most important of these is the death of the Frenchman, which Pi describes as killing a part of him which has never come back to life.

❖ The Primacy of Survival

- This is the definitive theme in the heart of the novel, Pi's time at sea.
- The theme is clear throughout his ordeal – he must eat meat, he must take life, two things which had always been anathema to him before his survival was at stake.
- Survival almost always trumps morality, even for a character like Pi, who is deeply principled and religious.
- When Pi tells the second version of his story to the Japanese men, this theme is highlighted even more vividly, because he parallels his survival instincts in the second story to Richard Parker in the first – it is he, when he must survive, who steals food, he who kills the Frenchman.
- If the first version of the story is seen as a fictionalized version of the second, the very fact that he divides himself from his brutal survival instinct shows the power of that instinct.

❖ The Definition of Freedom

- The true definition of freedom becomes a question early in the novel when Pi refutes the claims of people who think that zoos are cruel for restricting animals' freedom.
- An animal in the wild is 'free' according to the opponents of zoos, and it is true that that animal is not restricted in its movement by a physical cage.
- It is, however, profoundly restricted by its survival needs and its instincts.
- If that animal is guided solely by its need for food, water and shelter, is it really free?
- In a zoo, where the animal's needs are always provided, isn't it more free?
- The question of freedom arises again as Pi finds himself in a fight for survival at sea.
- He is without responsibility to anyone else, he is without any need to be anywhere in the world, he is perpetually in motion; yet he has probably never been less free, for he must always be putting his survival above all else.
- An example of this is that he can no longer choose to be a vegetarian – he must eat meat to stay alive.
- Throughout the novel, the primacy of survival, of life, greatly restricts "freedom" and thus redefines the very word.

❖ The Relativity of Truth

- This theme is not highlighted as a major theme until the last part of the novel, when Pi retells the entire story to make it more plausible to the officials who are questioning him.
- He then asks the officials which story they liked better, since neither can be proven and neither affects the information they are searching for – how the ship sunk.
- This question implies that truth is not absolute; the officials can choose to believe whichever story they prefer, and that version becomes truth.
- Pi argues to the Japanese officials that there is invention in all “truths” and “facts”, because everyone is observing everything from their own perspective.
- There is no absolute truth.

❖ Science and Religion

- The theme of science and religion as not opposed but in concert with each other is present primarily in the framing of the narrative.
- It is exemplified in Pi’s dual major at the University of Toronto of Religion and Zoology, which he admits he sometimes gets mixed up, seeing the sloth he studied as a reminder of God’s miracles.
- Pi’s favourite teacher, Mr. Kumar, sees the zoo as the temple of his atheism.
- The theme of the connection between science and religion also is related to Pi’s respect for atheists, because he sees that they worship science as he worships God, which he believes is not so very different.

❖ Storytelling

- The act of storytelling and narration is a significant theme throughout the novel, but particularly in the narrative frame.
- That Pi’s story is just that – a story – is emphasized throughout, with interjections from the author.
- Pi’s own references to it, and the complete retelling of the story for the Japanese officials.
- By including a semi-fictional “Author’s Note”, Yann Martel draws the reader’s attention to the fact that not only within the novel is Pi’s tale of survival at sea an unverified story, but the entire novel itself, and even the author’s note, usually trustworthy, is a work of fiction.
- This is not to say that Martel intends the reader to read the novel through a lens of disbelief or uncertainty; rather, he emphasizes the nature of the book as a story to show that one can choose to believe in God – because it is preferable to not believing, it is “the better story”.

The literary essay

- Use the question / statement of the essay to write your introduction.
- Write in the present tense.
- Use the SIR principle (Statement / Illustration/ Relate to the topic)
- Use each statement as a new paragraph.
- Indicate the amount of words used.
- Provide a title for your essay
- Link your conclusion to your introduction

Pi argues that Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba should take the “better story” as the true story. In an essay of 400 – 450 words, critically discuss this statement.

SIR Principle

Statement	Illustration (evidence / example / quotes)	Relate to the topic
All the characters in the text choose to believe the first story	Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba are sceptical but eventually choose the first version	In his final report Mr. Okamoto states that it is a remarkable story of survival of a courageous boy surviving for so long at sea with a Bengal tiger
Pi is greatly experienced with zoo animals	Pi grows up in Pondicherry where his father owns and manages a zoo. He has experience of how to deal with animals – e.g. the incident where Pi and his brother witness the goat being torn apart by the tiger	Pi manages to plausibly explain how he survives with Richard Parker for so long – give details of the training of Richard Parker with the whistle to illustrate your point
Pi seems truly depressed about Richard Parker’s desertion when they eventually end up in Mexico	Illustrate the end of Part 2 and Pi’s feelings when Richard Parker disappears into the jungle without a proper goodbye.	The bond between Pi and Richard Parker is clearly evident in the novel. The way Pi sees Richard Parker as a companion and this is very important to his own survival.
The second Story	Give examples/ discuss the symbolism – his mother / Orange Juice, the sailor / the zebra, the cook/ the hyena and Pi / Richard Parker	This is more believable but at the same time horrible and tragic. It is therefore easier to believe the first version as the “better story

Study Guide for ENG HL: Life of Pi

The theme of the relativity of truth	This question implies that truth is not absolute; the officials can choose to believe whichever story they prefer, and that version becomes truth. Pi argues to the Japanese officials that there is invention in all “truths” and “facts”, because everyone is observing everything from their own perspective.	There is no absolute truth.
Own opinion of which is the better story	Candidates must draw a conclusion and substantiate their findings by discussing morality and their reasons for choosing the “better story	Conclude by relating your choice to the introduction.

LIFE OF PI

BY YANN MARTEL

A Quote from the book:

“The reason death sticks so closely to life isn’t biological necessity; it’s envy. Life is so beautiful that death has fallen in love with it, a jealous, possessive love that grabs at what it can.”



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Vocabulary

Word	Meaning
acuity	keenness of hearing, sight, or intellect
agnostics	those who believe that the truth of religious or spiritual claims are impossible to prove or disprove
amenable	willing to cooperate; responsive to suggestion
anaemic	suffering from a lack of haemoglobin in the blood, usually caused by a deficiency in iron
anthropomorphized	when nonhuman things have been treated or considered as human-like
arboreal	relating to trees
archipelago	a group or chain of islands
arduous	difficult and demanding
artesian well	a pumpless well that allows water to rise to the surface that has travelled through porous rock from a higher elevation.
ashram	a community formed primarily for the spiritual uplifting of its members
attrition	slow destruction through wear and tear, weakening by persistent attack
brackish	salty
bracts	the plant parts from which the flowers grow
buoyant	able to float
cantankerous	easily angered and difficult to get along with
carapace	shell
carrion	the rotting flesh of a dead animal
cataleptic	in a state resembling a trance or unconsciousness, often associated with schizophrenia, epilepsy or drug use
catholicity	wideness of range and inclusiveness, as in taste
chimera	a widely unrealistic idea or hope
chromatic	relating to colour
commensal	describing a relationship between two species in which one derives benefit from the association while the other is unharmed but also not benefited
cordate	heart-shaped
cosmogony	a theory of the creation of the universe
craw	throat or gullet
deputation	a group of people chosen to represent a larger group and act on their behalf
discordant	consisting of sounds that are clashing or harsh
dissembling	the adoption of a false appearance or pretending in order to conceal facts, feelings, intentions
diurnal	active in daytime
durian	a foul-smelling but deliciously flavoured fruit
feral	animals that live in the wild after having been domestically reared
ferment	an opening between two organs caused by disease or injury
frugivorous	feeding primarily on fruit
gaff	a hooked fish pole

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Garden of Gethsemane	believed to be the place where Jesus and the disciples prayed the night before the crucifixion
heijira	the emigration of Muhammad and his followers to Medina in 622CE
herald	something that gives an indication of something that is going to happen; a sign
in situ	in place
incongruously	unsuitably or inconsistently
ineluctably	inescapably
insouciant	having light-hearted unconcern
Kathakali dancer	a dancer in a highly stylized classical form of Indian dance-drama
kinetic	relating to motion
Kumkum powder	a powder used for social and religious markings in Hinduism
lampoonery	the ridicule or satirizing of someone or something
lasciviousness	lewdness
licit	allowed by law
lithesome	flexible / easily bendable
maharaja	A Hindu ruler
mange	an infectious skin disease of animals and sometimes humans
marauder	one who raids for plunder
Memento mori	a work of art that is designed to remind the viewer of their imminent death, and the general brevity and fragility of human life
menagerie	a collection of animals, usually for royalty
nadaswaram	a wind instrument that is highly popular in South India
oestrous	in heat
olfactory	relating to the sense of smell
pandit	a scholar skilled in Sanskrit and Hindu law, religion, music, philosophy
porosity	the porous nature of something
prusten	the quietest tiger call, a puff through the nose used to express friendliness and harmless intentions
raiment	clothing
rambutan	A medium-sized tropical tree
rufous	of a reddish-brown colour
ruminants	hoofed animals that chew cud
sambar	a dish common in South Indian and Sri Lankan communities
sanguinary	bloodthirsty
venerable	worthy of respect
virulent	extremely infectious or damaging
viscera	internal organs
wallah	one who sells or peddles something

Sources

<http://www.gradesaver.com/study-guides/>

