

The Life of Pi

Yann Martel

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

PART I: TORONTO AND PONDICHERRY

Chapter 1

Pi studies zoology and religion at St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto with a concentration in the Kabbalism of Isaac Luria and in the thyroid gland of the three-toed sloth. Severe anemia leaves the speaker weak in Mexico.

Chapter 2

The speaker interviews Pi, an intense little man. At age 40, he lives in Scarborough, Ontario.

Chapter 3

The speaker meets Adirubasamy through his father and nicknames the man Mamaji. As a mentor, Mamaji tries to teach Pi's parents to swim and introduces the boy to the sea at age seven. Because of Mamaji's influence, the Patels name their son Piscine Molitor after a pool in Paris.

Chapter 4

Mr. Patel leaves hotel management in Madras to manage a zoo in Pondicherry. Pi believes zoos satisfy the needs of animal territoriality.

Chapter 5

At age 12, Pi enters the Petit Séminaire and demands that teachers and students call him Pi, pronounced like the Greek letter for the mathematical ratio of the perimeter of a circle to its diameter.

Chapter 6

Pi thinks that Mamaji is a superb cook of ethnic dishes.

Chapter 7

Pi's biology teacher, Satish Kumar, is a crippled atheist who love zoos. He thanks medicine for saving his life from polio.

Chapter 8

Humans frequently injure or poison zoo animals. At age eight, Pi gets a lesson from his father, Santosh, about the danger of touching a tiger. Pi and his brother Ravi watch a tiger devour a live goat.

Chapter 9

The purpose of a zoo is to acclimate animals to a human presence. Santosh develops a knack for understanding animals.

Chapter 10

The zoo attempts to emulate the natural habitats of animals.

Chapter 11

In 1933, a female leopard fled the Zurich Zoo and remained at large for ten weeks before being shot.

Chapter 12

Pi cooks South Indian vegetarian meals for his interviewer.

Chapter 13

Circus trainers subdue wild animals by establishing primacy. The lion is the most amenable to

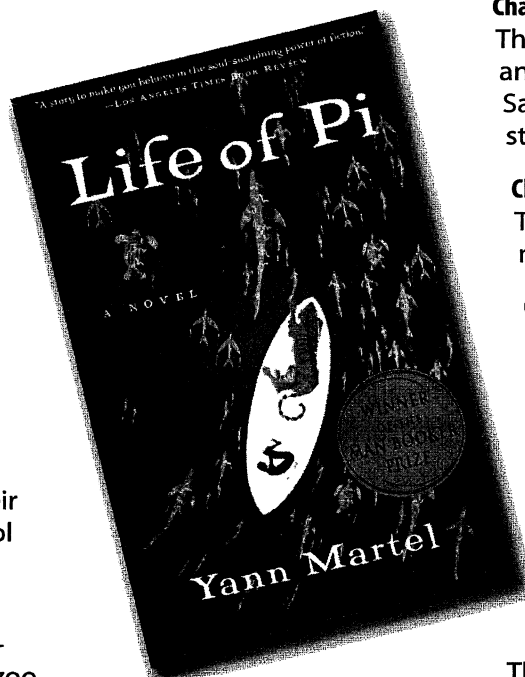
control.

Chapter 14

Of the pride, the omega, or lowest-ranking lion will work the hardest to please the lion tamer, it is not simply a matter of greater reward, it also provides the lowest ranking animal protection from other more dominant group members.

Chapter 15

Francis posts a picture of Ganesha, god of learning and wisdom, in his foyer. Additional religious art features the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, the Kaaba, Shiva, Krishna, Christ, and Allah.



Chapter 16

When Pi is born, Auntie Rohini introduces him to the Mother Goddess in Madurai. Pi feels at home with Hinduism, but disdains fundamentalism.

Chapter 17

At Munnar from Father Martin, 14-year-old Pi learns about Jesus and love. Pi compares the story of Jesus to that of baby Krishna. Pi becomes a Christian.

Chapter 18

The next year, Pi discovers Islam at Jamia Masjid, the Great Mosque, by observing a baker at prayer.

Chapter 19

Pi concludes that Islam centers on brotherhood and devotion.

Chapter 20

The Muslim is Satish Kumar, a Sufi who teaches at the University of Toronto. Pi later has a vision of the Virgin Mary.

Chapter 21

Pi ponders silence and godly presence.

Chapter 22

Pi imagines a dying atheist viewing God.

Chapter 23

Pi annoys the priest, imam, and pandit by blending faiths. The trio argues over weaknesses in their practices. Pi wants to emulate Gandhi by loving God.

Chapter 24

Ravi ridicules his brother's spiritual eclecticism.

Chapter 25

Pi is aware that religious people regularly debate the nature of God, but ignore those in need.

Chapter 26

Pi discusses with Santosh the similarities in religious histories. He asks for baptism and a prayer rug.

Chapter 27

Gita and Santosh laugh about their son's enthusiasm for faith.

Chapter 28

Pi loves praying on his rug. He is baptized in the presence of his parents.

Chapter 29

In February 1976, when Indira Gandhi returns to

power, the family decides to emigrate to Canada.

Chapter 30

The interviewer meets Pi's wife, Meena Patel.

Chapter 31

Mr. Kumar, the teacher, wants to see the zoo. He and Mr. Kumar, the Muslim baker, feed a carrot to the zebra.

Chapter 32

Pi marvels at the ability of animals to get along with other species.

Chapter 33

Pi shows the interviewer family photos. Pi regrets that he has forgotten what his mother looked like.

Chapter 34

Santosh sells the zoo. Ravi and Pi dread moving to Canada. Americans come to buy animals.

Chapter 35

The Patels board the *Tsimtsun*, a Japanese cargo vessel registered in Panama, on June 21, 1977.

Chapter 36

The interviewer meets Pi and Meena's teenage son, Nikhil "Nick" Patel, and four-year-old daughter Usha.

Part II: Pacific Ocean

Chapter 37

After the ship sinks, Pi is glad to see Richard Parker, but fears that the Patel family has not survived. Richard Parker climbs aboard the lifeboard.

Chapter 38

Pi recalls that storm that batters the ship before sunrise. Chinese crewmen toss Pi overboard from the listing ship.

Chapter 39

Pi recalls the cry of animals as the lifeboat hits the water.

Chapter 40

A shark forces Pi back to the lifeboat, where he faces the tiger.

Chapter 41

Clinging to the lifebuoy at dawn, Pi sees a hyena. A zebra has a compound fracture in a rear leg.

Chapter 42

An orangutang named Orange Juice floats on a stalk of bananas.

Chapter 43

Pi awaits rescue and observes the hyena and zebra.

Chapter 44

At noon, flies buzz. Pi spends the evening and night in tense watchfulness.

Chapter 45

At dawn, Pi realizes that the hyena seized the zebra's broken leg. Pi laughs at seasickness in Orange Juice and observes a hawksbill turtle.

Chapter 46

The struggle for life depresses Pi, who observes the hyena eating the zebra. Sharks circle. The hyena chews gut meat all night.

Chapter 47

The second day, the zebra miraculously survives. The hyena kills Orange Juice. Pi fears he is next. That night, he is delirious.

Chapter 48

Pi recalls how the hunt for a tiger results in the misnaming of its cub as Richard Parker, the hunter's name.

Chapter 49

The third day, Pi weakens from a lack of food, drink, and sleep. He assumes that Richard Parker is sedated.

Chapter 50

Pi sits aboard a six-oared lifeboat built for floating.

Chapter 51

Pi risks arousing the tiger by exploring for water. With a boat hook, he beats a hole in an emergency can. He finds enough food packages to last 93 days and enough water for 124 days.

Chapter 52

Pi inventories his medicines, blankets, flares, oars, rope, tools, netting, compass, and survival manual.

Chapter 53

Pi fears death. He prays to Jesus, Mary, Muhammad, and Vishnu as he makes a raft of oars, life jackets, and rope. The tiger kills the hyena. Pi spends the night on the raft.

Chapter 54

In a storm, Pi drinks rainwater while plotting how to co-exist with the tiger. He decides to let the tiger starve.

Chapter 55

At dawn of the fourth day, Pi sleeps.

Chapter 56

Pi contemplates the rashness that comes with fear.

Chapter 57

Pi studies the tiger's behaviors and decides to keep it alive.

Chapter 58

The survival manual warns what liquids and foods are dangerous and what actions can kill. Pi contemplates how to improve the raft.

Chapter 59

Pi learns to use a solar still and improves the raft. While watching sharks, he falls asleep.

Chapter 60

During the night, Pi prays a Muslim prayer.

Chapter 61

The fifth day is a good day for fishing. Pi baits his hook with pieces of a leather shoe. That afternoon, the tiger strikes a blow to Pi's face. Pi feeds it flying fish. He weeps at the cruelty of killing fish.

Chapter 62

On the sixth day, the tiger drinks desalinated water.

Chapter 63

On the beginning of the second week, Pi keeps busy with a schedule of prayers, food, and care of supplies and equipment.

Chapter 64

Pi's clothes disintegrate. He develops skin lesions from constant wetness.

Chapter 65

Pi studies navigation on the Pacific equatorial counter-current and concludes by drifting.

Chapter 66

To keep the tiger in food, Pi develops into a fisherman and hauls in green sea turtles.

Chapter 67

Pi feasts on shrimp and barnacles from the bottom of the boat and raft.

Chapter 68

Pi and the tiger nap away their days.

Chapter 69

At night, Pi sends up flares.

Chapter 70

Butchering a turtle requires sawing and hacking.

Chapter 71

Pi uses an orange whistle to socialize the tiger.

Chapter 72

A turtle shell shields Pi during his training of the tiger.

Chapter 73

Pi longs for books and keeps a journal of practical matters.

Chapter 74

Worship engages Pi's imagination.

Chapter 74

On Gita's birthday, Pi sings to her.

Chapter 76

Tiger feces require clean-up.

Chapter 77

Pi fantasizes about food and eats raw fish and tiger feces.

Chapter 78

Pi learns to predict weather from reading the skies.

Chapter 79

Pi catches a shark with his hands and feeds it to the tiger.

Chapter 80

Pi masters the tiger by staring him down.

Chapter 81

The symbiosis between human and tiger seems like a miracle.

Chapter 82

Pi protects his water supply.

Chapter 83

A storm ravages the raft. Pi rescues his orange whistles.

Chapter 84

Pi watches whales and catches a seabird.

Chapter 85

A thunderstorm amazes Pi.

Chapter 86

An oil tanker slides by, but Pi isn't rescued.

Chapter 87

Pi spends time dreaming.

Chapter 88

From floating trash, Pi extracts a bottle and launches a message about his plight.

Chapter 89

Sea, air, and sun take their toll on Pi's small cosmos.

Chapter 90

Sea blindness and thirst press the tiger and Pi toward death. Pi hallucinates a conversation with the tiger, which speaks with a French accent.

Chapter 91

Pi regains his vision and discovers the remains of a man whom the tiger killed.

Chapter 92

At an island, Pi tastes algae. The tiger takes over the island while Pi sleeps in the boat. In the morning, Pi goes exploring among meerkats. Fresh water rejuvenates him. He sleeps in a tree and concludes that the island is carnivorous. All that is left of one victim is a set of teeth.

Chapter 93

Weary of marooning, Pi turns to God.

Chapter 94

After landing at Jalisco, Mexico, Pi finds human rescuers. He advances to the home of a foster mother, then to the University of Toronto.

PART III: BENITO JUÁREZ INFIRMARY, TOMATLÁN, MEXICO

Chapter 95

Japanese authorities learn that the lone survivor of the Tsimtsum has landed and is lodged at the Benito Juárez Infirmary in Jalisco.

Chapter 96

Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba drive south from Long Beach, California, to question Pi.

Chapter 97

Pi relates his story.

Chapter 98

Okamoto and Chiba humor Pi.

Chapter 99

To make his story more believable, Pi tells it against without mentioning animals. He describes the broken leg as belonging to a cook. The cook murders Gita and a sailor.

Chapter 100

Okamoto surmises that a boiler exploded and sank the ship.

Martel's Life

Booker Prize-winner Yann Martel profits from a global lifestyle. Born on June 25, 1963, in Salamanca, Spain, he came of age in Alaska, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Mexico, and Peru, depending on where his Québécois parents worked in the Canadian foreign service. He grew up in an atheistic household, where he spoke French and wrote and studied in English. His father, Emile Martel, earned Canada's Governor General's Award for verse. By age ten, Yann Martel was an astute reader of Alphonse Daudet's *Le Petit Chose*. Educated at Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario, in 1981, Martel entered Trent University to complete a degree in philosophy with a concentration in the writings of Plato and Hobbes. During his studies, Martel considered entering politics. When he began writing professionally, he completed a half page per day. He washed dishes, guarded buildings, planted trees, and produced two plays and a failed novel before publishing a short fiction collection, *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* (1993). Three years later, he examined sexual identity in *Self* (1996), a semi-autobiographical first novel.



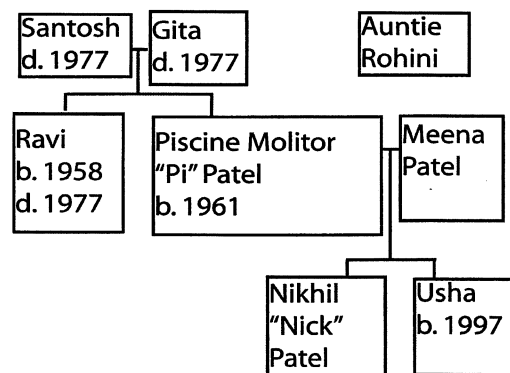
From six months of travels in India, Iran, and Turkey, Martel honed an eclectic point of view that furthered his writing career. He took two years to research *The Life of Pi* and two more to write it. As a result of its success, he served as writer-in-residence in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and taught a course on the animal in literature at Berlin's Free University. He returned to short fiction with *We Ate the Children Last* (2004), a study of a miracle cure that turns terminally ill patients into ravenous cannibals. Martel collaborated with composer Omar Daniel at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto on *You Are Where You Are* (2004), a composition for bass, piano, string quartet, and cell phone. A part-time resident of Montreal and Berlin, Martel devotes free time to sivananda yoga and to working with terminally ill hospice patients. His favorite authors include Willa Cather, Joseph Conrad, Dante, Gogol, Knut Hamsun, Thomas Hardy, Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka, Sinclair Lewis, Gabriel García Márquez, and Yukio Mishima.

Martel impresses critics with his abstemious lifestyle—no alcohol, tobacco, red meat, or greed for money, fine clothes, and property—and his devout Catholicism, a faith that allows him to grapple with evil. Of his restlessness and curiosity, he remarked to Adam Langer of *Book* magazine: "Life is short, it's a big world and it's a beautiful world. I haven't seen Nepal yet. I haven't seen the islands of the Pacific. I've yet to go to New Zealand. There are so many different ways of being, in terms of languages, beliefs, foods, behaviors, it continually astonishes me and I always want more."

Martel and the Critics

Yann Martel's rapid rise to world-class multicultural author began with the Journey Prize for *Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* and the Hugh MacLennan Prize and Governor General's Award in 2001. Global recognition is largely the result of *The Life of Pi*, an intriguing coming-of-age and survival story for which he gathered material in Indian temples, mosques, and the Thiruvananthapuram Zoo in Kerala and from reading the *Bible*, the *Koran*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In 2003, the work won the CBC Canada Reads competition, the French Le Combat des Livres citation, Quality Paper Book Club's New Voices honorarium, Quill & Quire Best Book, *Poets & Writers Magazine* best book, a £50,000 purse accompanying the Booker Prize, and nominations for the Borders Original Voices, Governor General's Award, and Dublin IMPAC awards. Fox studios optioned the novel for film. Subsequent editions are available in 30 languages. In 2004, the author won a German writing citation at the Leipzig Book Fair.

Character Genealogy



Martel's Published Works

The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios, 1993
Self, 1997
Life of Pi, 2002
We Ate the Children Last, 2004
You Are Where You Are, 2004

Media Versions

Audiobook

The Life of Pi, Audible.com, 2003

Audio Cassette

The Life of Pi, Highbridge Audio, 2003

Large Print

The Life of Pi, Wheeler, 2003

Related Reading

Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
Joy Adamson, *Born Free*
Aesop's Fables
Richard Bach, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*
Anne Bodart, *The Blue Dog and Other Fables for the French*
Joseph Bruchac, *Native Wisdom*
Len Cabral, *Len Cabral's Storytelling Book*
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
Johann Goethe, *The Story of Reynard the Fox*
Robin Lee Graham, *Dove*
Joel Chandler Harris, *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*
Jacquetta Hawkes, *A Woman as Great as the World and Other Fables*
Rudyard Kipling, *Just So Stories*
George Orwell, *Animal Farm*
J. J. Reneaux, *Cajun Folktales*
Gayle Ross, *How Rabbit Tricked Otter and Other Cherokee Trickster Stories*
Edmond Rostand, *Chantecler*
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*
George Bernard Shaw, *Androcles and the Lion*

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Smith, Jean. "Review," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 23, no. 1 (spring 2003): 158-159.
Whittaker, Peter. "Review," *New Internationalist* (August 2002): 33.
Wynne-Jones, Tim. "Tigers and Poodles and Birds, Oh My!," *Horn Book* 80, no. 3 (May/June 2004): 265-275.
Yann, Martel. "A Giraffe in a Cage Is Worth Two on the Box," *Spectator* 289, no. 9079 (10 August 2002): 37.
"Man Without Children," *Prairie Fire* 13, no. 2 (summer 1992): 46-57.
"A Second Before They Announce the Book Prize Winner," *New Statesman* 131, no. 4612 (4 November 2002): 9.

Timeline

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1961 | Auntie Rohini introduces Pi to the Mother Goddess. |
| 1968 | Mamaji teaches Pi to swim in the sea. |
| 1969 | Pi witnesses a tiger eating a live goat. |
| 1973 | Piscine renames himself Pi, which he writes on the board of each new class. |
| 1974 | He swims two lengths of the pool. |
| 1975 | He learns about Jesus. |
| 1976 | He gravitates toward Islam. |
| 1977 | He practices a faith blended from Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. |
| February 1976 | Santosh Patel is alarmed when Indira Gandhi's returns to power. |
| June 21, 1977 before dawn | The Patels leave aboard the <i>Tsimtsum</i> . When the ship sinks, crewmen toss Pi overboard in a lifeboat. |
| at dawn | Pi shares space with a hyena, zebra, and Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. |
| first whole day | The hyena slays the zebra. |
| second day | After the hyena kills Orange Juice, Pi fears he is next. |
| that night | Pi is delirious. |
| third day | He takes stock of food supplies, which should last him 93 days. He has enough water for 124 days. |
| that night | After the tiger kills the hyena, Pi spends the night in a raft made from oars, rope, and lifejackets. He drinks rainwater and plots how to kill the tiger. |
| fourth day | Pi decides to keep the tiger alive. |
| fifth day | In the afternoon, Pi feeds flying fish to the tiger. |
| sixth day | Pi desalinates water for the tiger. |
| Feb. 14, 1978 | Pi reaches Jalisco, Mexico. |
| late teens | He studies zoology and religion at the University of Toronto. |
| 2001 | He, Meena, and their two children live in Scarborough, Ontario, at the time of the author's interview. |

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Yann Martel's style, present the following terms and applications to the book:

dilemma a plot that depicts human characters in dire predicaments which they must resolve by making some sacrifice. At the tense climax to the fable, Pi realizes that co-existence with Richard Parker demands a face-to-face relationship of feeder to beast. Coping with the tiger's thirst, hunger, and cleanliness occupies Pi's mind and saves him from despair that he will never be rescued. He later acknowledges that the tiger was the source of salvation.

fable a brief, elementary moral story in verse or prose in which the characters are often simple peasants or animals demonstrating human foibles. *The Life of Pi* focuses on a fable-like series of episodes that enlighten Pi with observations about the human role in nature. Because of Martel's insistence that Pi acclimate to the principle of kill or be killed, the protagonist learns to fish, butcher green sea turtles, make a shield out of a turtle carapace, and devour what sustenance is at hand. The lessons of survival transform an adventure and coming-of-age tale into a meaningful fable.

foil a character whose presence in a literary work offsets or enhances the contrasting traits of another character. By contrasting the tiger and the human youth, Yann Martel advances simple contrast into extensive commentary on the nature of basic needs. Arrival at the island demonstrates differences in animal and human curiosity, drive, and exploration. When man and animal part on the Jalisco shore, Pi displays an appreciation for Richard Parker, the foil who forces Pi to use his head to keep the two alive on their trans-Pacific drift.

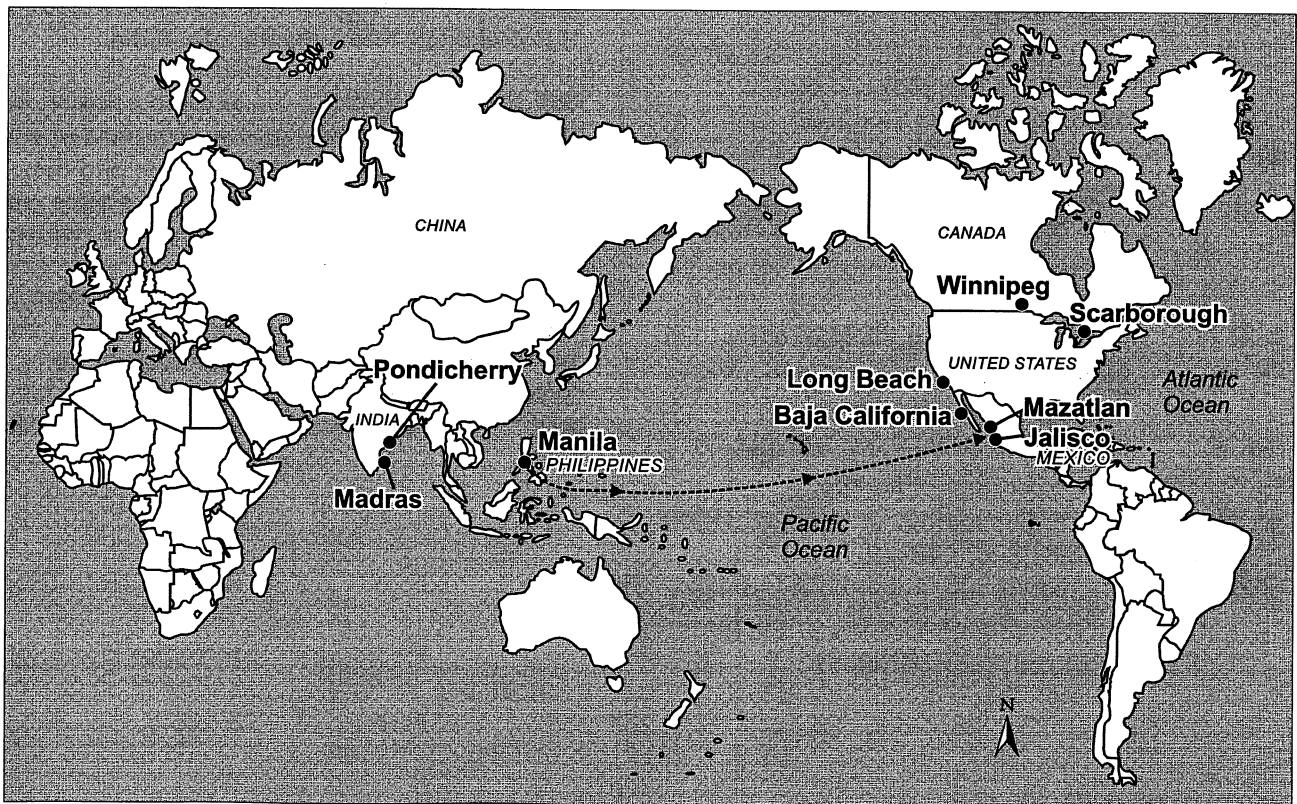
The Importance of Setting

The claustrophobic nature of Pi's trans-Pacific journey maintains tension throughout the narrative. While moving about freely at the Pondicherry Zoo in India, he develops a kinship with a range of birds, reptiles, and mammals and feels at home. The family's uprooting and the sedation and crating of zoo animals for transport to North America begins a life-changing shift in Pi's concept of his place in nature and the permanence of home. Aboard the Japanese cargo vessel *Tsimtsum*, he observes Santosh at work tending and quieting the animals. The sudden sinking of the cargo ship rapidly reduces Pi's world view to a single six-oared lifeboat. For companions, he shares space with an orangutang, a ravenous hyena, a zebra with a broken back leg, and a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. The competition for territory, water, and food rapidly reduces the number of passengers to Pi and the tiger.

Yann Martel stresses the versatility of the lifeboat and its stock of oars, rope, life jackets, desalination equipment, and provisions. Pi pores over the survival manual in search of ideas for relieving his anxiety about being eaten by the tiger. He makes dou-

ble use of paper to record his experiences with survival at sea. The cobbling together of a raft from oars, life jackets and rope to trail the drifting lifeboat alleviates the need for Pi to stay awake and to fend off tiger attacks. Pi remains alert to the tether and to the nearness of a storage cabinet stocked with food, water, and flares. While absorbing the rhythms of wind, cloud, and wave, he enters a dream state that soothes and enlightens him about himself and his place in nature.

Because a storm destroys the raft, Pi must return within range of the tiger's fierce teeth and claws. The role of feeder allows Pi to gather and toss flying fish, dorado, and turtle meat to Richard Parker, who develops a beast-trainer relationship with Pi. Their brief sojourn on an island parts them once more and introduces Pi to meerkats. The land setting places Pi in danger of cannibalism, not by a beast, but by a carnivorous tree. The final leg of the journey sends Richard Parker fleeing into the wild while Mexicans rescue Pi from the shores of Jalisco. His interview with Japanese authorities Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba forces Pi to tell two versions of the story, the second of which pictures a human community in the lifeboat that contrasts the beasts of the first story in vulnerability and savagery.



Cross-Curricular Sources

For related reading and more information about fables, Yann Martel, Pondicherry, Bengal tigers, meerkats, survival, zoo management, and world scripture, consult these sources:

Article

Harry, Lou. "The Popcorn Park Zoo," *Children's Digest* 47, no. 2 (1 March 1997): 28-29.

Sax, Boria, "The Allure of Animal Anecdotes," *Storytelling* (spring 1992): 10-13.

Audiocassette

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Spoken Arts, 1979

Books

The Alchemist, Paolo Coelho

Born Free, Joy Adamson

Dove, Robin Lee Graham

Jonathan Livingston Seagull, Richard Bach

Nights of Ice, Spike Walker

Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe

Internet

Pondicherry

<http://pondicherry.nic.in/>

Map

Pondicherry

<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/pondicherry/pondicherrylocation.html>.

Plays

Androcles and the Lion, George Bernard Shaw

Poems

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

"The Tyger," William Blake

Reference Books

As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam, Columbia University Press

Encyclopedia of World Scripture, McFarland

Meerkats, Bridgestone Books

Video

Born Free

The Little Prince

The Old Man and the Sea

The Red Pony

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* should include these aspects:

Themes

- animals
- dreams
- travel
- loss
- mentoring
- wisdom
- spirituality
- longing
- regret
- maturity
- survival
- rescue

Motifs

- accepting and preparing for fate
- reuniting with land
- physical and emotional hardship
- developing religious values

General Objectives

1. To experience and read aloud examples of animal lore
2. To identify and explain shifts in point of view
3. To picture events in chronological order
4. To envision gradual religious maturity and the acquisition of wisdom
5. To enumerate significant relationships with people and animals
6. To list a castaway's priorities
7. To account for territoriality
8. To comprehend loss, sorrow, and mystic visions as motivators
9. To evaluate everyday compromises
10. To discuss sources of food and water at sea

Specific Objectives

1. To determine why Pi renames himself
2. To analyze the misgivings of the Patels when they leave Pondicherry for Canada
3. To explain the difficulties of sharing a lifeboat with a tiger
4. To account for Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba's response to Pi's survival story
5. To discuss methods of purifying water and collecting food for Richard Parker
6. To analyze the need for zoos

7. To summarize references to the Koran and the Bible
8. To contrast the Patels' atheism with Pi's blended faith
9. To justify the slaughtering of fish and sea turtles for food
10. To predict the response of North Americans to Pi's unorthodox blend of religions

Meaning Study

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the novel. Explain each in context. Part, chapter, and page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. My fourth-year thesis for religious studies concerned certain aspects of the cosmogony theory of Isaac Luria, the great sixteenth-century Kabbalist from Safed. (Part I, Chapter 1, p. 3)
(Around the mid-1500s, Isaac ben-Solomon Luria (or Ari) of Safed, Galilee, wandered Asia Minor, Africa, Rhodes, Greece, and the Balkans. He taught Kabbalism, a Jewish mysticism that contemplates God's deliberate self-limitation to humankind and the flawed universe occupied by Adam, the first man. Luria surmised that humankind longs for divinity, salvation from evil, and the restoration of order and perfection on earth. Luria's ecstatic teachings drew followers into the anticipation of a messiah, an earthly hero who would redeem the Jews.)
2. But just as [Muhammad] planned his flight to Medina, the Hejira that would mark the beginning of Muslim time, I planned my escape and the beginning of a new time for me. (Part I, Chapter 5, p. 27)
(The prophet Muhammed endured disrespect, insults, and, on July 16, 622, an attempted assassination. On September 16, he began the holy hejira, hijra, or hegira, a meandering migration to the agrarian community of Yathrib (later named Medina or Madinah). After he arrived around September 22 or 24, calendar makers proclaimed the event the birth of Islam and the first year of the Islamic calendar. Muhammad erected a mosque, organized Bedouin nomads and farmers into an army,

and, in March 624, triumphed at the battle of Badr, the first display of Islamic militancy.)

3. Mother complained regularly about Mrs. Gandhi, but it meant little to me. (Part I, Chapter 7, p. 34)
(The Prime Minister of India in 1967, Indira Gandhi led liberal forces during India's war with Pakistan. Conservatives rallied in 1975, forcing her from office and defeating her birth control initiative. After 14 months in prison, she returned to power in 1978 and regained control of India in 1980. Her own bodyguard murdered her in 1984.)
4. In the entrance hall hangs a framed picture of Ganesha, he of the elephant head. (Part I, Chapter 15, p. 56)
(A zoomorphic Hindu deity, Ganesha bears the large ears, trunk, and belly of an elephant as symbols of energy, prosperity, assistance, sacrifice, and wisdom. His generosity represents the antithesis of vanity, arrogance, and materialism.)
5. Next to [the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe] is a framed photo of the black-robed Kaaba, holiest sanctum of Islam, surrounded by a ten-thousandfold swirl of the faithful. (Part I, Chapter 15, p. 57)
(At Mecca, home of the prophet Muhammad and his wife Khadijah, the sacred cube, called the Kaaba (also Qa'bah or Ka'bah), is a shrine hallowed at the central room of the Great Mosque. Composed of marble and gray stone like the foundation block that God gave to Adam, the Kaaba lies under black velvet beneath hanging lamps as a symbol of structure and order overlit by the glory of God. Muhammad sanctified the Kaaba as the holy of holies where Muslims of all races and cultures could come to pray during the obligatory hajj (pilgrimage).)
6. "It will be his symbolic first outing," she said. "It's a samskara!" (Part I, Chapter 16, p. 59)
(The Sanskrit term "samskara" names a sacramental stage of personal improvement, refinement, or purification as preparation for perfection, the ultimate goal of Hinduism.)

7. Islam had a reputation worse than Christianity's—fewer gods, greater violence, and I had never heard anyone say good things about Muslim schools—so I wasn't about to step in, empty though the place was. (Part I, Chapter 18, pp. 73-74)
(Because of the dynamics of Muslim history, Islam, like Christianity, is linked with violence and coercion as Arab power spread over Syria, Iraq, Persia, and Egypt to Central Asia, North Africa, and southern Europe. Intense legalism requires each Muslim to perform recitation of a creed, five daily prayers facing Mecca, charity to uplift the poor, annual observance of thirty days of Ramadan by fasting and prayer, a once-in-a-lifetime ritual journey to Mecca, and strict reading of the Koran in the original Arabic.)
8. He was a Sufi, a Muslim mystic. (Part I, Chapter 20, p. 77)
(The Sufi are Islamic ecstasies who stand in one spot and whirl to facilitate worship, to know God, to let the self die, and to open the spirit to rapture. Sufism expresses truth, love, and union with the almighty through dance and wonder. The golden era of whirling dervishes began in the 1200s, when mystic verse flourished. Rumi's poems survey the revolving universe and exaltation of Allah.)
9. "R. K. Narayan? You can't possibly have read all of Narayan?" (Part I, Chapter 26, p. 92)
(A revered Indian writer of novels, epic, and short fiction, Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan began writing about children with his first work, Swami and Friends (1935), and followed with 34 more titles, including A Tiger for Malgudi (1983).)
10. When they got to Tomatán, eight hundred kilometres south of Long Beach, and saw that it was not Tomatlán, Mr. Okamoto decided that they would continue to Santa Rosalia, two hundred kilometres further south, and catch the ferry across the Gulf of California to Guaymas. (Part III, Chapter 95, pp. 365-366)
(Martel creates irony out of the miscommunication with the Japanese officials, who hurry down the skinny Baja peninsula rather than down the main coastline of Mexico to Jalisco, where Pi recovers from anemia at the Benito Juárez Infirmary.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important. Be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Plot

1. Why does Santosh Patel sell the Pondicherry Zoo?
(The upheaval in India in the mid-1970s results from the re-election of Indira Gandhi, a liberal who tries to reshape a conservative citizenry. Santosh and Gita Patel discuss with Mamaji and others the changes in government. The collapse of Karunanidhi's ministry in February 1976 and the suspension of the constitution arouses in Santosh a fear of dictatorship and capricious jailings of Indira Gandhi's political enemies. Fearing that the Patel family's earnings are endangered, Santosh caves in to his anxieties. He and Gita decide to move to Canada. Sale of the zoo and its animals to buyers in Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Louisville, Oklahoma City, and Cincinnati offers cash for a fresh start in Winnipeg.)

Theme

2. Why is territory a focal theme?
(After the sinking of the Tsimtsum, Pi shares space in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger, hyena, zebra, and orangutang. The demands of nature cause the hyena to stalk and attack the zebra and orangutang; the tiger, named Richard Parker, establishes primacy by finishing off the leftovers. While the tiger rests on a full stomach, Pi tries to arrange space for himself in the lifeboat without infringing on the beast's territory. To establish a keeper-wild feline relationship, Pi blows the orange whistle, wields the shell of a sea turtle, and tosses dorado and flying fish to the tiger. By keeping Richard Parker fed and watered, Pi manages to save himself from destruction. To achieve a night's sleep, he rigs a raft to trail the lifeboat and sleeps fitfully while keeping watch on the rope tether. Eventually, Pi and Richard Parker respect each other's space, even after they are marooned on an island.)

Motif

3. What elements of a water motif dominate the story?

(Pi grows up defending his first name, "Piscine," which taunting schoolmates rhyme with "pissing." At the Petit Séminaire, he ends the constant battle with jokesters by demanding that the teachers and pupils call him Pi, pronounced like "pie" and the Greek letter "pi." Water imagery returns to the fore after he allies with Hinduism, Catholicism, and Islam. It is a crucial point of his syncretic faith that he be baptized, even though the Catholic ritual is not a priority of his atheistic parents. Water returns to dominance during the departure aboard the Tsimtsum to Canada.)

After the family sails from Manila east into the Pacific Ocean, the cargo ship's sinking forces Pi to live close to the wind, sun, and sea while keeping himself and Richard Parker alive in a lifeboat. Drifting aboard a makeshift raft trailing behind the lifeboat by tether, Pi studies sea life, which functions like a city. Constant wetness threatens Pi's health with lesions on his soaked skin. Emergence from the sea to an island alters his point of view from sea-bound and looking for land to land-bound and gazing out to sea. Upon his arrival in Jalisco, he undergoes a humorous folk baptism as Mexican women scrub his tender skin.)

Conflict

4. Why do religious leaders disagree about Pi's faith?
(The shift from seeker of faith to Hindu, Catholic, and Muslim introduces Pi to spiritual leaders who question the wisdom of following three distinct and often contradictory faiths. The Hindu pandit is concerned with Pi's conversion under Father Martin to Catholicism. The Islamic imam doubts that a Christianized Hindu can truly follow Allah. Pi divorces himself from the legalism of religious ritual and opts for the best elements of spirituality rather than the literal differences in scripture and observance. Because Pi's parents have little interest in religion, they offer only peripheral advice about their son's plunge into divergent faiths.)

Character

5. Why does Richard Parker become a character?
(Unlike Pi, a rational human being, Richard Parker is a Bengal tiger that follows bestial dictates. He demands his territory and the killing

of interlopers, particularly the hyena, a scavenger that challenges the tiger for available meat. As Pi attempts to socialize Richard Parker, the offerings of flying fish, dorado, and water reveal anthropomorphic behaviors in the tiger—the arching of the back, flicking of ears and tail, pawing and display of claws and teeth, and snarls and growls to indicate mood. Pi's love-hate relationship with Richard Parker alters significantly on the island, where Pi can climb a tree and indulge in observation of meerkats while the tiger explores alone. Upon reaching Jalisco, Mexico, Pi parts forever from Richard Parker, who bounds away into the brush. In revealing a photo album to the interviewer 24 years later, Pi displays nostalgia for the pseudo-human companion that taunted, threatened, and helped to keep him alive on the long trans-Pacific adventure.)

Motivation

6. Why does Pi defend zoos?
(Pi refutes the idea that animals should be left in their natural habitats. He explains that wild beasts and birds acclimate to limited perimeters and thrive on proper care, hygiene, medical care, and feeding. The sure sign of a contented animal is the birth of new generations of the same species. Pi contends that zoos introduce children to variety in the animal kingdom and ensures the survival of endangered species where human encroachment and poaching threaten annihilation. Supporting his philosophy and that of Santosh Patel are the numerous zoo managers who acquire the valuable animals after Santosh sells the Pondicherry Zoo.)

Character Responses

7. How does Pi react to loss of family?
(The sinking of the Tsimtsum and the demands of living aboard a lifeboat with four contentious animals—an orangutang, hyena, zebra, and Bengal tiger—leaves Pi no time to grieve for Santosh, Gita, and Ravi Patel. Positive memories of the family allow Pi to envision the others alive in Winnipeg, Canada, and wondering about his welfare. Shoring up Pi's decisions about socializing Richard Parker are the philosophies of human-beast relationships that Pi learned from his father, his model of right-thinking about wild animals. With more nostalgia, Pi observes Gita's birthday by singing "Happy Birthday" to his absent mother.)

Interpretation

8. Why did this book become a bestseller? *(Yann Martel's metafiction violates the strict definitions of philosophical novel, fable, fantasy, and adventure lore. The blending of mood, atmosphere, and themes from all four genres allows him to explore the nature of interview and writing and to impact the reader with variant points of view from Pi as a boy, youth, teenaged survivor, and a 40-year-old family man living in Scarborough, Ontario, with his wife Meena and their children, teenaged son Nikhil and four-year-old daughter Usha. By lightening the tone of a survey of religious attitudes toward God and spirituality, the author illustrates that a personal faith should grow naturally from human encounters, especially a daily battle against drowning, starvation, despair, sorrow, or dying from exposure or the attack of a Bengal tiger.)*

Comparative Literature

9. How does *The Life of Pi* compare with other books about faith? *(The distinguishing factor in The Life of Pi is an intense mutual scrutiny between human and feline. By removing Pi from the strictures of Indian society and the commentary and advice of his brother, parents, Mamaji, and mentors, the author forces Pi to turn inward for understanding and to God for enlightenment. The danger of starvation, drowning, disease, exposure, and attack from Richard Parker guides the focus toward realism. Anchored to the elements required for survival, the book compares to Mitch Albom's Tuesdays with Morrie and Paolo Coelho's The Alchemist, both of which center on issues of survival. Martel's touches of dreams and fantasies echo the philosophy of Richard Bach's Jonathan Livingston Seagull, another animal tale about faith. Extremes of animal lore and fable center The Life of Pi between Joy Adamson's factual Born Free and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's verse fable The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.)*

Structure

10. Why does Yann Martel refer to the adult Pi and to Richard Parker throughout the text? *(As a form of suspense-building and reader discipline, Yann Martel piques reader curiosity about the character Richard Parker, who seems at first to be a human figure. Another merging of impressions involves the implication that the interviewer is talking with Mamaji rather than with the elder Pi. These blurrings of lines between identities cause the reader subconsciously to compare characterizations and to develop impressions of Pi at different points in his journey from boyhood to middle age.)*

How Language Works

Much of *The Life of Pi* depends on conceit, a fresh, mind-stretching metaphor of unlike things. For example:

1. Pi listens for changes in teacher and pupil response to his new name. He remarks: "It was as if their tongues were charioteers driving wild horses." The use of an animal conceit enhances the unity of a work about human relationships with wild beasts.
2. In explaining why he distances himself from zealotry, Pi refers to the callousness of the self-righteous fundamentalist: "These people walk by a widow deformed by leprosy begging for a few paise, walk by children dressed in rags living in the street, and they think, 'Business as Usual.'"
3. Looking for hope of reunion with the Patels, Pi gazes out from the lifeboat and states optimistically, "That morning the horizon might curve one way, my lips resolutely curved the other, in a smile."
4. As Pi takes command of his dilemma in a boat with a Bengal tiger, he fantasizes about the ringmaster of a circus: "Let the trumpets blare. Let the drums roll. Let the show begin."
5. In pondering the mystery of the island, Pi allows himself to fantasize the purpose of his marooning: "If the island floated and moved, might it not move in the right direction? Might it not turn out to be a vegetable ship that brought me to land?"

Across the Curriculum

Education

1. Compose an introduction to fable that describes its use as an instructive tool introducing children to learning about God and to co-existence with nature. Explain why most illustrative and cautionary stories and dilemma tales are short, uncomplicated, but pithy. Cite as an example an episode in which Pi learns useful information about the three-toed sloth, Bengal tiger, hyena, zebra, or orangutang.
2. List additional coursework to accompany Pi's education in zoology and religion at the University of Toronto. Suggest psychology, oceanography, religious art and iconography, and philosophy.

Religion

1. Read aloud from Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scripture. Choose passages from the *Torah*, *New Testament*, *Brahmanas*, *Atharva Veda*, *Sutras*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Sefer Yesira*, and *Talmud*. Determine similarities of theme and subject, such as the need of humankind for a deity and the value of nature as an earthly home.
2. Compile a pronouncing gazetteer of religious terms, including darshan, zoomorphism, manna, Sufi, swami, hajj, agnostic, ashram, imam, Sikh, Brahman, Bapu Gandhi, atman, Salaam alaykum, pandit, Kabbalist, samskara, Lakshmi, limbo, Ganesha, Qur'an, patriarch, Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, miracle, vision, Krishna, dhikr, hafiz, Kaaba, literalism, fundamentalism, Nataraja, Shakti, Parvati, Bali, Yashoda, rabbi, prayer rug, mosque, temple, idolater, piety, Jesus, Pope Plus, Hare Krishna, sanctum, Vishnu, Muhammad, Allah, Shiva, baptism, holy of holies, and mystic.
3. Summarize religious stories that set human actions in the sea, for example, the story of Jonah and the whale, of the departure and arrival of Noah's ark at Mount Ararat, and of Jesus's walk on the Sea of Galilee. List examples of artistic views of these episodes.
4. Explain in a short speech how Pi Patel's conversions reflect the philosophy of ecumenism and of American Unitarianism.

Geography

1. List topics that might suit a manual on survivalism. Name beneficial plants, birds, fish, and mammals. Star anything that might poison a castaway, such as blowfish or drinking seawater. Prioritize the tasks of a survivor to ensure water, food, shelter, warmth, and rescue. Add commentary on sun blindness, sharks, skin lesions, food fantasies, and hallucinations.
2. Chart the Pacific equatorial counter-current from Manila to Jalisco, Mexico. Estimate the number of miles that Pi and Richard Parker drift before being rescued by Mexicans.
3. Using map software, generate a map covering places mentioned in the story: Madras, Pondicherry, Manila, Long Beach, Jalisco, Mexico, Toronto, Scarborough, Ontario, Paris, Zurich, Mecca, Santa Rosalia, Guaymas, Gulf of California, Delhi, Winnipeg, Tomatán, Tomatlán, and Baja California.

Research

1. Take notes on religious beliefs. Locate motifs and themes that impact Pi's story. Include deity, oneness with God, prayer, mysticism, miracles, ritual, icons and statues, and worship.
2. Outline elements of nature that enable Pi to co-exist with and socialize a Bengal tiger, particularly the capture of flying fish, dorado, barnacles, shrimp, sea birds, and green sea turtles. Feature a symbiotic relationship that allows Pi to survive while he supplies Richard Parker with fish and drinking water, protects himself from exposure, and cleans the boat of animal waste.

Journalism

1. Dramatize an online or on-camera interview with Pi. List questions covering his loss at sea, including the actions of the Chinese crew of the Tsimtsum, rescue of sedated zoo animals, a floating banana stalk, stocking of a lifeboat, desalinization of water, floating wreckage and trash, a message in a bottle, and meals of biscuits, flying fish, algae, barnacles, shrimp, and sea turtles.

Math and Economics

1. Post a bulletin board diagram explaining the importance of angles to the desalination cone. Note at what point of the sun's arc that the most pure water is produced. Determine the best way for Pi to protect his stock of water from evaporation or contamination by salt or bacteria.
2. Locate examples of wise management of zoo funds, particularly the creation of safe habitats. Explain why Santosh Patel fears an animal epidemic and why he sells stock before embarking with the remaining animals by sea to Winnipeg.

Law

1. Outline the legal implications of liability for passengers aboard a sunken cargo ship. Determine how Pi can sue the Japanese shipping company for his parents' and brother's deaths and for the loss of irreplaceable wild animals, including a hyena, zebra, Orange Juice, and Richard Parker.

Psychology

1. With a panel, contrast Mr. Kumar's teaching methods and thoughts on religion with those of scriptural literalists or fundamentalists. Propose ways for Pi to learn from all world scripture without engaging in tedious arguments over legalistic details.
2. In a paragraph, contrast the roles of Santosh, Mr. Kumar the teacher, Mr. Kumar the biologist, Gita, Father Martin, the imam, the pantid, Auntie Rohini, the Mother Goddess, a vision of the Virgin Mary, and Mamaji in helping Santiago achieve happiness and oneness with God. Explain how each figure promotes the boy's love of religion without altering the direction of his spiritual growth.

Cinema

1. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the story that would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and advance preparation, particularly hallucinations from sun blindness, surviving a storm that destroys a raft, floating on a banana stalk, observing whales and phosphorescent sealife, investigating molars and bicuspid teeth in a carnivorous tree, butchering a green sea turtle and using

the shell as a shield, watching a zebra die from loss of a broken leg, making friends with a Bengal tiger, and tossing overboard a bottle containing a message.

2. Describe aspects of the book that are more suited to radio, film, and tableau than to stage, for example, sending up flares, avoiding an oil tanker, eating cookies during an interview by Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba, fishing with shoe leather for bait, tasting tiger feces, sleeping in a tree, among meerkats, and sedating and crating animals for transport by cargo ship from Pondicherry to Canada. Explain why moments of laughter, prayer, meditation, and enlightenment relieve Pi's sorrow, terror, tedium, and low spirits.

Science and Health

1. Explain the dangers to human and animal health from exposure to extreme cold, sun, wind, sharks, and wetness. Sketch costumes and shelters that restore Pi's health and protect him from weakness, swollen limbs, boils, sunburn, wind burn, and mental and physical deterioration.
2. Write a short report on the importance of teeth, fins, wings, beaks, bones, suckers, and shells to sea animals, including whales, shrimp, barnacles, flying fish, dorados, sea birds, hawksbill and green sea turtles, and phosphorescent creatures. Illustrate your work with drawings of natural protection from skin, scales, and a solid carapace covering tender turtle flesh.
3. Compose a brochure on the causes and treatment of anemia. List nutrients lacking in Pi's survival diet. Summarize symptoms of his malnutrition.

Language

1. Choose a series of lines from the story that exemplify the stand-alone wisdom of adages, for example, "Whoever meets Christ in good faith is a Christian," "I knelt a mortal; I rose an immortal," "The founding principle of existence is what we call love," "The blackness would stir and eventually go away, and God would remain," "Conclude things properly," "First wonder goes deepest," "To be a cast-away is to be a point perpetually at the centre of a circle," "Only death consistently excites

your emotions," and "Progress is unstoppable."

2. Discuss the paradox of Pi's two stories to Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba. Why does the second story sound as implausible as the first? Why do some literary analysts think that the second story may be the real event and the first a dreamscape?
3. Compose an extended definition of mysticism. Use events from the story that express the value of each episode in nature to Pi's understanding of living in harmony with animals.

Art, Costume Design, and Music

1. Use desktop publishing, plaster of paris, masks, puppets, collage, fabric banners, mural, or sculptor's clay to create a gallery dramatizing the significance of the sea adventure to Pi's education in faith and oneness with nature. Include encounters with whales and sharks, survey of weather and clouds, collection of rainwater, tossing flying fish and dorado to the tiger, tasting of algae and raw fish, drifting with the current, and surviving a night storm.
2. Design a setting for an ecumenical study of Hinduism, Judaism, Catholicism, Sufism, and Islam. Use background sights and sounds as well as illusion to enhance Pi's evaluations of each type of iconography, ritual, music, and prayer, including the Muslim call to prayer, honor to Lord Ganesha, contemplation of the infant Krishna, kneeling on a prayer rug, and a vision of the Virgin Mary.

Drama and Speech

1. Corroborate Pi's most dramatic statements with private musings on solitude, fate, nature, commitment, love, mysticism, learning, loss, God, family, suffering, and survival. Explain aloud to a small group how each experience becomes a teaching method to help Pi accept an all-inclusive deity.
2. Project a reunion between Pi and Richard Parker. Compose Pi's welcoming words and sounds and Richard Parker's sniffs at the man he recognizes as his feeder and socializer.

3. Roleplay contrasting conversations—Mamaji and Pi discussing the value of swimming/Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba refuting Pi's claims of survival at sea with a Bengal tiger, Gita and Santosh musing over Pi's spirituality/Ravi's warning that Pi is too eclectic in his beliefs, Pi informing Mexican women that his skin is not white/Meena's welcome to the interviewer in Scarborough, Ontario, or Mr. Kumar's statement of atheism/Father Martin's exhortation to a newly baptized Catholic.

Composition

1. Write a diary entry describing hope and despair as Pi realizes that his parents and brother Ravi are dead and that the message in the bottle may never reach a potential rescuer. Determine why Pi accepts death as inevitable. Why does the acceptance of death prepare Pi for survival?
2. Compose a scene in which Pi addresses Friends of the Pondicherry Zoo on the importance of habitats to an animal's acclimation to captivity. Suggest ways that donors and supporters can inform the public of the value of rescuing endangered species.
3. Define storytelling as it applies to the intercalary chapters picturing the interviewer studying the family life of Pi, Meena, Nikhil, and Usha Patel. Why does Yann Martel break up the flow of narrative with friendly relations between Pi and the interviewer?
4. Compose a story of a perfect day at sea for fishing, watching clouds, observing sharks and whales, capturing a green sea turtle, navigating Pacific currents, studying phosphorescent sea life, and enjoying fresh breezes.

Literature

1. Discuss the nature and purpose of fables, particularly those of Aesop, Scheherazade, Geoffrey Chaucer, Marie de France, James Thurber, J. J. Reneaux, Antoine Saint-Exúpery, Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde, Beatrix Potter, Ambrose Bierce, Gayle Ross, O. Henry, Charles Dickey, Ivan Krylov, Anne Bodart, Italo Calvino, Len Cabral, Rudyard Kipling, Anton Chekhov, Alice and Phoebe Cary, Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, Zora Neale Hurston, Jacquetta Hawkes, Mark Twain, Virginia

Hamilton, Richard Adams, the Grimm brothers, Joseph Bruchac, Johann Goethe, Isak Dinesen, Peter Dargin, and Joel Chandler Harris. Explain why Pi's story sounds more like a fable than an adventure or survival tale. Which form has more lasting value—a fantasy novel or a fable?

2. Read aloud from other fables and sea or animal lore significant passages about accepting risk and understanding earth's creatures. Consider these examples: Frank R. Stockton's "The Lady or the Tiger?," Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, Richard Adams's *Watership Down*, Isak Dinesen's *Babette's Feast*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Panchatantra*, *One Thousand and One Nights*, Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, Antoine Saint-Exúpery's *The Little Prince*, Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, and Grimm's fairy tales.

Alternate Assessment

1. List in chronological order and describe significant events connected with Pi's life. Mention swimming two full laps, lashing oars and life jackets into a raft, butchering a green sea turtle and making a shield, encountering Hinduism and the Mother Goddess with Auntie Rohini, changing his name from Piscine to Pi, packing for the move to Canada, eating cookies and talking to Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba, observing whales and phosphorescent sea life, meeting Father Martin, buying a prayer rug, locating biscuspid and molars, talking with an interviewer in Scarborough, walking through the Pondicherry Zoo with Mr. Kumar and Mr. Kumar, praying on a rug, and reading a survival manual.
2. List events from the book that express strong attitudes toward God, faith, contentment, death, animals, swimming, hunger, fear, parents, vegetarianism, agnosticism, a sibling, and survival. Indicate the author's views on each subject.
3. Compose brief definitions of fable, aphorism, and humor as they apply to *The Life of Pi*. What changes in the story would reduce the amount of humor in favor of religious philosophy? advice on survival? self-pity? wonder? love of animals?
4. Summarize scenes that depict conflict, particularly sharing an island with Richard Parker and meerkats, creating a second story for Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba, arguing with Ravi, angering the imam, watching a tiger eat a live goat, discussing Christianity with Father Martin, selling a zoo, changing a name, and learning to swim.

Vocabulary Extender

Underline synonyms for each word in boldface.

1. **guru:** medium, transcendentalist, sage, martinet, master, dolt, mentor, deifier, savant, scholar, witling, rube, demonist, psychic, seer
2. **ashram:** lair, retreat, monastery, chancel, hideout, commune, apse, cloister, fellowship, settlement, incarceration, convent, transept, narthex
3. **piety:** zeal, faith, laity, reprobate, intercession, petition, supplication, devotion, reverence, apostasy, spiritualism, veneration, occultism
4. **atheist:** nonbeliever, zealot, infidel, pagan, heathen, secularist, doubter, skeptic, hypocrite, dissembler, freethinker, idolator, fetishist
5. **rite:** enchantment, philter, sorcery, conjury, incantation, ceremony, observance, jinx, amulet, sacrament, obeah, illusion, litany, obsession
6. **limbo:** sanctification, purification, afterlife, confinement, safehouse, resurrection, ascension, seance, purgatory, haven, sanctuary, reward
7. **literalist:** fundamentalist, heretic, animist, orthodox, falsifier, infidel, legalist, dogmatist, unbeliever, doubter, apostate, syncretist
8. **incarnation:** distortion, perversion, appearance, embodiment, manifestation, interpretation, avatar, revelation, veiling, translation
9. **mysticism:** invisibility, suppression, restriction, revelation, security, reticence, stifling, eclipse, fallacy, feigning, pretension, quackery, sham
10. **exaltation:** jeremiad, omen, remorse, elation, elegy, triumph, jubilation, ululation, lacrimation, threnody, rejoicing, salutation, plaint
11. **factuality:** veracity, disconcertion, quandary, truth, prevarication, reality, enigma, simulation, accuracy, validity, fallacy, obfuscation, perjury
12. **grace:** benevolence, mercy, charity, altruism, philanthropy, favor, benefaction, blessing, courtesy, good will, accommodation, lenience
13. **devout:** self-righteous, worshipful, adoring, recidivist, lapsed, pious, unregenerate, venerative, reverential, worldly, profane, observant, secular
14. **hallelujah:** amen, hosanna, blessing, supplicate, hurrah, sacrifice, invoke, pray, glorify, transcend, profane, vilify, hallow, convert, accept
15. **baptism:** submergence, retrieval, unburdening, immersion, rescue, negation, relief, submersion, reclamation, sanctification, blessing

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Identification (20 points)

Identify the following characters.

- _____ 1. snickering brother
- _____ 2. bapu
- _____ 3. troublesome Prime Minister
- _____ 4. Nikhil's wife
- _____ 5. sedater of animals
- _____ 6. victim of polio
- _____ 7. hunter
- _____ 8. animal with a broken hind leg
- _____ 9. comforter of a dying sailor
- _____ 10. raft builder

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- ___ 1. Only Richard Parker can slaughter the green sea turtle and wrench the meat from the shell.
- ___ 2. Arriving at Baja forces the two Japanese men to take the ferry at Santa Rosalia.
- ___ 3. Sun blindness causes Pi to misidentify a shark.
- ___ 4. Santosh is so discouraged by Indira Gandhi's return to power that he sells the Pondicherry Zoo.
- ___ 5. Gita encourages Pi to try out the new prayer rug by reading R. K. Narayan.
- ___ 6. Father Martin discourages Pi from seeking Islamic baptism.
- ___ 7. At the far edge of the lifeboat, the Chinese place water and a survival manual.
- ___ 8. At the center of the leaves lie molars and bicuspid.
- ___ 9. Pi makes up a story about the cook's barbarism.
- ___ 10. The zebra survives the night after the hyena severely mauls its organs.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Name the character who speaks each of these lines. On the line below, explain the significance of each citation.

_____ 1. I don't believe in religion. Religion is darkness.

_____ 2. They'll be scarred for the rest of their lives.

_____ 3. I challenge anyone to understand Islam, its spirit, and not to love it.

_____ 4. I will die today.

_____ 5. Your son was seen in church crossing himself.

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

1. Account for Pi's recurrent thoughts of violent death.
2. Defend Pi's decision to tell a second version of his story.
3. Compare Pi's experiences with the different faiths.
4. Express the importance of Richard Parker to Pi's survival.
5. Describe the circumstances that require trailing a raft behind the lifeboat.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Choose the answer that best completes each statement below. Place the letter of your response in the blank at left.

- _____ 1. The tarpaulin
- catches fresh water from the storm.
 - conceals Richard Parker.
 - protects Pi from sunburn.
 - is the final gift from the Chinese crewmen.
- _____ 2. Pi is pleased to see
- Mr. Kumar and Mr. Kumar at the zoo.
 - Orange Juice escape Richard Parker.
 - a swimming pool that bears his name.
 - the temple that Mamaji admires.
- _____ 3. Gita fears
- the tiger cages.
 - travel out of Manila.
 - Indira Gandhi's re-election.
 - that Santosh is terrifying their sons.
- _____ 4. Solitude at sea demands
- that Pi row alone.
 - a study of the night sky for navigation.
 - that the raft drift with the current.
 - days of sleeplessness.
- _____ 5. Pi fears that
- Richard Parker will not survive in Baja.
 - Gita, Ravi, and Santosh are grieving for him.
 - the Mexican women are trying to scrub away his color.
 - God has abandoned him.
- _____ 6. Father Martin reassures Pi that
- he is already a Christian.
 - baptism will make him a Christian.
 - Christians can't believe in Allah or Shiva.
 - Hindus will not welcome a Catholic.
- _____ 7. At the island,
- Pi tethers the raft to a buried oar.
 - Richard Parker disappears for days at a time in a tree occupied by meerkats.
 - Pi covers his face with a cloth and allows himself to dream.
 - Pi returns to vegetarianism.
- _____ 8. Pi regrets not being educated in
- Sufism.
 - knot-tying.
 - star navigation.
 - zoo management.
- _____ 9. To Pi, the sea seems like
- a burial ground for the *Tsimtsum*.
 - an easy route to North America.
 - his punishment for doubting God.
 - a city.
- _____ 10. Diminished rations cause Pi to
- need less food.
 - dream of fantasy meals.
 - rely solely on barnacles from beneath the lifeboat.
 - fish night and day to satisfy Richard Parker.
- _____ 11. Amid the floating trash is
- refuse from the *Tsimtsum*.
 - a whale carcass.
 - a refrigerator.
 - the zebra's broken leg.
- _____ 12. Pi imagines that
- Gita and Santosh await him in Winnipeg.
 - Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba are feeding him cookies.
 - there are 300-year-old trees that are only two feet tall.
 - Richard Parker has a French accent.
- _____ 13. Pi is endangered by
- constant wetness.
 - eating algae.
 - a man-eating bonsai.
 - an epidemic at the zoo.
- _____ 14. Pi awakens under
- waves caused by the storm.
 - a heap of flying fish and dorados.
 - bunks that crash as the *Tsimtsum* lists.
 - meerkats.
- _____ 15. In Pi's home are
- bowls of Meena's chutney and hot chapattis.
 - likenesses of Shiva, Ganesha, and the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe.
 - negotiators from a zoo in the United States.
 - crates from Winnipeg.

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part II: Completion (20 points)

Match these descriptions with the name of a place.

- _____ 1. California departure point for Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba
- _____ 2. departure port for the Mexican ferry
- _____ 3. zoo sale
- _____ 4. Pi's university
- _____ 5. departure port of the *Tsimtsum* into the Pacific Ocean
- _____ 6. registration point for the *Tsimtsum*
- _____ 7. treatment center for Pi
- _____ 8. destination of the Hejira
- _____ 9. location of the Kaaba
- _____ 10. town in which live Pi, Meena, Nihila, and Usha

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill-in the word that completes the blanks in each statement below.

- 1. Auntie _____ introduces Pi to Hinduism and to the Mother _____.
- 2. _____ takes Pi to the Indian shore and teaches him to _____.
- 3. _____ shows Pi and _____ how a tiger slays and eats a live goat.
- 4. _____ renames himself Pi, which he writes on the _____ of each new class.
- 5. When the *Tsimtsum* sinks, Chinese _____ toss Pi overboard in a _____.

Part III: Essay Questions (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

- 1. Explain causes of Pi's joys and despair.
- 2. Discuss why the author promotes zoos.
- 3. Contrast Pi before and after he arrives in Jalisco.
- 4. Describe the effect of prayer on Pi.
- 5. Account for Pi's devotion to Richard Parker.

Answer Key

Vocabulary

1. sage, master, mentor, savant, scholar
2. retreat, commune, cloister, fellowship, settlement
3. zeal, faith, devotion, reverence, veneration
4. nonbeliever, infidel, pagan, heathen, secularist, doubter, skeptic, freethinker
5. ceremony, observance, sacrament, litany
6. confinement, purgatory
7. fundamentalist, orthodox, legalist, dogmatist
8. appearance, embodiment, manifestation, avatar, revelation
9. revelation
10. elation, triumph, jubilation, rejoicing, salutation
11. veracity, truth, reality, accuracy, validity
12. benevolence, mercy, charity, altruism, philanthropy, favor, benefaction, blessing, courtesy, good will, accommodation, lenience
13. worshipful, adoring, venerative, reverential, pious, observant
14. hosanna, hurrah
15. submergence, immersion, submersion

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ravi | 6. Kumar |
| 2. Gandhi | 7. Richard Parker |
| 3. Indira Gandhi | 8. zebra |
| 4. Meena | 9. Gita |
| 5. Santosh | 10. Pi |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------|---------|
| 1. Mr. Kumar | 4. Pi |
| 2. Gita | 5. imam |
| 3. Pi | |

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. A | 11. C |
| 2. A | 7. A | 12. D |
| 3. D | 8. B | 13. A |
| 4. C | 9. D | 14. D |
| 5. C | 10. B | 15. B |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

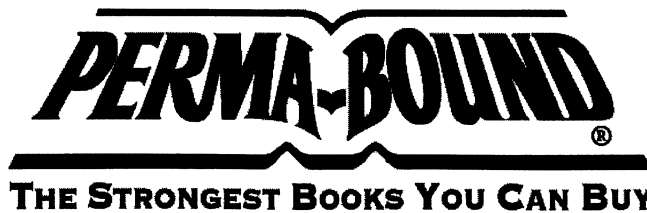
- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Long Beach | 6. Panama |
| 2. Santa Rosalia | 7. Benito Juárez Infirmary |
| 3. Pondicherry | 8. Medina |
| 4. Toronto | 9. Mecca |
| 5. Manila | 10. Scarborough |

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

1. Rohini, Goddess
2. Mamaji, swim
3. Santosh, Ravi
4. Piscine, board
5. crewmen, lifeboat

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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