

'LIFE OF PI'
BY YANN MARTEL



READING AND RESPONDING

Plot Summary



The novel begins with the author describing in an author's note his travels to India, where he meets a man named Francis Adirubasamy in a coffeehouse in Pondicherry. His response to the author's claim that he needs inspiration is "I have a story that will make you believe in God." After which he refers the author to Piscine Patel in Toronto, who immediately begins to tell his own story, starting in Chapter 1.

As a teenager in Pondicherry, India, Pi Patel describes his family – himself, his parents, and his brother Ravi. He is constantly exploring new opportunities and learning many odd and exciting things. His father is the proprietor of the Pondicherry Zoo, where Pi learns much of the workings and raising of animals. Pi's mother is an avid reader and introduces to him numerous literary works from which he learns the joys of numerous schools of thought. His school is filled with amazing teachers, one of whom, Mr. Kumar is an inspiration to Pi.

Deriving his full name (Piscine) from a world famous swimming pool in France, his parents are good friends with Francis Adirubasamy (from the author's note), a world class swimmer who often goes on about the Piscine Molitor in Paris. He goes by Pi instead because his schoolmates make a big deal out of calling him "pissing" instead as it sounds similar. They all take to the name and from that point on, his name is no long Piscine but Pi.

Pi grew up a Hindu, but discovered the Catholic faith at age 14 from a priest by the name of Father Martin. He is soon baptized. He then meets Mr. Kumar, a Muslim of some standing and converts to Islam. Therefore, he openly practices all three religions avidly. When the three religious teachers meet up with his parents at the zoo, they demand that he choose a single religion, to which he announces he cannot. Throughout this section, Pi discusses numerous religious matters as well as his thoughts on culture and zoology.

At age 16, Pi's father decides that Mrs. Gandhi's (the leader of India) political actions are unsavory and closes up the zoo to move to Toronto. He sells off a majority of the zoo animals to various zoos in America. The animals are loaded onto the same boat that the family will take to reach Winnipeg, Canada. On the journey to North America, the boat sinks.

As the only survivor of the shipwreck, he's stuck in a lifeboat with a dying zebra and a hyena. Pi sees another survivor floating in the water and only after throwing them a life preserver and pulling them aboard does he realize that "Richard Parker" is actually the 400 pound tiger from his father's zoo. He immediately jumps overboard until he realizes that there are sharks nearby.

So, upon reentering the boat, he wedges the tarpaulin up with an oar and decides he might survive if he can stay on top and keep Richard Parker beneath it. Over the next week an Orangutan arrives as well and the four animals interplay carefully, eating each other until there is only Richard Parker left.

Over the course of the next 7 months aboard the lifeboat, Pi hides on a makeshift raft behind the boat and begins the process of taming Richard Parker with a whistle and treats from the sea, as well as marking his portion of the boat. He begins to get close to the tiger, developing the kind of bond a zookeeper does with his menagerie. After a while, Pi learns to kill and eat from the sea, sharing with the tiger. The two do not eat nearly enough though and as time passes, they become quite ill.



At a certain point, the two become so hungry and ill that they lose their sight and come across another blind man amazingly floating along in the ocean as well. The two talk for a bit about food and eventually the blind man tries to board Pi's boat, intent on eating him. However, when he boards the boat the unsuspecting man is attacked by Richard Parker and eaten. The tears from the situation eventually clear up Pi's vision and they continue on alone in the boat.

Still floating along alone and desperate, the two come across an island made of algae. They disembark and Pi begins eating the algae, regaining his strength during the day and sleeping on the boat. Richard Parker regains his strength from eating the meerkats who live on the island, sleeping in the trees during the night. Eventually, Pi realizes that they leave at night because of an acid produced by the island during the night hours. He eventually notices a tooth among the algae, evidence of another man having died on the island. They leave quickly as the island is apparently carnivorous.

Finally, after more time spent floating along in the ocean, Pi sights land in Mexico and disembarks. Richard Parker immediately runs off into the woods and Pi is recovered by two men from the shipping company who owned the boat that sank with his family on it. He relates to them the story of his 227 days on the boat, but they do not quite believe his fantastic tale of surviving with a Bengal Tiger and meeting a blind man in the ocean.

So, Pi relays to them a second story instead of his mother, a sailor with a broken leg and a cannibalistic cook, with no animals and no magical islands this time around. The story closely parallels the first story without all of the fancy involved, and one of the men points this out. However, the two ignore the final story in favor of the better story and write it up in their report after Pi mentions that it does not matter as both lead to the same outcome.

Characters



Piscine Patel (Pi) – The main character and narrator of the story in the novel, Pi is a teenage Indian boy. His father ran a zoo and he practices three major religions – Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The knowledge his father gives him about animals is key to his surviving in a lifeboat with Richard Parker, the 400 pound Tiger.

‘Later, in Toronto, among nine columns of Patels in the phone book, I found him, the main character.’ (p. xiii) It is in this way that the reader is introduced to the eponymous Pi, although he remains Mr Patel until Chapter 3 when his full name is revealed. Pi’s name is an important component of his character and thus requires some attention.

The Mr Patel of the present in the novel is a gentle father and husband in early middle age. These passages are important because Martel uses them to highlight aspects of the younger Pi’s character. In Chapter 6, we learn that he is ‘an excellent cook’. (p. 24). The connection between food and stories in the novel begins as Patel feeds the ‘author’ his story and Indian food. In Chapter 15, he describes Patel’s house as ‘a temple’ but one that honours all three of the religions that Pi will embrace. The reader will later understand that Pi’s ordeal has nearly killed him physically but has not shaken his faith and love for his religions. In fact, the ‘Mr Patel’ component of Pi seems to be a remarkably contented man considering ‘the story’ that he is in the process of relating. In the final chapter of Part One and the final chapter involving Mr Patel, the reader is introduced to his children and his pets. The author is surprised but the reader does not yet register the source of this surprise. The final sentence in this section is: ‘This story has a happy ending’. (p. 93) Pi is not a victim of his experiences and the story is not structured in a manner which explains, in psychological terms, the adult Patel. Martel seems to be reaching back to a pre-Freudian period where stories of hardship had other functions beyond putting the effects of trauma in context.

Piscine Molitor Patel is the boy of the first part of the book who is teased about his name. For a character that will spend most of the book floating in the Pacific, there is a certain irony about his being named for a swimming pool. The pool is not how his name is understood by his school mates who call him ‘Pissing’. Pi’s name, like the story he tells, is heard differently by different people. When he goes to secondary school, he changes his name to ‘Pi’ which is, of course, a mathematical property: ‘And so, in that Greek letter that looks like a shack with a corrugated tin roof, in that elusive, irrational number with which scientists try to understand the universe, I found refuge’. (p. 24)

As ‘Pi’, Piscine Patel spends the remainder of the first section doing just that, trying to understand the universe: ‘First wonder goes deepest; wonder after that fits in the impression made by the first’. (p. 50) Pi is born a Hindu but becomes fascinated by Christianity and Islam. The property ‘pi’ with its infinite possibilities is sometimes seen in religious terms. Pi’s curiosity and wonder are underscored by his name. This section is dominated by his descriptions of the zoo and his various religious awakenings. The impression is of a sensitive and intelligent boy on the brink of manhood. Both his religion and his knowledge of animals help the Pi of the second section survive his ordeal. This Pi is, in part, the classic boy-hero of early twentieth century adventure

novels. He is methodical and resourceful; food and water are found and the tiger is subdued. The character is also a reflection on those adventure stories. Martel uses Pi to explore the underpinnings of the castaway story. Pi has moments of despair and desperation; he is Enid Blyton's plucky Georgie but there is also something of William Golding's Piggy about him.



The final Pi appears in the third section after he has landed in Mexico. He is seen through the eyes of the Japanese investigators. They are sceptical when he tells his story and feel that he is hiding something. For his part, Pi defends himself brilliantly. The reader, like the Japanese investigators, is curious about 'the story'. Pi answers every charge and proves that bananas do, indeed, float and that carnivorous vegetation already exists. Mr Okamoto concludes that he has been telling the truth and that his story is one of 'courage and endurance'. (p. 319) The reader, too, must accept that the story they have just finished is 'true' and that Pi is a credible narrator.

In *Life of Pi*, Pi is at once the subject of the story and the storyteller. He is a guide, first to the world of Pondicherry and then to the life of a castaway. The reader identifies with him but also recognizes that he is exceptional. He is, in the tradition of all great fictional characters, mysterious but also familiar. For a novel that deals explicitly with the idea of storytelling, he is the ideal protagonist.

Richard Parker – The 450 pound tiger and 227 day companion to Pi on the lifeboat, Richard Parker becomes not only Pi's arch nemesis, but his closest friend and only reason to stay alive on the boat. Often taking on numerous human characteristics, Richard Parker is an ambiguous silent character throughout the novel. The reader is still coming to terms with the fact that Richard Parker is a large tiger when Pi dives into the Pacific. As the 'Tsimtsum' sinks, Pi shouts out encouraging words to what sounds like a person swimming towards the lifeboat. At the very point that Richard Parker takes hold of the lifebuoy, Pi suddenly changes his tone and tries to drive him away. The reader has no idea why Pi is so frightened of this character until he says, 'I had a wet, trembling, half-drowned, heaving and coughing three year old adult Bengal tiger in my lifeboat'. (p. 99) This is not the first appearance of Richard Parker.

In the first section of the book, in one of the italicised passages set in the present, Pi shows the author a photograph: '“That's Richard Parker,” he says. I'm amazed. I look closely, trying to extract personality from appearance. Unfortunately, it's black and white again and a little out of focus.' (p. 87) His name is deceptive and it turns out to have come from a paperwork error. 'Richard Parker' is a name with an interesting history. Many critics have noted that there is a character called Richard Parker in Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket', a sea adventure story. Richard Parker was also the name of a man who was eaten by his fellow castaways in a famous nineteenth century cannibalism case. An earlier Richard Parker was an English sailor involved in the Nore Mutiny in the late eighteenth century. His name casts this character in an odd light. He is at once Pi's companion and his greatest challenge. The survival manual, as Pi notes, does not cover tigers so all of Pi's efforts to gather food and water will be in vain if he cannot overcome Richard Parker. He eventually decides to train him using a whistle and judicious feedings.



Pi is in a very difficult position, floating aimlessly in the Pacific. Richard Parker can be seen to represent the fear that all humans have to conquer in order to carry on. The fear of death must be subdued and Pi's training regime is the process by which he overcomes his terror. However, Pi acknowledges that Richard Parker is essential to his survival. 'Thank you for saving my life' (p. 286), he calls to the tiger as he disappears into the Mexican jungle. Martel is suggesting that the fear of death is actually a life force of some kind. Religion, on some level, is based on our need to explain death. The stories that we tell sustain us and alleviate the fear of the unknown. Richard Parker helps Pi to survive by giving him a reason to live. Pi must find a story that will subdue the tiger and the story is that of the circus trainer. Adding a Bengal tiger into the mix of a castaway story might seem unnecessary until it becomes clear that the tiger is simply the fear that hangs over such a tale.

The Author – Only present as a voice in the first Chapter (directly) the author here is a narrator as well as a man seeking a story, which he finds in Pi. He later describes bits of Pi's life as well as interacting with the adult Pi as he tells the story.

Yann Martel is not particularly interested in drawing distinct lines between himself and his stories. An earlier novel, *Self*, involved a main character who shared many biographical details with Martel. However, that same character changes gender in the course of the novel so it wouldn't be right to suggest that it was autobiographical in any traditional sense. Similarly, some of his short fiction includes an 'author' who functions as a main character. *Life of Pi* opens with the line: 'This book was born as I was hungry'. (p. ix) He goes on to talk about the poor reception received by his first novel and his subsequent trip to India. Author's notes are not uncommon at the beginning of novels but this is not what it seems. Pi's story is presented as 'truth' as he relates his meeting with Francis Adirubasamy, a character in the story. He goes on, as is traditional in an author's note, to thank the body who funded the writing of the story. The note thus is actually the first chapter of the book and the 'author' is a fictional creation of the real author, Yann Martel. Having established credibility through the 'Author's Note', the author then introduces Pi. The older Pi in the 'present' of the story is seen through the author's eyes. In the first section of the book, the meetings with Pi are described in detail. The author's function is to be an audience for Pi's story and its interpreter for readers. He is not a character in the central story but functions as the mask worn by the real author as the story is told. It is a technique that was common in Victorian novels. Charles Dickens begins *The Old Curiosity Shop* with a narrator who slowly retreats from the story. In a novel that is, to some extent about stories and storytellers, some attention must be given to this character. Martel is concerned by the idea of credibility in stories so the question of who relates the narrative is important. Though this character would appear to be similar to Martel, the purpose is, in fact, to create distance between the author of the book and the story. Martel seeks to avoid the confusion of his own voice in the narrative by creating a fictional version of himself. The similarity between the names 'Martel' and 'Patel' is also worth noting.

Francis Adirubasamy - A close friend of the Patel family and a world class swimmer, it is Francis who is responsible for Pi's name as well as sending the author to Toronto to hear Pi's story. Basamy is simply an Indian name; Adirubasamy is not, unlike Richard Parker, a real name. ADIRU is an acronym for Air Data Inertial Reference Unit which

is an instrument that gives information about air speed and altitude to pilots. This might seem like a stretch but there is nothing accidental about any of the names in this story. It is Adirubasamy who provides the 'author' with the information he needs to write his next novel. He delivers the famous line at the beginning of the novel, 'I have a story that will make you believe in God'. (p. xii)



Adirubasamy also provides Pi with the name Piscine and teaches him to swim, very crucial information for a future castaway. The name, Piscine Molitor, is inspired by his description of a Paris swimming pool. Pi's father loves the descriptions of the pools and the 'lore' surrounding them and Adirubasamy functions as a guide to Paris' swimming pools for Pi's father. He is also the guide that points the 'author' towards Pi and his amazing story. In Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he names the characters that appear in the hero's journey. The herald or guide is the character that challenges the hero to embark on his journey. Obi Wan Kenobi is the 'guide' in the original *Star Wars* film; Adirubasamy fills this role in *Life of Pi*.

Pi's Father – A zookeeper with strong political views and a habit of teaching his son all that he can about animals and their psychology. He dies after the ship sinks. Pi's father, like Francis Adirubasamy, teaches Pi lessons that will save his life. As a zookeeper, he feels it is his duty to ensure his sons have proper respect for animals. His horrifying tour of the zoo in Chapter 8 is a warning of the dangers of anthropomorphism. While it destroys some of Pi's enjoyment and identification with the animals in his life, it means that he is able to deal with Richard Parker as a dangerous animal.

Pi's Mother – A caring woman and a natural educator, Pi's mother reads a lot and shares what she can with her son. In Pi's first story she dies on the boat. In his second, she is one of the survivors who eventually die on the boat. Pi's mother makes brief appearances in the first section of the novel but he mentions her several times throughout the story. In the same section where the author is shown a picture of Richard Parker, Pi notes that, 'It's very sad not to remember what your mother looks like'. (p. 87) Her death, it should be noted, is a key event in the alternative story that Pi tells the Japanese investigators.

Ravi – Pi's brother who becomes everything that Pi is not, popular and athletic. They are very close before he dies in the shipwreck. Pi's older brother teases his somewhat eccentric younger brother in a comic fashion when it is discovered that Pi has become a Christian and a Muslim: 'So Swami Jesus, will you go on the Hajj this year?' (p. 70). He is described by Pi as 'our very own Kapil Dev' and he clearly worships his older brother. Martel presents Ravi almost as a cliché. He is the unlikely hero's more illustrious older brother whose death leaves only Pi.

Satish Kumar' – Pi's biology teacher and a masterful scientist who teaches Pi much of his thirst for knowledge. He is a natural atheist and teaches Pi the faith of an atheist as well as the desire to study zoology in college.

Mr. Satish Kumar (Sufi) – The other Satish Kumar is a shopkeeper in the Muslim part of town and introduces Pi to Islam.

Father Martin – A catholic priest who introduces Pi to Jesus Christ and the Catholic faith. They meet often and talk of Christ's works, breeding in Pi the desire to accept multiple faiths.



Tomohiro Okamoto and Atsuro Chiba – The two men from the Japanese Ministry of Transport who arrive on behalf of the Tsimtsum sinking to question Pi about his story of survival. They do not immediately believe him but consent to writing his story up in their report.

'Life of Pi' Chapter Summaries and Questions



Author's Note

The fictional author arrives in India, tired and unhappy with his current progress on a novel. He decides it isn't working and mails the notes for it to a fake address in Siberia. While he ponders his novel in Pondicherry, he meets a man named Francis Adirubasamy in a coffee shop. The man has a story for the author, one "that will make [him] believe in God." At first unsure, the author thinks the man is a religious fanatic. Adirubasamy refers the author to a man in Toronto by the name of Patel.

1. Why has Martel chosen to begin with a fictionalised author's note?
2. Martel presents an idyllic description of Indian (p x). What does this set up in reader's minds?
3. Martel suggests that fiction is "the selective transforming of reality". How valid is this assertion?
4. What is Martel suggesting was missing from the story set in Portugal?
5. Adirubasamy tells the author that he "has a story that will make you believe in God". Does 'Life of Pi' achieve this?
6. Martel ends the 'Author's note' with the suggestion that without art, "we sacrifice our imagination at the altar of crude reality and we end up believing in nothing and having worthless dreams" (p xiv). Explain this statement.

PART ONE

Chapter 1

The novel changes to Pi Patel's voice now, told in the first person as a memoir. The narrator first introduces himself as a graduate in both Religious Studies and Zoology at the University of Toronto. He describes his thesis on the thyroid gland of a three-toed sloth and goes on in detail about that sloth. He was given great credit for his knowledge in the zoology field but also held back because of his inability to divide religion and science. He describes the Goddess Lakshmi, a Hindu deity and how he misses India despite his love for Canada. He also describes how he misses Richard Parker. He goes on to mention his time in Mexico and a situation in an Indian restaurant in Canada.

7. Why does Pi say he chose the three-toed-sloth as his subject of study? How might the sloth "soothe [his] shattered self"? (p 3)
8. In what way does the three-toed-sloth remind Pi of God?
9. Pi suggests that "When you've suffered a great deal in life, each additional pain is both unbearable and trifling." (p 5) Explain what he means.
10. Pi explains that Oxford "is fifth on the list of cities I would like to visit before I pass on, after Mecca, Varanasi, Jerusalem and Paris." (p 6). Explain Pi's choice of cities.
11. Why does the waiter's comments in the restaurant wound Pi?

Chapter 2

Returning to the Author's narration, we learn that Pi Patel lives in Scarborough and is a small man of about forty. He speaks very fast and begins his story. This Chapter reminds the reader that Chapter one was the beginning of an interview, which will continue.



Chapter 3

Pi relates about Francis Adirubasamy, a friend of the Patel family. As a world champion swimmer, he always tried to teach the Patel family to swim, but only succeeded with Pi. We also learn that Francis was a great fan of the swimming pools of Paris, including one in particular, the Piscine Molitor, which his family subsequently named Pi after. It is only at this point that the reader is given Piscine Molitor Patel's full name.

12. Why was swimming Mamaji's "gift" to Pi?
13. What is it about Mamaji's stories that captivate Pi's father? Why might he have chosen to name his son after a swimming pool in Paris when Pondicherry has the expanse of the Indian Ocean at its feet?

Chapter 4

Pi describes the beautiful Pondicherry Zoo, run by his father, a former hotel operator. He compares the keeping of a zoo to the keeping of a hotel and how animals are similar to hotel occupants. While growing up in a zoo, Pi learns much of the world of nature. He loves the beauty and perfection of it all and sees the animals as happy for having their own territories. He claims that animals in the wild do not truly have freedom because they are dictated by their predators and the space restrictions.

14. Pi questions the notion that animals are unhappy in zoos because their freedom is curtailed. Explain the reasons he gives.
15. The Chapter ends with Pi comparing peoples' problems with zoos with their problem with religion and suggests that "Certain illusions about freedom plague them both." (p 19) What might he mean?

Chapter 5

Pi was unhappy as a child with his name (Piscine), as it was often mispronounced as "pissing" when it is meant to be pronounced as "pea-seen". For that reason as he grows up and enters the next level of school, he makes a show of jumping up during roll call and announcing to the class that his name is "Pi" even illustrating it with the mathematical symbol on the chalkboard.

16. Why is it, as Pi suggests, "a law of human nature that those who live by the sea are suspicious of swimmers"? (p 22)
17. Pi explains "in that elusive, irrational number with which scientists try to understand the universe, I found refuge." (p 24) How does this explain Pi's character and nature?

Chapter 6

The author interjects again, describing Patel's cooking ability as an adult and his back stock of food, enough to "last the siege of Leningrad."



Chapter 7

Pi meets with Satish Kumar, a very particular teacher of his – a communist, atheist, biology teacher, and one of Pi's favorites. Satish Kumar begins to relay his belief that all things can be described scientifically, describing his bout with polio and how medicine saved him as a child, not God. Pi comments on how atheists are more acceptable than agnostics, who are full of doubt.

18. Explain the reason Mr Kumar sees religion as darkness and Pi sees religion as light.
19. Pi sees atheists and agnostics very differently. Why is this?

Chapter 8

Visitors to the zoo are responsible for performing a great deal of horrible things with the animals, declaring humans as the worst of all animals. Pi's father shows the boys a tiger that has not been fed for three days, a standard condition in the wild. Watching what occurs when a goat is introduced to the cage scares "the living vegetarian daylights" out of Pi. His father goes on to describe the strength of every animal in the zoo against human beings, that is of course except guinea pigs.

20. Why does Pi suggest that the most dangerous animal in a zoo is man and that even more dangerous is *Animalus anthropomorphicus*?
21. Why might Pi have "anthropomorphized the animals until they spoke fluent English"? (p 34)

Chapter 9

Starting here, Pi describes some of the science of zoology and zoo keeping. Here he goes on about flight distance and how far an animal will stay from an enemy. That distance can be diminished by offering ample food, water, and shelter.

22. What does Pi's father's "intuitive gift" say about the relationship between animals and humans?

Chapter 10

Pi describes animals that would not enjoy captivity, those that were captured and brought to the zoo or those few zoo bred creatures that temporarily feel the instinctual call to leave. He describes how animals are leaving something not seeking something when they escape.

Chapter 11

As an example, Pi tells of a leopard in the mountains of Switzerland who survived there for two months.



Chapter 12

Going back to the author, we learn that Pi is often upset about something, that whoever Richard Parker is, he still “preys on his mind”. He mentions that he visits Patel often and that every time he’s there Pi cooks very spicy food.

23. The author suggests that “Memory is an ocean and he bobs on its surface.” What role does memory play in storytelling? In survival? In understanding life experience?
24. Why is it that Richard Parker still preys on Pi’s mind?

Chapter 13

Again focusing on animal training, Pi discusses lion taming. He discusses the act of establishing dominance over a lion with a whip and establishing alpha male status. It actually calms most animals to know their place in the order of things. Without unknowns, they don’t need to worry.

Chapter 14

With more on lion training, Pi describes how the lower the social standing of an animal, the easier it is to train them. It will be loyal and loving with a trainer because the trainer offers it protection and food, something all creatures seek in nature. It serves to display how an animal clearly stronger than a human might submit to a human being which it could easily kill.

Chapter 15

The author returns, describing Pi’s home as very religious, similar to a temple. There are numerous religious artifacts representing numerous different religions, from Hinduism to Christianity and Islam. He only describes the area without making comments. This Chapter begins the discussion of the various religious discussions in the next few Chapters.

25. What is the function of the fictional author’s input into the story?
26. Create a table that lists the icons and central beliefs of each of the three faiths that Pi embraces.

Chapter 16

Pi’s first visit to a Hindu temple as a child is full of wonderment and worship rituals. He describes the details of the rituals and what they stand for in the religion. He is a very religious man and enjoys it, but explains that fundamentalism is flawed with a story about Krishna disappearing before possessive milkmaids. He mentions both Christians

for their trust in love and Muslims for their awareness of God in everything. He makes a very circuitous description of how different the religions are and yet how with a different hat they are completely interchangeable.



27. Pi suggests that “many people seem to lose God along life’s way.” Why is this the case? Is this true of our community/ society?
28. Describe the significant rituals of each of the religious traditions that Pi embraces.
29. Pi says “the universe makes sense to me through Hindu eyes.” What eyes do we use to make sense of the universe? Why is/ isn’t that through the eyes of faith?
30. Summarise Pi’s view of religion.

Chapter 17

On a trip to Munnar, Pi notices a trio of hills, each with a temple, church, or mosque on it. Seeing the three equally spaced and realizing his foundation in the Hindu faith, he goes to meet Jesus Christ. He sees a priest from a distance and is astounded by his acts of love. He is confused, but enters the church anyways, wondering which statue is meant to represent the Catholic god.

The following day he meets Father Martin on a return trip and learns more of Christianity and the nature of Jesus and his sacrifice. Pi tries to understand by comparing Hindu deities to the Christian faith but fails in doing so. Over the course of days, the two meet often and Pi asks numerous questions, attempting to learn more. Many of the answers end with “love” as the simple answer and Pi begins to relate Christianity with the concept of love. He decides he will become a Christian, praying at the church, then going back to the Hindu temple and giving thanks for helping him find the Catholic faith.

31. Pi suggests that Catholics have a “reputation for severity”. What stereotypes do we associate with religion generally and Christianity, Hinduism and Islam specifically?
32. Pi sees the Catholic concept of Christ sacrificing his life for the sins of man to be a “weird story” and “peculiar psychology”. Is that what religion is? Is that what faith is?
33. Pi sees God as “God should be. With shine and power and might.” Is scepticism about God because mankind wants something obviously omniscient and omnipresent?

Chapter 18

A year passes and Pi experiences the same curiosity when he witnesses the Great Mosque. He sees it but is afraid to enter, so enters a local bakery instead. While talking to the bakery’s owner, the owner is called to prayer by the muezzin (the man at the mosque who calls the time for prayer). He witnesses the bakery owners relaxed, repetitive prayer motions and later thinks on it while praying at the Catholic Church.

34. Pi's strength is his inquiring mind. How important is this to Pi and to faith generally?



Chapter 19

He goes back to the bakery to ask the baker questions on the religion and is led to the mosque where he participates in the bowing and prayers with the other Muslims.

35. Pi makes a distinction between the essence of faith and the practice of faith. "I challenge anyone to understand Islam, its spirit, and not to love it. It is a beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion." Why might it be difficult to make this distinction?
36. 'Life of Pi' was first published in Canada on September 11 2001. What contribution might the book make towards interreligious discourse in a post 9/11 world?

Chapter 20

Pi relays that the baker is also named Satish Kumar, the same as his biology teacher and is a Sufi or Muslim mystic. He begins to see Kumar's home as a holy place and after praying with him for a while feels the profundity of those prayers and relays that he currently practices all three religions every day. He even describes an instance in which he witnessed the Virgin Mary in Canada.

37. Pi described Mr and Mr Kumar as "the prophets of my youth". What do these two men teach Pi and why is it a peculiar combination?

Chapter 21

The author returns again to discuss his afternoons with Pi. He ponders the words of Pi related in the next Chapter about religion and atheism.

Chapter 22

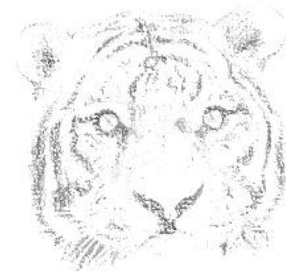
Pi thinks on how an atheist might experience death, upon that final revelation. He once again brings up his unhappiness with agnosticism and how an agnostic in death might cling to "dry, yeastless factuality" and miss the "better story" as mentioned by the author in Chapter 21. He does not appreciate their lack of imagination and faith.

38. Chapter 22 holds a key statement in the novel – if we lack imagination (faith), we miss the better story. To what extent is this true?

Chapter 23

A couple of years have passed since Pi's last relation of events in his life and he's been practicing his religions in triplicate for a couple of years, now 16. While at the beach, all three of the religious leaders Pi studies with appear and meet his family. He knows his choice of religious multiplicity will not be accepted and when the priest says Pi is a good

Christian, the others react confusedly. They argue for a bit, declaring Pi as their own until they agree that it is okay for him to be so religious and a seeker of God. However, they end up deciding that he cannot be of all three religions and must choose one. His reply, "I just want to love God" quiets them all and they walk away. The family walks on with some ice cream and the matter is left alone.



39. Why is there a need for 'competition' among religion?
40. How do each of religious men see the others? Why is it that these men are focusing on the differences between their faiths while Pi is focused on the similarities?
41. Pi says "Bapu Gandhi said 'All religions are true.' I just want to love God." Why are the religious men so bothered by Pi's practice of all three faiths simultaneously?

Chapter 24

Ravi goes on to tease Pi about the encounter and his multiplicity. He jokes about religious holidays and how Pi more or less gets every day as a holiday by recognizing three religions.

Chapter 25

Pi rails against those that do not accept his religious choices openly. He comments on their close mindedness. Regardless of his opinions though he is not allowed in any of the standard churches, temples or mosques and is forced to worship on his own. He decides that religion is played out within, not outside.

42. Why does people's judgement impact on faith?

Chapter 26

Pi goes to his father for religious items. He asks for a Christian baptism and an Islamic prayer rug. Pi's father goes on about the differences between the religions trying to dissuade his son but is stopped by his son's litany of details about each religion. His father states that they are Indian and that he should be Hindu to which Pi replies that both Christian and Muslim faith have been in India for centuries. His parents begin to pass him back and forth and change topics repeatedly. His mother tries to introduce new books to him and when he brings up Francis's multiple passports he only disturbs her that much more.

Chapter 27

Discussing Pi's requests, his parents compare his spiritual quest with the changes of the political status of India under Indira Gandhi. They compare them both as foolishness and decide Pi will eventually get over it (as they hope Gandhi will), giving into his requests in the end.

43. Why does faith challenge us and seem so at odds with modernity?

44. What position does Pi's mother and father take to his beliefs?



Chapter 28

Pi takes his prayer rug outside and absorbs the beauty of the outdoors. His family watches him in a mixture of curiosity and embarrassment through it all, including his joy at being baptized. Eventually his parents come to accept him despite his brother's teasing.

45. What is prayer? What conventions govern prayer? Are these conventions necessary?

Chapter 29

Despite the major issues on the political landscape (which he understands but does not care for) Pi is happy with his life in the zoo and with God. His father though is very much so upset by Gandhi's takeover of the government and how that will affect his zoo. Because it appears more and more so as though the zoo will fail in India, Pi's father decides to leave India for Canada.

46. What role do cultural institutions play as keepers of truth?

Chapter 30

Returning to the author, he narrates the meeting of Pi's wife, a Canadian, second generation Indian pharmacist. He realizes then that the house is filled with not only religious evidence but marriage evidence. He thinks that maybe Pi's wife had cooked the horrible spicy dishes for him, but learns later that it was in fact Pi.

47. The author observes that "Life has taught him not to show off what is most precious to him." What has provided this lesson?

Chapter 31

As Pi awaits Mr. Kumar (the Sufi) in his father's zoo, he worries because he cannot recognize him, rubbing his eyes as an excuse for not seeing him arrive. When he does arrive, they take a walk and discuss the different animals and how they interact, especially the Zebras. The other Mr. Kumar arrives and Pi lets them both feed the Zebras with a carrot. They all marvel at the beauty of the experience. The two Kumars, representing science and religion interact the same with nature in this scene.

48. What is the significance of this chapter and what does it say about the views of science and religion?

49. If science explains what we know and religion explains what we do not (yet) know, might they be part of the same continuum of knowledge and understanding?

Chapter 32

Zoomorphism is when an animal sees another as one of its own. Pi explains this in terms of the lion tamer once again, and how a lion will see the human tamer as an alpha creature. He gives numerous examples such as a mouse living in peace with a snake for weeks. The snake for whatever reason does not eat the mouse. Eventually a second, younger snake eats the mouse. He describes the process in detail and how the snake must feel regret for eating a mouse.



Chapter 33

The author returns, looking at Pi's old photographs. Most are of Pi in Canada, but four remain from Pi's childhood. Richard Parker is in one picture, though not recognizable as the reader has not yet been introduced to Richard Parker. Pi comments that he is said he cannot remember his mother, as he has no picture of her.

50. What is significant about the 4 photos that Pi has left of his life before the Pacific Ocean?

Chapter 34

Pi's father sells the animals to zoos across the ocean, many in America. Pi compares himself and his brother to the animals soon to be shipped overseas. It takes over a year to prepare to leave, due to so much paperwork for such a substantial transfer. Eventually the Patel family prepares to leave and Americans arrive to check out the animals.

Chapter 35

The date of Pi's family's departure is given as June 21, 1977 (summer solstice) on the Japanese freighter, *Tsimtsum* along with the animals in their cages. He is incredibly excited to be leaving. This Chapter delivers the final beautiful descriptions of India and Pi's mother country for the book.

51. Pi reflects "Things didn't turn out the way they were supposed to, but what can you do? You must take like the way it comes at you and make the best of it." What might explain Pi's acceptance of the chances of life?

Chapter 36

The author interrupts again, having arrived early to Pi's. Pi's son runs out, late for practice after which Pi apologizes for not introducing the author to his son, his four year old daughter, a dog, and a cat. He states "this story has a happy ending", having finally revealed to the author that there are other people in his life. This is the last time the author interjects as this is the last Chapter in Part 1 of the book.

52. What makes the fictional author comment that this story has a happy ending?
53. Why does Yann Martell choose to end Part 1 with this scene of domesticity?

PART TWO

Chapter 37



After the Tsimtsum sinks, Pi is stuck aboard a lifeboat with a zebra whose leg is broken. He sees Richard Parker in the water and calls him to him and helps get him aboard. When he finally realizes what he is doing, he sees that he has helped bring aboard Richard Parker, a 450 pound Bengal tiger. Pi immediately jumps overboard to escape.

- 54. Pi questions the purpose of reason. Why does he struggle with this?
- 55. Pi addresses his questions about life and the sense of the tragedy to Richard Parker. Why is this?

Chapter 38

Returning to his days on the boat, Pi describes the voyage on the Tsimtsum. He describes the chimpanzee and her bananas and Ravi's vivid interest in the engine room where he thinks something is off. One night, late, Pi hears an explosion and tries to wake his brother. He fails and heads up top to the deck to see what has happened. When he tries to go back below, the stairwell is blocked by water so he runs to three Chinese crew people who give him a life jacket and a whistle and throw him over board. The ship is sinking.

Chapter 39

After being thrown, he lands on a lifeboat's tarpaulin, losing his life jacket. He manages to keep the whistle though. As he tries to recover the Chinese crew members start yelling at him. Immediately afterwards a Zebra crashes aboard, followed by the boat breaking free of the freighter and hitting the water.

Chapter 40

Back in the water after jumping away from Richard Parker, Pi clings to a buoy hoping to keep far enough from Richard Parker not to be eaten. He sees though that there are sharks in the water, so when he cannot see Richard Parker under the tarpaulin, he wedges an oar under it and climbs out of the water.

- 56. Pi reflects "I was alone and orphaned, in the middle of the Pacific, hanging on to an oar, an adult tiger in front of me, sharks beneath me, a storm raging about me." Why doesn't Pi simply give up?

Chapter 41

Pi comes closer and closer to the boat on the oar and decides that if Richard Parker is beneath the tarpaulin, he will not come out with Pi out of sight. Pi comes aboard and comments on how amazing the zebra looks, wondering why it hasn't been eaten yet. He sees yet another animal aboard too, a spotted hyena. He cynically thinks that the crewmembers might have tossed him overboard to get rid of the hyena and save

themselves. He assumes the tiger fell overboard because there is no way a tiger and a hyena could exist together.



57. Martel injects some humour into the narrative with Pi reflecting "I never thought that finding myself confined in a small space with a spotted hyena would be good news, but there you go." What does this say about Pi's character?

Chapter 42

Floating in the ocean, Pi comes across a female orangutan named Orange Juice. He grabs the banana net she drifts towards him on and climbs aboard the boat, causing the hyena to scream.

58. Why does Orange Juice bring both "joy and pain in equal measure"?
59. Comment on Martel's choice of animals. What might each represent?

Chapter 43

While Pi thinks to himself that there are likely hundreds of rescuers out looking for him, that he and Orange Juice will be rescued from their ocean prison, the hyena continues to pace the boat, at one point jumping onto the tarpaulin for a moment before running back in fear. It starts barking and running around the zebra while Pi sits in fear contemplating just how disturbing the hyena is as a creature. Eventually the hyena vomits and lies down.

60. On what does Pi base his assumption that hundreds of rescuers are looking for them? What does the reality suggest about the insignificance of the ship in the Pacific and the insignificance of human beings in creation?

Chapter 44

When the sun comes up, Pi still sits on the oar, afraid to enter the boat with the predators. He wonders what the dark will do to the animals before hearing the barking of the hyena and the grunting of the orangutan. Beneath the boat, water predators continue to make noise as well. Pi is surrounded.

Chapter 45

As the sun comes up, Pi searches in vain for the rescue ship he is sure must be looking for him. He sees below that the hyena is finally eating the zebra, even though the zebra is still alive. As the boat rocks, Pi becomes nauseas. When he moves, he witnesses Orange Juice looking sick as well, wondering why she is still safe, not yet killed by the hyena.

61. Pi reflects that his “sense of empathy is blunted by a terrible, selfish hunger for survival”. How has Pi changed since the ship sank (in these early days of his journey on the Pacific)?
62. Orange Juice provides Pi a moment of relief. Comments on the significance of the animals that end up on the boat with Pi.



Chapter 46

In his memory, the second night aboard the boat was the worst of them all, regardless of the 226 other nights. He sees more sharks in the water and watches as Orange Juice searches for her sons (as he puts the emotion to her). As the zebra continues to protest being eaten, the hyena becomes enraged and tears into the animal noisily. The hyena slips and slides in blood, eating the zebra from the inside out, while it's still alive. The sight angers Orange Juice, causing her to roar, to which the hyena roars back. When the zebra spouts blood, the sharks react in a frenzy of their own and even more noise ensues. Finally, after a long time of ample noise, it all stops and Pi is left with his thoughts, crying in the night over the loss of everything he knows.

63. What is it about the second night that leads Pi to remember it being a night of “exceptional suffering”?
64. Why does Orange Juice react the way she does to the zebra's demise?

Chapter 47

When the sun dawns again, Pi sees the zebra is still moving. It doesn't die until noon, but as soon as it does, the hyena attacks Orange Juice. The two fight for a while as Orange Juice attacks the hyena, beating him. He also remembers that she was once a pet who became too big for its owners. Eventually the hyena snags her throat though and as Pi is afraid that he will be next he moves toward the Hyena to do what he can. In doing so, he sees that Richard Parker is still beneath the tarpaulin. He struggles back up above and collapses into delirium for the rest of the night.

65. What side of Orange Juice do we see in this Chapter and what does it suggest to us about animal instinct versus human instinct?
66. What function does the grizzly details of the death of the zebra and Orange Juice serve in the story? Why has Yann Martel chosen to go into this level of detail?

Chapter 48

Finally we learn how it is that Richard Parker came by a human name. When a half dozen people are found dead in a mountain area of Bangladesh, a hunter is hired to capture the panther they believe did it. It turns out to be a Tiger with her cub. The hunter captures the two and sends them off to Pondicherry zoo. On the paperwork the names of the hunter and the tiger cubby (Thirsty) are mixed up and Pi's father finds it amusing enough to leave it as is.

Chapter 49



Finally, Pi realizes that he's been awake and hasn't eaten or drank anything in three days. For some reason, the situation with Richard Parker, as hopeless as it seems, perks up Pi who begins to look for a source of drinking water. He no longer fears the hyena because of the tiger's presence and he now figures out the prior odd behavior of the other animals was likely in response to the presence of the tiger. He cannot however figure out why the tiger is acting so strange, assuming it's either the sedatives or seasickness.

67. Pi says that having "lost all hope" he "perked up and felt much better". Explain this apparent contradiction.
68. Pi rationalises that the hyena's behaviour can be explained because "in the face of such a superior predator, all of us were prey". What does this suggest about nature and our place within in?

Chapter 50

Here, Pi describes in minute detail every aspect of the lifeboat, from the size to the shape and room Richard Parker is taking up under the tarpaulin. He notes there are five oars but that he has no strength to row.

Chapter 51

As he keeps looking, Pi becomes desperate and unhooks the tarpaulin to look where Richard Parker is hiding. He spots multiple life jackets which he mistakes for the tiger and is scared again. Eventually he opens the compartment that was under the tarpaulin, which when opened blocks the opening to Richard Parker's den. He finds in there numerous survival supplies. He immediately drinks four cans of water and throws his vegetarian diet away to eat animal fat enhanced biscuits. After looking through the materials at his disposal he decides he has enough food for 93 days and enough water for 124 days.

Chapter 52

Pi does inventory of the lifeboat, comes up with: food, water, ropes, rain catchers, a notebook, and more from the locker. He finally has a decent night's sleep.

69. Comment on the detail Pi includes in his list.

Chapter 53

Pi tries to decide what is best for him, certain of death if he stays on the boat and certain of death if he jumps overboard. He once again falls into despair over his losses and the only thing that keeps him going is a short prayer he keeps telling himself, "so long as God is with me, I will not die. Amen." He decides to build a raft from the life jackets in the boat and the ropes in the locker. He puts the buoy in the middle and sets it attached to the front of the boat. The hyena is freaking out and Pi hopes to finish before it's too late.



It's then that Richard Parker finally rises to his full size and quickly kills the hyena. The tiger moans from the rocking of the boat, clearly seasick and turns to face Pi. Afraid for his life, Pi still manages to note the beauty of the tiger. When a rat runs across Pi's head, Richard Parker tries to attack. He cannot quite make it because of the motion of the boat though and it gives Pi to throw the rat at the tiger. Satisfied with his treat, Pi is able to retreat and escape the tiger's attack. He notices soon afterward that Richard Parker had vomited in his space.

With the time he's given, Pi quickly finishes the raft and gets aboard. He keeps it close to the lifeboat, but it floats and offers a source of safety to keep away from the tiger. When it starts raining and Pi goes to get a rain catcher, Richard Parker hears and goes to attack, forcing Pi to quickly push away from the boat.

Chapter 54

In the cold and wet, Pi cannot sleep and as the sea gets worse and the rain gets harder, he worries the raft will not hold. He decides he needs new plans, of which he manages to craft five. None of them will work, so he decides he can win against Richard Parker via attrition. He thinks he can simply outlive the tiger that will not have water or food.

Chapter 55

After a full night and half a day of rain, Pi is exhausted and barely remembers what he was thinking before. He eventually falls asleep when the sun finally arrives. He sees Richard Parker jumping across the expanse of water and attacking him and remembers that tigers can drink salt water. Ultimately he concludes that plan 6 is ultimately doomed from the start.

Chapter 56

Pi ruminates on the nature of fear and that regardless of how smart you might be, fear will destroy you. It attacks all of the parts of the body and will defeat you. He decides fear is his greatest opponent.

Chapter 57

Richard Parker seems full and watered and is making a purring type sound that his father told him is contentedness. He decides that the only way he can survive is if they both survive. The only way to accomplish that is to tame the tiger. He realizes he has a way of defeating fear now and staying alive.

He pulls out his whistle and with huge gestures and circus performer flare, makes the tiger step back and cringe. For a moment at least, Pi instills fear in the tiger. His seventh plan is created, keeping Richard Parker alive.

Chapter 58

Pi finds a survival guide and begins listing the tips from it. There are numerous useful tips and some specific ways to keep alive while adrift, but not a spot on training tigers or co-existing with a 450 pound predator. He must create his own training plan, starting with the dictation of territory, creation of shelter, and more.



70. Comment on the usefulness of the survival manual.

71. Pi says "Survival had to start with me." Comment on the survival Pi had to come to terms with.

Chapter 59

Pi begins to note the effects of his movement on the lifeboat and the raft and how they maneuver within the sea. When he pulls the boat closer, the boat rocks and waves, upsetting Richard Parker. As Richard Parker howls, the last vestiges of life in the rats and cockroaches flee the boat.

When Pi returns to the tarpaulin he notes that Richard Parker has marked his territory only underneath the cover. He snags some rain water that has collected and drinks it, then replaces it with his own urine and marks the top of the tarpaulin to claim his own territory.

His next step is to pull out the solar stills and string them along behind the boat. He adds a seat and a small shelter to the raft and watches the tiger. When he has his raft sufficiently stocked, he lets it out and watches Richard Parker from afar.

While he's watching, he notices below that there are dozens of different creatures in the sea below him. He sees that there are even more creatures than he originally thought when he only saw dolphins on the boat.

72. Discuss the significance of the two life forms left adrift in the Pacific.

73. From the raft Pi has a different perspective of the ocean than he did from the ship. How might this be a metaphor for our view of the world?

Chapter 60

Waking up in the middle of the night, Pi compares the beauty of his surroundings with a Hindu story he remembers from his youth of Markandeya, who sees the cosmos when he falls from Vishnu's mouth. The thought makes Pi feel very small compared to the universe, and he prays before going back to sleep.

74. What does viewing the ocean at night teach Pi about his predicament?

Chapter 61

Pi feels much stronger and better about his situation as he attempts fishing to catch food using his shoes. After failing, he looks for more bait in the locker and still finds nothing.

When he notices Richard Parker staring at him he freezes until a flying fish hits him in the face. He sees the fish flopping around inside the locker and tosses it Richard Parker. Unfortunately, the tiger misses the fish, but more fish begin to jump out of the water to escape predators. While Pi is berated with fish, Richard Parker takes the chance to eat the fish and feed amply. Before heading back to his raft, Pi grabs one of the fish for himself.



As he agonizes over killing the fish to use as bait, he reaches tears comparing himself to Cain in his crime. The flying fish works wonderfully as bait though and he manages to catch three of the large dorado. This time around he has no problem killing the fish as they are for Richard Parker instead. He feeds Richard Parker and uses the opportunity to blow his whistle and show his dominance once more.

75. What is Pi's explanation for the fact that he wept over the having to kill the flying fish, yet killed the dorado he caught without a second thought?

Chapter 62

Pi has trouble sleeping and decides to take some time paying attention to Richard Parker. He notes that he is probably thirsty and starts looking for a way to get water to the tiger without digging into his own supply. The solar stills that he set up have succeeded in creating a large amount of water though, so he puts the water in a bucket and adds some sea water for Richard Parker. He throws fish to the tiger and attaches the bucket to a bench for him. When he goes for the fish and notices the water, Pi blows his whistle and looks Richard Parker directly in the eyes and sends him running. After another bout of fishing, Pi has no more success, but he notes a sea turtle which he might have to turn to in the future. It's been one week since the freighter sank.

Chapter 63

Pi steps back from his narrative a bit and compares his 227 days to the duration of other castaways in history. He trumps them all, and gives credit to how busy he kept himself. His prayers were a large part of it, as well as Richard Parker. Richard Parker for his part is staying away because of the heat and the motion of the boat. He mentions as well that he does not remember any specific dates or times in order, just the beginning and ending of his journey.

76. What function did routine play in ensuring Pi's survival?
77. Pi prays 5 times a day in adherence to Muslim practice. In what way does this assist in his survival?
78. Why does Pi stop looking for rescue vessels?

Chapter 64

Pi describes how his clothes disintegrate and his skin begins to feel the damage of his days at sea. His boils and sores would not heal because of how horrible the sea water and sun were on the skin.

Chapter 65

Pi reads through the navigation instructions in his survival guide to no avail, not quite understanding them without sea or navigation training. He recognizes that he can control his life but he has absolutely no control over what direction he's going or how to change that direction.



79. The survival manual assumes scientific knowledge that Pi doesn't have. Explain the paradox.

Chapter 66

After a while of failed hook and line fishing, Pi decides to start impaling them. The revulsion he felt early on has passed and he has no trouble with killing them any more. At times, the use of the banana net from the boat is useful and he catches so many fish that he feels covered in their scales. He has even stooped to killing turtles and wrestling them aboard.

80. Pi says that he "descended to a level of savagery [he] never thought possible". What does this suggest about the human instinct for survival?

Chapter 67

The distractions of the day are becoming more and more important as monotony and boredom begin to overtake Pi. He witnesses the eco-system of algae, worms, slugs, shrimp, and fish growing and living on or around his raft. He eventually begins eating the crabs and barnacles living on or around the lifeboat.

Chapter 68

Richard Parker is probably the biggest distraction, as Pi watches the tiger's sleeping patterns and style while he himself cannot sleep.

Chapter 69

There is a slight light in the distance which causes Pi to set off flares that smell like spices. It reminds him of his home and his family and a deep depression hits him. The light illuminates the sea and both he and the tiger watch it, with the despair that he might not ever be rescued.

Chapter 70

Here, Pi goes into great detail about how to slaughter a sea turtle. He has to do it on the lifeboat. He hopes the heat will keep Richard Parker to himself. He slaughters the turtle by cutting his neck with a hatchet and draining the blood into the beaker. He drinks the blood and saws the shell off with a knife. When he finally gets the shell from his belly after much work and cannot quite kill the turtle, throwing him down to Richard Parker

and heading back to his raft. He decides he must quit working so hard for the tiger and act as the “alpha”.



Chapter 71

Pi goes over the play by play manner in which he was able to tame a tiger on a lifeboat. To begin, the first step is to provoke the animal, almost to the point of attack by not quite. Keep eye contact, and when the tiger gets near blow on a whistle and drop anchor to rock the boat until the tiger is sick. Afterwards, retreat to your own area and leave the tiger be. After a while, the tiger should associate the sound of a whistle with incredible illness and only the whistle will be needed.

Chapter 72

When Pi begins trying to intimidate Richard Parker in their training he uses a turtle shell shield and promptly gets smacked into the water. After a while, he's able to recover and with more and more turtle shells he keeps trying. Eventually, with a fifth shield, he's able to intimidate the tiger and come out victorious.

81. What does Pi's persistence at training Richard Parker say about his personality and his ordeal?

Chapter 73

Pi ruminates on how great a book would be, something to read over and over and enjoy differently each time. He wishes for scripture to read and compares himself to similarly stranded Hindu figures. He also thinks on the Gideon Bible he found in a hotel room and how great an idea it is to spread faith in places of rest. He would even go so far as to enjoy a novel at that point, but the only piece of reading he has left is the survival guide and his own choppy diary, written in tiny lettering to conserve paper. Nothing is in order and days are not catalogued. Rather it is just a mess of his ideas as they come to him and the experiences he's undergone.

82. Pi longs to have “a long book with a never-ending story”. What might be his reasons and what does this add to Martel's message about the nature of stories?

Chapter 74

Pi uses his religious rites to calm himself, regardless of how hard they are to perform. At his worst moments, he pronounces his love of God the most. His things and his spirit are quickly falling apart though and it takes only the thought of his family to spark a small bit of hope.

83. Pi struggles with faith during his ordeal but remains faithful. What accounts for this?

Chapter 75

Pi sings Happy Birthday to his mother on a day he guesses to be her birthday.

Chapter 76

Pi is in the process of cleaning up Richard Parker's feces, noting how rarely they come now from such a horrible diet. He notes as well that Richard Parker has begun to hide them as a sign of deference to Pi and a show of bowing to Pi's dominance. By rolling the feces about and staring at Richard Parker, he's able to exert yet a further degree of dominance over the tiger.



Chapter 77

The food is running lower by the day, so Pi begins to ration his biscuits further, eat turtles, and every part of the fish that the body can digest. He goes so far as to imagine the various extravagances of Indian cuisine in the stead of the fish parts he devours. In a fit of absolute hunger and despair, Pi tries to eat Richard Parker's feces, catching it in a cup and adding water. When he attempts to eat it though, he realizes there is nothing there to get, no nutrients, only waste so he dumps the rest out. He continues to get sicker.

Chapter 78

There is much variance in the weather, from the clouds to the rainfall. He ponders the different sounds of the sea, the wind, and the moon, and all of those many nights spent drifting. Everything is a circle to him, with no land on the horizon, and only the sun beating down every day. He ponders whether there is anyone else out there "also trapped by geometry, also struggling with fear, rage, madness, hopelessness, apathy." Everything that happens causes joy and despair at the same time. The sun is painful but it cures the meat for Pi to eat and powers the stills that create fresh water. The night is something of relief but is cold and unknown. When he is hot, he wishes to be wet, and when wet, wishes to be dry. And all the while he is both extremely bored and absolutely terrified.

84. How does the seemingly barren and inhospitable environment provide sustenance for Pi?

Chapter 79

There are numerous kinds of sharks in the waters always around the lifeboat. Pi enjoys their beauty as a pleasant distraction. He decides to catch one and when the Mako shark flops onto the boat, Richard Parker attacks it viciously. The shark manages to bite the tiger on the foot though and the ferocity of his roar and attack send Pi to the raft. After Richard Parker finally kills the shark, Pi is able to retrieve bits of the meat, though in the future he decides he will catch small sharks with a stab to the eye for quick kills.

Chapter 80

Another group of flying fish arrives and as Pi hides behind one of his turtle shells, Richard Parker eats them out of the air. One of the Dorado flies into the lifeboat on its own and brings Pi great joy. Richard Parker sees the fish as well and the two stare at

each other until Pi is able to stare down the tiger, proving that he has actually mastered the tiger in full. He now feels more comfortable on the lifeboat as the alpha.



Chapter 81

Pi thinks back on how amazing it was that he survived. He thinks on the fact that Richard Parker is a zoo tiger and not a wild one, meaning he relies on Pi solely for his food and water. He is still unable to believe the relationship he has with the tiger.

Chapter 82

The sole and most important purpose in his life is to find and keep fresh water. He keeps it very carefully stored and adds salt for Richard Parker. There's rarely enough water to drink though. The food is even harder as Pi gives most of the fish he catches to Richard Parker. He eats everything he does catch as quickly as possible though so that the tiger doesn't get to it. He compares himself to an animal, sinking lower over time to survive.

Chapter 83

When a monstrous storm strikes, the like of which could probably sink the lifeboat, Pi decides he will risk a night with Richard Parker in the lifeboat. He crawls under the tarpaulin and closes it over the top of the boat, holding tight to keep from being tossed onto the tiger. When the storm clears up, Pi's raft and most of his food are gone. Luckily, some water remains. As the day comes, Richard Parker emerges and watches Pi fix the broken bits of the boat and remove the water from it. He doesn't appear to have any interest in bothering Pi.

Chapter 84

As a whale swims by, Pi thinks of them as the ocean's communicators, sharing his plight with the whole ocean. The whales themselves though were already harpooned, likely by a Japanese ship and when a few dolphins swim by, he's unable to reach them with his gaff. When he sees birds, he hopes they mean there is land nearby. Regardless, he catches one and eats its organs, throwing the rest to Richard Parker.

Chapter 85

A brilliant lightning storm appears and offers Pi a bit of excitement. He hopes for Richard Parker to enjoy it with him, but the tiger is scared to shaking. Pi however is overwhelmed but not afraid, praising Allah and tries further to help Richard Parker enjoy it.

Chapter 86

Pi finally sees a ship, sending him into ecstatic daydreaming of his family in Canada. When he finally realizes that the ship is a tanker, much too large to see him in the water, he barely has time to get out of its way before he's crushed. Barely escaping the tanker's

vector, Pi is able to maneuver out of the way, sending a flare off of the side of the ship in the process. Richard Parker merely naps with mild interest in the proceedings. Pi swears to save the tiger, happy as he is with his only true companion.



85. What significance does Richard Parker's presence take on after the encounter with the ship?

Chapter 87

Using a dream rag, which is nothing more than a wet cloth, Pi covers his face and stops air from entering his lungs, plunging him into a deep sleep that offers him a bit of release.

86. What function does the dream rag serve? What does this say about 'escapism'?

Chapter 88

Drifting into a large mass of foul smelling garbage, Pi's able to snag a wine bottle from the mess and write a short message explaining his situation and toss it back into the water.

87. What prompts Pi to write a message and set it adrift in the bottle?
88. Refer to news articles about the 'Pacific Garbage Patch'.

Chapter 89

Everything that Pi has gathered is quickly breaking apart. His life vests have turned white, and the sun has even destroyed how everything smells. Richard Parker is emaciated in the same manner as Pi and his pen finally runs out, ending his journal entries. That last entry is about his own wasted condition and his guess that both he and Richard Parker will soon be dead. A bit of rain brings him hope but not enough and when Richard Parker does not move, he pokes him to see if he is still alive, guessing that he won't be for long.

89. Why has Martel chosen to make the wasted condition of Pi and Richard Parker coincide with the pen running out of ink?

Chapter 90

When Richard Parker loses his vision, it is only a short while before Pi does as well. Not only that but Pi can no longer stand up or eat. He is physically beaten that the insult of blindness is nearly too much to bear.

Out of nowhere though, Pi hears a voice, at first thinking it to be his imagination and then having a full conversation with the voice about food. The voice discusses the joy of eating meat dishes with Pi to which Pi replies that a carrot would be good as well. He realizes that the other voice is very much a meat eater and he believes he might be "talking" to Richard Parker. When he asks if the voice has killed a man, the voice replies

that he has killed not only a man but a woman and eaten them both. Pi quickly changes the subject.



After a while, he realizes that the voice has a French accent and thinks that someone else must actually be there. He tells the voice his name and receives a response, asking for food. The both of them are completely blind from lack of nutrition and continue to exchange stories of food. Pi tells the man that he has no food when the other offers a trade and the two commiserate further until Pi invites him aboard to discuss things closer, to enjoy each other's company. Eventually the other fellow comes aboard and when the two embrace, it is clear that he is trying to kill and eat Pi rather than befriend him. Richard Parker responds swiftly, killing and eating the other castaway. Richard Parker saves Pi's life, but Pi is completely mortified by the act and brought to tears.

Chapter 91

After rooting around in the other boat, Pi finds a bit of water and food. The tears brought on by the death of the other man have returned his vision a little bit. He rinses them further and in two days, they've completely recovered. When his vision returns he sees the final results of Richard Parker's attack on the body of the other castaway. In a final confession he admits he used bits of the dead man's flesh for bait and even ate small dried bits himself.

Chapter 92

The two arrive on an island made entirely of plant mass. There is only green, which Pi finds soothing as his favorite color and the shade of Islam, but Pi thinks it to be an illusion until he steps on it and smells the plants. He falls to the ground and decides to taste the algae, a sugary coating and salty inside. He weeps in joy at having found food after going to sit under the shade of a tree.

Richard Parker also leaves the boat, with all the strength he can muster and leaves for the midst of the island. Afraid of the tiger claiming the island as his own, Pi returns to the boat after eating and resting, to be joined later by a much livelier and fed Richard Parker.

The next day, the two return to the island and eat again. After Pi returns to the boat, Richard Parker comes charging at him. He tries to stop him with the whistle, but the discomfort of the tiger forces him into the water where he swims toward the boat instead.

The next day, the two go out for more of the same, regaining their strength. Pi attempts walking for the first time again and they are feeling much healthier. After another day, Pi decides to explore the island a bit, seeing all kinds of ponds, trees and thousands of tiny meerkats. The meerkats are huddled around a pond snagging fish from below and Pi soon joins them by soaking the fresh water of the pond. Richard Parker soon arrives and decimates the meerkats. They simply allow it, not knowing anything of predators on their algae island.

After a few more days, Pi cleans out the lifeboat and explores the island further. He decides it must be about 7 miles in diameter and 20 miles around. He continues and makes further scientific judgments of the algae on the island as well.



As time passes, the two regain much of their health and strength. With the tiger regaining so much strength, Pi decides to resume training to keep him safe. He teaches the tiger how to jump through hoops, not quite able to teach him the more complicated rolling hoop tricks.

On a particular night, Pi decides to sleep in a tree with the thousands of meerkats that climb them every night. In the morning all of the furry little creatures crawl off of him and head for the ponds. He eventually brings supplies and continues sleeping in the trees, enjoying the meerkats' company. One night, he notices a dead fish in the pond that causes the meerkats to yell. In the morning the dead fish is gone.

In further travels on the island, Pi finds that the island may be carnivorous with a tree that holds a human tooth. He tests this by dropping a meerkat onto the algae at night and watching it scurry back up the tree. He decides that the island emits some kind of acid at night to digest whatever is still on it. It's time to leave the island. When he leaves, he brings a plentiful supply of water, meerkats, and fish as well as some of the algae (though it dissolves at night in the acid). He waits for Richard Parker and when the tiger returns sets back out to wander the sea in his boat.

90. Time passes at a different pace in this chapter. Why?

Chapter 93

With everything around him run out, Pi is out of resources. He reaches the lowest point thus far, and decides to turn to God.

91. Pi observes "It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unrelenting suffering, I should turn to God." Why is this "natural"?

Chapter 94

The lifeboat comes ashore in Mexico and Pi stumbles off onto the beach. Richard Parker follows him and bolts into the jungle, never looking back. Pi feels alone, abandoned by the tiger, until he compares the beach to God and he feels its embrace. As he cries over losing Richard Parker, people find Pi on the beach, despairing that he didn't have a proper good bye to end the story. He regrets to the very day he tells the author the story that he didn't say "farewell. God be with you," to Richard Parker.

To a local village the people on the beach take Pi to be bathed and fed. He eats for days, and is eventually taken to a hospital and finally to his foster mother in Canada. Pi's story ends with special thanks to everyone who helped him along the way.

92. Why does Pi wish he had farewelled Richard Parker with "God be with you"?

PART THREE

Chapter 95

The author finally returns, discussing the arrival of Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba to Tomatlan. At first arriving in Tomatan, the wrong city, they travel over 1500 KM via a ferry boat and broken car to reach Tomatlan, their actual destination. After 41 hours of unpleasantness, they arrive at the Benito Juarez infirmary and interview Pi for hours, recording everything. In the end they give a copy of the entire tape and a copy of the report to the author.



Chapter 96

Pi meets the Japanese men, introducing themselves as interviewers on behalf of Japan, trying to learn about the sinking of the Tsimtsum. They tell him they had a good trip in between discussing between themselves in Japanese. They hand Pi a cookie and then start an interview.

Chapter 97

“The Story”

Chapter 98

After asking for a break and giving Pi another cookie, the Japanese men discuss how they think Pi is crazy. They also note how Pi is hoarding cookies, offering him yet another and leaving the room temporarily.

Chapter 99

The two Japanese men return and inform Pi that his story is not believable. He asks why and they mention that bananas do not float, to which Pi proves them wrong by floating two bananas in front of them. Their second point is the carnivorous island, which seems impossible. Pi states that it is unlikely that certain other plants would make sense if one had never seen them, such as a Venus Fly trap. The missing tiger is the third argument to which Pi mentions that animals escape all the time and are never found. He is angry that his story is “hard to believe” and they step aside again, commenting that he stole their entire lunches.

When Mr. Okamoto tries to discuss the sinking of the ship, Pi has none of it and they continue to argue over the truth of Pi’s story. The conversation tugs back and forth ending with idle conversation to ease the stress.

Finally, Pi angrily starts a story designed so as not to “surprise you. That will confirm what you already know.” He tells them a second story without animals in which a French Cook, a sailor with a broken leg and Pi’s mother are with him on the lifeboat. The cook cuts off the sailor’s leg and when he dies, eats him, greatly disturbing Pi and his mother. A while later Pi’s mother and the cook argue and the cook kills Pi’s mother, throwing her head to Pi. Afterwards, Pi kills the cook and finally, alone, he turns to God.

Mr. Okamoto points out the parallels in the stories and analogous situations and the two don't know what to believe. They continue to press for details about the actual sinking of the ship and continue to annoy Pi who has only bad things to say about the crew of the ship.



With neither story offering a different outcome, Pi requests that they choose which story they like best. The two men enjoy the first story, to which Pi offers thanks and begins to cry. The two men finally thank Pi and leave, commenting that they'll hide from Richard Parker. Pi comments "He's hiding somewhere you'll never find him."

Chapter 100

When Mr. Okamoto finally submits his report, it does not explain why the ship sank and at the end he footnotes it with a comment stating that Pi Patel's is a great story of amazing survival as he survived "in the company of an adult Bengal tiger."

Themes



Stories, Storytelling and Storytellers

This is the main subject of Martel's book. From the 'Author's Note' where a writer searches for a story to the ending where Pi offers up an alternative tale, *Life of Pi* is about the place of the story in human life. The structure of the text with its multiple retellings of the story highlights this aspect. Throughout the novel, Martel supplies observations on the nature of stories.

In the 'Author's Note', the reader is told that the author was actually writing another book when he heard Pi's story. Unfortunately, that story doesn't work out as 'An element is missing, that spark that brings to life a real story'. (p. xi) *Life of Pi* is about the search for that 'element'. As the author travels through India, people offer him stories when they find out he is a writer: 'Most times the stories were little more than anecdotes, short of breath and short of life'. (p. xi) Martel associates stories with life – stories must live and breathe. They don't have to be 'true' but they have to be credible and well told. When Francis Adirubasamy tells him that he has a 'story that will make you believe in God' (p. xii), Martel suggests that a good story must test readers but ultimately make them believe that the story could happen. For a novel that will involve a boy and a tiger in a lifeboat, he has set himself a considerable task.

His use of the castaway story is significant. It is a story that reaches back to the dawn of civilisation. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is a castaway story of sorts, as is Homer's *Odyssey*. This is an archetypal story that we have been telling since the first stories were recorded. Martel thus announces his intention to tell a story about telling stories. When Pi's mother, concerned that he is becoming obsessed with religion, suggests some reading material, it is a Robert Louis Stevenson book that she hands to him. When he protests that he has already read the book three times, she offers Arthur Conan Doyle, Narayan, and *Robinson Crusoe*. Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Conan Doyle both wrote castaway stories. The other writer mentioned, R.K. Narayan, wrote a novel called *A Tiger for Malgudi* that is narrated by the eponymous character.

The shipwreck story contains elements which continue to intrigue readers, film goers and television audiences. When the technology fails, humans are left to their own devices. They must take on nature using only the craftiness that has always given them the advantage in battles with the natural world. The resourcefulness and determination that humans can show come to the fore in this situation. It is a story which exposes what resilient creatures we can be, given the right circumstances. They are also survival stories, and reflect our own feelings about life and death. Something in the castaway's desperate clinging to life strikes a chord in a life where death remains a source of fear and mystery. Martel 'ups the ante' by putting a large predator in the lifeboat with the castaway.



Science and Nature

When Pi attends the University of Toronto, he has a very unique double major; religious studies and zoology. One of the challenges in reading *Life of Pi* is in understanding the connection. They would seem to be quite distinct disciplines until the reader considers that both represent mystery and wonder. Religion sprang out of our need to explain natural phenomenon. When people began to consider the world around us, they began to tell stories to explain the mysteries. Why is the rain falling? Who built that mountain? From the beginning, people confronted animals either as companions, a source of food or as dangerous predators. Cave paintings, perhaps the earliest recorded stories, often depict people's interactions with animals. Animal stories are as old as castaway stories so it is significant that Martel has combined the two.

Animal stories are a staple of children's stories and to some extent our view of these creatures is conditioned by those stories. Bears are cute, snakes are nasty and so on. Our language for animals is largely anthropomorphic; that is, we see them in terms of our own nature. Martel strives to present animals in an unsentimental manner. His castaway story, except for Richard Parker, is in keeping with the tradition; but his animal stories are not. The key to Pi's survival on the raft is never allowing his feelings for Richard Parker to cloud his judgement. He says he loves the tiger but knows that a hug would almost certainly end in death. Martel's idea seems to be that animal stories are fine but animals also have their own stories and these are as interesting as those of the anthropomorphic variety. That story is science. Zoology is, of course, a science. In a book that is decidedly in favour of religion as a 'better story' than agnosticism, science is not undervalued nor ignored. In Chapter 7, Pi discovers that his science teacher is an atheist. When Pi suggests that religion is 'light', Mr Kumar counters by telling him that, 'a clear intellect, close attention to detail and a little scientific knowledge will expose religion as superstitious bosh. God does not exist'. (p. 27) This would seem to fly against everything that the multi-faith Pi believes but he sees it as another story: 'It was my first clue that atheists are my brothers and sisters of a different faith, and every word they speak, speaks of faith. Like me, they go as far as the legs of reason will carry them – and then they leap'. (p. 28) For all his religious faith, Pi is a man (or a boy) of reason. His approach to his predicament is nothing if not scientific. He maps out the lifeboat and sets to work establishing where he can get food and water. His use of the rain water stills and his descriptions of fishing suggest that Martel has thought carefully about how someone would survive so long in such conditions. Similarly, Pi's approach to Richard Parker is informed by the scientific knowledge of animals that he has elaborated on in the first section of the book.

Two incidents towards the end of the novel highlight Pi's 'faith' in reason and science. He realises that he has landed on a carnivorous island through observation and experiment, two cornerstones of scientific inquiry. When the Japanese investigators suggest that bananas don't float and that this is a credibility problem in his story, he challenges them to perform an experiment. The experiment shows that bananas do, in fact, float. They don't believe his story about the island either.

“No scientist would believe you.”

"Those would be the same that dismissed Copernicus and Darwin. Have scientists finished coming upon new plants? In the Amazon basin, for example?" (p. 294)



The suggestion is that science is a story that continues to unfold and like all stories it requires belief or 'faith'. The debate that rages between religion and science, or faith and reason, is an old one. Martel makes the point that they are, in a sense, the same thing. In Chapter 32, Mr Kumar, his atheist teacher meets Mr Kumar the baker who inspires Pi's conversion to Islam. They both stare at a Grant's Zebra.

'Mr Kumar said, "Equus burchelli boehmi."

Mr. Kumar said, "Allahu akbar."

I said, "It's very pretty."

We looked on.' (p. 84)

Religion

Pi's other major at the University of Toronto is Religious Studies. This is hardly surprising when we learn that, as a teenager, the Hindu Pi converted to Christianity and Islam simultaneously. At the beginning of Chapter 1, he reveals that his honours thesis dealt with Isaac Luria. Is it possible that Pi converted to Judaism as well? Pi is attracted to his three religions for different reasons. His description of Hinduism at the beginning of Chapter 16 highlights the sensory pleasure of that religion: 'I am a Hindu because of sculptured cones of red kumkum powder and baskets of yellow turmeric nuggets, because of garlands of flowers and pieces of broken coconut, because of the clanging bells to announce one's arrival to God...' (p. 47) He equates sense with faith: 'I became loyal to these sense impressions before I knew what they meant or what they were for'. (pp. 47-48). Martel proposes the idea that religious faith is not entirely abstract but can be something that is experienced in a tangible way. Every creative writing teacher will eventually make the point that a good story needs to invoke more than one sense; a good story should appeal to the mind and the body. To Pi, the sensory element of Hinduism helps to make it a good story. He is astounded by Christianity: 'You keep your sweaty, chatty Son to yourself' (p. 56), says Pi to Father Martin. At first, Pi cannot understand the human element in Christ's story. His idea of a God is a superhero like the Hindu Krishna. He notes that Christ is a God who, 'goes hungry, who suffers from thirst, who gets tired...' (p. 55). Pi is maddened by the idea but eventually finds himself strongly attracted Christ's story. The sensory richness of Hinduism is replaced by the deprivation invoked by the crucifixion story. Later, Pi says that it is Christ's 'humanity I found so compelling, in my way'. (p. 58) Pi describes Islamic prayer as 'a deeply religious contact'. (p. 61) He also calls it a 'callisthenic communion with God'. (p. 60) Pi is attracted to the simplicity and the physicality of Islam. It differs to Hinduism and Christianity but there is still a sensory element. All of the religions come into play for different reasons during his ordeal at sea. Martel is suggesting that religions like stories are to be enjoyed for different reasons. Certain websites caution readers against this book for this reason. Religious 'tourism' is to be avoided, apparently. Martel's purpose is to put religion into the context of the human experience and our need to explain through stories. In Chapter 22, Pi suggests that death is only a problem for agnostics who will view death as, 'Possibly a f-f-failing oxygenation of the b-b-brain,' (p. 64) and, to the very end, lack imagination and miss the better story.



Hunger

Life of Pi begins with, 'This book was born as I was hungry'. (p. ix) The idea of hunger becomes somewhat ambiguous as the reader realises that his hunger was not for food but for a story. Early in the novel, the 'author' notes that Pi is 'an excellent cook. His overheated house always smells of something delicious'. (p. 24) Pi, as he appears in the Toronto sections, cooks up food for the author but also feeds him the story of his ordeal. Martel develops the link between food and stories throughout the novel. Pi's rich sensory description of Hinduism includes references to food and he discovers Islam while sampling Mr Kumar's bread. Part of his attraction to Christianity is Christ's hunger and thirst on the cross. The appeal of religions, as has been noted, is the stories; but Martel suggests that stories are like food. We are nourished by narrative and they are as necessary to our survival as food and water. Martel highlights this connection in the first section of the book and puts it to the test in the second. In Chapter 22, a short but important section of the novel, refers to the agnostic's view of the world as 'dry yeastless factuality'. (p64) This view is, according to Pi, without substance and he uses a food metaphor to make his point.

Pi is able to survive his ordeal by using the water stills, and hunting and gathering food from the ocean. He survives but his imagination begs for more. When he meets the Frenchman towards the end of the novel, their conversation is almost entirely about food. ' "If you're not happy with this figment of your fancy, pick another one. There are plenty of fancies to pick from." Hmmm. Fig-ment. Wouldn't a fig be good?' (p. 243)

The conversation that follows details the culinary fantasies of Pi and the Frenchman. Martel is suggesting that our imaginations must be fed in the same way that we feed our stomachs. In this scene, food and the evocation of food are almost interchangeable. Later, when Pi is questioned by the two Japanese investigators, an interesting exchange takes place:

'Mr Okamoto: "Mr. Patel, we don't believe your story."
"Sorry – these cookies are good but they tend to crumble. I'm amazed. Why not?" '(p.292)

What is Pi saying? He is suggesting that the best stories like the best cookies tend to crumble when held up to scrutiny. This isn't an admission that his story isn't true. It is simply an acknowledgement of the nature of good stories: good stories always have an extraordinary element that stretches our perception of reality. The castaway story is always about the exceptional ability of human beings to survive. It is that element of the exceptional that is the hardest part to believe; it is also the most powerful part of the tale.

The other aspect of food in *Life of Pi* is Pi himself. For a large part of the novel, Pi Patel must ensure that he does not become Richard Parker's dinner. Tigers are a well-known and well-documented predator of man: the various 'man eater' stories along with the fear and awe inspired by these creatures is significant in the novel. Pi's father tries to inspire a healthy respect for animals by forcing them to watch a goat as it is devoured by a tiger. Afterwards, Ravi says to Pi, 'You're the next goat'. (p. 39) His words are ironic because Pi comes dangerously close to meeting such a fate. Richard Parker's presence is

a reminder that food and eating are part of a chain of existence. From the cannibalistic attack of the Frenchman to the carnivorous island, there is a strong sense of the food chain in this novel. Food is closely aligned with stories. Martel's pastiche of so many familiar stories can be seen as an analogy for this process. Stories are devoured by storytellers who tell new stories which are in turn devoured by other storytellers. The use of the castaway story underlines Martel's point.



Quotations



1. **"I have a story that will make you believe in God."** Author's Note p. x This is spoken by Francis Adirubasamy to the author. At first the reader may think the story is about believing in a religion but it is not. It is not about holding on to the particulars, but about having faith in something beyond what is seen. At the end of the book the reader may choose to believe or not.
2. **"If we citizens do not support our artists, then we sacrifice our imagination on the altar of crude reality and we end up believing in nothing and having worthless dreams."** Author's Note p. xii The author is thanking the Canada Council for the Arts for their support, but he is also encouraging the promotion of the better story.
3. **"But religion is more than rite and ritual. There is what the rite and ritual stand for."** p. 48 Pi is describing the sights, sounds, and smells of Hinduism. He goes on to explain the fundamentals of that religion. He sees the world from a Hindu perspective, but cautions against fundamentalism. This points out again that it is not about the particulars of the religion, but about faith.
4. **"Tree took account of road, which was aware of air, which was mindful of sea, which shared things with sun. Every element lived in harmonious relation with its neighbour, and all was kith and kin."** p. 62 Pi is returning home from a visit with Mr. Kumar, the Sufi. He has a feeling that the connectedness of all things has been revealed to him by God.
5. **"I felt like a small circle coinciding with the center of a larger one."** p. 62 This is another part of Pi's revelation. He has a sense of peace, unity, and harmony resulting from his ability to weave three religions and science into his personal belief system. The circle simile is appropriate for someone named Pi.
6. **"The presence of God is the finest of rewards."** p. 63 Pi is pleased with the spirituality he has achieved. He has just described two instances where he felt that God had come close to him. With three religions he can strive for three times the presence.
7. **"Jesus, Mary, Muhammad and Vishnu, how good to see you Richard Parker!"** p. 97 Pi is shipwrecked and sees Richard Parker swimming toward him. There is ironic humor in his multi-religious exclamation (one of many). Also, not yet knowing who Richard Parker is, the reader is led to believe momentarily that someone else has survived the wreck.
8. **"After a thorough investigation, I made a complete list: "192 tablets of anti-seasickness medicine !" 124 tin cans of fresh water, each containing 500 milliliters, so 62 liters in all !" 32 plastic vomit bags !" 1 boy with a complete set of light clothing but for one lost shoe !" 1 spotted hyena !" 1 Bengal tiger !" 1 lifeboat !" 1 ocean !" 1 God"** p. 145-146 Pi makes a very specific, quantitative list that goes on for two pages. The last entries on the list are both humorous and

philosophical. Pi has God with him, even alone in the middle of the ocean.



9. **“Only fear can defeat life.”** p. 161 Pi is explaining the dangers of fear, but at the same time seems to be talking himself out of being afraid. Fear can cause the loss of belief and the loss of reason. The “light of words” defeats fear by not allowing your mind to wallow in it.
10. **“It came as an unmistakable indication to me of how low I had sunk the day I noticed, with a pinching of the heart, that I ate like an animal, that this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate.”** p. 225 Pi kills and eats quickly so he can get his share before having to give it up to Richard Parker. He has become like an animal. Animals are not accountable to God for their actions. This scene comes at a time when Pi’s faith has waned.
11. **“I know what you want. You want a story that won’t surprise you. That will confirm what you already know. That won’t make you see higher or further or differently.”** Pi is angry that the Japanese men do not believe his story. They have told him they want to know what really happened. This quote brings the climax of the story. Pi will tell a second story, without animals, about his survival. He will then press the men into confessing which they thought was the better story.

Quotations



- 'That's what fiction is about, isn't it, the selective transforming of reality? The twisting of it to bring out its essence?' Pg X
- 'It is true that those we meet can change us, sometimes so profoundly that we are not the same afterwards, even unto our names.' (Pg 20)
- 'Doubt is useful for a while ...but we must move on. To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin to choosing immobility as a means of transportation.' (Pg 28)
- Pi: 'Religion will save us' (Pg 27)
- 'Atheists are my brothers and sisters of a different faith, and every word they speak speaks of faith. Like me, they go as far as the legs of reason will carry them – and then they leap.' (Pg 28)
- 'I learned the lesson that an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us, twice: one with Father and once with Richard Parker. (Pg 31)
- 'The Hyenas ... The strongest jaws in nature. Don't think that they're cowardly or that they only eat carrion. They're not and they don't! They'll start eating you while you're still alive.' (Pg 36 – 37)
- "Life will defend itself no matter how small it is.' (Pg 38)
- 'That is God as God should be. With shine and power and might. Such as can rescue and save and put down evil.' (Pg 55)
- 'The presence of God is the finest of rewards.' (Pg 63)
- "Bapu Ghandi said, 'All religions are true.' I just want to love God," I blurted out, and looked down, red in the face.' (Pg 69)
- 'For evil in the open is but evil from within that has been let out. The main battlefield for good is not the open ground of the public arena but the small clearing of each heart.' (Pg 71)
- 'People move because of the wear and tear of anxiety ... Because of the feeling that nothing will change, that happiness and prosperity are possible only somewhere else.' (Pg 78)
- 'Things didn't turn out the way they were supposed to, but what can you do? You must take life the way it comes at you and make the best of it.' (Pg 91)



- 'Hope fed on hope.' (Pg 119)
- 'When your own life is threatened, your sense of empathy is blunted by a terrible, selfish hunger for survival' (Pg 120)
- 'I was so solely in need of company and comfort' (Pg 145)
- 'I must say a word about fear. It is life's only true opponent. Only fear can defeat life' (Pg 161).
- 'You dismiss your last allies: hope and trust. There, you've defeated yourself. Fear, which is but an impression, has triumphed over you' (Pg 162).
- 'I had to tame him. It was at that moment that I realized this necessity. It was not a question of him or me, but of him and me' (Pg 164).
- 'I hated him for it, yet at the same time I was grateful' (Pg 164).
- 'Remember: the spirit, above all else, counts. If you have the will to live, you will' (Pg 167).
- 'I saw my suffering for what it was, finite and insignificant' (Pg 177)
- 'It is simple and brutal: a person can get used to anything, even to killing' (Pg 185).
- 'I survived because I forgot the very notion of time' (Pg 192).
- 'I got a clear sense of direction from the spectacle, most definitely, but I mean that in a spiritual sense, not a geographic one' (Pg 193).
- 'I travelled down the road of life' (Pg 194).
- 'To think that when I was a child I always shuddered when I snapped open a banana because it sounded to me like the breaking of an animal's neck. I descended to a level of savagery I never imagined possible' (Pg 197)
- 'All animals, do not favour violence as a means of settling scores. When animals fight, it is with the intent to kill and with the understanding that they may be killed' (Pg 206).
- 'Words scratched on a page trying to capture a reality that overwhelmed me' (Pg 208)

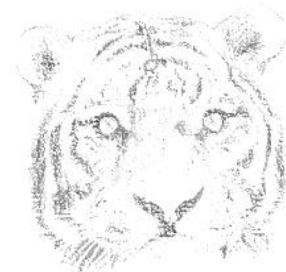


- 'Faith in god is an opening up, a letting go, a deep trust, a free act of love – but sometimes it was so hard to love (Pg 208)'
- 'To be a castaway is to be a point perpetually at the centre of a circle' (Pg 215).
- 'Only death consistently excites your emotions, whether contemplating it when life is safe and stale, or fleeing it when life is threatened and precious' (Pg 217).
- 'A terrific battle of minds for status and authority was waged between a boy and a tiger' (Pg 222).
- 'It came as an unmistakable indication to me of how low I had sunk the day I noticed, with a pinching of the heart, that I ate like an animal, that this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate' (Pg 225)
- 'At moments of wonder, it is easy to avoid small thinking, to entertain thoughts that span the universe, that capture both thunder and tinkle, think and thin, the near and far' (Pg 234)
- "'I love you!" The words burst out pure and unfettered, infinite. The feeling flooded my chest. "Truly I do. I love you, Richard Parker. If I didn't have you now, I don't know what I would do. I don't think I would make it. No, I wouldn't. I would die of hopelessness. Don't give up, Richard Parker, don't give up. I'll get you to land, I promise, I promise!"' (Pg 236).
- '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 off 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' (Pg 255).
- 'It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God' (Pg 284).
- 'I am a person who believes in form, in the harmony of order. Where we can, we must give things a meaningful shape' (Pg 285).
- 'It's important in life to conclude things properly. Only then can you let go. Otherwise you are left with words you should have said but never did, and your heart is heavy with remorse' (Pg 285).
- 'Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer' (Pg 297).
- 'Tigers exist, lifeboats exist, oceans exist. Because the three have never come together in your narrow, limited experience, you refuse to believe that they might' (Pg 299).

- 'The world isn't just the way it is. It is how we understand it, no? And in understanding something, we bring something to it, no? Doesn't that make life a story?' (Pg 302)
- 'Solitude began. I turned to God. I survived' (Pg 311).
- 'Mr. Okamoto: "Yes. The story with animals is the better story."
- Pi Patel: "Thank you. An so it goes with God." (Pg 317).
- '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' (Pg 319).



Close Study - Chapter 8



This is, at once, one of the funniest and ghastliest chapters in the novel. It begins with a lecture from Pi on the cruelty of people towards zoo animals. He outlines several examples from his own zoo and others. He then describes the idea of anthropomorphism and its dangers. He relates a story about his father's lesson on the dangers of the zoo animals. His father takes Pi and Ravi to watch a tiger devour a goat; he then takes them around to a number of other exhibits and summarises the danger that each animal represents to people. At the end of the tour, Ravi tells Pi that he is the 'next goat'.

This chapter is critically important to the structure of the story because it establishes the great danger that Richard Parker poses to Pi on the life raft. It also adds some credibility to Pi's ability to tame the tiger. The reader must know that Pi is knowledgeable on the subject of animals if they are to 'believe' that he can survive for 277 days on a life raft with a Bengal tiger.

The chapter extends the theme of the relationship between animals and people. We tell stories about animals because they are mysterious. The tendency in literature to anthropomorphise animals is one of ideas that Martel challenges in this story.

- Why is man the 'most dangerous animal in the zoo'?
- Why does Martel relate such horrible stories of human cruelty?
- How do these stories fit into the wider theme of people and animals in the story?
- What is 'anthropomorphism'? Give examples.
- Why is anthropomorphism the bane of zoologists?
- How does Pi's father justify the lesson? Is he right?
- How does Martel describe the tiger devouring the goat? What is the effect?
- Why is it significant that the tiger eats the goat because he is hungry?
- How do the descriptions of the dangers of the other animals work against anthropomorphism? Give examples.
- What does Pi think when he goes by the Rhinoceros pit after the lesson? Has he completely abandoned anthropomorphism?
- Why is Ravi's comment at the end of the chapter significant?
- What is the overall effect of this chapter?
- Why is it an important component of the novel?
- Compare this chapter to the section that follows on religion. Pi's majors in university are religious studies and zoology. What is the connection?

Close Study - Chapters 56 and 57



There is any number of important and significant chapters in the second section of the novel. Pi's observations about his predicament and life in general, not to mention his various adventures, make for compelling reading.

These two chapters point to a several of the main ideas in the novel and are therefore worth reading in detail. Chapter 56 is a meditation on fear. Pi describes the process by which one is filled with fear and the physical effect of it. He suggests that the only way to defeat fear is to articulate it. Chapter 57 opens with the admission that it was Richard Parker who helped him overcome his fear. He notices that Richard Parker is contented after eating. He then hears the tiger make a sound called the 'Prusten', a sound that tigers make to indicate their friendship. Pi interprets it as a question about their future together. At that moment he decides to tame Richard Parker. Using the whistle, he manages to subdue the animal.

- Why is fear life's only true opponent?
- How does Pi characterise fear?
- Why is the physical effect of fear important?
- How does fear triumph over a person?
- What do humans fear most?
- What is Pi's solution to fear? How does Pi's solution relate to storytelling? How does it relate to religion?
- Why is it surprising that Richard Parker helps him to deal with his fear?
- How does Pi read Richard Parker's expression?
- Describe the Prusten. What is the Prusten in human terms? Why does the sound suggest to Pi that he should tame the tiger?
- Why does Pi contend that Richard Parker saved his life?
- Why is it significant that Pi creates the fantasy of a circus ring to train the tiger?
- What does Richard Parker represent?
- What has Pi accomplished in Chapter 57 aside from the obvious success in training Richard Parker?
- Human beings conquer fear by telling stories. Do you agree?

Close Study – Chapter 99



Chapter 99 is the penultimate chapter in the novel. It is the longest chapter and the one that most sharply divides readers of the novel. Some finish this chapter and feel that they have been tricked. Pi has made up the story that they have just read; Pi's other story is unpleasant but, for some reason, readers feel that this is the 'truth'. All of this is part of Martel's message in the novel: he wants the reader to consider stories and what makes them work from a critical perspective.

In this passage, Pi tries to prove that his story is true. He uses rational arguments but fails to convince the Japanese interviewers. His story is just too good to be true. So he thinks for a moment and tells them another story.

- 'Sorry – these cookies are good but they tend to crumble.' What is the significance of this statement?
- How does Pi try to convince them to believe his story about Orange Juice, the ape?
- How does Pi argue his case when they doubt his story about the carnivorous island?
- 'It's an incredible story'. (p. 296) What is ironic about the investigator's disbelief?
- What is the difference between Pi's view of the world and that of the investigators?
- 'What is your problem with hard to believe?' (p. 297) What point is Pi trying to make?
- 'Nothing beats reason for keeping tigers away.' (p. 298) What does Pi mean by this statement?
- The two investigators doubt his story precisely because it is so hard to believe. What is Pi's response?
- What kind of story do the investigators want? Why is this ironic? What is Pi's contention about the use of words and the idea of invention?
- What point is Martel making about stories and storytelling in this passage?
- Throughout the passage, food is being exchanged and discussed. What connection is Martel making between food and stories?
- Pi's objections and arguments are based on sound logic and reason. Why does the reader tend to identify with the investigators?

Text Response Topics



1. 'The main character in *Life of Pi* is the story itself.' Discuss.
2. '*Life of Pi* is a novel about different kinds of hunger.' Discuss.
3. Why does Pi dislike agnostics over atheists? Discuss.
4. 'Richard Parker represents the mystery of the natural world.' Discuss.
5. Why are the most important parts of *Life of Pi* the hardest to believe? Discuss.
6. The 'better story' is more important than the 'truth'. Do you agree?
7. 'Stories are as important to survival as food and water.' Discuss.
8. If Pi is so religious why does he not reject science and reason? Discuss.
9. 'Life of Pi is a book about food.' Do you agree?
10. 'At the end of the novel, it becomes clear that the whole book is an elaborate trick.' Do you agree?
11. 'At the end of the novel, the reader is left 'bamboozled' and suspicious of the narrator.' Discuss.
12. Yann Martel shows the reader that a book can be both playful and serious. How does he do this?
13. "Every page offers something of tension, humanity, surprise, or even ecstasy". How does Yann Martel inspire such a range of emotions in his reader?
14. 'Life of Pi is often horrific, at times hilarious, and will leave a persistent pull on your psyche as it did mine.' Do you agree with this assessment of the novel?
15. 'Yann Martel's winning novel, *Life of Pi*, tells the story of a boy adrift in a lifeboat with only a tiger for company. It's been described as eccentric and entrancing.' Do you agree?
16. 'As readers we can enjoy the tale of survival by Pi, but there is a deeper underlying meaning to the narrative.' Do you agree?



17. Yann Martel has said, 'I think of it as two stories and you have to choose.' Which story do you choose to believe in *Life of Pi*?
18. "Without Richard Parker, I wouldn't be alive today to tell you my story." Is Richard Parker responsible for Pi's survival?
19. 'Pi condemns "those who lack artistry and imagination, the inability to commit to a story." How important is story-telling in the novel?
20. 'Pi endures life's ups and downs the way an animal in the wild does: because he has to.' Pi learns that animalistic behaviour is the key to his survival. Do you agree?
21. 'Pi embraces religious doctrine for the same reason he embraces the safety and security of a zoo enclosure: it makes life easier and more pleasurable.' In what way is this shown in the novel?
22. Martel uses the island as a test of faith for Pi. Do you agree?
23. 'Religion is aligned with imagination, while lack of faith is linked to accurate observation and rationalism.' How is faith explored in the novel?
24. 'Stripped of his normal life, Pi must return to nature and reassert his animal instincts to survive.' How does Yann Martel explore this notion in the novel?
25. 'Life on a lifeboat isn't much of a life. It is like an end game in chess, a game with few pieces. The elements couldn't be more simple, nor the stakes higher.' How does Pi win the game of survival?
26. "The lower you are, the higher your mind will want to soar." Pi's experiences show the importance of faith and imagination in human lives. To what extent do you agree?
27. 'At his lowest point, Pi reaches for the only remaining sources of salvation available to him: faith and imagination.' How does Yann Martel explore faith and imagination in the novel?
28. How is the idea of survival explored in *Life of Pi*?
29. Discuss the importance of believability in this novel.
30. '*Life of Pi* is a novel about believing.' Do you agree?
31. "Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer." *Life of Pi* shows us that life is empty without belief of some sort. Discuss.



32. 'A life that is entirely rational or fact based is almost not worth living.' How is this idea explored in the novel?
33. 'Faith is a bridge between the coldness of fact and the warmth of emotion.' This is the key message of *Life of Pi*. Do you agree?
34. 'To believe in something makes us feel more alive, more connected to the world around us.' How is this idea explored by Yann Martel?
35. 'We, the reader, know that these things did not really happen to Pi, yet we suspend our disbelief so as to become more wholly absorbed in the text.' What lessons can be learned from *Life of Pi*?
36. "You want a story that won't surprise you. That will confirm what you already know." How do Pi's stories teach us what we don't already know?
37. 'To believe in the story with animals is to believe in a world in which God can exist; but to believe in the story without animals is to be forced to acknowledge that human existence is nasty, brutish, and devoid of morality or spirituality.' Is this the only lesson the novel teaches the reader?
38. 'Pi learns that, in order to retain his sanity, he must achieve a deep personal honesty that allows him to acknowledge the animal within himself while still remaining human.' Discuss.
39. 'The "better story" is the story that represents a world where God might exist, but the other story represents a world that is spiritually void.' How is this shown in *Life of Pi*?
40. '*Life of Pi* opens outwards to explore other ways of seeing and knowing the world.' Is this how you see the novel?
41. *Life of Pi* explores the human need to tell and believe in stories as a strategy for survival. Discuss.
42. 'All of the stories in *Life of Pi*, in the end, address a deeply rooted need to love and be loved, and in order to survive in the world every individual needs to put his faith in one or another story of this love.' Do you agree that the novel is a story of love?
43. Pi comes to realize that the world in which he now lives has been stripped of the false comforts and artificial harmonies of society.' How is Pi's faith tested in this new world?
44. 'Gradually, the distance separating Pi from Richard Parker is almost erased in the novel.' Are Richard Parker and Pi distinct but connected elements of the same character?



45. 'The tiger emerges as a symbol of Pi's primal nature and his instinctive drive for survival at all costs.' Do you agree?
46. 'What Pi discovers on his journey across the Pacific Ocean is that even his hybridized faith cannot answer all of the questions that confront him.' Discuss.
47. 'To question and to doubt, Pi learns during his stay on the island, is the key to survival.' Do you agree that this is the purpose of the island?
48. "There will be many who disbelieve the following episode," How does Yann Martel convince the reader to believe in Pi's story?
49. 'When Pi stops believing blindly in the island as a source of sustenance and begins to explore and question it, he sees the island for exactly what it is.' What does Pi learn from his journey?
50. What is the lesson of the island?
51. Why does Martel intentionally confound his readers with the alternative endings of the novel?
52. ' *Life of Pi* explores how faith can create hope in even the most dire circumstances.' Discuss.
53. 'Richard Parker represents the inner strength Pi never knew he had.' Is this your view of the novel?
54. ' *Life of Pi* examines the capacity of the human spirit to endure tragedy.' Discuss.
55. 'The settings in *Life of Pi* are just as captivating as the characters.' Do you agree?
56. "I love Canada." Though he now feels a part of his new country, Pi is still deeply connected to his childhood experiences in India. How is this shown in *Life of Pi*?
57. What does *Life of Pi* suggest is most important in life?
58. *Life of Pi* shows the power and potential of storytelling. How is this achieved?
59. ' *Life of Pi* is is not merely a fantastical story, it seeks to enlighten readers about significant aspects of life.' Is this your reading of the novel?
60. "It will make you believe in God." To what extent does *Life of Pi* achieve this claim?



61. 'Truth is relative.' How does Martel support or contradict this idea in *Life of Pi*?
62. '*Life of Pi* shows that what we believe is the only truth we need to survive.' Do you agree?
63. 'Without faith, Pi would never have survived the journey on the lifeboat.' Do you agree?
64. "Mankind's need to believe is a fundamental truth of life." Discuss.
65. "*Life of Pi* teaches us that living creatures will often do extraordinary, unexpected and sometimes heroic things in order to survive" Do you agree?
66. What importance do colours play in offering symbols of hope and survival in the novel?
67. "*Life of Pi* explores the depths of shame and barbarity when living creatures are pressed for survival' Is this how you have read this book?
68. How does Martel use metaphor and symbolism to tell a remarkable tale of survival and the human condition?
69. 'In Martel's novel *'Life of Pi'*, is it important that the story is not true?
70. In *'Life of Pi*, it is the message that is significant, rather than the story. Discuss.
71. Does the story of Pi Patel 'make you believe in God'?
72. Pi is irrevocably damaged because of the trauma he experienced on the lifeboat. Do you agree?
73. Does Pi Patel's life have a 'happy ending'?
74. Given that Pi is a Hindu, a Christian, a Muslim, in what sense is he religious? Consider this in relation to his time lost at sea.
75. *Life of Pi* is a difficult story to believe, but in what sense or senses is it believable?
76. Is *Life of Pi* a good story? If so, why, if not, why not?
77. Pi believes he would not have survived without Richard Parker. Why?
78. "*Life of Pi* would be a better story without the author's note and the part three section on Mexico." Discuss.
79. *Life of Pi* is a novel about love. Do you agree?



80. How important is setting in *Life of Pi*?
81. '*Life of Pi* shows that it is possible to live a life of co-existence with opposites.' Do you agree?
82. How does Martel use reality and implausibility to create *Life of Pi*?
83. 'The main character in *Life of Pi* is the story itself.' Discuss.
84. '*Life of Pi* is a novel about different kinds of hunger.' Discuss.
85. Why does Pi dislike agnostics over atheists?
86. 'Richard Parker represents the mystery of the natural world.' Discuss
87. Why are the most important parts of *Life of Pi* the hardest to believe?
88. The 'better story' is more important than the 'truth'. Do you agree?
89. Stories are as important to survival as food and water.' Discuss.
90. If Pi is so religious why does he not reject science and reason?
91. '*Life of Pi* is a book about food.' Do you agree?
92. 'At the end of the novel, it becomes clear that the whole book is an elaborate trick.' Do you agree?
93. 'At the end of the novel, the reader is left 'bamboozled' and suspicious of the narrator.' Discuss.
94. 'The metaphors and allusions in *Life of Pi* are just as crucial to conveying Martel's preoccupations as the narrative viewpoint.' Discuss.
95. 'Pi survives his ordeal because of his belief in God.' Discuss.
96. '*Life of Pi* is a novel about imagination.' To what extent to do you agree?
97. 'How does the structure of *Life of Pi* help the reader to distinguish between truth and fiction?' Discuss.
98. 'Why is it significant that it is a tiger that survives the journey with Pi? Discuss.
99. 'In what ways is Pi as a boy different to the adult Pi who narrates the story?'



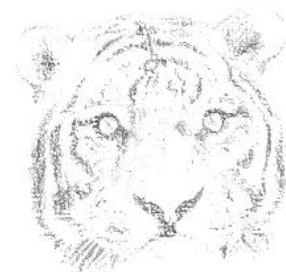
100. “The most dangerous animal in a zoo is Man.” To what extent do you think this is true given your understanding of *Life of Pi*?
101. ‘*Life of Pi* shows animals and humans to be territorial creatures.’ How far do you think this is true?
102. ‘Pi cannot live without Richard Parker, just as Richard Parker cannot live without Pi.’ Discuss.
103. ‘In *Life of Pi* Martel demonstrates the essential unreliability of storytelling.’ Discuss.
104. “You must take life the way it comes at you and make the best of it.” How does Pi live this out in his own life?
105. Pi says, “Survival had to start with me.” To what extent is this Martel’s comment on life in general?
106. ‘This story has a happy ending.’ Do you agree?
107. ‘*Life of Pi* is an allegory about fear.’ Discuss.
108. “I have a story that will make you believe in God.” ‘In essence, *Life of Pi* is a religious story.’ Is this true?
109. ‘That faith is essential in life is the central message of *Life of Pi*.’ Discuss.

Discussion Questions



1. What is your feeling about this book after reading the author's note? Does it make you want to read the book more or less?
2. "I still smart at the slight. When you've suffered a great deal in life, each additional pain is both unbearable and trifling" (5). Relate a story from your personal experience that ties in with the sentiment expressed in this quote.
3. "Richard Parker has stayed with me. I've never forgotten him. Dare I say I miss him? I do. I miss him. I still see him in my dreams. They are nightmares mostly, nightmares tinged with love" (6). How does this quote set "Richard Parker" up in your mind? How can you have nightmares about something that are tinged with love?
4. If you were to describe the author's writing style in five words. What would they be?
5. Pi makes the argument that zoos are very humane for animals. Do you buy this argument? Why or why not? Use at least two pieces of text to support your answer.
6. "I learned that an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us, twice: once with my father and once with Richard Parker" (31) Explain what you believe the meaning and importance of this quote is. Use both the text prior to this quote and any other clues the book may give you.
7. What kind of childhood did Pi have, good or bad? Use at least two textual examples to support your ideas?
8. Who do you think narrates the italicized passages such as the one that comprises chapter 12? What is the effect of these shifts in points of view?
9. Chapters 15 through 20 describe Pi's religious conversions, ending with the confrontation of all three of his spiritual advisors. At the heart of this confrontation is Pi's insistence that he cannot accept an exclusively Hindu, Christian, or Muslim faith; he can only be content with all three. What threads link his three religious identities? What enables Pi to embrace all three, rather than focusing on their differences?
10. Why did Pi at first try so hard to save Richard Parker?
11. Besides the loss of his family and possessions, what else did Pi lose when the Tsimtsum sank? What did he gain?
12. On page 164, the Pi is talking about Richard Parker. He says, "He pushed me to go on living." Explain what he meant by that.

The Author's Voice

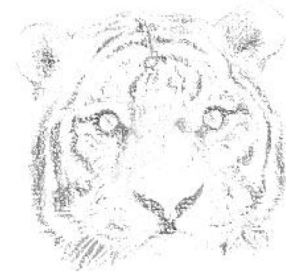


- Go back and read all of the italicised chapters except for the Author's note - chapter 2 p.7, chapter 6 p.24, chapter 12 p.42, chapter 15 p.45, chapter 21 p.63, chapter 30 p.79, chapter 33 p.86, chapter 36 p.91 .
- Take notes for what you think are the 20 most important things you learn about Pi through these chapters.
- Write any quotations which give some insight to Pi, especially his current view of the world.
- In a paragraph, summarise your impressions of Pi from these chapters. Consider what he seems to value most at this stage of his life.
- Answer the questions below after discussing them with a partner or in a small group:
 1. Do you notice anything about Pi in these chapters which contradicts his previous **theories** or behaviours as detailed in section 1?
 2. Food is raised in these chapters a lot and is used as **motif** throughout the novel. Why is food detailed so much here? What significance could food have in relation to what you know of the rest of the story?
 3. The first line of the novel is: "This book was born as I was hungry." Considering this in light of your response to food in question 2, does it in any way relate to that kind of hunger? Beyond food, what could it **symbolise**? How does it relate to storytelling?
 4. Pi's outward reverence for his three chosen religions is richly detailed in these chapters by extensive **imagery**. "*His house is a temple.*" With what you know about Pi as a child, why the excess of religious collectables in his adult life?
 5. "*Memory is an ocean and he bobs on its surface.*" What could this **metaphor** be saying about storytelling? How does memory influence what our stories are and the ways we tell them?
 6. Look closely at the Author's musings on p.63, the indented text. Does it make any sense to you? What do you think he is he trying to say here? What do you think he is he trying to do here?
 7. On p.87 we are introduced to Richard Parker in a photograph. Look closely at this text. What **assumptions** do we make as readers about RP and how does Martel construct the text to ensure we make those assumptions? Why does he do that?
 8. The final line of section one is: "*This story has a happy ending.*" Why might Martel choose to **foreshadow** what is to come in sections 2 & 3 in this way? Do you think it ends happily? How do the author's chapters contribute to the possibility of a happy ending for Pi?

A final challenge

When you have finished studying all of the novel, go back and read the Author's Note very carefully. Try to make connections with what is embedded here to what evolves in the rest of the story. There is much foreshadowing apparent and the place and purpose of the Author's Note should become clearer to you.

Extended Response Topics



1. Religion is of utmost importance to Pi. Discuss the role of religion in his life and how it helps him survive his ordeal.
2. In light of the fact that this is a novel about imagination, why does Martel begin with the Author's Note, which gives the impression that Pi's account is truth, not fiction?
3. The two Japanese officials who interview Pi don't believe that he really landed on a man-eating island. When they say that carnivorous trees and fish-eating algae do not exist, Pi responds, "Only because you've never seen them." What does this exchange say about human understanding of what is real and possible?
4. Why does Pi give two accounts of his ordeal? Which is the true story, and which one would you rather believe?
5. "'To me, it was paradise on earth' In what ways did Pi's childhood prepare him for a harsh and cruel world?"
6. 'Humans aspire to really high things, right, like religion, justice, democracy. At the same time, we're rooted in our human, animal condition. And so, all of those brought together in a lifeboat struck me as being... as a perfect metaphor.' (Yann Martel). How does Martel create his 'perfect metaphor'?
7. 'The idea of a religious boy in a lifeboat with a wild animal struck me as a perfect metaphor for the human condition.' (Yann Martel) How does *Life of Pi* represent the human condition?
8. 'Pi has chosen a tiger to represent himself because of its conflicting qualities: nobility and violence, grace and brute force, intelligence and instinct.' Is Richard Parker really Pi?
9. 'In crediting Richard Parker's existence for his own survival, Pi acknowledges that it is animal instinct, not polite convention or modern convenience, that protects him from death.' What do you believe protects Pi from death?
10. Among Yann Martel's gifts is a rich descriptive palette. Regarding religion, he observes the green elements that represent Islam and the orange tones of Hinduism. What color would Christianity be, according to Pi's perspective?
11. What do you make of Pi's assertion at the beginning of Chapter 16 that we are all "in limbo, without religion, until some figure introduces us to God"? Do you believe that Pi's piousness was a response to his father's atheism?

A Question of Faith



Choose an essay topic below, meet in a group and discuss ways to approach the topic and discuss topic sentences, examples and quotes. This essay will be due then start planning.

1. 'Religion is aligned with imagination, while lack of faith is linked to accurate observation and rationalism.' How is faith explored in the novel?
2. 'To believe in something makes us feel more alive, more connected to the world around us.' How is this idea explored by Yann Martel?
3. If Pi is so religious why does he not reject science and reason?
4. 'The central message of *Life of Pi* is that it is essential to have faith in something beyond yourself.' Do you agree?
5. "Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer." *Life of Pi* shows us that life is empty without belief of some sort. Discuss.
6. "My majors were religious study and zoology." Martel demonstrates that science and religion are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Is this how you see the novel?
7. "I was more afraid that in a few words thrown out he might destroy something that I loved." Why is religion so important to Pi?
8. In what ways are the detailed explorations of zoology and religion important to the subsequent narrative in sections 2 and 3?



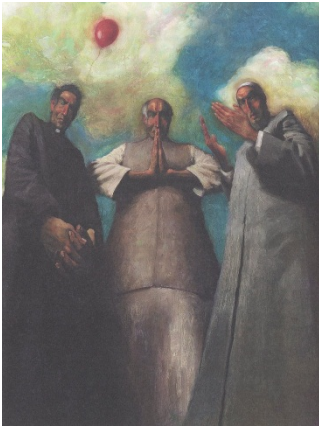
"My zoology thesis was a functional analysis of the thyroid gland of the three-toed sloth. I chose the sloth because its demeanour – calm, quiet and introspective – did something to soothe my shattered self." Pi's experiences leave him forever changed. In what ways does he change the most?





"To me, it was paradise on earth." In what ways did Pi's childhood prepare him for a harsh and cruel world?"

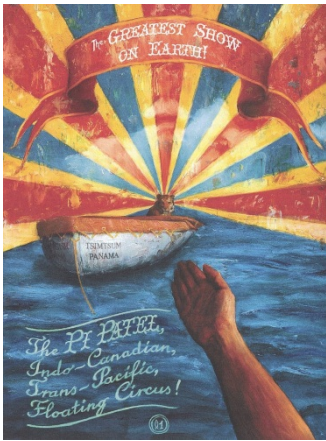


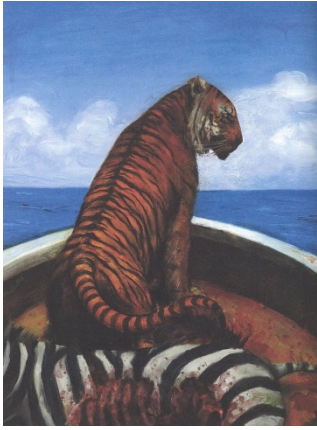


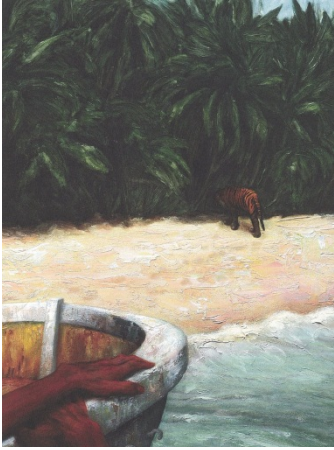
Religion is of utmost importance to Pi. Discuss the role of religion in his life and how it helps him survive his ordeal.











"Then Richard Parker, companion of my torment, awful, fierce thing that kept me alive, moved forward and disappeared forever from my life."
What does Richard Parker represent for Pi?





In light of the fact that this is a novel about imagination, why does Martel begin with the Author's Note, which gives the impression that Pi's account is truth, not fiction?

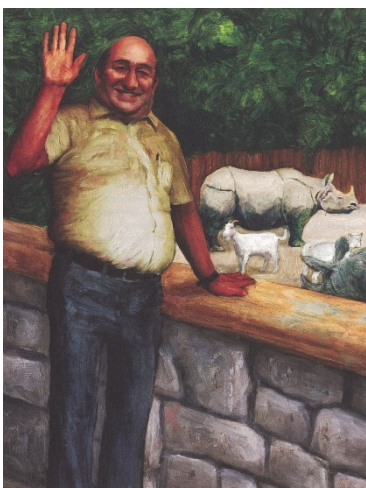




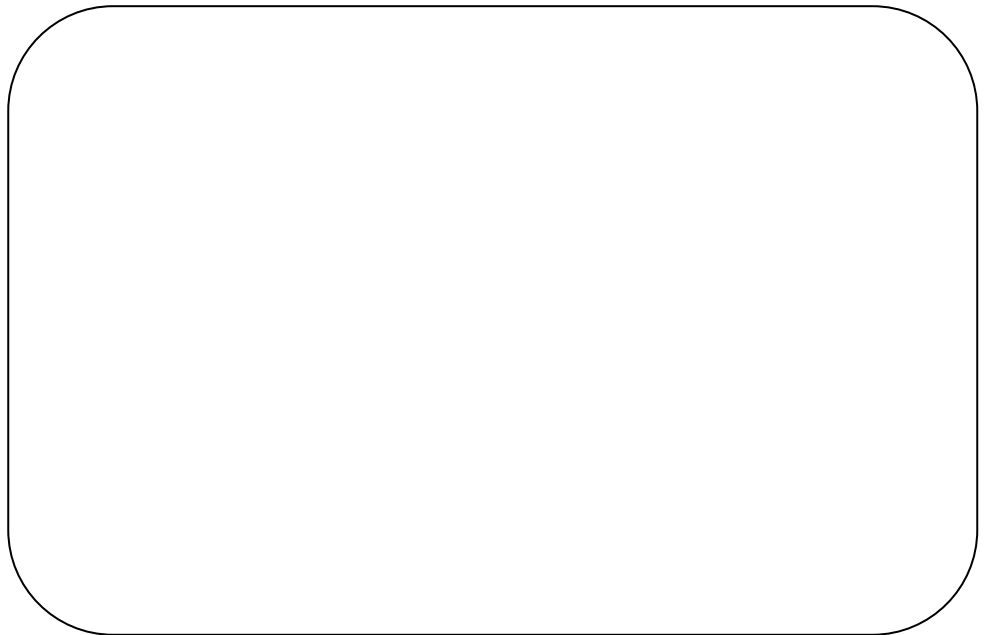
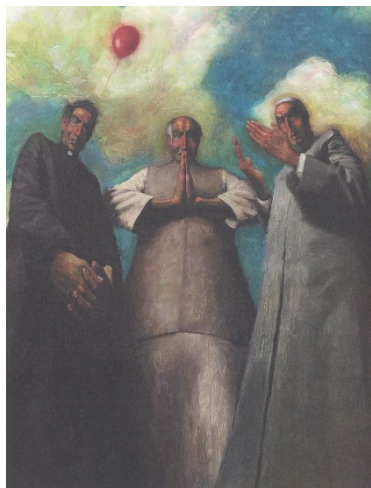
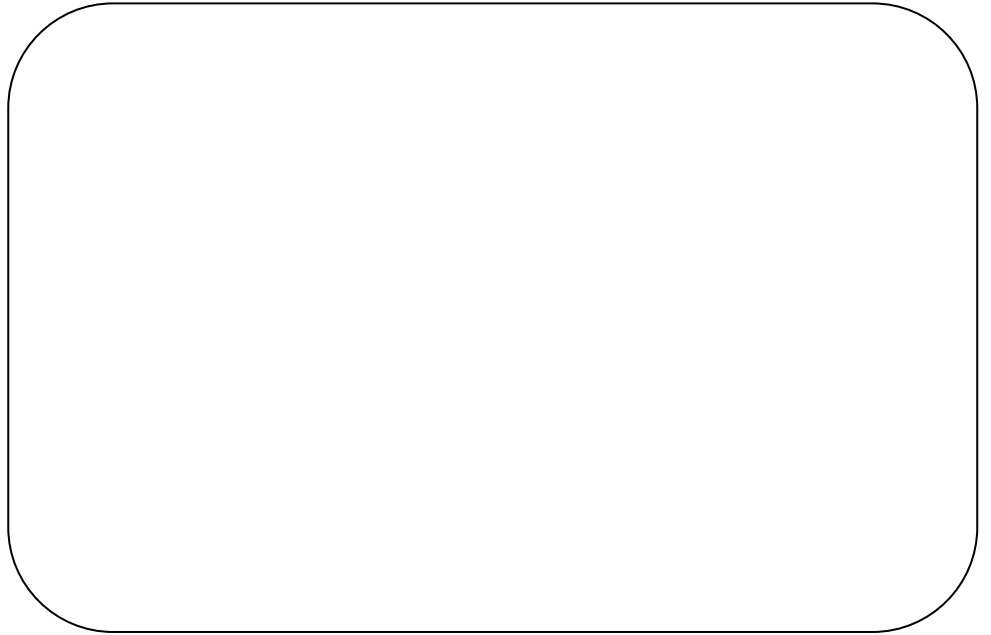
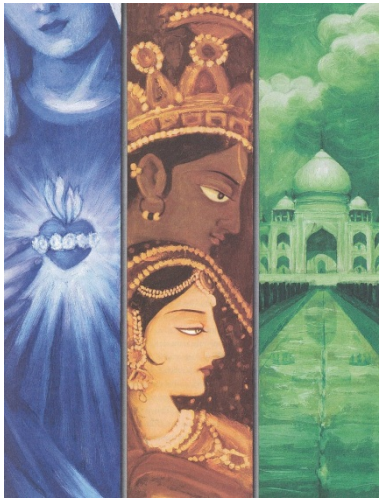
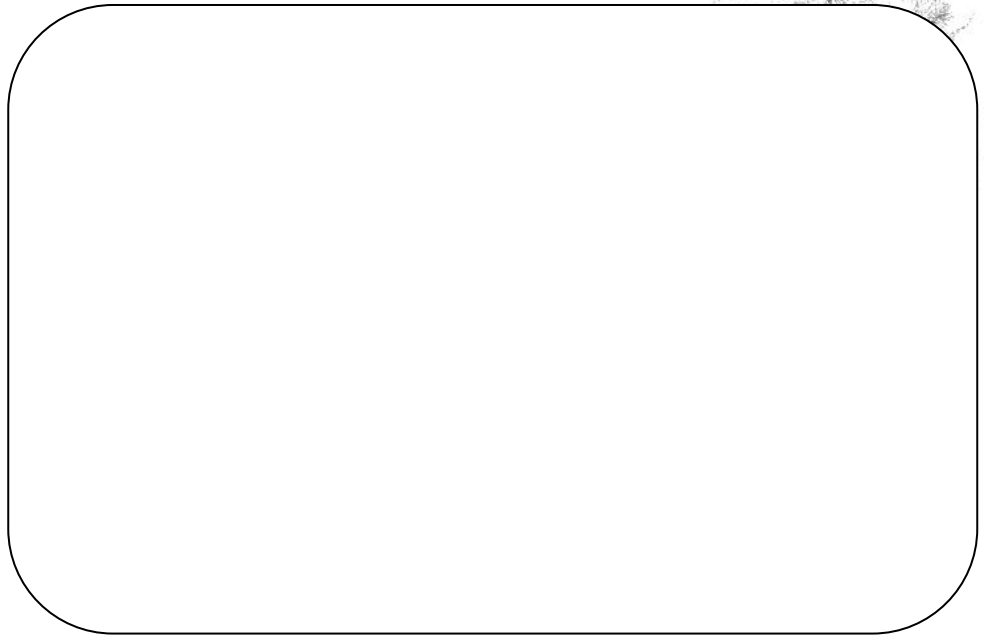
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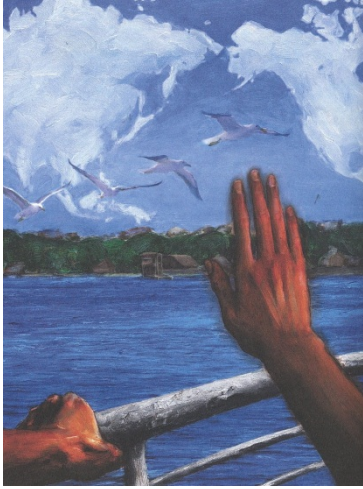


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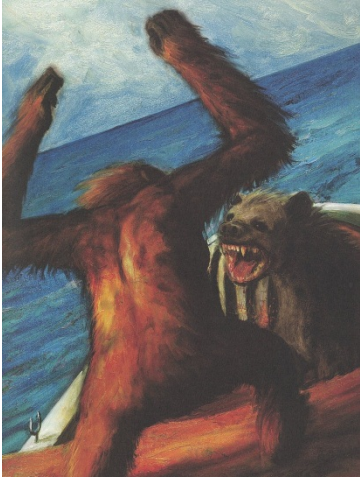
A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a response or drawing.



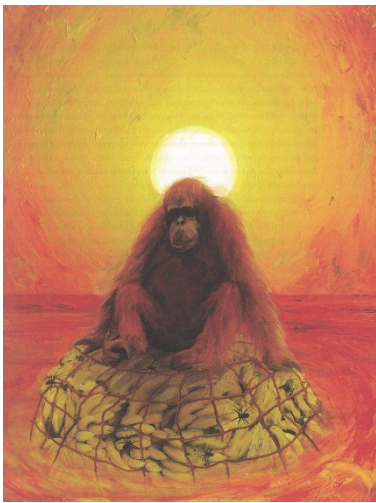
A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a response or drawing.



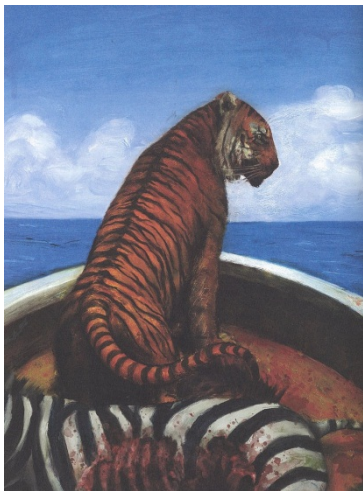
A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a response or drawing.



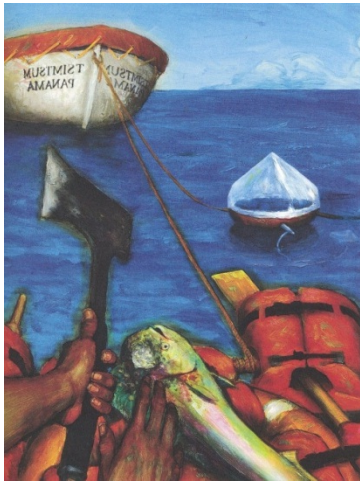
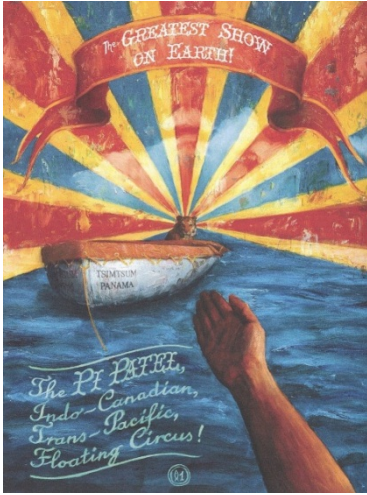
A large, empty, rounded rectangular box for writing.



A large, empty, rounded rectangular box for writing.

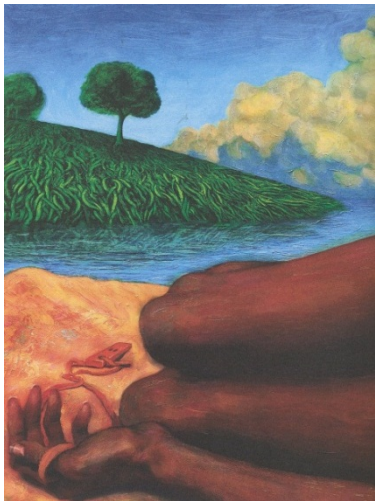


A large, empty, rounded rectangular box for writing.





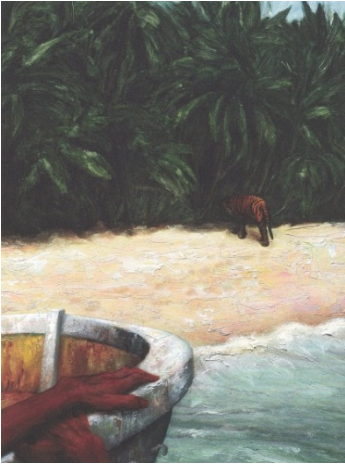
A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a response or drawing.



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a response or drawing.



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a response or drawing.



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a caption or description of the first painting.



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a caption or description of the second painting.



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a caption or description of the third painting.