

Study Guide

Life of Pi by Yann Martel

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Introduction

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What is faith? What is friendship? What is fiction? *Life of Pi* explores these questions in the tale of a devoutly religious Indian boy nicknamed Pi who becomes stranded on a lifeboat with an unrestrained 450-pound Bengal tiger as his only companion. Pi draws upon his knowledge of wild animal training--his father was a zookeeper back in India--to establish an uneasy peace between himself and the tiger, which he sees as his only possibility for survival.

The novel, published in the United States by Harvest/Harcourt, is a unique blend of religious exploration, practical zookeeping advice, meditation on the nature of truth, and shipwreck survival tale. It won both the 2002 Man Booker Prize and the 2001 Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction and has sold over one million copies worldwide.

Life of Pi was inspired in part by a story written by renowned Brazilian author Moacyr Scliar. In Scliar's *Max and the Cats*, a young Jewish man flees Nazi Germany on a ship bound for Brazil, but when the boat sinks, he finds himself sharing a lifeboat with an unusual passenger: a jaguar formerly of the Berlin Zoo. Although the similarity between the two ideas generated some controversy after Martel's novel became a bestseller, both authors have acknowledged that the two books are quite different.

In an interview with Ray Suarez of *Online NewsHour*, Martel describes why the concept appealed to him as a writer:

Humans aspire to really high things ... 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 ... a perfect metaphor.

Critical and recreational readers agree. *Life of Pi* earned one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the English-speaking world, the Man Booker Prize, and has been a book-club favorite among both men and women ever since. The book's narrative, stylistic, and philosophical merits have made Pi and his creator literary stars.

Author Biography

Author Biography

Yann Martel was born in Salamanca, Spain, in 1963 to Canadian parents. His parents were diplomats for the Canadian government, and Martel spent much of his youth in countries such as Costa Rica, France, and Mexico. He later attended Trent University in Ontario, where he earned a philosophy degree.

Martel performed various odd jobs, including planting trees and washing dishes, before becoming a full-time writer at the age of twenty-seven. His first book, a collection of stories titled *The Facts Concerning the Helsinki Roccamatios*, was published in 1993 to critical acclaim but little commercial success. His first novel, *Self*, fared equally poorly when it was published in 1996. In his Author's Note at the beginning of *Life of Pi*, Martel describes it this way: "Books lined the shelves of bookstores like kids standing in a row to play baseball or soccer, and mine was the gangly, unathletic kid that no one wanted on their team."

Martel traveled to India, where he worked on his next novel; while there, he realized that the novel he had planned simply was not working out. However, he recalled a review of a book by Brazilian author Moacyr Scliar that he had encountered years before. The book was called *Max and the Cats*, and though he never read it, its premise stirred Martel's imagination. He immediately set to work on his own tale, superficially similar to Scliar's, but prominently featuring Indian characters and settings. In addition to the research he conducted in India, Martel spent a year researching zoology and religion after returning to Canada.

The novel he wrote, *Life of Pi*, was released in Canada in 2001 and proved to be Martel's breakthrough work. The book won the 2002 Man Booker Prize for Fiction, as well as the 2001 Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction, and has since sold over one million copies. The book was followed by a collection of short stories titled *We Ate the Children Last* (2004). As of 2006, Martel was finishing a year-long position as a Visiting Scholar at the University of Saskatchewan Department of English.

Plot Summary

Plot Summary

Life of Pi is a tale about survival, belief in God and coming of age, that unfolds while the protagonist is floating in a lifeboat on the Pacific Ocean. The main character, Pi Patel, is a loveable teenager with a lifelong curiosity for animals and religion. Pi grows up as the son of a zookeeper in Pondicherry, India. He is intensely religious and practices Hinduism, Islam and Christianity with equal zeal. When Pi is about 16 years old, his father decides to relocate the family to Canada to escape the increasingly undesirable political developments in 1970's India. Pi's father arranges for the family to accompany some of the animals bound for North America on a cargo ship named *Tsimtsum*. "Midway to Midway" the ship suddenly and quickly sinks. Pi is instantly orphaned and left to survive in a lifeboat with a crippled zebra, a hyena, an orangutan and a tiger. The hyena dispatches the zebra and the orangutan and the tiger dispatch the hyena. Pi is left alone in the lifeboat with the tiger.

After considering how he could rid the boat of the tiger, he decides that the tiger must live and he must tame the tiger so that they can live together. Having spent his entire life around animals, Pi has a theoretical understanding of how to tame a tiger; however, he has never actually had the chance until now. The story recalls the adventures and practical matters of life at sea as a castaway. The story tells of the wonders and the intense challenges. Pi comes of age during this story by having to battle the elements, the sea and the sky, as well as testing his will to live. The tiger, named Richard Parker because of a clerical error that mistakenly recorded the captor's name for the tiger's, is both Pi's nemesis and his reason for living.

During his ordeal, Pi learns how to overcome his own fears, as well as balance on the thin line between taking control and relying on powers larger than himself. Pi has much to balance, considering his sorrow over losing his family, his hopes of rescue being raised and then dashed, his triumph over fear and his ultimate survival.

When Pi finally rescues himself by landing on a beach in Mexico, he is orphaned once again by his reason for living, Richard Parker. The tiger disappears into the Mexican jungle, while Pi is interrogated by officials seeking the "real story" of why the ship sank. Pi recalls his tale, which the officials label as preposterous, only to re-tell the tale sans animals and with Pi as a blood-thirsty cannibal. The author's twist may mystify some readers who will wonder if the latter tale is closer to the truth. The book is, after all, fiction.

Part 1 Chapter 1

Part 1 Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter 1 is an introduction of the main character by the main character. He opens by introducing himself and he relates how his academic study of religion and zoology brought him back to life. He discusses his study of the two- and three-toed sloths. Sloths survive because of their sleepiness and not attracting the attention of would-be predators.

The main character now lives in Canada, but he grew up in India. He misses his homeland but feels much loyalty and fondness for his present home country. The closing paragraphs of the chapter introduce a character, Richard Parker, as someone whom he misses, but who abandoned him.

The main character relates his experience in a hospital in Mexico and the kindness of the staff and people after hearing his story. He also tells about the first time he turned on a water tap and the first time he went to an Indian restaurant in Canada. He was wounded by the rebuke of a waiter for using his fingers and had to try and use utensils to finish his meal.

Part 1 Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter introduces the reader to the main character in the first-person point of view. The style of the chapter is conversational, as if one were sitting down in a coffee shop with the main character and chatting for a few minutes. Although the chapter provides the reader with a good sense of who the main character is, it is sparing in detail.

The author creates suspense by leaving numerous questions unanswered. For example, why is the main character located in Mexico? Why is he in the hospital? Is this a part of his immigration track? What is it about his story that moves the Mexicans in the hospital to bestow gifts of food and clothing on him? The themes revealed in this introduction include the intricacies and beauty of nature, nature as a reminder of God and the beauty of simplicity.

Part 1 Chapter 2

Part 1 Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 2 introduces a new, unnamed character who lives in Scarborough. The author provides a physical description of a "small, slim man" with an Indian complexion. He is purposeful in his movements and wears a warm, winter coat even though the weather is mild.

Part 1 Chapter 2 Analysis

The reader is given no indication as to who this newly introduced character is. The author is creating more suspense for his story by setting the stage for multiple locations. Additionally, this chapter is not written using a first-person point of view as the first chapter was but a third-person point of view instead.

Part 1 Chapter 3

Part 1 Chapter 3 Summary

The main character tells the story of how he got his name. He was named after a swimming pool in Paris that was visited by one of his father's good friends, Francis Adirubasamy. The main character feels a great deal of affection for Mr. Adirubasamy and calls him Mamji, a respectful affectionate term for uncle in his native tongue. Mamji, in his younger years, was a champion competitive swimmer.

Even though the main character's family did not enjoy swimming the same way Mamji did, the main character's father loved the talk of it. Mamji would indulge him with the talk of the swimming pools in Paris, where he studied for 2 years in the early 1930's. He would tell them about the swimming pools, about their histories and about those built and used for the Olympics. He also discussed at length and in colorful detail the lack of hygiene of the French and their swimming pools.

In Mamji's opinion, there was no rival to the spectacular pool, Piscine Molitor. It was ideal for a competitive swimmer because it contained two pools, one indoors and the other outdoors. Even more important, the water was clean. It also included changing rooms, hot showers, an exercise room, a beach, a sunning deck and a bar, among other amenities.

To Mamji and the main character's family, this pool was spoken of with reverence and admiration. When the main character was born, he was named after the swimming pool: Piscine Molitor Patel.

Part 1 Chapter 3 Analysis

In this chapter, the reader learns the main character's full name and how he got it. The reader learns more about the main character, along with a little history of his immediate family and his early years.

Swimming is an important theme for Piscine and his childhood. Also important in this chapter is the introduction of Mamji. The author begins to fill in details about Piscine and the reader gets to know more about his history in this chapter. We find out that his father is a zookeeper who loved to talk about swimming as an escape. Again, the theme of simplicity appears in Piscine's description of swimming and the pleasure of the rhythm of a good stroke.

Part 1 Chapter 4

Part 1 Chapter 4 Summary

In Chapter 4, the narrator introduces the Pondicherry Zoo. Pondicherry is the territory in India where Piscine grew up. Once Pondicherry became a territory of India in 1954, the Pondicherry Botanical Gardens became a zoo founded by Piscine's father, Mr. Santosh Patel. Mr. Patel had been a hotelkeeper and thought that the transition to zookeeping would be natural. The zoo became a source of a little enjoyment and many headaches.

To Piscine, the zoo was heaven on earth. He loved growing up in and around the zoo. His life was surrounded by animals. He awoke to the roar of lions as his morning alarm and enjoyed his meals with the sounds of monkeys and exotic birds. On his way to school, he would walk past the habitations of various other exotic animals.

Piscine then discussed the "nonsense" that animals are not happy living in a zoo. He argued that animals in the wild are driven by hunger and fear having to defend themselves from the environment, predators and parasites. Thus, they become creatures of habit, moving around in the same area and using the same routes year after year. The area they inhabit becomes their home. He used an analogy that if someone were to barge into your home and declare you free to go, you would think that person was crazy and ask him to leave. You own your home and want to remain there. Animals feel the same. Consequently, in the zoo, their home, a territory is created for them where they do not have to worry about predators or hunger. He said that after the animals settle in, they come to feel like a landowner rather than a prisoner. They become protective of their territory and treat it as they would their territory in the wild. Piscine argued that most animals actually prefer the zoo with its lack of disease and predators and abundance of food and water.

Piscine also understood that zoos are generally not favored by many because of the confinement of the animals. He likened this opinion to religion, in that both are plagued by the issues of freedom and confinement. The chapter closes by relating that the zoo no longer exists, except in memories.

Part 1 Chapter 4 Analysis

The image of Piscine as a child reveling in the wonder of the animals underscores the themes of simplicity and beauty of nature. Considering the amount of the chapter devoted to Piscine's discussion of captivity versus freedom, it foreshadows that this subject will become a more pervasive theme in the book. There is also foreshadowing in this chapter that shows the reader how Piscine may handle challenges in his life based on his experiences while he was growing up with the animals and having considered their freedom and confinement at great length.

Part 1 Chapter 5

Part 1 Chapter 5 Summary

The story about how Piscine got his name is not over. As he grew up and entered school, the trouble he received for his name was never ending from his classmates to his teachers. No one could properly pronounce his name, so they chose to call him names such as "Pissing Patel."

Finally Piscine got to change schools and attend the medium secondary school where his brother went. On the first day of school, all the students took their turns introducing themselves. When it came time for Piscine to introduce himself, he ran to the chalkboard and wrote "My name is Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as Pi Patel." Pi repeated his introduction in each one of his classes. Much to Pi's delight, the name stuck.

Part 1 Chapter 5 Analysis

We now know the full story of Pi's name. This scene is significant because it serves as further development of our main character. We have a better understanding of who he was as a young man and what he experienced as a child growing up.

Part 1 Chapter 6

Part 1 Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter 6 is a short chapter that reintroduces a nameless male character who was first discussed in Chapter 2. He is described as a great cook with an extensive spice collection. For the first time, we learn that the scene takes place in India, but this gentleman cooks Western meals, like Mexican food, very well. He also keeps an abundant amount of food in his home.

Part 1 Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter, unlike Chapter 2, in which our nameless main character is introduced, is written in first person. Both this chapter and Chapter 2 are printed in italics, clearly showing that the author wants these scenes set apart from the rest of the book. We do not yet know who this character is or what his significance is.

Part 1 Chapter 7

Part 1 Chapter 7 Summary

Pi introduces one of his favorite teachers from his youth, Mr. Satish Kumar. Mr. Kumar was a Communist and the first atheist Pi had ever met. He is described as looking quite peculiar with a balding head and a large, round belly.

Mr. Kumar visited the zoo often and Pi recalls the first time he saw Mr. Kumar at the zoo. Not knowing how to handle the situation, Pi kept his distance until Mr. Kumar saw him and waved him over to the Indian rhino exhibit. As they watched the rhinos and their roommates, the goats, Mr. Kumar remarked that he wished that the country's politicians could get along as well as the goats. Pi, not knowing much about politics answered back that religion is the answer. Mr. Kumar refuted his answer and went on to explain his atheistic beliefs to young Pi. Mr. Kumar's atheism dated back to his childhood when his body was racked with polio and he cried out to God, but God never came. Although Mr. Kumar's discussion frightened young Pi, Mr. Kumar would become his favorite teacher and mentor and the reason he studied zoology. From this discussion Pi began to learn that atheists were just people with a different faith. Pi says, however, that he cannot tolerate agnostics. We are all entitled to have doubts about our faith at one time or another. One cannot, however, choose doubt as a philosophy of life.

Part 1 Chapter 7 Analysis

As the chapters progress, Pi is being developed as a character through the impact of others on his life. For example, in this chapter we learn about the teacher who had the greatest impact on his life. We also learn that even though Pi and Mr. Kumar had differing views on religion, Pi is tolerant and without compromising his own beliefs, learns to feel kinship with those of alternate religions. The one issue that Pi and Mr. Kumar did agree upon is the sacredness of the zoo. Mr. Kumar called it his temple and for Pi, it's his paradise.

Part 1 Chapter 8

Part 1 Chapter 8 Summary

Pi's father had a sign near the entrance of the zoo that read, "Do you know which is the most dangerous animal in the zoo?" Next to the sign was a curtain with a mirror behind it. Zookeepers consider man the most dangerous threat to the zoo. The danger is manifest in man's cruelty toward the animals. Pi goes on to list incidences of foreign and dangerous objects that have been fed to zoo animals throughout history. Fortunately, at his father's zoo, they had few incidences of animal cruelty. Pi tells the story of a snake charmer who tried to steal a cobra and a woman who dangled her sari in the lion's cage thinking they ate only meat.

Pi's father taught him that the second greatest danger in the zoo was anthropomorphism. We try to see in the animal what we want to see in ourselves, for better or worse. Pi says this is the bane of theologians, as well as zoologists.

To erase any anthropomorphism in his children, Mr. Patel marched his sons out to the tiger's den where a starved tiger was given a live goat. His father lectured that the boys were never to try to pet the tiger. The family watched in terror as the hungry tiger devoured the goat. Following the tigers, Father took them to the homes of the lions and leopards, the bears, the hippos, the hyenas, orangutans, the ostrich and elephants. At each stop he revealed to them how quickly and easily each of the animals could kill or maim them. The family ended their tour at the cages of the guinea pigs where Father took a guinea pig out of its cage and handed it to Pi saying that they were not dangerous and could be touched.

Part 1 Chapter 8 Analysis

Pi presents an interesting contrast in this chapter, which opens by stating that humans are the most dangerous animals in the zoo and providing, in detail, the many ways zoo animals are tortured by humans. The chapter closes with an exhaustive description of the many ways that the animals are dangerous to humans. Pi developed a healthy respect for the power of all the animals, but at the end of the chapter, he was more frightened by what his brother, Ravi, was going to do to him for having falsely accused him of wrongdoing. Ravi provided foreshadowing when he threatened that Pi will be the next goat thrown into the tiger's den.

Part 1 Chapter 9

Part 1 Chapter 9 Summary

Another aspect of being a zookeeper is getting the animals used to having humans nearby. Pi believes that it is an art to be able to reduce the animals' flight distance or the minimum distance they need from a human before they flee. The flight distance varies from animal to animal. Pi's father had the knowledge and instinct to understand the animals and put them at ease around humans. As a result, he created a zoo of healthy, stress-free, well-socialized animals. A zookeeper knows whether he has been successful at creating a good environment for his animals if they are relaxed enough to reproduce. The animals at Pi's father's zoo multiplied readily.

Part 1 Chapter 9 Analysis

Pi continues to introduce the reader to the world of zookeeping and his observation of animal behavior. The reader is given further insight into the delicate balance between humans and animals in the zoo and that to have a successful zoo, the balance must be respected.

Part 1 Chapter 10

Part 1 Chapter 10 Summary

As comfortable as a zoo may be, there are always animals that try to escape. The desire to escape may result from unsatisfactory habitat. Another common escapist is the mature adult animal, for they are often too set in their ways to adapt to new surroundings. Animals are usually escaping from something rather than planning to escape to somewhere. Animals inherently want to feel safe, so if they don't feel safe in one place, they move to another. They become dangerous only to those who come between them and their safe haven.

Part 1 Chapter 10 Analysis

Pi further characterizes animal behavior for the reader and discusses why animals may try to escape confinement. He makes the point that animals do not try to change their surroundings unless there is something drastically wrong.

Part 1 Chapter 11

Part 1 Chapter 11 Summary

Pi tells the story of a female black leopard that escaped from the Zurich Zoo during the winter. Apparently, she and the male she was sharing her habitat with were not getting along. She escaped one night, much to the alarm of the residents of the city. Search parties and dogs tried to find her, but to no avail. She remained on the loose for 10 weeks and was discovered by a farm worker under a barn. He shot her and killed her. She had existed quietly, living off roe-deer, trying to fit in to her new surroundings.

Part 1 Chapter 11 Analysis

This chapter examines the balance that the animals seek in their surroundings. Safety is also a theme. Animals are seeking simply to exist in a safe, favorable and comfortable environment and live peacefully with those around them. Furthermore, if they do not feel safe, they flee until they are able to find a safe place.

Part 1 Chapter 12

Part 1 Chapter 12 Summary

The nameless man continues to tell his story even though it agitates him. The author is afraid he may want to stop, but Richard Parker is still heavy on his mind. When the author visits his home, he always prepares an amazing vegetarian feast that is much too spicy for the author. He loves the food, but it leaves him in tears with his stomach in knots.

Part 1 Chapter 12 Analysis

The reader now knows that the italicized chapters are a flashback to the main character of the book, Pi, imparting his story to the author. The Author's Notes at the beginning of the book use this same italicized print and tell the story of how the author stumbled upon a man--who turned out to be Mamji--with a story to tell about a man he knows, Pi. This book is a result of the author's interviews with Pi. The italicized chapters tell the story of discovering this story and putting it together.

Part 1 Chapter 13

Part 1 Chapter 13 Summary

A lion in a zoo will attack not because it is hungry--zoo animals are well fed--or because it is mean but simply because its territory has been invaded. So, circus trainers must establish that the ring is *their* territory by entering before the lions while they watch. Once the trainer can establish that he is the super-alpha male, his wishes will be granted, whether they be jumping through hoops or rolling over.

A trainer must make sure that he or she maintains dominance and that their alpha status is clearly understood. If the animals begin to feel any social insecurity, aggressive, deadly behavior is likely. Part of an animal's sense of safety is tied to its social rank.

In the example of a circus trainer with lions, it's a matter of brains over brawn. The circus trainer must psychologically maintain his alpha male status and do so calmly, which puts the animals at ease and persuades them to do whatever the trainer wishes.

Part 1 Chapter 13 Analysis

Animals, like humans, need to know where they belong. They are social creatures but prefer to have a well-defined social order. Humans are no different. Our intelligence enables us to be dominant creatures, but if we question our rank or give up our power, we are likely to be attacked by another wishing to be the alpha male. This chapter includes foreshadowing of what Pi will be facing later in the story.

Part 1 Chapter 14

Part 1 Chapter 14 Summary

The animal most agreeable to the wishes of the trainer is the one with the lowest social standing of the group--the omega. The omega animal sees that it can gain the most by maintaining closeness to the alpha male. So generally, it is the omega animals that are asked to do the most difficult tricks because they are the most eager to please.

Part 1 Chapter 14 Analysis

In this chapter we continue to learn more about animal behavior and hierarchy. We learn that the omega, or less dominant, animal is preferred for training. Having this knowledge will undoubtedly be useful to understanding Pi's story. Pi is imparting his zoological knowledge to the reader so that the reader will understand future events in the story.

Part 1 Chapter 15

Part 1 Chapter 15 Summary

The author describes the man's home as a temple, full of religious symbols and artifacts. In the entryway is a picture of Ganesha, with an elephant head. This god represents one who overcomes obstacles and enjoys good luck, wisdom and learning. Scattered around the home are a cross, a picture of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe and a photo of Kaaba, an Islamic religious symbol. In his kitchen cabinet is a shrine with Ganesha again and Krishna playing the flute. There is another Virgin Mary in the dining room, as well as a brass Ganesha sitting in his office. In his office are a prayer rug and a wooden crucifix on the wall. Next to the man's bed is a Bible.

Part 1 Chapter 15 Analysis

It is likely from the vestiges of the man's home that he is deeply interested in religious expression. Pi as an adult is being further characterized. We can see that he has had a great number of religious influences on his life since the early story in the book about his discussion with his teacher, the atheist. He appears to have brought with him these influences throughout his life. The reader may now wonder what experiences have brought these religious interests to his life. Each one of the symbols in his home represents a belief or an experience in his life.

Part 1 Chapter 16

Part 1 Chapter 16 Summary

Pi believes that we are born without religion and don't have any until we are introduced to it. Pi was introduced at a very early age by his mother's sister. His Aunti Rohini saw to it that she accompanied her sister and newborn nephew in the Hindu rite of passage. From that day on Pi's interest in religion grew.

He still is a Hindu. He is faithful to the rites and rituals and their meanings. He is introduced to the different aspects of the Brahman. One is the world soul. Nirguna goes beyond understanding and even words. Saguna has qualities and fits within human understanding, which is expressed in the world around us, vegetation, animals and earth. Pi explains that the human soul seeks, throughout many lives, to become united with the Brahman. The difficulty or ease of this path is determined by Karma.

Pi introduces a woman, Antieji, as he calls her, a Quebecois and his foster mother in Toronto. When she first heard of Hare Krishnas, she thought it meant "hairless Christians." He corrected her but also explained that Hindus are a little bit Christian, just like Muslims are like Hindus and Christians like Muslims.

Part 1 Chapter 16 Analysis

The reader learns, very importantly, that Pi is a Hindu, despite all the religious relics from different faiths present in his home. Knowing his religious persuasion is very important to the story. His beliefs become the glasses through which he sees the world and the events that happen to him. In this section, he reveals the depth of his religious beliefs; they permeate his life, his mind and his soul. His Antieji is used in this scene to illustrate his belief that the major world religions are interrelated and intertwined. This belief is what allows him to house the various religious symbols in his home.

Part 1 Chapter 17

Part 1 Chapter 17 Summary

At the age of 14, Lord Krishna led Pi to meet Jesus Christ. The Patels took a rare family vacation to Munnar, famous for its tea estates and surrounded by hills. It began as a typical family vacation with tours of the tea estates and visits to the national park where they fed goats. During the first morning in Munnar, Pi observed three hills that stood out from the others. Atop each hill was a temple. A Hindu temple resided on one, a mosque on the second and a Christian church on the third hill.

Pi had never been inside a Christian church and one afternoon he decided to investigate. The first building he came to was the rectory. He watched the priest and assistant priest seated in their office, studying. He was moved that these men were at the ready to receive anyone. Then he dared himself to walk into the church. No one was there and he looked around a little and left.

The next day, he returned and met Father Martin. He asked Father Martin to tell him a story, which he did. Pi found the story of Jesus odd, that the Son had to pay the price for the sins of mankind. He could not imagine why a god would subject himself to torture, pain and death. Father Martin assured him that it was because of love. Pi felt that this god is too human and he became bothered by him. For three days, however, Pi returned to speak with Father Martin to hear more and to ask more.

As much as Pi is bothered by the story of Jesus, he is moved. He continued to think about what he had learned. On the family's last day in Munnar, Pi rushed up the hill to meet with Father Martin one final time. He told the Father that he wanted to become a Christian. Father Martin told him that he already was a Christian in his heart. Pi was overjoyed and entered the church, finally feeling like he belonged. He stayed and prayed and then raced over to the Hindu temple on the first hill and thanked Lord Krishna for having put Jesus in his path.

Part 1 Chapter 17 Analysis

Pi, even as a young man is deeply spiritual and responds deeply and freely to his spiritual experiences. Even though this chapter tells a seemingly simple story, it says much about Pi as a young man. He embraced different viewpoints even though he was a bit scared at first. To him, Christianity connects with humanity in a different way than Hinduism. The reader is learning more about the spiritual development of Pi, which will undoubtedly shape the story in the pages to come. Also, the depiction of the three hills foreshadows Pi's own religious discoveries.

Part 1 Chapter 18

Part 1 Chapter 18 Summary

Nearly a year later, Pi discovered Islam. He was out one day exploring his town and happened upon the Muslim quarter of town. He was drawn to a mosque and had a peek inside. He saw a large open room, the sanctuary, with long straw mats covering the floor. He continued on his tour of the Muslim quarter and happened upon a very small shop that was selling small flat breads. After gaining the attention of the shopkeeper, they began to talk. While there, Pi was able to witness the man saying his prayers. Watching this expression, Pi thought of Islam as little more than "hot-weather yoga for the Bedouins."

Part 1 Chapter 18 Analysis

Again, the reader sees Pi's continuing interest in discovering religion. It is very interesting that his childhood meanderings and adventures seem to lead him to find religion.

Part 1 Chapter 19

Part 1 Chapter 19 Summary

Pi visited the shopkeeper again and asked him about what being a Muslim was like. Pi attended a service with the man and noticed the openness of the sanctuary and that all the attendees sat randomly on the floor cross-legged. When it came time to pray, he felt a deep connection to the religion as soon as his forehead hit the floor.

Part 1 Chapter 19 Analysis

The reader sees Pi explore his religious attraction further. This time it has led him to Islam. He also says in the chapter that he is attracted to the brotherhood and devotion of the religion. Pi is a religious explorer, an explorer of the mystical. All his adventures as a young man lead him to different religious discoveries.

Part 1 Chapter 20

Part 1 Chapter 20 Summary

The man who introduced Pi to Islam was a Sufi, a Muslim mystic. His name was Satish Kumar. He shared the same surname as Pi's communist, atheist mentor. These two men, Pi says, taught him biology and Islam and were the reason he studied zoology and religion in college. He calls them the prophets of his youth.

Mr. Kumar, the Muslim, had a very personal, loving relationship with God. He and Pi would pray and chant together. Pi felt full of glory when he would leave Mr. Kumar's very small, two-room shack. One day after leaving, he was riding home on his bike, came to the crest of a hill where he could see forever and suddenly felt like he was in heaven. He felt God very close to him. He felt God close to him one other time in Canada, where he saw the Virgin Mary through a puff of fine snow falling from the trees.

Part 1 Chapter 20 Analysis

Pi's religious experiences are very deep and meaningful to him. Religion and deep convictions are a very important part of this story. To Pi, it seems that God is God, no matter if He is found in a mosque or a temple or a church.

Part 1 Chapter 21

Part 1 Chapter 21 Summary

The author is sitting at a café, thinking over an afternoon spent with his interview subject. He thinks of phrases that echo in his mind and how they relate to his own life. He makes a list of the words and phrases used to describe divine consciousness, including "...a realization that the founding principle of existence is what we call love...."

Part 1 Chapter 21 Analysis

These interludes that the author includes help the reader to understand what is being presented. He is setting the reader up for an amazing story that is believable only if it happens to an amazing person. He wants to make sure that the reader does not miss the depth of our main character, Pi and the depth of his soul and convictions. We see that his convictions are just as pure and deep as they were when he was a boy before the foundations of his beliefs are shaken by events.

Part 1 Chapter 22

Part 1 Chapter 22 Summary

Pi briefly imagines the point just before one meets death and how it must be for an atheist or an agnostic. He imagines the atheist's instant change of heart to believe when he sees the white light. The agnostic continues his doubt and explains the white light away as the chemistry of the brain's failing.

Part 1 Chapter 22 Analysis

The author shows the reader how Pi uses some of the phrases of divine consciousness, especially relating to death and the lives of atheists and agnostics and how they discover their lives are mundane and non-spiritual only at their deaths. The author is surprised by how struck he is that his own life may be flat and lacking. In the presence of a man as pious as Pi, he feels that his life lacks depth.

Part 1 Chapter 23

Part 1 Chapter 23 Summary

Pi felt totally comfortable in his religious exploration and expression. Regarding those to whom it mattered, however, they were not comfortable with his practice of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Neither his parents nor his religious teachers knew of his interfaith practices and once they all found out, they decided to come together for a discussion.

Neither of Pi's parents was very religious. His father was, foremost, a businessman. Pi's mother was indifferent on the subject, even though she had a Hindu upbringing and had been schooled as a Baptist. Although she was more interested in books and reading than religion, she never noticed Pi's interest in various religious books. As long as he was reading, she was happy.

Much to Pi's horror, once all the parties had converged, the three wise men, as Pi called them, began to claim Pi as their own. Each thought that he was more faithful to their religion than to the others. Then they began disparaging each other's beliefs. Pi and his parents were silent. Finally, Pi's father stepped in to remind them that the country allowed for freedom of religion. They argued that he could not be a Muslim, Hindu and Christian at the same time. All eyes were on Pi awaiting his decision. Pi said that all he wanted to do was love God and he reminded all of them of Ghandi's words that "All religions are true." He was embarrassed. After the group fell silent for a few minutes, Pi's father interjected that he could not blame Pi for wanting to love God. The wise men left and Pi and his family went for ice cream.

Part 1 Chapter 23 Analysis

This episode is Pi's first experience with standing up for his beliefs. His faith is challenged by all those in his life that mean anything to him. Although he's red-faced and embarrassed, he stands up to them and uses the words of Ghandi, whom they all respect, to defend himself and his beliefs. This story foreshadows the challenges to come in which Pi will have to defend himself and his beliefs.

Part 1 Chapter 24

Part 1 Chapter 24 Summary

When Ravi, Pi's elder brother, finds out about the meeting with Pi, his parents and the three religious men, he gives Pi grief to no end.

Part 1 Chapter 24 Analysis

Ravi is as non-religious as Pi's parents but with a sense of humor about the whole subject. Pi does not share how he felt about all of the teasing from his brother. Perhaps it helped him to have a sense of humor about the whole embarrassing episode.

Part 1 Chapter 25

Part 1 Chapter 25 Summary

Pi continued to be persecuted for his interfaith practices. He felt people should pay more attention to themselves at the least or run to the defense of the widowed and homeless rather than attack him. He changed Christian churches, no longer lingered after Muslim prayers and attended Hindu temple at busy times when he was not detected.

Part 1 Chapter 25 Analysis

Rather than feeling he fit in everywhere, in every religion, as he once felt, Pi seems to not fit in, or feel welcome anywhere. Through his experience he still maintains his religious convictions and practices, although he has had to adjust to make it work for him and remain somewhat undetected. Even at this early age, Pi feels that he is further enlightened than those around him and he can see past the issues that divide religions to see what to him is more important--care for the widowed and homeless.

Part 1 Chapter 26

Part 1 Chapter 26 Summary

Pi decided that he wanted to have a Christian baptism and that he wanted a prayer rug so he could pray outside. To get these things, he had to muster the courage to talk to his father about them. He told his father his request. His father questioned his desire. He told him that he wanted to be baptized and pray to Allah because he loved God. His father said that he could not be both Muslim and Christian. Then his father told him to talk to his mother about it. He tried to talk to his mother, but she avoided the subject, telling him to first talk to his father. Then she tried to talk to him about a book. Realizing that the subject of his religion was important to Pi, she conceded to the discussion. She told him he must choose a religion. He argued this point with her until she put her hand to her forehead. His mother conceded to his wishes.

Part 1 Chapter 26 Analysis

Pi now finds out that not even his parents really support his interfaith practices. In fact, they don't quite understand why he's religious at all. In this chapter, his parents come off as quite self-involved, neither of whom wants to condemn or support him on his religious journey. Pi doesn't really reveal how he feels after learning of his parents' feelings other than to remark that it took courage for him to bring up the subject with his father.

Part 1 Chapter 27

Part 1 Chapter 27 Summary

Pi overheard his parents discussing him later that day. They question how he got to be so religious, especially during a time of progress and modernization in India. They interjected their political views regarding Mrs. Gandhi and Pi's father sees her as a passing phase, just as they hope Pi's religious fervor is a passing phase. Pi's father questioned why Pi was so interested in Islam since, in his opinion, it was so foreign to Hinduism. They both wished that Pi could be more normal.

Part 1 Chapter 27 Analysis

In this chapter we see, through Pi's eyes, how his parents see him. The reader also learns more about their values. They certainly value progress and secularism in wishing their son was not so religious and old fashioned. What we do not see in this chapter is how Pi feels about this discussion between his parents. Every child who has a relatively good relationship with his parents seems to have some desire for their approval. That desire is not apparent in Pi at this point. During his parents' discussion of politics, Pi inserts some foreshadowing that his family will be moving to Canada. The reasons or timing are not included at this point.

Part 1 Chapter 28

Part 1 Chapter 28 Summary

Pi talks about his prayer rug and that he lost it. He lovingly recalls what it looked like and that it reminded him of the sacredness of the earth and creation underneath it. He most often prayed outside because he preferred the outdoors to anywhere else. He had a quiet corner of the yard underneath a shade tree picked out where he would pray. That spot would always remain in his memory as a special one. He recalls his baptism as an uncomfortable event. His father and mother attended against their wills but luckily his brother could not be there. The actual baptism was, for him, as refreshing as a warm summer rain.

Part 1 Chapter 28 Analysis

Pi stood up for himself and got what he wanted, a prayer rug and baptism. Then he loses the rug and his baptism is awkward. This chapter provides further characterization of Pi. He's still young and loses things and his baptism was not as glorious as it could have been. He does not dwell on these points, however. Rather he goes on and on about the beauty of his prayer rug and what it felt like to kneel on it and ends the chapter with the description of the baptism feeling like an all-consuming cleansing, even though it was only a trickle of water poured over his head.

Part 1 Chapter 29

Part 1 Chapter 29 Summary

Pi's father became fed up with the political direction of India and decided that the family must flee to Canada. Pi explores the reasons why his family needed to move, that his father hoped to provide a better life for their family and that the anxiety and worry over the political situation in India was taking a toll so heavy it was no longer worth it for them to stay.

Part 1 Chapter 29 Analysis

There are big changes on the horizon for the Patel family as a result of the increasingly dictatorial actions of Mrs. Gandhi, the ruler of India at the time. Pi's father wanted to raise his family in a progressive India, but when he saw that that was not going to happen, he decided it was time to move. Furthermore, he saw that the political climate would not be good for his livelihood. To Pi and his brother, Canada was an unimaginable country they knew nothing about and that was very far away. The reasons for choosing to move to Canada are not revealed.

Part 1 Chapter 30

Part 1 Chapter 30 Summary

The author is back at Pi's home. This time he meets Pi's wife. He didn't know Pi was married since he'd never mentioned his wife. They all chat briefly in the entryway of the home. Meena is her name, she's dressed in a white lab coat and she is a pharmacist on her way to work. After she departs, Pi, with a smile, tells the author that he's made special chutney for him.

Part 1 Chapter 30 Analysis

The characterization of Pi continues and the reader now learns that Pi is married. His wife is also of Indian descent. The reader learns the beginning and the end of the story at the beginning of the book and the rest of the book is used to fill in the middle part of the story and tell the adventures of Pi.

Part 1 Chapter 31

Part 1 Chapter 31 Summary

Pi invited his Muslim mentor, Mr. Kumar, to the zoo. This was the first and only time Mr. Kumar and Mr. Kumar meet and by chance at that. Pi nervously awaited Mr. Kumar and ushered him into the zoo. Mr. Kumar had never been to a zoo before and was struck with wonder. Pi showed him the zebras, which he had never seen before. He could not believe that they were naturally black and white. At the zebra exhibit they run into Mr. Kumar, the teacher. Pi gave both men carrots to feed the zebra. Mr. Kumar, the teacher, remarked about the royalty of the zebra and shared with the other two its Latin name. Mr. Kumar, the baker, remarked at its wonder and praised God.

Part 1 Chapter 31 Analysis

Mr. Kumar and Mr. Kumar represent the two sides of Pi, his piety and his interest in creation. The two sides of his character, represented by Mr. Kumar and Mr. Kumar, meet at the zoo. Pi finds great wonder in God's creation, the animals and also finds great interest in their behavior, which leads him to study zoology in college. The reader sees in this meeting the way his two mentors interact, as well as how the two sides of his character interact. One side praises God for his wondrous creation; the other is interested in the biological lineage of the animal.

Part 1 Chapter 32

Part 1 Chapter 32 Summary

Pi discussed the strange living arrangements of some of the zoo animals. He likened it to anthropomorphism, where an animal takes another being and treats it like it would one of its own kind. He cites the example of the goats living with the rhinos and an example of a mouse living peacefully in the viper cage for a few weeks. He explains the phenomenon that life sometimes has a brand of denial and craziness that enables it to survive and save itself.

Part 1 Chapter 32 Analysis

The behavior of the animals is also an important theme of this book and in this chapter, animals and creation are further characterized by Pi. This chapter provides one more example of how life breaks its own rules to survive. Animals are not self-aware which helps them to survive. For example, if the mouse living with the vipers realized how scrumptious and vulnerable his soft flesh was to the vipers would he really have set up house so comfortably in their cage? This chapter also foreshadows Pi's relationship with Richard Parker.

Part 1 Chapter 33

Part 1 Chapter 33 Summary

The author is again with Pi looking at photo albums. They look at more recent photos and move backward. They look at wedding photos, photos from the University of Toronto and photos from Brazil, where Pi studied the three-toed sloth. From life in India there are very few pictures; although many were taken, they were lost. All that he has were pictures provided by Mamji. He identifies Richard Parker in one of the photos. Pi laments that he is forgetting what his mother looks like, what her voice sounds like. It's a source of pain for him.

Part 1 Chapter 33 Analysis

The reader begins to see a painful part of Pi's life. It is hinted and foreshadowed that the time between his life in Toronto and leaving India is poisoned with pain. It's foreshadowed in this chapter that something tragic happens to Pi's family, so that he can no longer see them.

Part 1 Chapter 34

Part 1 Chapter 34 Summary

The Patel family sold the zoo. Because of impending regulatory changes on the trade of endangered animals there was a rush by foreign zoos to snatch up the Pondicherry collection. Even though there was great interest in most of their collection, it took more than a year for all the paperwork to be completed and the animals to be re-located to their new homes. It took equally as long for the family to get all its paperwork completed and approved for immigration to Canada. Finally, the family prepared to move.

Part 1 Chapter 34 Analysis

Although Pi's father believes he's doing the right thing for the family in moving them, nothing is easily accomplished in preparing for the move. One can imagine how excruciating it must have been to have made up their minds to move and then not be able to leave for an entire year because of the paperwork.

Part 1 Chapter 35

Part 1 Chapter 35 Summary

The Patels departed for Canada June 21, 1977, on a cargo ship. Before leaving, Pi made sure to say goodbye to Mamji, his mentors, Mr. and Mr. Kumar and all his friends. He felt excitement at their departure; however, his mother was sad. As the ship left the harbor, Pi waved his goodbyes to India. "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," Pi said.

Part 1 Chapter 35 Analysis

The sadness and longing of Pi's mother and the closing sentence that things don't turn out as planned foreshadows something terrible happening, probably on the ship as the Patel family travels to Canada. His mother is dressed in her best clothing with her hair fixed up and adorned with flowers. Does this foreshadow her death?

Part 1 Chapter 36

Part 1 Chapter 36 Summary

The author arrives at Pi's home for another interview. He's early and quickly meets Pi's teenaged son, Nikhil, who is leaving for baseball practice. The author is welcomed into Pi's home and a small dog rushes up to greet him. He didn't know Pi had a dog, either. In the living room the author spots a young girl holding a cat. Pi introduces her as his daughter, Usha and the cat is Moccasin. His daughter is 4. The author promises the reader a happy ending to his tale.

Part 1 Chapter 36 Analysis

The reader can sense impending doom because of the author's use of foreshadowing. In earlier chapters we know that Pi will somehow lose his parents. We also know that the move to Canada does not go as planned. The author now comforts us with the rosy picture of Pi's current home life and that the story will end happily, no matter how difficult it gets in the middle. Perhaps the author does this because he fears that the reader would not continue if he jumped right into the difficult part without foreshadowing a happy ending.

Part 2 Chapter 37

Part 2 Chapter 37 Summary

In this chapter the ship sinks. Pi recalls the horror of it all. He is in a life boat and the only familiar face he spots is Richard Parker, who is still in the water. He cries out for Richard Parker to swim to him, to the life boat. He begins to swim toward the boat. Pi is in denial of this horror and hopes to wake from his nightmare. He cannot find his mother or father or brother. He finds a life buoy in the boat and throws it to Richard Parker. He grabs hold of the buoy with his last bit of energy. Pi begins to pull him to the boat and then it strikes him what he is doing. Pi yells for Richard Parker to let go of the buoy. He grabs an oar to hit him. Suddenly, Richard Parker is in the boat. It hits him that he now has an adult Bengal tiger in his boat. Pi throws himself overboard.

Part 2 Chapter 37 Analysis

It's not clear whether this is a dream, reality, or further foreshadowing. It certainly is a harrowing and tragic scene. Pi has lost everything and is now adrift at sea with a tiger inhabiting his life boat. The reader understands from all of the zoology education provided by Pi prior to this episode that the animals are wild and unpredictable. It also is possible for animals to allow other creatures to live with them peacefully. However, if we remember the chapter where the lions eat the goat, we can see why Pi threw himself overboard.

Part 2 Chapter 38

Part 2 Chapter 38 Summary

Pi cannot believe that the ship has sunk. There had been no indication that things were going to go so terribly wrong. After a couple of days at sea, the ship had landed in Manila for new cargo food and some repairs. According to his brother, Ravi, there was some problem with the engines. However, after 2 days the ship sailed again and for 4 days the family went about caring for the animals on the ship by day and sleeping soundly by night. Early in the morning of the fourth day Pi awakened with a start, as if there had been an explosion. He climbed out of his bunk and decided to go exploring. At first he just noticed a storm raging. Then he noticed the pitch of the ship. He scrambled to return below deck and went down one level to find rising water blocking his way. Now it hit him that the ship was sinking and he could not reach his family. He heard the awful sounds of the ship heaving and monkeys crying. He found three crew members and ran to them for help. They gave him a life jacket and threw him overboard.

Part 2 Chapter 38 Analysis

Clearly, this will become the major life-changing event in Pi's life. His fortune is following him, though. It was fortuitous that he woke up and went above board before the water would've trapped him. It was fortuitous that he found the men with the life jacket. This event is the jumping-off point for the rest of the story and his luck so far foreshadows the fortune that will follow him through his adventures. All that the author told the reader before was leading up to this event.

Part 2 Chapter 39

Part 2 Chapter 39 Summary

After being thrown overboard, Pi miraculously landed on a tarpaulin-covered life boat. He regained his bearings and looked up to where he had come from just in time to see a 500-pound zebra flying toward him. The animal landed in the boat, which broke free from its perch, fell through the air and landed in the stormy water.

Part 2 Chapter 39 Analysis

Pi's good fortune continues; he miraculously lands in a life boat and doesn't get killed by a falling zebra. He and the zebra are now floating on the sea together.

Part 2 Chapter 40

Part 2 Chapter 40 Summary

Pi was now in the churning waters and Richard Parker and the zebra remained in the life boat. Pi was terrified as the water crashed against and over him. Then he saw the dorsal fin of a shark nearby. He had to take drastic measures. He grabbed the floating oar originally meant to scare off Richard Parker and grabbed on to the life boat. He stuck the oar under the tarp and made a perch for himself. He wrapped himself around the oar and raised himself a couple feet out of the water. Had he thought about his chances of survival with a tiger in the boat and sharks in the Pacific below him, he probably would have given up.

Part 2 Chapter 40 Analysis

Pi demonstrates the primal desire of life to survive. He doesn't reason what his chances are for survival; he just clings to life between the sharks and the tiger. His lifeblood fights to continue even though he's orphaned, alone and terrified. The tiger and the zebra are also fighting for survival in a seemingly no-win situation. Pi cannot hold on to the oar forever.

Part 2 Chapter 41

Part 2 Chapter 41 Summary

As the sun began to rise Pi was still alive. The sharks, the sea, the tiger and the lifeboat had allowed him to live. He looked for other survivors but saw none. He was in a bad position and knew that he couldn't hold on forever. He decided to make his way down the oar toward the boat. He knew that he was safe as long as the tiger did not see him. He pulled himself up enough to see over the tarp. The zebra was still alive although with a badly broken leg and blood everywhere. Then from under the tarp, a hyena peeked out, looked at Pi and ducked back under. Pi was then convinced that the zebra was alive and the hyena under the tarp because Richard Parker must have fallen overboard and drowned. What a relief. The weather cleared, Pi's deep sorrow overtook him and he wept.

Part 2 Chapter 41 Analysis

With the rising of the sun, Pi's chances of survival rise when he surmises that the tiger must have gone overboard. The storm clears, a symbol that the worst may be over. The tiger, symbolizing death in the boat is gone as are the sharks, symbolizing death in the water. Pi is surrounded by certain death but survives nonetheless, accompanied by the wondrous beauty of the zebra. Although the beautiful zebra is broken, it survives as a symbol of Pi and foreshadowing that he will survive although not without being broken.

Part 2 Chapter 42

Part 2 Chapter 42 Summary

Pi sees the zoo's prize Borneo orangutan floating on a mound of bananas. Her name was Orange Juice because of her drooling problem. She drifts toward the life boat and steps off the mound and into the life boat. Pi grabs the net she was sitting on and pulls it into the boat instead of grabbing the bananas. The orangutan is in shock and lies on the tarp.

Part 2 Chapter 42 Analysis

Pi is relieved to see more life survive the destruction. He's collecting quite a strange cast of boatmates. When Pi spotted Orange Juice, the rising sun gave her a fiery halo, like a goddess. This animal symbolizes fertility and gentleness. Pi's survival continues as he assists in the preservation of more beautiful objects of God's creation.

Part 2 Chapter 43

Part 2 Chapter 43 Summary

Pi was convinced that he only had to endure this strange survival situation for a few more hours before the search and rescue teams arrived by ship and by helicopter to save him. He remained tense and tried to watch both the horizon and the predator in the boat. The hyena emerged from underneath the tarp and looked around the boat and beyond the boat to the water. It became agitated and began doing laps around the boat while barking. Pi thought about the predatory power of this animal and that they hunt when the sun goes down and will eat anything and everything, even their own kind. The hyena did laps for the rest of day before finally collapsing in a small space behind the zebra.

Part 2 Chapter 43 Analysis

There are hints that the tiger is still in the boat, under the tarp. The hyena becomes agitated for no apparent reason other than they are crazy animals to begin with. Pi once again survives even after receiving strong stares from the hyena. His hope is still alive as he is, although every other creature in the boat, except for the hyena, seems to be dying slowly. The threat of certain death for Pi is as real as if the tiger were still in the boat.

Part 2 Chapter 44

Part 2 Chapter 44 Summary

Pi spent the day at sea. He was perched on his oar keeping an eye on the animals in the boat. Knowing what he knew about the hyena he became more worried about what could happen during the night. Night fell and with a moonless sky, darkness took over. Pi tries to watch the horizon for rescuers while keeping his ears open to hear the animals. During the night Pi heard snarling, barking and squealing. He was petrified but there was nothing to be done. The minutes ticked by and the first night passed.

Part 2 Chapter 44 Analysis

Pi's life is still in danger from the hyena. He knows what the species is capable of and it terrifies him. However, even as night falls, the hyena stays away from him and his life is spared one more night. Death is still very close to Pi and it's unpredictable. However, Pi and his life force are resilient and he lives through the night.

Part 2 Chapter 45

Part 2 Chapter 45 Summary

Daylight came and with it Pi felt hopeful. He was thankful to have made it through the night and he was sure he would be rescued today. He imagined the reunion with his family and what he would say. Then he noticed that the hyena had eaten off the leg of the zebra during the night. He felt sorry for the suffering zebra. As the day wore on, he felt queasy from all the motion of the boat. Pi wondered what had become of Orange Juice. He spotted her at the front of the boat, slouched over and holding on to the side of the boat. She was seasick. Pi also noticed that the ecosystem in the boat had become quite strange. In the wild the orangutan and the hyena would never meet and here they were side by side, the orangutan ignoring the hyena. Near the end of the day, Pi saw a sea turtle floating near the boat and staring up at him. He commanded the turtle to go for help. The turtle disappeared.

Part 2 Chapter 45 Analysis

Pi clings to his hope of rescue. Once again, Pi serves as an example of man's will to live. His hope drives him to virtual delusion as fantasizes about his reunion with his family. The zebra, symbolizing wonder and beauty has now had to endure a predator's chewing off its leg while it is alive and helpless. This affects Pi deeply . Pi also takes comfort and even finds humor in that the orangutan is seasick. After laughing at her, his sickness disappears. This provides another example of how the author uses the orangutan as a symbol of Pi. All the animals are a symbol of some part of him. They are all thrust into this strange, tragic situation and must learn how to survive, both physically and mentally.

Part 2 Chapter 46

Part 2 Chapter 46 Summary

As the second day passed, Pi waited for his rescuers, but none arrived. He dreaded having to spend another night on the water. He noticed a great number of sharks and fish swimming near the boat. Orange Juice sat up in the boat, relaxing. She saw and acknowledged Pi, but didn't pay him much attention. Then the hyena emerged from his hiding place and began to go crazy. He jumped up onto the dying zebra and began to tear away at its flesh and its innards. The zebra was eaten from the inside out. Pi was terrified. The sights and smells of the massacre were unbearable. Orange Juice decided not to watch the happenings peacefully. She began roaring deeply and loudly. The hyena responded with a higher-pitched roar. Some of the zebra's blood was spilled overboard and the sharks began charging the boat. Pi was even more frightened, fearing the sharks would sink the boat. Finally, all the noise and activity subsided and the sun was setting. Pi finally came to accept that his family was dead and he was overcome with grief. He spent the second night crying and grieving.

Part 2 Chapter 46 Analysis

Pi is coming to terms with his situation. Another day passes with no rescue. Just like the zebra, his hope and his soul are being eaten alive from the inside out. The grisly scene in this chapter shows the power of nature to preserve itself in the face of destruction. The hyena's will to live drives it to eat the zebra alive. The situation looks dire for Pi. One wonders what the hyena will do once he's finished eating the zebra. Pi has not expressed any desire for food and water himself.

Part 2 Chapter 47

Part 2 Chapter 47 Summary

The next day dawned and Pi saw that the zebra was still alive. He was dumbfounded at how long the animal could go on living with such a horrible gaping wound. Both the hyena and the orangutan were agitated. Pi was feeling weaker and weaker. By midday, the zebra was dead and the hyena grew even more agitated. The hyena decided to take a run at Orange Juice. He flew over the remains of the zebra toward Orange Juice going for the kill. The orangutan hit him in the head, stunning the beast. Pi was impressed, considering her gentleness and lack of experience with wild animals. Orange Juice was a domesticated pet before coming to the zoo. After recovering from its stun, the hyena took another pass at Orange Juice and this time it made contact, clamping onto her wrist and quickly moving to her throat. Orange Juice was dragged to the bottom of the boat. Pi knew the hyena would be after him next. He was delirious from sleep deprivation and was desperate for rest. He stood up on the tarpaulin, arms raised and stared at the hyena who looked up from his recent kill. Pi prepared to throw himself on the hyena for a fight to the death, but at the last moment he looked down to see Richard Parker's enormous head. Pi retreated to the back of the boat in disbelief and delirium wondering whether he really saw the tiger or it was just a bad dream.

Part 2 Chapter 47 Analysis

The battle between the forces of life and death are now shifting toward death. The beautiful zebra is now maimed and dead and the gentle, loving orangutan is also dead. Pi anthropomorphized the orangutan, remembering its maternal treatment of him as a boy and how it went on to have two sons of its own, just like his own mother. Even in her death, her eyes and cries were humanlike. All that remains in the boat is Pi and the two agents of death, the tiger and the hyena. Pi is losing strength and hope. His plight is still worsening.

Part 2 Chapter 48

Part 2 Chapter 48 Summary

Pi told the story of how Richard Parker got his name. As a cub he was captured when his mother was shot with tranquilizer darts by a hunter looking for a man-eating panther. After temporarily crippling the mother with darts, the hunter found the cub in some shrubbery crying for her. Both were sent to the Pondicherry Zoo. At the shipping station somehow paperwork got mixed up and the name of the hunter, Richard Parker, was mistaken for the name of the cub. The name stuck.

Part 2 Chapter 48 Analysis

This chapter is characterization of the tiger, Richard Parker. The reader learns that the cub was taken from the wild very young and had known life in the zoo its entire adult life. We also learn that, like Pi, Richard Parker is also an orphan, having lost his mother.

Part 2 Chapter 49

Part 2 Chapter 49 Summary

Dawn broke again and Pi found that he could not move. He was too weak to move because of the lack of water, food and sleep. He was losing hope so completely that he now felt that he had nothing more to lose. It occurred to him that because the craft he was in was a lifeboat, there must be sustenance--food and water--somewhere aboard. He just needed to find it, which meant he would have to move from his perch on the tarp toward the hyena and tiger. He first saw the hyena still hiding behind the zebra carcass. He no longer feared this worthless creature because there was a tiger in the boat. Now that he knew Richard Parker was in the boat, Pi knew why the other animals had behaved strangely. They were all afraid of the tiger. Pi believed that the tiger's presence was the reason that he had not yet been attacked. He attributed the tiger's placid behavior to seasickness and sedation. Nonetheless, he still needed to find the water.

Part 2 Chapter 49 Analysis

Pi is growing weaker and will not live long without finding food and water. His soul is also hungry for hope. With the death of his hope, however, his courage rises. Feeling he has nothing to lose, Pi grows more daring and feels no fear when he sees the hyena and the hyena sees him. Pi is becoming more and more animal-like. He now tries to establish himself as the alpha male over the hyena and it seemingly works. The hyena shies from his gaze. There is a strange détente among the three remaining living beings in the boat. Pi staves off death, symbolized by the tiger and the hyena, by not fearing it anymore and by attempting to establish dominion over it.

Part 2 Chapter 50

Part 2 Chapter 50 Summary

Pi took stock of the boat, his temporary home and described it in detail. As for size, it was 3.5 feet deep, 8 feet wide and 26 feet long. It had benches all along the interior perimeter and two benches that crossed the width of the boat. Pi calculated that there was about 100 square feet of territory for Richard Parker. The boat was designed to accommodate 32 people, as it had printed on the side. As time went on, Pi noticed more and more details about the boat and used them to his advantage. "How true it is that necessity is the mother of invention, how very true," he said.

Part 2 Chapter 50 Analysis

Pi is growing to accept his situation and his survival instincts drive him to take stock of his surroundings and how much space the tiger has. If he's going to survive he'll have to use his only advantage over the tiger, his mind. The author provides foreshadowing of Pi's use of parts of the boat to save his life and that these life-saving details come to light at just the right time, when Pi will need them the most.

Part 2 Chapter 51

Part 2 Chapter 51 Summary

Even after his good look around the boat, Pi didn't see what he was really looking for, drinking water. Perhaps there was none, so his hope faded. Then he decided to roll back some more of the tarpaulin and look underneath. This was very risky because Richard Parker's den was under the tarp. He was urged by his primal need to survive. He rolled back the tarp and through a pile of lifejackets, he saw the hind quarters and back of Richard Parker. His body and the tiger's were separated only by the fabric of the tarp. He also saw a locker. He lifted the lid of the locker and discovered a multitude of items, including cans of water. He did not see any can openers, so he hit the cans against the tarpaulin hooks and opened them and drank a couple liters of water. He felt so much better but still felt hungry. He dug again within the locker and found a package of biscuits, which he devoured. Once his hunger and thirst were satisfied, his curiosity took over and he began going through all the items in the locker.

Part 2 Chapter 51 Analysis

Pi's persistence and courage has paid off. He's found food and water even as the tiger lay just feet from him. With his hunger and thirst quenched, his hope and strength return. He's so thankful for his findings that he sees each can and each package as precious gifts.

Part 2 Chapter 52

Part 2 Chapter 52 Summary

Pi took a complete inventory of each item included in the locker. The locker included a variety of basic medicines, drinking water, food rations, blankets, life jackets, a variety of flares, oars, matches, plastic containers, ropes, fishing kits, anchors, hatchets, rain catchers, pens, a cargo net, lifebuoy, hunting knife, cigarettes, chocolate, survival manual, compass, notebook and various other items. After he completed the inventory and with a full belly, Pi fell asleep.

Part 2 Chapter 52 Analysis

The reader is provided with a glimpse of the provisions that Pi now has at his disposal. He may have to use all of them to ensure his survival. As long as he can keep the animals away from him and keep his mind occupied, he has enough food and water to last him for months. He has come to accept that he is lost at sea in a boat with two wild animals.

Part 2 Chapter 53

Part 2 Chapter 53 Summary

Even though the food, water and nap satisfied Pi's body, he remained anxious. He still struggled with the reality that Richard Parker was in the boat. He had to face the reality that he was going to die. Then he had to deal with knowing of his impending death and waiting for it to happen. He was ready to give up until he heard a voice say to him that he was not going to die; he was going to make it. He then discovered his relentless will to live. He began to plan his survival. He built a raft out of life jackets and floating oars. As he was building, Richard Parker began to growl and then the hyena let out a high-pitched scream. Richard Parker attacked the hyena and killed it swiftly and then he turned and looked at Pi. Luckily, a rat appeared and Pi threw it to Richard Parker, who gobbled it up. Then the tiger retreated beneath the tarp. Pi tethered his raft to the lifeboat and put it in the water. As he looked at the water he saw fish and a few sharks. He got onto his raft and floated past the boat. The day came to an end and the rain started to fall.

Part 2 Chapter 53 Analysis

For the first time, Pi faces the real prospect of death. We all know that one day we will die, but to have one's death so imminent is horrifying, especially for a young man. Facing death is a recurring theme of this story. How Pi deals with his situation at times of imminent death speaks to the strength of his character. He discovers his strong will to live. This will is often discovered only when one is faced with death. The survival of life is also a theme of the book, illustrated by Pi's stories of the animal kingdom and now illustrated by Pi's own story.

Part 2 Chapter 54

Part 2 Chapter 54 Summary

That night, the rain continued and Pi did not sleep. He was wet and cold and filled with worry. Afraid that his knots might come apart, he continued to check each one. He fretted about what he was going to do with Richard Parker. He devised numerous plans to get rid of him and have the lifeboat all to himself. He thought about pushing him into the water, killing him with morphine from the locker, attacking him with all the weapons in the locker, choking him with a rope, poisoning him, or just waiting for him to die from hunger and thirst.

Part 2 Chapter 54 Analysis

Now that Pi has accepted his situation and is determined beyond anything to live, he begins to put his plans together. He will certainly not be able to out-muscle the tiger, so he must outsmart him. His plans to do so give him hope and purpose and a reason to go on living. He is going to wage war against the tiger; a war that will take time and thought, just what Pi may need to occupy him until he's rescued.

Part 2 Chapter 55

Part 2 Chapter 55 Summary

The sun rose on the next day. The rain stopped and Pi found himself exhausted and frozen to the bone. He clung to his plan of waging war on the tiger, although at the moment he couldn't remember what his plan was. He wrapped himself in his wet blanket and fell asleep. The sun dried and warmed him and his blanket and he awoke. Richard Parker stood up on the edge of the boat and peered his way. Even though he floated on his raft at a good distance from the boat, the tiger looked enormous, like he could span the distance to Pi with no effort. Pi began to question his plans. He doubted how long this raft would last. One bad storm and he'd be done for. He also doubted his plan to outlast the tiger also as he realized that when the tiger got hungry, all he had to do was take a little swim--tigers are master swimmers--out to the raft, fetch Pi and return to the boat. He also remembered that this breed of tiger is able to drink saline water, so he would never go thirsty. He feared he was going to lose the war.

Part 2 Chapter 55 Analysis

Pi is once again overcome with despair when he realizes that his plan to get rid of the tiger is not going to work. The tiger's presence is so massive that every time Pi faces him, he seems to lose his will to challenge him. He loses his hope of survival. A theme emerges here that sometimes when we logically look at a situation, there seems to be no hope, especially when we see the sea of hopelessness spread out before us and the claws of death reaching for us. However, we know how this story ends, Pi survives. Even in the most hopeless circumstances there is always hope and a chance for survival.

Part 2 Chapter 56

Part 2 Chapter 56 Summary

Pi thought about fear and its ability to destroy life. "It is life's only true opponent," Pi said. If fear is not dealt with, it will rattle your foundation and spread throughout your soul like a cancer. Fear must be repressed and its darkness exposed by the light of day.

Part 2 Chapter 56 Analysis

Pi is trying to impart some wisdom from life lessons learned in this chapter. The entire chapter speaks about the power of fear. Unrepressed fear has the power to destroy hope and faith. At this point in Pi's story he must defy death once again by acknowledging his fear exposing it and not allowing it to defeat him.

Part 2 Chapter 57

Part 2 Chapter 57 Summary

Pi found comfort in Richard Parker. This ferocious animal, his nemesis, had provided him with companionship and purpose. While standing on the edge of the boat and peering at Pi, the animal conveyed a look of contentment, like one looks after a satisfying meal. Then he snorted out of his nostrils once and then again. Pi called it "Prusten." Since Pi had grown up with the animals, he was familiar with their sounds and the different meanings of such sounds. Prusten is a quiet tiger call to express friendliness and harmlessness. He looked at Pi and made the call again. Pi immediately came up with his next plan, to tame the animal. In his soft heart, Pi did not want to lose Richard Parker and thought taming him would be much better. Once again, his hope returned and his panic and fear subsided. He might actually survive this. Pi stood up and began blowing one of the whistles from the locker. The tiger snarled and clawed in the air but did not jump in the water. The first training session came to an end.

Part 2 Chapter 57 Analysis

Richard Parker and Pi are beginning to form their own unique relationship. Pi finds himself terrified of the beast but also dependent on him for purpose and for hope. Richard Parker then expresses through his sounds to Pi that he means no harm, perhaps acquiescing the super alpha male role to Pi. It takes a great deal of courage for Pi to stand up to the tiger and attempt to tame him. Pi has conquered fear and in doing so, may just have conquered death for the time being.

Part 2 Chapter 58

Part 2 Chapter 58 Summary

Pi took the time to read the survival manual included in the locker. Written by a British Royal Naval commander, it provided practical advice on surviving a shipwreck. The manual ended by encouraging the reader that if one has the will to survive he will. The manual also provided basics on navigation. None of this was helpful to Pi as he faced his present challenge of taming the tiger. He knew he had much work to do in establishing a territorial relationship with Richard Parker. He also had much to do to ensure his basic survival such as devise some shelter, improve his raft and stop expecting outside help. He realized that he was responsible for his own survival now. The weight of this realization struck him heavily and he sobbed.

Part 2 Chapter 58 Analysis

The commander's survival manual serves as further foreshadowing that if Pi can maintain his will to survive, he will. The recurrent theme in this chapter is that we are individually responsible for our survival and our will to survive. We are responsible for the basic steps necessary to be successful and that hope without action will amount to a life spent dreaming but without accomplishment. Pi has to find the strength within himself to conquer the loneliness and the bouts of hopelessness and tame Richard Parker.

Part 2 Chapter 59

Part 2 Chapter 59 Summary

Pi was again hungry and thirsty, so he decided to approach the boat and get some food. He noticed that when the raft was next to the boat, the boat turned parallel to the waves, increasing the unpleasant rolling motion that caused Richard Parker's seasickness and when the raft was away from the boat it turned perpendicular to the current and flowed with it. Pi would use this to his advantage against his ill companion in times to come. Once next to the boat, Pi could smell the tiger's urine because he had marked his territory under the tarp. Pi decided to make the top of the tarp his, so he relieved himself in one of the containers from the locker and emptied the contents onto the tarp. He also took the opportunity to begin improving his raft. He modified it so he had a mast and draped a blanket over it to create shelter. Once he was finished, he sat back and ate while he watched the sunset. Richard Parker peeked up above the side of the boat. Pi shouted a greeting to him and he responded with Prusten sounds again. Pi looked down into the water and took in the sights of the underwater world existing below him; he'd never seen anything like it. He felt calmed.

Part 2 Chapter 59 Analysis

Pi is beginning to feel safer with his surroundings and his situation. He begins to notice the vastness and beauty of the ocean around him and beneath him. He's also taking control of his relationship with the tiger, using the tiger's own behavioral system to stake his own territory. Pi is also keeping his mind busy by fixing up his raft and inventing new ways of providing himself with shade. For the first time since the shipwreck, Pi sits back to enjoy the sunset and even marvel at his shipwreck companion. His voice in this chapter is the voice of the Pi we knew before his crisis, the Pi that wonders at the beauty and majesty of nature around him.

Part 2 Chapter 60

Part 2 Chapter 60 Summary

During the night Pi awakened to see the huge moonlit sky before him. He was struck by how small he is and how vast the sea and the sky are. He and his suffering felt minor in comparison to the grand stage upon which he now sat. He marveled and felt terror at the same time. Then he said a prayer and went back to sleep.

Part 2 Chapter 60 Analysis

Pi is beginning to see beyond his crisis and put it in the perspective of what's around him. He's terrified at the relative smallness of his situation in the scope of the big world he now floats upon. These thoughts lead him back to prayer. Although largely absent from his account since the shipwreck, his religious beliefs and prayers begin to bubble up again. Also, even though he acknowledges his irrelevance, he refuses to accept that his life and his suffering do not matter. He cries out that he and his situation do matter. As a theme of humankind, we all strive for purpose and to make meaning out of our lives. Pi fights to keep his purpose alive.

Part 2 Chapter 61

Part 2 Chapter 61 Summary

Pi was feeling rested and strong the next morning and decided to try fishing for the first time. He had no bait, so he decided to cut up his leather shoe and use parts of it. Considering all the fish he saw the night before, he thought he'd have no problem. The shoe didn't work. He began to worry; the fish was not for him but for Richard Parker. He was afraid if the tiger became hungry, he would come after him. So Pi went to the locker to look for bait ideas. He looked up to see the tiger staring at him. Just then a swarm of flying fish attacked them, many of them falling into the boat and Richard Parker snapped them up. Pi caught a few too and decided to use one of them for bait, which meant he'd have to kill it. He'd never killed anything in his life and it took him a long time and many tears to get up the courage. He tried fishing again and caught a large dorado. This time killing it was much easier. He delivered his kill to Richard Parker; all the while blowing the whistle so that the tiger would know where his food was coming from.

Part 2 Chapter 61 Analysis

Pi continues on with his plan to tame this tiger. One way to tame him is to feed him, which Pi figures he'll do with fish. Even more difficult for Pi than catching a fish is having to kill one of the flying fish. Here, he illustrates that humankind is really not designed to kill, but when it's a matter of life and death it's amazing what one can get used to.

Part 2 Chapter 62

Part 2 Chapter 62 Summary

Pi awoke before sunrise after a restless night of sleep. Richard Parker was restless, too. Pi feared he may be getting thirsty, so he bled the water from the stills into a bucket and delivered it to the tiger along with two flying fish. Richard Parker discovered the bucket and lapped up the water. He looked up and Pi stared at him intently and blew the whistle. The tiger disappeared under the tarp. Pi was able to make the lifeboat more and more like a zoo habitat. As the day ended, Pi calculated that the next day would mark a week since the ship sank.

Part 2 Chapter 62 Analysis

Pi's days are becoming more routine, collecting water, fishing and taming the tiger. He is now taking control of his surroundings. Pi has found ways to keep himself occupied; he's developed a love for fishing. His days are purposeful; he's got food and water and is even sleeping somewhat.

Part 2 Chapter 63

Part 2 Chapter 63 Summary

Pi compared the length of his survival at sea with that of other survivors. Some were at sea for 38 days, 47 days, 76 days, 83 days, 118 days and 173 days. Pi was at sea for 227 days. He offered the keys to his survival, including keeping occupied. Each day had a fairly full schedule of maintaining his raft, feeding and watering himself and Richard Parker and observing the tiger. Big events in his days included dropping everything to collect rainfall and catching turtles. He said he survived by not keeping track of time and of the days. Instead, the time was marked by his daily routine and the adventures he had along the way.

Part 2 Chapter 63 Analysis

After learning much about Pi's emerging routine, the reader is now privy to how long the ordeal lasts. Relative to many others, Pi survived for a very long time. His secrets of survival are consistent themes in the story that surface again in this chapter. One must keep one's mind occupied and find purpose in life wherever life places you. Pi also learned to live in the moment. He did not track days but lived out each day in the present, not looking for rescuers on the horizon.

Part 2 Chapter 64

Part 2 Chapter 64 Summary

Pi's clothes disintegrated from the sun and salt and he spent many months without any clothing. From being wet all the time, he developed salt water boils, which were very painful and prevented him from finding a comfortable resting position. Slowly and with sunshine, the boils would heal, but new ones developed when his skin got wet.

Part 2 Chapter 64 Analysis

Small details of suffering often become major matters to the one suffering. Pi shares one of these small details. He's also sharing a life lesson, that time and sunshine can heal one's wounds.

Part 2 Chapter 65

Part 2 Chapter 65 Summary

Pi spent a great deal of time trying to understand the navigational directions in the survival manual. The main problem was that he had no knowledge of the constellations to use the celestial navigation. Pi had always wondered at the stars, but he had always received more spiritual direction from the sky rather than geographic. It did not really matter, however, because he had no means of propelling himself, anyway. So he ended up just drifting. He did not control his direction and time and distance passed.

Part 2 Chapter 65 Analysis

Pi likens his drifting at sea to that of the lives of the rest of humanity who "travel down the road of life" afloat on forces over which they largely have no control. He also revisits the feeling of smallness in the face of a brilliant starry night.

Part 2 Chapter 66

Part 2 Chapter 66 Summary

Pi fished voraciously, experimenting with a variety of methods and equipment. He had to catch as many fish as possible to keep Richard Parker satisfied. He ended up fishing the most with gaffs. The gaff was a tubular tool, about 5 feet long, with a handle and ring for a rope at one end and a large hook at the other end. He would hook the fish underneath their gills. The fish's instinct was to swim upward and he would pull it up onto his raft. He also used his cargo net with hidden hooks sewn into it. In addition to fish, he began catching turtles, which were easy to catch but very difficult to land on the boat because they usually weighed around 130 pounds.

Part 2 Chapter 66 Analysis

Pi is amazed at how much of a savage he's become. He was raised as a strict vegetarian and never killed anything his life. The sound of a banana peel cracking open would at one time unsettle him. The themes of how far life will go to preserve itself and how much Pi is becoming more like the tiger in his boat are important in this chapter as Pi learns how to fish and dissect his kills for food.

Part 2 Chapter 67

Part 2 Chapter 67 Summary

Pi noticed that the underside of his raft was becoming its own little ecosystem full of sea life. Algae began to grow and then animal life started appearing in the form of little shrimp and clear little minnows. He also began to see worms and larger, chubby fish and crabs. He tried eating everything but enjoyed the little crabs the most. He also noticed that the hull of the lifeboat was growing barnacles, which he watched as entertainment. They brought peace to his anxiety ridden body.

Part 2 Chapter 67 Analysis

Pi revels in the nature that exists around him, only this time he sees it as a food source. With his very survival dependent on the interesting, beautiful sea life that he witnesses, his enjoyment of it takes on a whole new meaning. However, he is still able to find distraction and entertainment in little things like the barnacles.

Part 2 Chapter 68

Part 2 Chapter 68 Summary

Pi discussed his changing sleep patterns. Because of the stress and anxiety of his situation he generally slept no more than an hour a night. His sleep patterns were contrary to Richard Parker's, who slept almost all the time and in various positions around his area of the boat.

Part 2 Chapter 68 Analysis

Pi is deeply anxious about his situation, which is evident in his lack of sleep. The tiger, however, could not care less. His relaxation is continual. Perhaps this chapter is an illustration of the difference between humans and animals. Humans are often wracked with worry and anxiety over situations over which we often have no control. Richard Parker's approach to his situation is to nap and relax, sometimes on the floor of the boat and sometimes on one of the benches with his head resting on the edge of the boat so he can see out.

Part 2 Chapter 69

Part 2 Chapter 69 Summary

Often Pi saw what he thought were lights in the distance. Just in case they were ships, he set off a flare each time. One of his most vivid memories from his time as a castaway was the smell of the flares. To him they smelled just like cumin, which instantly transported him back to his hometown and a better time and place. His flares were never seen and to this day the smell of flares reminds him of the ocean and no longer of his childhood home.

Part 2 Chapter 69 Analysis

Pi's hope is still alive. The theme of hope and will to live are very important to this story and to Pi's survival. He continued to set off flares each time he thought he saw lights until all his flares were gone. He becomes deeply disappointed when the lights turn out to be nothing. As time passes, he gives up completely on ever being rescued by a ship; however, he still clings to his hope of surviving this ordeal.

Part 2 Chapter 70

Part 2 Chapter 70 Summary

Pi learned from the survival manual how to butcher turtles and found that it was very difficult. The first turtle he tried to butcher was not cooperative and true to instinct, withdrew into its shell. He finally was able to separate the head from the body and collect a glassful of the turtle's blood, a nutritious drink encouraged by the survival manual. He then removed the shell to reveal the turtle's meat. He gave the remainder of the turtle's body to Richard Parker, who thoroughly enjoyed it. After he fed the tiger and fled, he thought that he needed to carve out his territory on the boat; he needed unlimited access to the tarp and locker.

Part 2 Chapter 70 Analysis

Rather graphically, Pi describes the butchering of the turtle. For such a meek, vegetarian boy, he has certainly learned how to become a skillful hunter and butcher. He also makes a very important decision to stake out his territory on the boat.

Part 2 Chapter 71

Part 2 Chapter 71 Summary

Pi laid out his plan to tame the tiger in a nine-step sequence. He chose a day with regular, but calm, waves. First, he used the anchors to create a stable position for the lifeboat with his getaway raft easily accessible. He made a body shield out of a turtle shell for protection. Then he began the training. He provoked the tiger by intruding on the neutral area but was careful not to provoke him too much. The purpose of the intrusion was to provoke the tiger to intrude on Pi's territory. He had to be careful to maintain eye contact with the tiger because whoever won the staredown was the alpha male. Once the tiger trespassed, Pi began blowing the whistle and tripped his anchor so that the boat would move sideways with the boat, which made the tiger hopelessly nauseous. Eventually, the tiger would associate the blowing of the whistle with the nausea and avoid the behavior that led to the whistle blowing.

Part 2 Chapter 71 Analysis

This chapter, the guide to taming a tiger is written much like the survival guide Pi has been reading continually. He said that he felt that the survival didn't adequately prepare him with how to survive when your castaway mate is a Bengal tiger. Pi, as a young man, has to put aside his fear of the massive beast and use his intellect to conquer the animal. Although he survives a couple of close calls with the tiger, he maintains his inner strength.

Part 2 Chapter 72

Part 2 Chapter 72 Summary

When Pi trained the tiger, he wore a shield that he made out of a large turtle shell. During the first session with the tiger, Richard Parker swatted at Pi and he fell off the boat and the shield sank. Pi was terrified and didn't eat or drink for the rest of the day. Pi knew that he would have to continue the training because it was a necessity. He also knew that the tiger did not really want to fight with him because predators don't want to fight with other predators unless absolutely necessary. Richard Parker went on to swat at Pi four more times knocking Pi into the water each time and he lost his shield four more times. Pi persisted in his training and he never lost a shield again.

Part 2 Chapter 72 Analysis

In this chapter Pi illustrates one of the greatest differences between man and beast: persistence. Pi continues to fight off death and persists in his training of the tiger. One may marvel at how he knew so much at such a young age about training the tiger. He also had to have solid self-confidence and know that he was doing the training properly to persist even after coming within arm's length of Richard Parker.

Part 2 Chapter 73

Part 2 Chapter 73 Summary

During the quiet parts of his days Pi wished, most of all, for a book. This desire was one that didn't subside even after he survived his ordeal. The first time he saw a Gideon Bible, he sent a donation to the Gideons. His only reading material was the survival manual, which he read over and over. He also kept a diary, being careful to write as compactly as possible to avoid using up too much space in the notebook. The entries were not dated and covered mostly practical matters.

Part 2 Chapter 73 Analysis

Another important factor in survival is keeping one's mind active. For Pi this must have been difficult without having anything to read. Sure, he had Richard Parker to observe, but the tiger slept much of the time.

Part 2 Chapter 74

Part 2 Chapter 74 Summary

Pi maintained his religious practices; however, he had to modify the rituals to fit his current situation. He found solace in his religious expressions, yet he had to continually reconsider his place in God's universe. He found it difficult to continue believing, loving and keeping his heart open. He felt so alone and full of despair. However, through the darkest times, his faith would re-emerge.

Part 2 Chapter 74 Analysis

Part of Pi's coming of age in this story is how his religious expression changed. In this chapter he touches on this subject. He says he found it difficult to remain open to God, to feel love and to believe that God listens to his prayers. This is reasonable to believe under the circumstances that Pi faced. Many people, when faced with a crisis will wonder why bad things such as the shipwreck happen to good people and wonder why God lets these things happen. This exploration is a theme in Pi's story and part of his coming of age through his castaway experience.

Part 2 Chapter 75

Part 2 Chapter 75 Summary

Pi sang "Happy Birthday" to his mother on her estimated birthday.

Part 2 Chapter 75 Analysis

Pi understandably misses and mourns his family, especially his mother. His singing the song illustrates that he also misses the celebrations and the family time together. He reaches out for those expressions in singing this song to honor and remember his mother.

Part 2 Chapter 76

Part 2 Chapter 76 Summary

Pi made a point of cleaning up after Richard Parker and trying to keep his area of the boat clean. This became significant after he noticed the tiger trying to hide his feces one day. His act of trying to hide was significant because it signaled his deference to Pi. If he flaunted them it would have been a sign of dominance. Pi took advantage of this and exerted his dominance by handling the tiger's feces in front of him so that it made him nervous but not provoked.

Part 2 Chapter 76 Analysis

Pi continues the training of the tiger and knows enough about the animal's behavior to even bully him psychologically over the matter of his defecation. Pi has become more opportunistic and has become alert to any chance to exert further domination over Richard Parker.

Part 2 Chapter 77

Part 2 Chapter 77 Summary

The food supplies began to run low, so Pi started following the recommended daily intake according to the survival guide. He was beginning to starve. His hunger grew and he thought about food continuously. At one point he would clean the fish he caught and peel off their skin, whereas later on he would just bite into them, so thankful just to have them. He also began to eat every part of the turtles he caught. After the biscuits ran out, Pi became so desperate that he would try to eat anything. He even tried eating Richard Parker's feces once. There were no nutrients in it and he spit it out, never to try that again. As starvation set in, his body began to break down and he found that standing became more and more difficult.

Part 2 Chapter 77 Analysis

Pi's situation is becoming more dire. His food supplies have dwindled and he has to rely on what he can catch to feed himself and the tiger. Starvation is making him increasingly desperate and he's beginning to take on more of Richard Parker's traits. He has started eating like an animal, no longer fussing with cleaning and peeling fish but just eating them whole.

Part 2 Chapter 78

Part 2 Chapter 78 Summary

Pi discussed the many skies and seas with wind in between that he experienced as a castaway. He felt as though he was always at the center of a huge circle made of sky and ocean. He also felt a victim of contradictions most of the time. During the heat of the day he wished for the coolness of the night and in the darkness of the night he was lonely and wished for the daylight. The greatest of these contradictions was the presence of boredom and terror at the same time. His life at sea became only exciting at death, whether contemplating how it would happen or fighting it off when threatened. His life at sea was not living but existing and very difficult to maintain.

Part 2 Chapter 78 Analysis

The tenor of this chapter is very solemn and morose. Pi marvels at the different seas and skies that he witnesses, yet he feels trapped in their ring, like a circus animal. He discusses his continual discomfort with his situation, with the daylight and the nighttime, with the heat and the cold and with the sunshine and the rain. He's full of contradictions. He finds himself exhausted from trying to preserve an existence because he has no life. His despair is very deep at this point in the story.

Part 2 Chapter 79

Part 2 Chapter 79 Summary

Pi noticed that there were sharks around the lifeboat all the time, mainly at sunrise and sunset. Pi could catch the sharks with his bare hands when they swam past the boat. He would throw them over to Richard Parker's area of the boat. The tiger would paw at the sharks until he had clubbed them to death and then eat them. Once a shark got hold of one of Richard Parker's paws and injured the tiger. Pi would catch the small, young sharks and kill and eat them himself.

Part 2 Chapter 79 Analysis

Pi continues to characterize his existence, one of his sources of food being sharks. One of the main sources of Pi's entertainment was watching the tiger and how he reacted to certain things. In this chapter, he enjoyed watching Richard Parker's response to the shark, not having any experience with predatory fish.

Part 2 Chapter 80

Part 2 Chapter 80 Summary

Pi began to spend more time on the boat following an incident with Richard Parker. During a storm of flying fish, a large dorado landed in the boat. Pi picked up the fish and out of the corner of his eye saw Richard Parker staring at him. He turned to face the crouching tiger sure that his end had come. His raft was not nearby and neither was the whistle, so he stared the tiger down. The stare lasted for a couple of seconds and Richard Parker licked his nose and averted his gaze. Pi had won. From that time on he spent more time on the lifeboat, even going so far as to sleep on the tarpaulin with his back to the tiger.

Part 2 Chapter 80 Analysis

This chapter is an important one in the likelihood of survival for Pi. Now that he has the tiger tamed, for the most part, the greatest foe in his survival is his own will. Through this victory over the tiger, Pi has gained comfort in being able to spend more time on the lifeboat. This episode also shows how much Pi is becoming more like an animal and driven by survival instincts. He was ready to fight the tiger for the fish.

Part 2 Chapter 81

Part 2 Chapter 81 Summary

In thinking back, Pi finds it hard to believe that he survived his relationship with Richard Parker. He attributes his survival with the tiger to two things, Richard Parker's tendency toward seasickness and the fact that Pi provided all his food and water. The tiger would not have survived had it not been for Pi providing for him. These actions gifted Pi with the power over the tiger.

Part 2 Chapter 81 Analysis

In this chapter, Pi explains how his survival depended on gaining power. As we read at the beginning of the book, gaining power was about conquering his will and finding that he had a strong will to live. To live, he had to gain power over the tiger, which he has been able to do by making the tiger dependent on him for food and water.

Part 2 Chapter 82

Part 2 Chapter 82 Summary

Water was a huge concern for Pi and he obsessed about it. He collected rainwater and used the stills to turn sea water into drinking water. Even with his diligence, they narrowly survived. Pi always made sure Richard Parker had as much water as he could drink. Food was also always a concern and at times it was plentiful, but more often, it was not. Pi had to give generously to the tiger at the cost of his own hunger and thirst because Pi knew his life would end quickly if the tiger became desperate for food. Pi also painfully came to realize how animal-like he was becoming when the sounds and behavior of his supping sounded just like that of the tiger's.

Part 2 Chapter 82 Analysis

Pi discusses how close he came to not surviving because of the lack of food and water. He had to work so hard just to continue to live for an uncertain future. He also had to continue feeding and watering the tiger. Richard Parker now seems to have become a symbol of hope. Pi continues to feed his hope to prevent it from becoming his death. If he did not believe he was going to survive, why would he continue feeding the tiger? At the same time Pi finds that he is taking on more and more of the tiger's attributes and is becoming an animal himself.

Part 2 Chapter 83

Part 2 Chapter 83 Summary

A great storm kicked up one afternoon and the sea began to rage with enormous swells. Pi's little lifeboat rode the swells up and then sped down the opposite side. Pi was able to cover the entire boat with the tarpaulin and crawl underneath to relative safety. Richard Parker's territory was under the tarp and in the blackness underneath, Pi does not know the whereabouts of the tiger except for his growling. The storm raged, the boat went up and down the swells at 60-degree angles and Pi and the tiger were thrashed about, almost drowning. The next morning, Pi saw that his little raft was gone, the lifeboat was in bad shape and much of the food Pi had stored was gone or ruined. Pi did manage to salvage one whistle.

Part 2 Chapter 83 Analysis

Pi will no longer have his private raft available, so he will have to live full time on the boat with Richard Parker. Fortunately, he was able to recover the last orange whistle to survive the storm. The storm is significant because it also forced Pi and Richard Parker to inhabit the same space, under the tarp for an entire night. Additionally, they will now have to inhabit the boat together all the time.

Part 2 Chapter 84

Part 2 Chapter 84 Summary

Pi and Richard Parker came eye to eye with a whale. Pi was awakened by the whale's blowhole. He looked over the edge of the boat, right into the eye of the whale. Pi believed the whale was looking for a mate and obviously changed his mind after further inspection of Pi and his companion, the tiger. Pi also saw many dolphins. One group of them stayed with him an entire day. He also saw a few birds, one of them being the masked booby, which he caught, killed and ate. He fed the leftovers to Richard Parker.

Part 2 Chapter 84 Analysis

Pi marveled at the gentleness and beauty of the whales and dolphins that he saw during his ordeal. Unlike most of the other wildlife he mentions, he says nothing about killing and eating either the whales or the dolphins. He remarks that the killing of whales is a horrible crime. This type of remark may seem a bit hypocritical considering that in the same chapter he tells how he broke the neck of the booby and ate it. This contradiction illustrates the disparity between Pi's intellect and his survival instincts.

Part 2 Chapter 85

Part 2 Chapter 85 Summary

Pi and Richard Parker experienced a fantastic lightning storm. Pi was struck by the beauty and wonder of it all. Richard Parker was terrified. Pi reveled in the close call with a lightning strike. All the while he talked to the tiger about the entire spectacle.

Part 2 Chapter 85 Analysis

In this chapter, the theme of the appreciation of natural wonders appears. Pi is impressed and mystified by the lightning crashing all around him. Rather than being afraid, he thinks of the hugeness and majesty of the universe. This is one time Pi feels happiness. The tiger, however, is cowering in terror. Also of note in this chapter, Pi begins to speak to Richard Parker as if he's another person. Pi may be starting to anthropomorphize the tiger.

Part 2 Chapter 86

Part 2 Chapter 86 Summary

Pi saw a ship coming toward them. This only happened once during his ordeal. Pi called out to Richard Parker. Pi thought that, finally, his mother, father and brother have come to rescue him. At almost the last minute, Pi realized that the ship was not coming for him but bearing down on his little lifeboat. The ship passed, never noticing the castaways in its wake. Pi and Richard Parker watched longingly as the ship became a speck on the horizon. Pi cried out to the tiger that he loved him and could not make it without him. He also promised the tiger that he will deliver him to land.

Part 2 Chapter 86 Analysis

Pi's hopes of rescue are renewed with the passing ship. Pi still thinks of his missing family. The ship passes, as do Pi's hopes. Pi makes it apparent that without the tiger giving him purpose and hope, he would not have made it. One of the themes of this chapter touches on the strange relationship that Pi and Richard Parker have with each other and that they need each other to survive.

Part 2 Chapter 87

Part 2 Chapter 87 Summary

One of Pi's methods of escapism was to temporarily asphyxiate himself by putting a cloth over his face. When he put the cloth over his face and fell into a daze, he would experience the most amazing dreams and hallucinations. Using his "dream rag" helped him pass the time.

Part 2 Chapter 87 Analysis

Pi needed to periodically escape his situation and did so by putting a wet rag over his face and partially asphyxiating himself. The hours passed very slowly at times and the rag trick helped them pass more quickly. Now that Pi no longer had to be on guard against Richard Parker all the time, he had more time to relax and find alternate ways to entertain himself.

Part 2 Chapter 88

Part 2 Chapter 88 Summary

Pi's lifeboat came upon a collection of trash floating in the water. He was disgusted by the smell and the rotten food, but he recovered an empty, floating wine bottle. Taking a page from his notebook he wrote a note telling of his plight, put the message in the bottle and set the bottle afloat on the water.

Part 2 Chapter 88 Analysis

In an effort to alert someone, somewhere about his predicament, Pi puts a message in a bottle and sends it off, hoping that his message will be received and he saved.

Part 2 Chapter 89

Part 2 Chapter 89 Summary

Pi's suffering became intense. The sun and the sea ate away at everything. Pi and Richard Parker were slowly dying. They were starving and thirsty and losing strength to even gather food and water. Both had lost weight and Pi was spending the greater parts of the days sleeping in a semi-conscious state using his dream rag more than ever. In his diary, Pi wrote of having no energy and predicting his imminent death. He also poked at the tiger to see whether he was still alive, which he was. Then, instead of running out of paper in his diary, his pens ran out of ink.

Part 2 Chapter 89 Analysis

Pi reached the lowest point in his crisis and for the first time actually wished to die, predicted his death and discontinued his diary entries because he is going to die. He slept most of the time and spent the rest of the time using his dream rag to hallucinate. Richard Parker is also close to death, the fur in his coat begins to fall out and he is barely eating.

Part 2 Chapter 90

Part 2 Chapter 90 Summary

Richard Parker went blind. For days, before Pi discovered his blindness, he rubbed his eyes and meowed. Then when Pi threw him a fish, it hit him in the face and he made no reaction. Then Pi began to go blind. The next day, his blindness was complete. Pi was barely alive and had again resolved to die. He said his goodbyes to Richard Parker and then heard a voice speaking back to him asking if someone was there. He went on to have a lengthy conversation about food with the voice. At one point he thought it must be Richard Parker speaking to him. The conversation continues. The other individual was blind also. Pi kept falling asleep and falling into a delirious state. The voice asked for food and Pi tells him he has none. Through their blindness the two found each other and embraced weeping. The two fall onto the tarpaulin and the man began to grab at Pi and spoke of eating him. The man moved off the tarp, mistakenly, into Richard Parker's territory. The tiger consumed him.

Part 2 Chapter 90 Analysis

The author writes this chapter in a stream-of-consciousness, dazed style. The lines between what is real and what is hallucination becomes blurred to the point that the reader does not know whether the events in this chapter really happened or was it just a maddening hallucination about another man or about the tiger having a conversation with Pi. Each one of these possibilities is suggested in this chapter. Furthermore, if it is another man, is it Pi or the tiger who kills and consumes him? Pi states that the experience of going blind and the death of this man caused a part of him to die permanently.

Part 2 Chapter 91

Part 2 Chapter 91 Summary

Pi boarded the man's boat to scavenge for food and anything else of value. Feeling around, he found some turtle meat, fish, biscuit crumbs and water. Pi wept and wept and in 2 days, his vision returned. The sight he saw in the boat was horrific. The man's body had been dismembered and picked apart by Richard Parker. Pi took one of the arms and used it for bait. Then he found himself eating at the flesh of the body. Once he caught a fish he stopped eating at the body and resolved to pray for the man's soul daily.

Part 2 Chapter 91 Analysis

Pi's sight is restored. Curiously, he goes blind just before the killing and eating of the other castaway and regains his sight following the grisly episode. Morally, Pi sinks lower than death in his cannibalism and he knows it because he resolves to pray for the man daily. Since the body is so dismembered, however, he never knows who the person is. Could the man have been another castaway from his ship?

Part 2 Chapter 92

Part 2 Chapter 92 Summary

Pi saw trees in the near distance. He was so used to illusions and hallucinations he was not sure whether they were real or not, but he continued to stare. As the boat approached the island, Pi discovered that the trees were real and he stepped off the boat to investigate. The island had no soil; it was just a mass of algae. He was elated that they found the island and yelled at Richard Parker that they were saved. He began eating the algae until he was full. Richard Parker, wobbly from weakness, leapt from the boat and disappeared over a ridge. After a few wobbly days, Pi was able to walk again. Each night, both Pi and Richard Parker returned to sleep in the boat. After a few days, Pi decided to explore the island. He found that it was all algae and inhabited by meerkats, a small, furry, carnivorous animal related to the mongoose. The meerkats fed on freshly dead fish that they had not killed. Pi was mystified. Both Pi and Richard Parker grew stronger and returned to life. Pi decided to vacate the boat and sleep in a nearby tree. The first night he discovered that all the meerkats vacated the island floor and slept in the trees. Pi woke up one night to see all the ponds full of dead fish. In the morning the fish were all gone. It was a mystery. Later, Pi found what he believes to be a fruit tree. He picked the fruit, wrapped in layers of leaves and found a human tooth in each of the half dozen that he picked. The mystery of the island was revealed to him; it was a carnivorous island by night. The island had eaten all the fish and a human. It had not eaten the meerkats because they escaped to the trees at night. Pi and Richard Parker reluctantly boarded the lifeboat and pushed off.

Part 2 Chapter 92 Analysis

Once again, the author writes this chapter in a way that it is not clear as to whether this episode really happened to Pi or whether it was a dream or hallucination. Nevertheless, the island seems to be a symbol of Pi, Richard Parker and their floating island, the lifeboat. Everything with which they come into contact, they consume as carnivores, including a human being. Pi is repulsed and terrified by the island.

Part 2 Chapter 93

Part 2 Chapter 93 Summary

Pi was completely tired of his crisis, but death would not come to him. During this time of the last days of his suffering, in his lowest times, his mind turned to higher thoughts and his heart turned to God.

Part 2 Chapter 93 Analysis

This chapter is full of despair and hopelessness. Even though Pi now wants to die, his death will not come. Even in his darkest moments, he experiences redemption in his religious beliefs and in God.

Part 2 Chapter 94

Part 2 Chapter 94 Summary

Pi, Richard Parker and the lifeboat finally landed in Mexico. Pi was extremely weak. Richard Parker had already jumped off the boat. Before disappearing forever, he stopped for a few moments on the beach still staring into the jungle. Pi hoped he would look back and make some sign to conclude their relationship. He didn't. Pi was now all alone and felt abandoned by his family and Richard Parker. He cried, wishing he had said something to the tiger, thanking him for saving his life. Later that day, he was found by some locals and taken by police to a hospital to recover. From there, doors opened and generosity flowed from Mexicans and Canadians to help him.

Part 2 Chapter 94 Analysis

Pi's tale as a castaway comes to an end on a Mexican beach and he is almost too weak to notice. What he does notice is that his companion, Richard Parker, abandons him without so much as a glance back. The tiger is able to put the ordeal immediately behind him and leap into a new jungle. Pi desired a conclusion to the relationship, which he never received. He wanted to know that he held some chord of significance to the tiger.

Part 3 Chapter 95

Part 3 Chapter 95 Summary

The author tells the story of two men from the Japanese Ministry of Transportation that were dispatched to the town in Mexico where Pi recovered to interview him regarding the sinking of the ship. They interviewed Pi for 3 hours and supplied the transcript to the author.

Part 3 Chapter 95 Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to set up what is to follow in Part 3. The following chapters include an interview with Pi about his ordeal as told to the Japanese officials.

Part 3 Chapter 96

Part 3 Chapter 96 Summary

The interview with the Japanese officials began. The date was February 19, 1978. The men wanted to hear from him how the ship sank and what happened to the cargo on the ship. They began by asking Pi to tell them what happened in as much detail as possible.

Part 3 Chapter 96 Analysis

The interview begins with introductions. The men feed Pi a cookie and then ask him to tell them his story. He obliges.

Part 3 Chapter 97

Part 3 Chapter 97 Summary

"The story."

Part 3 Chapter 97 Analysis

Pi tells his story to the officials, which obviously he does not need to repeat since he just finished telling it to the reader.

Part 3 Chapter 98

Part 3 Chapter 98 Summary

After Pi finished telling his story, the two men remarked to each other, in Japanese, that they found the story interesting. Then they excused themselves to take a short break.

Part 3 Chapter 98 Analysis

The two officials are skeptical of Pi and his fantastic tale. He had no idea about their feelings because they spoke only Japanese in front of him.

Part 3 Chapter 99

Part 3 Chapter 99 Summary

The officials returned from their break to tell Pi that they did not believe his story. Then they proceeded to pick the story apart. Pi proved his points and defended his memory. Finally, the men demanded to hear the real story, or in Pi's understanding, a story without animals. Pi proceeded to tell them a horribly gory tale about the shipwreck and his survival that did not involve animals. After the ship sank, the cook, from a lifeboat, threw Pi a lifebuoy and pulled him into the boat. There were four in the lifeboat: Pi, his mother, the cook and a sailor. The sailor had broken his leg from a fall. The cook, who was a bully, amputated his leg and used it for bait. The sailor soon died and the cook butchered him. Pi and his mother were horrified. Pi's mother continually berated the cook for eating the sailor and the cook eventually butchered Pi's mother in front of him. After a few days, in a moment of opportunity, Pi stabbed the cook with a knife and killed him. Then Pi ate him. Pi concluded his story. The Japanese men drew the parallels to his original story and asked him a battery of follow-up questions. The men conceded that the reason the ship sank lies at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. Pi then asked which story they preferred. They both reply that they like the story with the animals. "Thank you. And so it goes with God," Pi replied. The men left.

Part 3 Chapter 99 Analysis

Pi offers an alternate story to the Japanese officials because they don't believe his original story. The second story he offers is hopelessly gory and tragic. Instead of animals, there are people and they eat each other. Pi is the biggest cannibal of them all. The suggestion of the alternate story offers tragic twist leaving the reader to wonder which story is true. Each reader will have different viewpoints on this subject.

Part 3 Chapter 100

Part 3 Chapter 100 Summary

The author recalled the letter he received from the Japanese official that recounted the interview with Pi to have been "difficult and memorable." He admired Pi's intellect and wit. He included his final report in the letter to the author. Essentially, the final report said that Pi had no conclusive knowledge about the reason the ship sank. It also discussed weather, crew fitness, etc. The report concluded with a note about Pi and his amazing fortitude in surviving his ordeal, especially given that he had to survive in the company of an adult tiger.

Part 3 Chapter 100 Analysis

The Japanese official decides to believe Pi's original story and believe in the tiger. He offers the reader a further characterization of Pi, post crisis, saying that he is an amazing, courageous and intelligent young man. Plus, he survived longer than any other known castaway.

Characters

Characters

Piscine Molitor Patel

Piscine is the main character of the story. He is a teenaged boy, born in Pondicherry, India, in the early 1960's. Piscine was named after a pool in Paris. His father's best friend described the pool as "...a pool the gods would have delighted to swim in." Piscine grew to be a seeker of God as a young man, so the name fit perfectly. Piscine got his nickname of Pi when he decided to shorten his name to stop the teasing from his classmates who called him "Pissing." Pi had one older brother, Ravi. Pi grew up at a zoo and his father was the zookeeper. He grew up knowing and loving all the animals. As a young man, he had a love for theology and he was a seeker of God. He practiced his native Hinduism, but he also practiced Islam and Christianity. Pi, as characterized by the author, was a very sweet, likeable and sensitive young boy. He mentions at one point that he shuddered at the snap from the breaking of a banana peel. Pi came of age on the lifeboat with Richard Parker, a frightening transition no boy should have to make. Pi had to use his intelligence to find food, make water and protect himself from the tiger. He had to use his strength to weather storms and catch and butcher food. Pi also had to maintain a fierce will to live. As an adult, Pi lives in Toronto, he's college educated and he has studied zoology and theology. He's a great cook. Pi is a husband and father to a son and daughter.

Richard Parker

Richard Parker is a 450-pound Bengal tiger from Bangladesh. He spent all but his first 3 months in the Pondicherry zoo before joining Pi on the lifeboat. A professional hunter had been employed by a village to capture a black panther that had been terrorizing their townspeople. Instead of finding the panther, the hunter shot and tranquilized Richard Parker's mother. As the mother was being carted off, the hunter found the little cub hiding by a river. The hunter named him Thirsty. However, at the shipping point, the clerk mixed up their names and hunter's name, Richard Parker, was given to the cub. During their days together in the lifeboat, Pi discovered that Richard Parker was an omega animal and thankfully much more trainable than if he had been an alpha male. Richard Parker was largely characterized as a beautiful, yet aloof, beast that loved to eat anything and everything.

Objects/Places

Objects/Places

Pondicherry, India

Pondicherry was Pi's hometown and a place where many of Pi's happiest memories reside. Pondicherry was a small territory that became part of the young republic, India, in November 1954. The zoo that Pi's father owned was located in Pondicherry, also.

Pacific Ocean

The majority of Pi's story took place in a lifeboat floating on the Pacific Ocean. Pi marveled at the beauty of the ocean's surface and the various colors and surfaces that it displayed. Pi was also intrigued by what lay beneath the surface. He loved watching the fish, the turtles, the whales and the dolphins. In the story the Pacific Ocean represented much. It was the cemetery for his family and beloved zoo animals; it represented the hopelessness and despair that went on as far as the eye could see. The ocean also provided sustenance, food and water for him and for Richard Parker. Finally, it was the ocean's currents that brought Pi and the tiger to land.

Lifeboat

Pi and Richard Parker spent their time as castaways on the lifeboat. It was large enough to hold 32 people but almost too small for Pi and Richard Parker. The boat served as their home and their shelter for 227 days at sea.

Themes

Themes

Relationship Between Man and Beast

The bulk of the story of Pi and Richard Parker deals with the theme of humankind's relationship with the animal kingdom. In Pi's story the moral is that when humankind respects and understands the ways of the animal kingdom, the two can live together in relative harmony. This theme was a very important one to Pi and one he referred to throughout the book. Pi's discussion of this theme began early on with his thoughts on why zoos were not inhumane for the animals and continued throughout his castaway crisis. Pi had to balance his will delicately to live with his knowledge of animal behavior. His ability to manage the relationship successfully between himself and the animal kingdom present in the lifeboat allowed him to survive his ordeal.

Power of the Will to Survive

Perhaps typical of a castaway's survival story is the theme of the power of the will to survive and even the power of life to perpetuate. Early on in his castaway ordeal, once Pi had accepted that his family was probably dead and the rescue ship was not coming to pick him up, he had to make a decision whether to strive to live or give up. He chose to fight for his life. Pi even says in his story that he did not know how strong his will was until he faced this crisis. His will to live gave him the power to do things he would have never imagined himself doing such as catching and butchering fish and turtles, taming a hungry tiger and even at the point of greatest desperation eating human flesh. Pi's will often waned. He even hit a low point where his physical strength was completely gone; he had gone blind and could not even provide food for himself or Richard Parker. He had resolved to die. Even at those moments--like the one when he wrote in his journal that tomorrow he would die--his will and the power of life to prevail kept him alive even when his body and mind did not want to continue.

Presence of God in Creation

Pi was a very religious young man and his religious beliefs, however varied, were a prevalent theme throughout his story. From early on in his life Pi looked for God. He saw God in everything. The belief that God is present in all creation is largely a Hindu belief. Hindus believe that God is present in the leaves of the trees and blades of grass, as well as in animals and humans. This belief is largely the reason Pi and his family were strict vegetarians. Pi often discussed the presence of God in the world around him, even throughout his castaway crisis. While in the lifeboat he talked about the sky and the sea and the majesty of both. He often felt small and insignificant because of the vast expanse of sky and sea around him.

Coming of age

Pi's story is about growing up fast and having the enormous responsibility of surviving the impossible at a very young age. Once orphaned and responsible for his survival, Pi had to develop a strong will to survive. He had to use his mind and intellect to outsmart the animals with which he shared his lifeboat. Pi had to do all of these things in the face of the enormous grief of losing his entire family. As a very young man, Pi had to deal with the questions of why God allows bad things to happen to good people and why he was chosen by fate to survive. Pi's story is one of a young man faced with impossible odds of survival who had the maturity and inner fortitude to survive.

Religious Devotion

One of the main themes in *Life of Pi* is religious devotion. A large section of part one of the book concentrates on Pi's experiences with three religions: Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. Pi's first religious devotion is to Hinduism, which he traces back to his earliest youth when his Aunt Rohini first takes him to a temple: "A germ of religious exaltation, no bigger than a mustard seed, was sown in me and left to germinate."

When Pi is fourteen, he also adopts Christianity. He does not end his devotion to Hinduism, but he merely supplements it with teachings from the Bible and a deep belief in Christ's love. A year later, he also adds Islam to his list of practiced religions. Pi does not see these three religions as contradictory in any way; during a discussion with his father, he observes, "Muslims say the God of the Hebrews and the Christians is the same as the God of the Muslims." However, the adults around him tell him that he must choose only one--or none at all, an option his father supports.

Pi never wavers in his devotion to all three religions. Throughout the novel, he references stories and characters from each of the three religions wherever appropriate. For example, when Pi's lifeboat drifts into a school of flying fish, he compares the onslaught to the hail of arrows that befell Saint Sebastian. On another occasion, while fishing, Pi wishes he had eight arms like the goddess Durga so he could perform all the necessary tasks at the same time. When he first sees Richard Parker approaching the lifeboat after the shipwreck, Pi exclaims, "Jesus, Mary, Muhammad and Vishnu, how good to see you, Richard Parker!"

Pi continues his three-way religious devotion even as an adult. The author character describes the décor he sees when he visits Pi's home in Toronto:

In the living room, on a table next to the sofa, there is a small framed picture of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, flowers tumbling from her open mantle. Next to it is a framed photo of the black-robed Kaaba, holiest sanctum of Islam, surrounded by a ten-thousandfold swirl of the faithful. On the television set is a brass statue of Shiva as Nataraja, the cosmic lord of the dance, who controls the motions of the universe and the flow of time.

The Nature of Truth

The nature of truth is one of the most fundamental themes in *Life of Pi*. In his Author's Note, Martel asserts that the tale of Pi is true, and that he has met both Pi Patel and Francis Adirubasamy in real life. Throughout part one of the book, Martel even intersperses short chapters that describe Pi as an adult living in Canada, over two decades after the shipwreck, providing details about his home, his wife, and his family.

Throughout the book, Pi expresses the view that those who rely only on reason and facts to inform their view of the world too often "lack imagination and miss the better story." In this way, Pi suggests that truth does not necessarily need to come from facts or science, but that faith and belief can provide equally valid truths for those willing to accept them.

Part three of the novel consists primarily of an "official" transcript of an interview that Japanese shipping officials conducted with Pi soon after his lifeboat washed ashore in Mexico. Again, the author suggests that the transcript is a factual, real-world document, which reinforces his earlier statement that the story is true. When the Japanese officials call into question Pi's version of events, however, the narrator addresses the subject of truth in an entirely different way: "Isn't telling about something--using words, English or Japanese--already something of an invention? Isn't just looking upon this world already something of an invention?" Rather than argue that his story is true, Pi simply tells the Japanese men another story that more closely matches what they consider plausible. Afterward, he asks the men which story they think is better. The men choose the first story, which is less plausible but offers a much more appealing view of the world. In

doing so, the men choose their own "truth."

Style

Style

Point of View

The large majority of *Life of Pi* is written in the first person, from Pi's point of view. First person is the classic and still remains the most commonly used point of view. It was important in this story to have it told from Pi's point of view because it makes the story more intimate. The reader hears the story of Pi's adventure right from its source, getting the action and adventure, but also the internal struggles and the thoughts and feelings he had during the ordeal. The disadvantage of first person point of view, from a reader's perspective, is that the reader is told only what the main character wants to tell. This disadvantage is a well-used tactic for the author of *Life of Pi* because he uses it to create the book's twist at the end when Pi offers up the alternate, animal-free story. Since the reader has only Pi's point of view to draw from, the reader never knows for sure which story is the real one.

Life of Pi includes some chapters that are written from the author's point of view. These chapters are written by the author directly to the reader, outside the main story, appear italicized and are meant to characterize Pi further as an adult and to let the reader know that the story has a happy ending. In essence, the book initially relates the beginning of the story and the end of the story and then fills in the middle as the book progresses. The chapters written from the author outside the main storyline are generally written in the first person point of view of the author's experiences and sessions interviewing the adult Pi about his experience. Pi's story is thus a product of the interviews. These interjections give the book a sense that the author is acting on the reader's behalf, confirming the validity of the story, almost as if there is an omniscient point of view.

Setting

Life of Pi is initially set in mid-twentieth century India, in a small territory in the south of India. The bulk of the story takes place on the Pacific Ocean, in a lifeboat that is drifting across the sea westward toward Mexico. The story ends in a small village on the coast of Mexico, where Pi's lifeboat reaches land.

Pi's hometown of Pondicherry, India, where the story begins, is an almost heavenly place in Pi's recollection. It's a peaceful place with a diverse culture and many interesting places for a young man to explore. Pondicherry is also the home of Pi's father's zoo, at which Pi spends most of the years of his youth. The zoo instills in Pi the knowledge and respect for the animal kingdom that allow him to survive his ordeal.

Pi has a love/hate relationship with the Pacific Ocean. On the one hand, he admires and is in awe of its many moods, from calm to stormy and the way the colors of the water change to reflect its moods. Pi also curses the sea's vastness and dangers. It is the sea, however, that provides Pi his food and water, for which Pi is grateful and mystified.

Language and Meaning

The author of *Life of Pi* is a very poetic writer. Martel's style is often rhythmic and his descriptions poetic. His style reinforces the main character's appreciation for the splendor of creation around him. Throughout much of Pi's castaway crisis, the language of the story becomes very practical; e.g., providing lists or step-by-step instructions on how to butcher a turtle or tame a tiger. The author's language fluctuates from his poetic, sometimes rhythmic style to a much more plain-spoken conversational style, as though the reader were hearing the story by sitting across the table from Pi.

Structure

Life of Pi is divided into three parts with a total of 100 chapters. The book has 100 chapters because, as Pi explains about telling his story, "Where we can we must give things a meaningful shape." The first part, entitled "Toronto and Pondicherry" is a flash forward to Pi's life in Toronto and then a flash back to his childhood, how he got his name and a retelling about his happy years growing up in India. At the conclusion of Part One, Pi and his family have set sail to Canada, but the ship has not yet sunk.

Part Two, entitled "The Pacific Ocean," begins with the story of the sinking of the ship and carries on from there chronicling Pi's trials and experiences at sea. Part Two ends with Pi and Richard Parker having landed in Mexico, where the tiger leaves for the jungle and people find Pi on the beach. Part Three begins with the Japanese officials traveling to interview Pi about his ordeal and the subsequent interviews with Pi. Part Three ends with the Japanese officials' report that basically Pi shed little light on the sinking of the ship but that his story was compelling.

First-person Narrative

Life of Pi is primarily a first-person narrative. A first-person narrative is a story that is told directly by one of the characters involved in the story. In this case, the story is told by Pi Patel, the main character, who refers to himself in the first person (using words like "I" and "me") throughout the novel. In *Life of Pi*, as in many first-person narratives, the reader is given direct access to the thoughts and feelings of the narrator, but not to the thoughts and feelings of other characters in the story.

Life of Pi also contains several chapters written from the point of view of the author; these chapters are also written as first-person narrative, but they are experienced through the eyes of a different "character"--in this case, Yann Martel. In these chapters, Pi is a character whose thoughts are not directly revealed to the reader.

In addition, part three of the book contains a fictional transcript of an interview with Pi shortly after he reaches safety in Mexico. This transcript is not presented from the point of view of any of the characters, and it is meant to be an objective recording of the words spoken by each character.

Metafiction

Metafiction is a modern style of fiction in which the author deliberately calls attention to the story as a fictional creation. Often the author does this to make a point about how the fictional world relates to reality, and vice versa. In *Life of Pi*, author Martel calls attention the fictional nature of his story in several ways. First, the entire work is a sort of "story within a story," a fictional creation within which a smaller work of fiction exists. The main story of Pi, which is the core of the novel, is surrounded by additional parts that are also fictional, such as the Author's Note and the interview transcript in part three. These parts attempt to frame Pi's tale within a real-world scenario, and lead the reader to confront his or her own ideas about fact and truth. This resonates with the novel's message of finding truth in a "better story" instead of just looking for the most reasonable explanation of events.

Martel also allows Pi to address the reader directly on several occasions throughout his narrative, which reminds the reader that they are indeed experiencing a story. Pi also shares his thoughts on how his story might be structured, and he forewarns the reader about events that might be hard to believe. These are all traits commonly found in metafiction.

Historical Context

Historical Context

Pondicherry and French India

Though most people associate colonial India with the British Empire, parts of India were claimed as territories by the French as early as the 1600s. These French claims were mostly concentrated along the eastern coast of India, with Pondicherry serving as the main seat of French colonial interests. Pondicherry became a successful port and, like many other colonial strong holds in India, became the scene of territorial struggles between the French and the British.

A devastating clash occurred in 1761, when British forces seized control of Pondicherry and destroyed the city; they returned Pondicherry to France four years later, and the city was quickly rebuilt. However, the two colonial powers continued to battle for control of Pondicherry and other eastern Indian settlements for the next several decades. By the 1820s, the region stabilized and Pondicherry made slow progress toward regaining its former grandeur.

After British India gained its independence in 1947, France was placed under increasing pressure to relinquish its colonial territories in India. As Yann Martel relates in his Author's Note at the opening of *Life of Pi*, the French "left Pondicherry in 1954, leaving behind nice white buildings, broad streets at right angles to each other, street names such as rue de la Marine rue Saint-Louis, and *képis*, caps, for the policemen." In the novel, Pi and his family live in Pondicherry, where Pi's father runs the zoo.

A Brief History of Zoos

Zoological gardens, typically known as zoos for short, are collections of wild animals--often considered exotic to the area--that are kept within enclosed areas in such a way that visitors can observe them. In the broadest sense, according to Vernon Kisling's *Zoo and Aquarium History: Ancient Animal Collections to Zoological Gardens*, early forms of zoos have existed for five thousand years. These earliest animal collections were often little more than game reserves and seldom featured exotic creatures.

In the Middle Ages, as European traders traveled into previously inaccessible regions, they often brought back specimens of new and exotic animals for their royal sponsors. This led to the development of menageries, which were simply exotic animal collections owned by wealthy citizens and royalty. These animals were not used for primarily scientific research or for public enjoyment, but for the social status the owners received by laying claim to such rare creatures. As Kisling notes, "While gardens were pervasive throughout the social strata of societies, living animal collections were, for most of their history, restricted to royalty and the wealthy classes."

By the 1800s, the tide had turned in favor of scientific study, and the first zoological gardens were established throughout Western Europe. Their popularity led to the establishment of multiple zoos throughout Europe, the United States, and Australia. Although zoos remained an important resource for the scientific study of wild animals, the focus of many zoos slowly shifted to public education and entertainment to subsidize scientific programs and zoo expansion. Today, while zoos continue to provide entertainment to the public, their main focus is on educating patrons about conservation of wild habitats and preserving species that are in danger of becoming extinct. In addition, many zoos participate in breeding programs intended to help endangered species improve their chances of surviving and flourishing in the wild.

Critical Overview

Critical Overview

When *Life of Pi* was first published in Canada in 2001, it earned the author rave reviews and a Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction. However, it was only after the book received the prestigious 2002 Man Booker Prize that international success ensued.

In a review for the *Nation*, Charlotte Innes wrote, "If this century produces a classic work of survival literature, Martel's novel is surely a contender." Innes also noted that, although Martel follows a well-established literary structure, he both "infuses the genre with brilliant new life" and "restores one's faith in literature." Gerald T. Cobb, in a review for *America*, expressed a similar sentiment, calling it "a book that reinvents the lost-at-sea novel in quite striking terms." Cobb also described the work as "gripping and unforgettable." Roberta Rubenstein, writing for the *World and I*, called the book "a wonderful adventure tale whose originality, imaginative detail, suspense, and immediacy will keep you turning pages breathlessly until the very end." Rubenstein described Martel's writing as "vivid, witty and profound," and noted that the author "pushes the reader to see higher and further and differently." In a review published in *Book*, Paul Evans called the novel "a work of wonder" and proclaimed Martel "a limpid stylist with a flair for the poetic." Francis Henry King, writing for the *Spectator* (U.K.), called the work "a book of sometimes perplexing, often disconcerting but always remarkable originality," further noting that the book is "rich in incidental treasures of style and thought." Gary Krist, in a review for the *New York Times*, called the book "extraordinary," though he conceded, "There are times when Martel pushes the didactic agenda of his story too hard."

In a review for *Time International*, Bryan Walsh observed that the premise of the book "could easily become precious, but Martel saves his novel from saccharine whimsy by grounding it in hard reality." Still, Walsh felt that the book is "a bit overballasted" by Pi's survival at sea, and concludes "inevitably, boredom leaks into his story." In a review for the *New York Review of Books*, Pankaj Mishra pointed out two flaws in the novel. First, he noted, "Some of Martel's descriptions of religious practices in India carry the whiff of an encyclopedia entry, or a tourist's scrupulously kept journal." Second, he argued that "Martel is unable to reveal adequately, after the flurry of colorful religious information in the early pages, the precise nature, or vacillations, of Pi's faith."

Even as critics generally praised his novel and sales of the book skyrocketed, Martel found himself at the center of a literary controversy. Although he never hid the fact that Moacyr Scliar's book *Max and the Cats* provided him with the fundamental scenario of his book--that of a young man trapped aboard a lifeboat with a potentially man-eating great cat--some members of the literary community cried foul at the similarity. In a 2002 interview with the *New York Times*, Brazilian author Scliar expressed the following opinion on the matter:

In a certain way I feel flattered that another writer considered my idea to be so good, but on the other hand, he used that idea without consulting me or even informing me. An idea is intellectual property.

Martel's supporters point out that, according to the law in many countries, ideas are not protected by copyright--only the actual artistic works are protected. The two novels, they argue, are markedly different in nearly every way other than the similar premise. The controversy appeared to subside soon after, and as of 2006, Scliar has not pursued any legal action against Martel or his publisher.

Criticism

Criticism

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Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

In this essay, pop-culture writer Greg Wilson looks at author Yann Martel's use of metafictional elements in his novel Life of Pi, and how those elements are used to express the narrator's greater message about God.

Metafiction is sometimes simply described as "fiction that calls attention to the fact that it is fiction." It is usually characterized by deliberate intrusions on the reader's willing suspension of disbelief; the omniscient narrator begins making comments to the reader about characters or plot details, for example, or characters themselves express some awareness that they exist within an artificial world. However, there exists another breed of metafiction that might best be described as "fiction that actively denies that it is fiction at all." In many ways, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is a blend of two seemingly contradictory metafictional breeds, both of which ultimately address the notions of truth and reality in storytelling.

Martel works to establish his book as double-layered metafiction from the outset. In his prefatory Author's Note, he presents what appears to be a factual explanation for how the book came about. Indeed, the first half of the Author's Note appears to parallel the author's real-life experiences quite closely. Having published two not-very-successful books, the author travels to India to clear his head and work on a third. However, his supposedly true narrative quietly slips into fiction without offering the reader any sort of clue. Indeed, the author prefaces the made-up genesis of his tale with an altogether factual history of Pondicherry, India. This sober account lulls the reader into an easy credulity, on which the author capitalizes by proclaiming that the following story of Pi Patel is quite true, and was first relayed to him by a friend of the Patel family named Mr. Adirubasamy, who told the author that the story "will make [him] believe in God."

At the same time, the author--who resembles the real-life Yann Martel, but is clearly also a participant in a larger fictional world--reminds us of the book's artificiality. He thanks both Pi Patel and Mr. Adirubasamy for their contributions to the book, yet he also thanks Mr. Moacyr Scliar for "the spark of life." It would be easy for an unknowing reader to overlook this detail; only upon further research does one discover that Moacyr Scliar is the author of a book titled *Max and the Cats* about a Jewish family that runs a zoo in Berlin in 1933; the family decides to relocate their zoo to Brazil, but their ship sinks during the journey. Ultimately, one character becomes trapped on a lifeboat with a panther. Familiar, yes? Even as he insists in his Author's Note that the story is based on real events, Martel reveals the true fictional inspiration for his work.

Martel peppers his main narrative with similarly contrasting metafictional elements. For example, the author makes it clear from the start that, although the majority of the story is conveyed from the first-person point of view of Pi, it is actually written by author Yann Martel. This is reinforced through occasional chapters written not from Pi's point of view but from the author's; these chapters describe Pi, his home, and his family in an almost journalistic style. Although this calls attention to the fictional nature of the main tale, it also serves to authenticate Pi as a real person and suggest that his experiences, no matter who has written them down, are real.

The author--writing as Pi--also references other pieces of "real-world" literature, primarily in his discussions of sloths and zookeeping. These sections read almost like encyclopedia entries on their stated subjects, and quoting of real pieces of scientific literature again serves to lend the narrative credibility. Similarly, when Pi is lost at sea, the factual style of the survival manual he reads has a grounding effect amidst Pi's increasingly odd experiences aboard the lifeboat.

At the same time, the author self-consciously calls attention to the narrative as a story by having the narrator communicate directly to the reader on several occasions. For example, after describing his first several weeks on the

lifeboat, Pi says of his continuing tribulations, "But I don't know if I can put them in order for you. My memories come in a jumble." Later, referring to the floating carnivorous plant-mass he finds, Pi tells the reader that "there will be many who disbelieve the following episode." Near the end, Pi even muses on the structure of his narrative: "For example--I wonder--could you tell my jumbled story in exactly one hundred chapters, not one more, not one less?" Similarly, the fact that Pi is stranded at sea for exactly 227 days (22 divided by 7 is the mathematical definition of pi) calls attention to the story's self-consciously crafted structure.

The overall effect of this interweaving of metafictional devices is clear: The author is leading readers to question not only the facts of the story as they have been told, but also *any* facts that are not experienced firsthand. This calls to mind Patricia Waugh's description of such works in her book *Metafiction*: "In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality outside the literary fictional text." This metafictional play culminates in part three of the book, the "transcript" portion that takes place after Pi has returned to land. The Japanese maritime officials to whom he tells his story express doubt, and they ask him instead for the "straight facts," without invention. Pi counters: "Isn't telling about something--using words, English or Japanese--already something of an invention? Isn't just looking upon this world already something of an invention?" Pi continues: "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?" The very act of relating a "true-life" event, Pi argues, is a feat of storytelling just as much as the creation of a fantasy tale.

To satisfy his interviewers, Pi tells another story about his experiences at sea--this one without any reference to exotic animals, as the Japanese officials request. In his new tale, he shares the lifeboat with people instead of animals: The orangutan becomes his mother; the zebra becomes an Asian sailor; the hyena turns into the ship's French cook. The events in his second tale, though they closely parallel the events of the first story, are far more mundane and horrific; the cook cuts off the sailor's injured leg to use it for bait, and then dines on the sailor's flesh after he bleeds to death. Eventually, the cook kills Pi's mother, and Pi kills him and eats his heart in turn. In this version of the tale, the Japanese men note, Pi has assumed the role of the tiger.

The Japanese men find this tale easier to believe, terrible though it is, since it does not include exotic animals and undiscovered carnivorous plant-islands. The reader is left to wonder: Did Pi make up the first story, which the reader has experienced in vivid and enduring detail, as an allegory of what *really* happened aboard the lifeboat? Or did he merely craft a more believable version of the story just to satisfy the Japanese officials? Even within the context of what the reader knows is a fictional story, the reality of Pi's experiences within that fictional world are suddenly cast into doubt. That the reader feels shock at this possibility--that a fictional character might be making up a story, just as the reader *knows* the author is doing--is a testament to Martel's ability to craft a convincing protagonist. It is also the ultimate metafictional violation of the reader's "willing suspension of disbelief."

After telling this second story, Pi points out that neither story can explain the sinking of the ship, which is the mystery the Japanese officials had hoped to solve. Pi then asks:

So tell me, since it makes no factual difference to you and you can't prove the question either way, which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with the animals or the story without the animals?

Suddenly, the author's intent becomes obvious. He does not seek to trick the reader into believing a made-up tale, nor does he aim to dismiss the objective aspects of the real world. Ultimately, Martel is not at all concerned with the differences or similarities between fiction and reality. He argues that, in a situation where all other elements are irrelevant, distinguishing fact from fiction is pointless; both are equally valid, or equally invalid. There is only one important question to ask: Which is the better story?

The first story borders on religious allegory, odd and beautiful and uplifting; the second story "won't make you see higher or further or differently," as Pi notes, and smacks of the "dry, yeast-less factuality" so often sought in the sciences. Readers have come to the author's grand message, and the business end of Mr. Adirubasamy's assertion that the tale would cause the reader to believe in God. Is the "better story" one that expands your mind, heart, and spirit (think religion), or one that merely confirms what you have already guessed (think science)? Both require equal amounts of faith, because neither can be proven.

So, which is the better story? In Pi's case, the message is clear: The one that keeps you going; the one that lends you the courage to survive in a world that can be cruel and inexplicable; the one that celebrates the wonders of the world, instead of lamenting its shortcomings. Fact, fiction, or metafiction, *that* is the better story.

Source: Greg Wilson, Critical Essay on *Life of Pi*, in *Literary Newsmakers for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Robinson Crusoe (1719), by Daniel Defoe, is a classic tale of an English castaway who survives for twenty-eight years on an exotic island. Like Pi, Crusoe finds himself drawn to religion as one source of the strength he needs to survive.

The Old Man and the Sea (1952) is a classic by Ernest Hemingway. This novella tells the tale of an old fisherman's ordeal at sea as he attempts to land and bring back to shore the largest catch of his life. The story was at least partly responsible for Hemingway receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

Interpreter of Maladies (2000), by Jhumpa Lahiri, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of stories centered on first-generation Indian Americans and their efforts to adjust to life in a new society. One story, "Bless This House," deals with a newlywed Hindu couple who find that their new house is a veritable trove of Christian religious artifacts.

Self (1996) is Yann Martel's first novel. It is the tale of a young man who switches genders overnight on two different occasions and contains many of the same ideas about religion and belief that the author used to shape *Life of Pi*.

Midnight's Children (1980), by Salman Rushdie, is a Booker Prize-winning novel about two Indian children born at the same instant India establishes its independence. The two children--one from a rich Muslim family, and one from a poor Hindu family--are switched at birth and develop into arch-enemies with strange abilities.

Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Boyagoda contends that the elements of religion in Life of Pi confuse and diminish the otherwise strong adventure tale.

Good news came from across the Atlantic late last year. England's most prestigious literary award--the Booker Prize--had been awarded to a work that made the following assertion on its inside cover: "This is a novel of such rare and wondrous storytelling that it may, as one character claims, make you believe in God. Can a reader reasonably ask for anything more?" That sophisticated English literary palettes thought this a reasonable claim--and that Canadian Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* has since become a bestseller--may be an indication that growing numbers of people, thirsting for more substance in their lives, are beginning to seek more substance in their reading. Or, alternately, it may be a comment on the brand of popular piety Martel's novel proposes.

The protagonist of *The Life of Pi* is the precocious son of a pragmatic zookeeper, an Indian boy fascinated by his nation's many faiths but forced by its many political problems to emigrate to Canada along with his family and their animal charges. During the voyage, their ship suddenly sinks, leaving the boy on a lifeboat along with a few furry survivors; ultimately only Pi and a tiger remain. As the duo drift through the Pacific Ocean, struggling to survive the elements, Pi must also struggle to survive his shipmate; he relies on his wits and his faith in, intermittently, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam to do so. After a series of adventures--some wondrous, some gruesome--their boat washes up in Mexico and the two part ways. We never hear from the tiger again, but we do hear from Pi. In fact, he retells his story as an adult living in Toronto, in a house whose décor--a portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe rests beside a photo of Kaaba; a brass statue of Shiva stands beneath paintings of Christ; a prayer rug lies near a bedside Bible--inadvertently displays our protagonist's eclectically tacky approach to religion.

The Life of Pi seems to have as many literary predecessors as India has religions. There are traces of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, St. Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, and Aesop's *Fables*. But *The Life of Pi* also asks to be the latest in the long line of grand tales about India, novels that seek to capture what Martel himself calls "the rich, noisy, functioning madness" of the place, and a great deal of the novel's flaws rest in that ambition. The encounters of two more famous orphans with India's religions provide a sense of what Pi lacks. Kipling's *Kim* and Rushdie's *Saleem Sinai* dash from one end of India to another, experiencing the nation's religious panoply as it must be--as frenzied, vital, occasionally terrifying--rather than as a well-meaning Canadian might imagine it: as polite, passive, frequently meek.

For example, the adult Pi, an Indian orphan-cum-Canadian immigrant, recalls finding a Gideon Bible in a hotel room. He praises the Gideons, then advises: "They should leave not only Bibles, but other sacred writings as well. I cannot think of a better way to spread the faith. No thundering from a pulpit, no condemnation from bad churches, no peer pressure, just a book of scripture quietly waiting to say hello, as gentle and powerful as a girl's kiss on your cheek." The author's patent lack of appreciation for the intensity and particularity of religious devotion explains such myopic idealism and saccharine imagery. In telling us that the Bible (and "other sacred writings") is "just a book" to spread "the faith," Martel reveals his fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between God and religious practices. Martel offers a confusing pastiche of devotions brought into unity by the sincerity of individual intention and action, rather than by virtue of the singular truth inherent in any of the religions Pi purports to follow.

Pi's repeated all-inclusive paeans to his private trinity of faiths detract from an otherwise enjoyable tale, which Martel achieves when he forgets about religion and concentrates on telling his young hero's adventures. Running through the

chaos of a sinking ship; watching a tiger wrestle a shark; exploring a mysterious island; devising ways to catch turtles and gather fresh water--these are but some of the novel's small pleasures. In matters not religious, Martel chose the right narrator: Pi's innocent voice allows us to revel in the wide-eyed pleasures of this world as only a young boy on a fantastic voyage can experience them. Consider Pi's description of the fearful symmetry of raw elegance and sublime power occasioned by his tiger companion returning to their boat:

He surged onto the stern, quantities of water pouring off him, making my end of the boat pitch up. He balanced on the gunnel and the stern bench for a moment, assessing me. My heart grew faint. I did not think I would be able to blow into the whistle again. I looked at him blankly. He flowed down to the floor of the lifeboat and disappeared under the tarpaulin. I could see parts of him from the edges of the locker lid. I threw myself upon the tarpaulin, out of his sight--but directly above him. I felt an overwhelming urge to sprout wings and fly off.

Like Pi, we are breathless, a tiger-training whistle dangling from our lips, as much from the beauty as from the terror of a wild animal in close proximity.

However grateful we may be to Martel for such moments, the third and final section of his novel limits our general appreciation by enlisting us in a clumsy postmodern game of narration and belief. The section is comprised of a transcript between two Japanese representatives of the shipping company and Pi, recuperating in a Mexican hospital room. The Japanese have no time for Pi's unbelievable musings and insist upon a factual account of the ship's sinking, so Pi retells his tale, turning his animal shipmates into humans. The new version is more comprehensible but less enjoyable: either way we can never know which version "actually" happened. We likely entered the novel as skeptical as are the Japanese, but having heard the story, we now face a test of faith: Which do we believe? Of course Martel wants us to believe in Pi's original version, with the floating banana island and the man-eating plants and the flying fish. In his view, to do so is a leap of faith, which in turn is a leap towards God: the God brought into existence by the novel itself, a strange mishmash of religious notions and figures that together comprise the deity that Pi creates and celebrates. In short, a God of fiction.

Martel should have stuck to the metaphoric approach he takes to religion at the end of the novel's second section, when Pi finally reaches land. In his darkest moment, Pi perceives: "The lower you are, the higher your mind will want to soar. It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God." The next chapter opens: "When we reached land," a phrase that with simple perfection conveys the foundation given to us when we rely on God's power, rather than on our own. In one of the novel's few instances of coherent religious meaning, Martel echoes St. Paul and Kempis' *Imitatio* in telling us that if we turn to God in our lowest moments, inevitably we will be raised up on high. A meaningful moment, sadly set adrift amongst so much faith-as-flotsam. If only we could agree with Pi's approach to religion, we could enjoy his *Life*. Were we to read in a compartmentalized way, taking bits and pieces from here and there that amuse or ennoble us, ignoring the deeper implications of such a piecemeal commitment to a unified whole, we could happily sail along with boy and tiger. But such a way of reading, of professing, indeed of living, while so symptomatic of our contemporary condition, ought not be our course.

T. S. Eliot made the following distinction: "We must believe that the greater part of our current reading matter is written for us by people who have no real belief in a supernatural order, though some of it may be written by people with individual notions of a supernatural order which are not ours." Martel falls into the latter camp: unfortunately, his invitation to believe in God through his novel is too individualized to be reasonable. We do not turn to fiction to find the true God, and we should not turn to it to find a recipe for making a God agreeable enough to our personal tastes to believe in. We turn to good novels in part to exercise our imaginations, and *The Life of Pi* allows for that in some places. Yet Martel goes much further, to imply that we can find God by using our imaginations freely. But we can only hope to find God by using our imaginations wisely. Fiction, on its own, cannot create truth. The finest books can at best sound

the depths of the human condition and bring rumors of the highest truths. They help chart our course towards that undiscovered country where we all hope, someday, to land.

Source: Randy Boyagoda, "Faith, Fiction, Flotsam," in *First Things*, May 2003, pp. 69-72.

Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Palmberg praises the affecting portrayal of faith and the divine in Life of Pi.

One of the many and fruitful exaggerations in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is the assertion, made by a minor character, that Pi's story will "make you believe in God." With humor, incisiveness, excellent writing, and an uncompromising fidelity to the messy compulsions of the human heart, what the novel really compels is not belief in God but sympathy for those who seek God. For readers invested in the sacred, it is a well-finished novel about unfinished business.

Young Pi Patel, a zookeeper's son growing up in India in the '60s and '70s, has no trouble believing in God. By age 15, he is simultaneously an active Hindu, Christian, and Muslim, unbeknownst to his agnostic parents, and Pi compares the three religions' stories and practices in rich, quirkily reverent prose. Of Christianity, all Pi initially knows is that "it had a reputation for few gods and great violence. But good schools." Initially, Pi is bemused by Christianity's emphasis on conversion--"religion as swift as a swallow, as urgent as an ambulance"--and repelled by its "one Story" of crucifixion and atonement, which strike him as "downright weird."

After a few days of visiting a kindly priest, however, Pi is conquered by Christ's message of love. Not much later, a gentle Sufi mystic and baker leads Pi to experience Islam as a "beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion." The teenager also cheerfully agrees with Gandhi that "all religions are true."

What the book is mainly about, as the cover illustration suggests, is Pi's travails once he is trapped on a life raft with an adult Bengal tiger, the last survivor of his father's zoo. Here, Martel's sense of humor gives way to a sense of the absurd, references to God diminish, and Pi's struggle to survive, physically and emotionally, takes center stage.

When Pi has exhausted every resource, when "the rest of this story is nothing but grief, ache, and endurance," he says, "it was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God." But this is the end of a chapter, rather than the beginning, and the next chapter describes not God but landfall.

As *Life of Pi's* early chapters make clear, Pi himself will go on to piety and comparative happiness in Canada. The novel, in contrast, comes to a climax immediately after Pi's rescue, when he struggles to describe how the sharp knife of suffering has cut away his family, his health, his vegetarianism, and arguably his grip on reality. Martel makes all of these losses, particularly the last, bear rich fruit.

By the end, Pi's belief in God and love has been honed down to a stark, unhelpful, desperate need for God and love--or for storytelling, which Martel seems to regard as the same thing. Even those of us who do not fully agree on that point will find in this beautifully crafted novel utter honesty, passion, and yearning for the sacred.

Source: Elizabeth Palmberg, "Man Overboard," in *Sojourners*, Vol. 32, No. 2, March-April 2003, pp. 55-56.

Quotes

Quotes

"My life is like a memento mori painting from European art: there is always a grinning skull at my side to remind me of the follow of human ambition. I most this skull (?), I look at it and I say, 'You've go the wrong fellow. You may not believe in life, but I don't believe in death. Move on!'" Chapter 1, P. 5.

"In both cases we look at an animal and see a mirror. The obsession with putting ourselves at the centre of everything is the bane not only of theologians but also of zoologists. I learned the lesson that an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us, twice: once with Father and once with Richard Parker." Chapter 8, P. 31.

"Whereas the agnostic, if he stays true to his reasonable self, if he stays beholden to dry, yeastless factuality, might try to explain the warm light bathing him by saying, 'Possibly a f-f-failing oxygenation of the b-b-brain,' and, to the very end, lack imagination and miss the better story." Chapter 22, P. 64.

"Bapu Gandhi said, 'All religions are true.' I just want to love God,' I blurted out and looked down, red in the face." Chapter 23, P. 69.

"There are many examples of animals coming to surprising living arrangements. All are instance of that animal equivalent of anthropomorphism: zoomorphism, where an animal takes a human being, or another animal to be one of its kind." Chapter 32, P. 84.

"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." Chapter 35, P. 91.

"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." Chapter 40, P. 107.

"You might think I lost all hope at that point. I did. And as a result I perked up and felt much better." Chapter 49, P. 134.

"My feelings can perhaps be imagined, but they can hardly be described. To the gurgling beat of my greedy throat, pure, delicious, beautiful, crystalline water flowed into my system. Liquid life, it was. I drained that golden cup to the very last drop, sucking at the hole to catch any remaining moisture. I went, 'Ahhhhhh!'" Chapter 51, P. 142.

"Oncoming death is terrible enough, but worse still is oncoming death with time to spare, time in which all the happiness that was yours and all the happiness that might have been yours becomes clear to you." Chapter 53, P. 147.

"I was giving up. I would have given up - if a voice hadn't made itself heard in my heart. The voice said, 'I will not die. I refuse it. I will make it through this nightmare. I will beat the odds, as great as they are. I have survived so far, miraculously. Now I will turn miracle into routine. The amazing will be seen every day. I will put in all the hard work necessary. Yes, so long as God is with me, I will not die. Amen.'" Chapter 53, P. 148.

"For fear, real fear, such as shakes you to you foundation, such as you feel when you are brought face to face with your mortal end, nestles in your memory like a gangrene: it seeks to rot everything, even the words with which to speak of it. So you must fight hard to express it. You must fight hard to shine the light of words upon it." Chapter 56, P. 162.

"The stars shone with such a fierce, contained brilliance that it seemed absurd to call the night dark. The sea lay quietly, bathed in a shy light-footed light, a dancing play of black and silver that extended without limits all about me. The volume of things was confounding - the volume of air above me, the volume of water around and beneath me. I was half-moved, half-terrified." Chapter 60, P. 177.

"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. You want a flat story. An immobile story. You want dry, yeastless factuality." Chapter 99, P. 302.

Topics for Discussion

Topics for Discussion

1. Near the end of the book Pi offers an alternate story of his days as a castaway. Which story is more believable? Why? How does this twist make you feel about the rest of the book?
2. Early on in the book, the author says that this is a story that will make one believe in God. Discuss whether you agree or disagree.
3. Throughout his life and even in college, Pi studied the behavior of animals and religion. Discuss the similarities and differences of these two fields of study.
4. How does Pi's story compare to that of other stories of castaways with which you are familiar through books and movies?
5. In an interview, the author says that instead of a tiger accompanying Pi in the lifeboat he considered an elephant and a rhino. How would having another animal have changed the story? What was the significance of having a tiger in the boat with Pi?
6. Pi struggled with his inner comfort with practicing Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Do you agree or disagree with Ghandi's quote that "all religions are true?" Is there a difference between a belief in God and practicing religion?
7. What do Pi's experiences teach us about our own lives?
8. The narrator asserts that the story has a happy ending. Discuss whether you agree or disagree.
 - *Life of Pi* features two accounts of Pi's days as a castaway. In the first, Pi survives aboard a lifeboat with a 450-pound Bengal tiger and visits an island that turns out to be an enormous carnivorous plant. In the second, Pi watches a man kill his mother and then later kills the man himself, eating his heart afterward. The Japanese officials who hear these two stories, interested primarily in why the ship sank in the first place, ultimately make no effort to prove or disprove either account (although they express disbelief upon hearing the first story). Imagine you are an investigator who must determine what really happened aboard Pi's lifeboat. You have every modern crime-solving technique at your disposal, and you are given access to both the boat and the beach on which it landed. What kind of evidence would you look for? What are some examples of evidence that would support Pi's first story? What are some examples of evidence that would support Pi's second story? Write a report outlining your plan for solving the mystery, including what types of evidence you would search for to prove or disprove either account.
 - Author Yann Martel has been criticized for "borrowing" the main premise of *Life of Pi* from another book, Moacyr Scliar's *Max and the Cats*. In that book, a Jewish family of zookeepers from Berlin move to South America, but become shipwrecked on the way; in one scene, a young man ends up sharing a lifeboat with a panther. Martel admits that he got the idea from reading a review of Scliar's novel--he even thanks Scliar in his Author's Note--but claims he has never actually read the other author's book. Moreover, according to Martel's defenders, although the books both contain similar premises, the writing style, theme, and other elements are altogether different. Where is the line between inspiration and plagiarism best drawn? What about works that take a well-known storyline, such as that of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and place it in a new setting? Write an essay outlining your feelings on the subject of borrowing ideas from other writers.

- In *Life of Pi*, the narrator Pi provides a great deal of detailed information about zookeeping. He also aims to dispel the popular notion that zoo animals are prisoners that would be better off in the wild. By way of comparison, he asks, "Would you rather be put up at the Ritz with free room service and unlimited access to a doctor or be homeless without a soul to care for you?" Do you feel that animals in zoos lead a better life than animals in the wild? What benefits does a zoo animal have over its wild brethren? What benefits do wild animals enjoy? Write an essay explaining your position. Be sure to include examples and arguments to support your opinion.
- In *Life of Pi*, the narrator argues that those who seek only facts from the world around them are missing out on "the better story." Think of a perfectly believable real-life experience you have had. It could be as simple as doing your homework or going to the store. How could you change it to make it a "better story"? Write out this new version of your story. Be sure to include sensory details to make the story come alive for the reader.

Further Reading

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This book is a thoroughly researched history of mankind's relationship with captive and collected wild animals, and the changing motivations that continue to promote such collections.

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This novella, about a young Jewish man fleeing the Nazis who at one point ends up in a lifeboat with a jaguar, inspired Yann Martel to use a similar premise in *Life of Pi*. Taken together, the two books provide an interesting example of how writers can create strikingly different works based on similar ideas.

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Sources

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members--educational professionals-- helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed--for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*--the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name.
 - o Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.

- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).
- **Sources:** an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- **Further Reading:** an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- **Media Adaptations:** a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- **Topics for Further Study:** a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- **Compare and Contrast Box:** an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- **What Do I Read Next?:** a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

"Night." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the "Criticism" subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. "Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition," Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. "Richard Wright: "Wearing the Mask," in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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