

For your first assignment in American Literature, please read the Mariner Edition of *Life of Pi*, ISBN 978-01560-27328. The guide below is meant to be a supplement to your reading and should not be viewed as a substitute for your own close analysis of the novel. Completing the reading guide will give you a useful preparation tool when you are contributing to class discussions and then studying for the summer reading test.

Life of Pi Reading Questions

Author's Note

1. It is important to note that while Yann Martel did write two unsuccessful books before writing *Life of Pi* and while he did indeed travel to India, he did not meet a man named Francis Adirubasamy and there is no such person as Pi Patel. Why do you think Martel chooses to open with this blend of fact and fiction?

Part I (Toronto and Pondicherry)

2. Explore the significance of Pi's unusual name. How are both his full name (Piscine Molitor Patel) and his nickname (Pi) symbolic?
3. Growing up in a zoo, Pi knows a lot about animals. Briefly explain his thoughts on the following:
 - a. Flight distance
 - b. Lion tamers and alpha/omega lions
4. Pi talks a good deal about his early relationship with God. Briefly explain how each of the following characters influences him in this area. Also, describe what happens when one or more of the following figures encounters one another:
 - a. Pi's father
 - b. Pi's mother
 - c. Mr. Satish Kumar (from teacher)
 - d. Father Martin
 - e. Mr. Satish Kumar (the baker)
5. Chapters 21 and 22 are very short, yet Yann Martel has said that they are at the core of the novel. How? Why?

Part II (The Pacific Ocean)

6. The ship sinks and Pi finds himself on a lifeboat with several animals. Describe, *in detail*, when and how each one of them ends up on the boat and how Pi ends up alone on the boat with Richard Parker. (Note: these details will come back on a later question).
7. How was Richard Parker captured? How did he come to be named "Richard Parker"?
8. Draw and label the lifeboat with the raft that Pi makes attached. Feel free to be creative and colorful. If you are having a hard time visualizing the lifeboat and Pi's raft, there are some good images from the movie available on the internet.

9. How does Pi attempt to “tame” Richard Parker? Does it work?
10. Describe, *in detail*, Pi’s descent into blindness and his encounter with the Frenchman.
11. Describe, *in detail*, the floating island. Why does Richard Parker sleep in the boat? Why do they leave the island?

Part III (Benito Juarez Infirmary, Tomaltan, Mexico)

12. Who are the officials who interview Pi? What do they want to know? Why are they skeptical of Pi’s story?
13. Describe, *in detail*, the second story Pi tells. Looking back at your answers to questions 1 and 5 in section II, how might the first story work as a metaphor? In answering this questions consider the following:
 - a. Why is the order of the animals getting on the boat important?
 - b. Why these animals specifically?
 - c. Who/What is Richard Parker?
 - d. Is the floating island real or not? If not, what does it represent?
14. After hearing both stories, the author remarks that he “like[s] the one with the tiger better.” Which one do you like better? Which one is “true”?
15. In the Author's Note, the fictional Francis Adirubasamy states “I have a story that will make you believe in God.” How is this story one that lends itself to belief in things that can't be proven to exist? What is the difference between faith and belief?