

RESOURCES: X-KIT Achieve, MACRAT

http://www.wikisummaries.org/wiki/Life_of_Pi

<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/lifeofpi>

<http://www.prezi.com/hpqjswashnyi/life-of-pi-on-anthropomorphism>

Oxford Exam Success Literature / Course Hero / Lit Charts / X-Kit Achieve / Macrat / Mrs Sperry.com

PICTURE SOURCES: Google images

DIFFERENT GENRES are integrated in the novel:

- adventure,
- fable – using animals that represent human traits to teach a moral lesson
- allegory (teaching a moral lesson or explaining a principle/idea) ,
- parable (a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson)
- fictional (not factual),
- philosophical and religious,
- castaway story (a person who has been shipwrecked and stranded in an isolated place) and
- magical realism.

WHAT IS MAGICAL REALISM?

A storyline which accepts magical or mystical elements as part of the real world.

SETTING: Pondicherry (coastal town) in India, Toronto, Canada, the Pacific Ocean (along the equator) and Mexico

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR

Life of Pi is told from a first-person point of view, with most of the narration by the protagonist adult Pi Patel.

The shorter sections *in italics* are narrated by the visiting writer or the fictional author.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

Anthropomorphism (noun): Literary Device as a main theme

To anthropomorphise (verb)

Derived from the Greek *ánthrōpos* ("human") and *morphē* ("form").

Anthropomorphism is also a type of personification that gives human characteristics to non-humans or objects, especially animals.

However, there is a slight difference between these two:

Personification gives human characteristics to animals or objects to create imagery.

Anthropomorphism aims to make an animal or object behave and appear as if it is a human being.

EXAMPLE: Pinocchio, the famous wooden doll, was anthropomorphised: he was given the ability to talk, walk, think and feel like real human boy.

In the novel, **LIFE OF PI**, 'Pi quite frequently dressed wild animals in the tame costumes of imagination.' (page 31) e.g. Pi saw the baboons as gangsters and the sloths as yogis.

"The poor dear looked so humanly sick! It is a particularly funny thing to read human traits in animals, especially in apes and monkeys, where it is so easy."

- Pi Patel

The following animals are anthropomorphised:

The zebra who impersonates the **Chinese sailor**, is vulnerable and eaten by the hyena.

The hyena impersonates the **cook**, a cruel, ugly man, a liar and a murderer. When talking about the hyena, Pi, instead of referring to the hyena's behaviour as hyenas' way of hunting, he refers to its behaviour as *cowardice*, which is a human trait.

Orangutan who impersonates **Pi's mother**, is referred to as '*a mother of two fine boys*'. Orange Juice is given the human characteristics of courage, empathy, the ability to comfort and be selfless. She attacks the hyena to protect her son and comforts the zebra in his final moments.

The tiger, Richard Parker, is the symbol of Pi's fears and survival instincts. He has '*formidable sideburns*' & '*stylish goatie*' (page 190)

Anthropomorphism is the disguise for human nature and sins.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF YANN MARTEL

Yann Martel was born in Spain to French-Canadian parents.

Martel's father worked as a diplomat, and the family moved to Costa Rica, France, Mexico, and Canada during Martel's childhood.

He grew up speaking both French and English.

Martel studied philosophy at Trent University in Ontario.

He spent a year in India visiting religious sites and zoos.

His first three books received little critical or popular attention, but with the publication of *Life of Pi* in 2001, Martel became internationally famous and he was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 2002.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE NOVEL

Pondicherry is unique as it was once a French colony from 1674 until it was transferred to the Indian Government in 1954. Most of India was ruled by Britain.

Pondicherry has a diverse and unique culture where Pi could be exposed to Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

Pondicherry was renamed Puducherry and its capital is the city of Puducherry. The Botanical Garden in Pondicherry/Puducherry still exists and has a toy train track, but it no longer has a zoo.

The historical Pondicherry did have a zoo in 1977, but it lacked any tigers or anything larger than a deer.

The Patel family spent holidays in two places: Munnar, a small hill station and Madurai, a popular tourist and pilgrimage site.

The political and economic situation in India in 1977 was unstable and this encouraged Pi's father to move his family to Canada.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had been found guilty of misconduct in her recent election campaign, but instead of resigning she declared a state of emergency. 'The Emergency,' lasted from 1975 to 1977.

This suspended democracy, all constitutional rights, clamped down on political opponents, took control of the media and gave Gandhi dictatorial power.

While 'The Emergency' was a time of political oppression and violence, India experienced much-needed economic stabilization and growth.

WHAT DOES MARTEL WANT FROM HIS READERS?

He wants to show his readers there is more than one story, and since humans can create their own realities, they often choose the richer, more inspirational story.

Martel was interested by 'the extremes of existence on earth—the animal and the divine.' Pi, a double major in zoology and religion in college, is fascinated by these extremes.

Martel wants readers to decide which of Pi's stories is better—the story with animals in Part 2 of the book, or the story Pi gives in Part 3, replacing animals with humans desperate to survive: 'One is on the outer edges of the barely believable,' Martel says, 'the other is nearly unbearable in its violence.'

He feels the story with animals involves a 'transcendental element,' or events / ideas that are extremely special and unusual and cannot be understood in ordinary ways, or spiritual benefits to people of deep thought instead of action. This element lacks in the story with humans.

PLOT

Part 1: Toronto and Pondicherry

It is narrated in the first person by Pi.

Pi narrates as an adult, looking back at his earlier life as a high school and college student in Toronto, then further back to his childhood in Pondicherry.

Pi explains that he has suffered intensely and found solace (comfort) in religion and zoology.

He describes how Francis Adirubasamy, a close business associate of his father's and a competitive swimming champion, taught him to swim. He awards Pi his unusual name.

Pi is named after the Piscine Molitor, a swimming club with two pools in Paris that Francis Adirubasamy used to frequent.

Pi's father once ran the Pondicherry Zoo, teaching Pi and his brother, Ravi, about the dangerous nature of animals. He did this by feeding a live goat to a tiger before the boys' young eyes.

Pi is brought up as a Hindu. He then discovers Christianity, and Islam. Pi chooses to practise all three religions simultaneously.

Pi's parents decide to move the family to Canada because of political instability. On June 21, 1977, they set sail in a cargo ship, The Tsimtsum, along with a crew and many cages full of zoo animals.

Part 2: The Pacific Ocean

1. The ship is sinking.
2. Pi describes the explosive noise and chaos of the sinking of the Tsimtsum: crew members throw him into a lifeboat, where he soon finds himself alone with a zebra, an orangutan and a hyena. They all seem to be in shock.
3. Pi's entire family has drowned.
4. Pi clings to a lifeboat and encourages a tiger, Richard Parker, to join him.
5. After realizing his mistake in bringing a wild animal aboard, Pi leaps into the ocean.
6. When the storm subsides, Pi contemplates his difficult situation.
7. The hyena kills the zebra and the orangutan. To Pi's surprise, Richard Parker reveals himself: the tiger has been in the bottom of the lifeboat all along.
8. The tiger kills the hyena. Pi and Richard Parker are alone together at sea.
9. Pi survives on canned water and filtered seawater, emergency rations and freshly caught sea life.
10. He also provides for the tiger, whom he masters and trains.

Part 3, Benito Juarez Infirmary, Tomatlan, Mexico

Two officials from the Japanese Ministry of Transport, Mr Okamoto and Mr Chiba, interview Pi about the sinking of the ship, the Tsimtsum.

Pi tells the story as in Part 1, but the skeptical men are not convinced that it is the truth.

Pi tells his story again BUT replaces the animals with humans: an extremely hungry cook instead of a hyena, a sailor instead of a zebra and his mother instead of the orangutan.

The officials find the second story credible but prefer the first story as it is inspirational and shows courage and endurance.

In their report, they commend Pi for living so long with an adult tiger.

CHARACTERS

The **VISITING WRITER / the FICTITIOUS AUTHOR** is never named.

He shares same traits and experiences with Yann Martel, the book's author.

He comes from Canada and becomes intrigued by Pi's story on a visit to India.

He is insightful, honest, enlightening, partly fictitious, partly the real author: Yann Martel

He is the narrator of the Author's Note and the italicized sections.

MR FRANCIS ADIRUBASAMY is an old friend of the Patel family. Pi is named after his favourite pool, the Piscine Molitor in Paris, France. He introduces the visiting writer to Pi and his story.

He is called Mamaji (respected uncle) and is also a champion swimmer.

Pi Patel's full name is **PISCINE MOLITOR PATEL**.

YOUNG PI: Protagonist in India and on the lifeboat in 1977. He is gentle, kind, loving, vegetarian, religious, animal and nature lover, intelligent, practical, determined, strong survival skills, sensitive, quick-witted, funny, wise and aware of natural beauty.

ADULT PI: Lives in Canada in the 1990s and tells the visiting author his survival story at sea.

THE FAMILY IN INDIA

MR SANTOSH PATEL is Pi's father and the owner of the Pondicherry Zoo. He is cautious, not religious, modern and firm. He decides to move the family to Canada as a response to political instability in India, in 1977. He drowns in the Tsimtsum's wreck.

MRS GITA PATEL is Pi's mother. She drowns in the Tsimtsum's wreck. She is killed by the cook in the Second Story. She is a book lover, calm, loving, gentle yet firm and courageous.

RAVI is Pi's older brother by three years. He is known for his popularity, charisma and athletic ability. He is an extrovert, playful and a tease. Ravi drowns in the Tsimtsum's wreck.

AUNTIE ROHINI is Pi's mother's sister, who introduces young Pi to Hinduism.

THE TWO KUMARS

MR. Satish KUMAR is Pi's biology teacher in India.

He is an atheist, a polio survivor, odd-looking, triangle-shaped body, scientific and a communist.

MR. Satish KUMAR, a Muslim baker, is the Sufi and mystic who introduces Pi to Islam after Pi sees him praying one day.

He is devout and nondescript (undistinguished – lacking interesting features).

BABU is a zookeeper at the Pondicherry Zoo.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

The **PANDIT** is the leader of the Hindu worship services Pi attends. He is offended by Pi following other religions.

The **IMAM** is the leader of the Muslim worship services Pi attends.

FATHER MARTIN, the **PRIEST**, is the leader of the Christian worship services Pi attends. He is kind and religious.

CHARACTERS IN CANADA

AUNTIEJI is Pi's foster mother when he moves to Canada after his arrival in Mexico. Pi calls her Auntieji, an Indian term of endearment.

MEENA is Pi's wife. A fellow Indian immigrant and works as a pharmacist in Canada.

NIKHIL (Nick) is Pi's teenage son who is confident.

USHA is Pi's young daughter, a shy four- year-old who enjoys playing with her cat.

CHARACTERS IN THE FIRST STORY (ANIMAL STORY)

- **RICHARD PARKER** is the Bengal tiger who crosses the ocean in the lifeboat with Pi. He is the antagonist / Pi's alter ego on the lifeboat. He weighs 204 kgs, 9 feet long, carnivorous, ferocious, an alpha male & submissive to Pi.
- **THE HYENA** is one of the animals in the lifeboat with Pi. He is vicious – kills and eats the zebra and Orange Juice but is killed by Richard Parker.
- **ORANGE JUICE** is the orangutan in the lifeboat with Pi. She is killed by the hyena. She is maternal, humanlike when lonely and seasick and courageous.
- **THE ZEBRA** is in the lifeboat with Pi after the shipwreck. His leg is broken and the hyena also eats him. He is gentle, young, beautiful, exotic, tormented and vulnerable.
- **THE BLIND FRENCHMAN**, who is also a castaway, meets Pi in the Pacific Ocean when he is temporarily blinded. The Frenchman tries to kill and eat Pi as he is starving, but Richard Parker kills the Frenchman. He is ugly, violent, dangerous and cannibalistic.

CHARACTERS IN THE SECOND STORY (HUMAN STORY)

- The ship's **FRENCH COOK** is violent and aggressive – the hyena in the animal story.
- The cook kills **Pi's MOTHER** – the orangutan in the animal story – in a fight over food. Pi kills the cook in retaliation.
- The **CHINESE SAILOR** survives the shipwreck with a broken leg – the zebra in the animal story.
- **PI PATEL** has a fierce will to survive and will do anything when his existence is threatened. Pi's will to survive is represented by Richard Parker, the Tiger.

IN MEXICO

Japanese officials investigating the sinking of the Tsimtsum; they hear both stories.

- **MR OKAMOTO** is the official at the Japanese Ministry of Transport who interviews Pi in Mexico. He is sceptical, impatient, rude and business-like.
- **MR CHIBA** is Mr Okamoto's assistant. He is naïve, trusting and inexperienced.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the Author's Note, an anonymous / fictitious author (who has a lot in common with the real author, Yann Martel) explains that he travelled from his home in Canada to North of India because he wanted to get new ideas and inspiration to write his new book. He is dissatisfied with the new novel and mails his notes to a fake address in Siberia.

While he is sipping coffee in a café, he meets an elderly man named Francis Adirubasamy who offers to tell him a story that will 'make him believe in God'.

He urges the author to get the true account from the actual person the story is about – a man named Pi Patel who lives in Canada, Toronto.

The author arrives in Toronto and finds Pi's name in the phone book. The two men meet many times and the author gets details of Pi's story.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

The novel changes to Pi Patel's voice now, told in the first person 'I', as a memoir (biography which is a detailed description of a person's life).

The narrator, now an adult, first introduces himself as a graduate in both Religious Studies and Zoology at the University of Toronto. Pi was especially interested in Isaac Luria's work and did his thesis in the three-toed sloth.

He was given great credit for his knowledge in the zoology field.

Due to his ordeal and suffering, he sees the world in scientific and religious terms, the one is informing and enriching the other – therefore, he cannot divide religion and science.

He also describes the Goddess Lakshmi, a Hindu deity.

Pi refers to **AGNOSTICS** who are *like sloths*.

AGNOSTICS are in a state of doubt – who are not sure if God exists, and they do not have clarity in their beliefs to give meaning to their lives.

In contrast to the agnostics, Pi prefers

ATHEISTS who do not believe in the existence of God. They believe firmly in reason and science which gives them meaning in life.

For Pi, *sloths have a spiritually calming nature which reminds him of God*.

Pi says his life is like a memento mori which is a reminder that life is surrounded by death. The reason for this is that Pi has had a traumatic ordeal at sea for 227 days.

A *memento mori* is an artistic or symbolic reminder of the inevitability of death.

The expression 'memento mori' developed with the growth of Christianity, which emphasized heaven, hell and salvation of the soul in the afterlife.

Chapter 1 ends with Pi in a situation in an Indian restaurant in Canada. He gets upset when a waiter sees Pi eating with his hands instead of using a knife and fork. The waiter asks, 'Fresh off a boat, are you?'

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What is the purpose of the Author's Note?

To create authenticity. By explaining how the story came about, Martel establishes the circumstances a real.

This blend of fact and fiction allows the reader to believe that the story is about real people and events.

2. Make a comparison between the visiting writer/fictitious author and the real author, Yann Martel. Which details are true and which ones are false?

TRUE:

They both had a lack of success in their writings;

The trip to India for inspiration to write a story;

The description of the places that they visited in India e.g. Pondicherry and the Botanical Gardens;

The Canada Council for the Arts who supported his writing of the story;

Mr Scliar who inspired the author to write the story because of a review of his novel, '*Max and the Cats*'.

FALSE:

There is no evidence that the real author sent his notes to Siberia;

No evidence that Francis Adirubasamy or Pi Patel existed.

3. Give a reason why the author listens to Francis Adirubasamy. State why this is important.

Francis tells the author that the story 'will make him believe in God'.

The reason for this is because the author is at a low point in his life and is inclined to listen.

4. Refer to the Author's Note: '*Once upon a time there was a zoo...*' Explain how this statement introduces the concept of storytelling and the reader's belief in these stories.

Most fairy tales begin with the words, '*Once upon a time...*'.

A fairy tale is known not to be true; it is fictitious.

Francis Adirubasamy introduces a story which he believes to be true and will persuade the visiting author to believe

in God. He tells him to '*pay proper attention*' and to believe the story.

5. **Refer to Chapter 1: 'My suffering left me sad and gloomy.'**
Discuss the effect this opening line has on the reader.

The reader is curious to find out what tragic event could have caused such suffering and sadness.

The narrator is also unknown at this stage and the reader wonders about the narrator's character.

The literary device, *foreshadowing*, (the author HINTS as to what is to come in the novel), leaves the reader in suspense.

6. **State how one of the major themes is introduced by Pi's reference to the 'three-toed sloth'?**

The narrator, the adult Pi Patel, reveals his ideas about religions.

He compares the sloth's calm, spiritual demeanour to human yogis and that sloths remind him of God.

Therefore, the themes of the coexistence of faith and science, the belief in God and the synchronicity (the simultaneous occurrence of events) between animals and humans are introduced.