



# Life of Pi

Study Guide by Course Hero



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## 👁 Book Basics

### AUTHOR

Yann Martel

### YEAR PUBLISHED

2001

### GENRE

Adventure

### PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR

*Life of Pi* is told from a first-person point of view, with most of the narration by the protagonist, Pi Patel; shorter sections in italics are narrated by the visiting writer.

### TENSE

Pi narrates *Life of Pi* in the past tense. The visiting writer narrates in the present tense as he meets the adult Pi and in the past tense for the Author's Note.

### ABOUT THE TITLE

*Life of Pi* describes influential events in the life of Pi Patel, whose first name refers to the mathematical symbol pi, an irrational number (3.14159) that continues indefinitely without repeating numerals in a pattern. The symbol reflects Pi's quest to understand the universe and the infinity of life, which is also why the author left the article *the* out of the title: "Like pi, life is not finite."

## 🕒 In Context

### Autofiction

The novel is an example of autofiction, or a fictionalized autobiography of the character Pi Patel. The term *autofiction* was coined by French writer Serge Doubrovsky to describe his work *Fils* (1977). By combining autobiography with fiction, works of autofiction seek to define the self or truth through fictional elements that may conflict with literal fact. To this end writers of autofiction may narrate in the third person or change the facts relating to people, details, or events because they believe this fictionalization tells a larger truth.

Martel said the story's central metaphor came to him one day: the tiger in the story would be "divine," while the lifeboat in which Pi Patel floats would be "an odyssey of the soul across existence." As autofiction the novel has the same trappings of authenticity a reader might find in a nonfiction biography or autobiography. It includes observations by a visiting writer about the main character, a transcript of an interview, an official report, and acknowledgments. The book itself

discusses the relativity of truth frequently. Pi knows his story is hard to believe and feels readers may dispute its accuracy. He argues, "Isn't just looking upon this world already something of an invention?" Martel believes "there are truths that go beyond factual truth, that build upon it" in both art and faith.

## Max and the Cats

Martel faced controversy regarding the novel's inspiration. While searching for ideas, he read a review of respected Brazilian author Moacyr Scliar's book *Max and the Cats* (1981).

In Scliar's book a young boy and his zoo-keeping parents immigrate to Brazil, and the boy is shipwrecked with a panther for company. Martel thought "the idea had been faxed to the wrong muse." When Scliar heard of *Life of Pi*, which has a similar plotline, he felt Martel had infringed upon his intellectual property without consulting him.

Martel openly acknowledged the role of Scliar's story in his own novel and thanked him briefly and obliquely in the Author's Note: "I am indebted to Mr. Moacyr Scliar, for the spark of life."

## Animals as Allegory

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 similarly fascinated by these extremes. Martel wants readers to decide which of Pi's stories is better—the story with animals, in which the animals function as allegorical symbols for ideas and events 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 an understanding of truth that transcends or moves beyond factual details, lacking in the story with humans.

## Prime Minister Indira Gandhi

## and the Indian Emergency

Indira Gandhi, the "Mrs. Gandhi" in *Life of Pi*, won India's 1971 election and became the country's leader. In *Life of Pi* her government provides the backdrop to the Patel family's life-changing decision to emigrate.

Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency in India in 1975 (one year before Pi's family leaves for Canada) in part because of increased political opposition. Her rule was controversial because she restricted the personal freedoms of Indian citizens and imprisoned her opponents. To make matters worse, her time in office was marked by poverty and food shortages. The time period between 1975–77 is sometimes called "The Indian Emergency."

Mrs. Gandhi's leanings toward dictatorship affect the Patel family both indirectly and directly. In Part 1, Chapter 29 Mr. Patel references Mrs. Gandhi's jails being full. Pi mentions the country's constitution has been suspended for eight months by the time the family leaves. In 1975 Indira Gandhi amended the Indian Constitution to give herself the right to rule by decree, limiting people's freedoms.

When Indira Gandhi takes over the Patels' local Tamil Nadu government, forcing its leader to resign, the Patels sense real danger for their family and make plans to leave India.

## 📍 Author Biography

Yann Martel was born on June 25, 1963, in Salamanca, Spain. His parents, both French Canadians, joined the Canadian Foreign Service when he was young. The family lived in Costa Rica, Mexico, and France as well as Spain and Canada. He later studied philosophy at Ontario's Trent University. Before Martel committed to writing at age 27, he considered careers in politics and anthropology. After graduation he worked as a dishwasher, a security guard, and a tree planter.

*Life of Pi* followed two books that had lackluster sales: *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* (1993) and *Self* (1996). Published in September 2001, his third book propelled him to national literary acclaim—what Martel calls a "freak success." Martel wrote *Life of Pi* after a backpacking trip to India in 1996. He had already written a novel that failed to inspire him, and he felt aimless and depressed: "I was in need of a story. More than

that, I was in need of a Story," he later wrote. The trip caused him to "[fall] in love with faith." He became mesmerized by the Hindu temples and their proximity to other places of worship, such as churches and mosques. Like Pi, Martel had a secular upbringing. As an observer he became interested in the storytelling aspects of faith. He also learned to appreciate and closely observe animals on this trip.

Like Martel's previous works, *Life of Pi* pushed genre boundaries and engaged issues of identity, mortality, and belonging. After winning Britain's competitive Man Booker Prize, the book was translated into some 40 languages and sold 13 million copies. In 2012 it was adapted for film by Ang Lee, the director of such films as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hulk*, and *Brokeback Mountain*.

Martel continues to write stories and novels that portray magical events and engage ethical questions. His 2010 novel *Beatrice and Virgil* features animals as characters to illuminate the hope and darkness in the human condition. *The High Mountains of Portugal* (2016) follows the pursuit of an antique crucifix that unfolds across several decades.

Martel lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. *Life of Pi* remains his best-known work.

## Characters

### Pi Patel

Pi, as an adult, reflects on the experiences that shaped him as a child, particularly his knowledge of animals, his religious conversions, and his transformative journey across the Pacific Ocean. Pi is intelligent and well educated. He loves science and learning, often recounting biological or psychological facts to make his points. He realizes, however, that humans cannot explain every event. Pi's faiths in Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism deeply influence his worldview. Pi's parents and brother passed away in a shipwreck that Pi, at 16, survived. As an adult he lives contentedly with his wife and two children, but he thinks often of his departed family.

### Richard Parker

Richard Parker came to the Pondicherry Zoo after a hunter (the original Richard Parker) killed his mother in the wild. As an adult Richard Parker weighs 450 pounds. Pi describes him as beautiful and graceful, with an overwhelming presence. At first Richard Parker is antagonistic toward Pi, but he adapts when Pi establishes himself as the dominant animal. Richard Parker's companionship gives Pi purpose and peace on their long journey.

### Visiting Writer

The visiting writer is thoughtful and reflective. He describes his own life as "glum contentment." He originally seeks out Pi because he's looking for an extraordinary story for his next book. After many encounters and interviews with Pi, the visiting writer feels his own worldview and beliefs being challenged. He concludes Pi's story will make listeners believe in God.

### Mr. Patel

Mr. Patel is an experienced and skilled zookeeper. He's proud of the "modern, biologically sound principles" on which the zoo is run. He raises his family to be secular (nonreligious); though he grudgingly accepts Pi's religious interests, he does not share them. Mr. Patel has a deep faith in technology and human progress.

### Mrs. Patel

Mrs. Patel is intelligent and compassionate. She loves to read. She has a deep affection for India and misses her country when she leaves for Canada with her family. She identifies as secular—Pi describes her as "serenely impious"—but is more open than Mr. Patel to accepting Pi's religious zeal. In Pi's second story to the Japanese officials, Mrs. Patel survives the shipwreck and remains in the lifeboat with Pi. She's killed by the cook in a squabble over food.

## Ravi

Ravi is popular in school, and Pi admires and looks up to him. Pi calls Ravi the "dazzling hero of my childhood." Ravi often teases Pi, including mocking him about his religious beliefs, but he seems to have a real affection for his younger brother. Ravi is adventurous and loves to explore. He watches the engines on the Tsimtsum before it sinks. In one version of the story Ravi dies during the explosion on the ship. In the other version the blind Frenchman kills Ravi.

## Blind Frenchman

The blind Frenchman is an unapologetic carnivore who will eat every part of an animal. As he and Pi discuss food, Pi imagines the Frenchman's voice to be the voice of Richard Parker, another carnivore. Because of their similarly hopeless situations, Pi feels a kinship and brotherhood with the Frenchman and mourns his death.

## Character Map



- Main character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

## Full Character List

Character	Description
Pi Patel	Pi Patel's full name is Piscine Molitor Patel. He is an Indian academic and zookeeper's son who immigrated to Canada at age 16 in a lifeboat. Pi is the novel's main character and, for most of the book, the narrator.
Richard Parker	Richard Parker is the Bengal tiger who crosses the ocean in the lifeboat with Pi. He got his human name from a clerical mix-up at the Pondicherry Zoo.
Visiting Writer	The visiting writer is never named, though he shares traits and experiences with Yann Martel, the book's author. He narrates the Author's Note and the italicized sections of the book. Originally from Canada, he becomes intrigued by Pi's story on a visit to India. The writer's thoughts provide the frame for the larger narrative.
Mr. Patel	Mr. Santosh Patel is the owner of the Pondicherry Zoo and Pi's father. He decides to move the family to Canada as a response to dissatisfaction with Indian politics in 1977. He dies in the Tsimtsum's wreck.
Mrs. Patel	Mrs. Gita Patel is Pi's mother. She dies in the Tsimtsum's wreck.
Ravi	Ravi is Pi's older brother by three years. He's known for his charisma and athletic ability. Ravi dies in the Tsimtsum's wreck.
Blind Frenchman	The blind Frenchman, who is also a castaway, meets Pi in the Pacific Ocean when he is temporarily blinded. Since the Frenchman is starving, he attempts to kill and eat Pi, but Richard Parker kills the Frenchman first.
Mr. Adirubasamy	Mr. Francis Adirubasamy is an old friend of the Patel family; Pi is named after the man's favorite pool in the world, the Piscine Molitor in Paris, France. He introduces the visiting writer to Pi and his story.
Auntieji	Auntieji is Pi's Québécoise foster mother when he moves to Canada after his arrival in Mexico. Pi calls her Auntieji, an Indian term of affection.
Babu	Babu is a zookeeper at the Pondicherry Zoo.
Mr. Chiba	Mr. Chiba is an assistant at the Japanese Ministry of Transport who helps Mr. Okamoto interview Pi in Mexico.
The cook	In his second story to the Japanese officials, Pi describes the ship's cook as a "brute" similar to the way he describes the hyena. Pi feels love for the cook because of the forced companionship of the long journey. But when the cook kills Pi's mother in a fight over food, Pi murders him in retaliation.
The hyena	The hyena is one of the animals in the lifeboat with Pi. Like other hyenas, he is vicious and will eat anything. Pi is also struck by the hyena's physical ugliness. He kills and eats the zebra and Orange Juice, but is killed by Richard Parker.
The imam	The imam is the leader of the Muslim worship services Pi attends.
Mr. Kumar, the baker	Mr. Kumar, a baker by trade, is the Sufi and mystic who introduces Pi to Islam.
Mr. Kumar, the teacher	Mr. Kumar is Pi's biology teacher in India who is an atheist.
Mr. Okamoto	Mr. Okamoto is the official at the Japanese Ministry of Transport who interviews Pi in Mexico to figure out why the Tsimtsum sank.

Orange Juice	Orange Juice is the orangutan in the lifeboat with Pi after the shipwreck. Orange Juice is one of Pi's favorite animals in the zoo, and he's comforted by her presence. She's killed by the hyena.
The pandit	The pandit is the leader of the Hindu worship services Pi attends.
Meena Patel	Meena is Pi's wife. A fellow Indian immigrant, she works as a pharmacist in Canada.
Nikhil Patel	Nikhil is Pi's teenage son, who goes by Nick.
Usha Patel	Usha is Pi's young daughter, a shy four-year-old who enjoys playing with her cat.
The priest	The priest is the leader of the Christian worship services Pi attends.
Auntie Rohini	Auntie Rohini is Pi's mother's sister, who introduces young Pi to Hinduism.
The sailor	In Pi's second story to the Japanese officials, the sailor is a <i>Tsimtsum</i> employee who survives the shipwreck with a broken leg. He is similar to the zebra in his physical loveliness and vulnerability.
The zebra	The zebra is in the lifeboat with Pi after the shipwreck. Pi describes the zebra as "a lovely animal." His leg is broken, and he doesn't live long before the hyena eats him.

## Plot Summary

### Part 1, Toronto and Pondicherry

In 1996 a Canadian writer flies to Bombay, India, where he plans to write a novel. His attempt fails, and he goes to the

south of India in search of a better story. In the town of Pondicherry, the visiting writer meets an elderly man, Mr. Adirubasamy, in a coffeehouse. Mr. Adirubasamy claims to have "a story that will make you believe in God." He connects the visiting writer with Pi Patel, a 42-year-old Indian scholar living in Toronto, Canada.

Pi narrates his life story, beginning with his academic studies in religion and zoology and his mysterious past. The first part of the novel recounts Pi's childhood as the son of a zookeeper who is surrounded by and fascinated with animals. His father shows him and his brother a tiger attack to demonstrate how dangerous animals can be. After being teased in school because of his first name, Piscine, Pi renames himself after the mathematical symbol.

In contrast to Pi's secular upbringing, Pi becomes intrigued by religion through a series of chance encounters. A youthful visit to a temple causes Pi to fall in love with Hinduism; talks with a priest in a church interest Pi in Christianity; and meeting a Muslim mystic leads Pi to Islam. As a result Pi begins to practice all three religions, and despite pressure to choose one he claims he needs each religion to understand God. In 1977 when Pi is 16, his parents decide to move the family, along with many of the zoo animals, to Canada on a cargo ship because of political unrest in India.

In several chapters the visiting writer narrates and reveals his impressions of the adult Pi. Happily married with two children, Pi fills his home with religious iconography and stuffs his cupboards with vegetarian food. But Pi, to his distress, has few photos of his parents and brother. Pi points out a photo of the tiger Richard Parker to the visiting writer.

### Part 2, The Pacific Ocean

Pi narrates his passage across the Pacific Ocean. The cargo ship carrying his family and their animals, the *Tsimtsum*, sinks without warning. Pi ends up on a lifeboat with only animals for company—a hyena, a zebra, an orangutan, and a tiger. The hyena kills the already injured zebra and eats the orangutan, while Richard Parker, the 450-pound Bengal tiger, eats the hyena. Pi fears for his life and mourns his family.

During Pi's first week at sea, he hopes for rescue. He takes stock of his supplies and builds a raft to give him space from Richard Parker. Eventually Pi realizes he must tame Richard

Parker and keep the tiger alive if he hopes to survive himself. Pi uses his knowledge of animal behavior to claim space and authority, making Richard Parker obedient to him. A vegetarian, Pi is forced to slaughter fish and turtles to survive.

Months pass on the lifeboat. Pi suffers from thirst, loneliness, and despair. He relies on his faith for comfort. He notices both the beauty and the menace of the ocean. One night Pi is near death and temporarily blinded from malnutrition. He hears a voice and responds, realizing slowly he's talking to another human castaway. The two men meet. The other man, a blind Frenchman, tries to kill Pi for food. Instead Richard Parker kills the blind Frenchman.

Soon afterward Pi and Richard Parker find an island made of algae. Pi is delighted by the land, vegetation, and fresh water. Several meerkats live on the island as well. He stays on the island happily until he realizes the algae ponds are carnivorous and have killed another human being. Reluctantly, he returns with Richard Parker to the lifeboat.

Pi finally reaches Mexico. Richard Parker wanders away, devastating Pi, but he is glad to return to land. Pi is cared for by some village women, and a police car transports him to a nearby hospital.

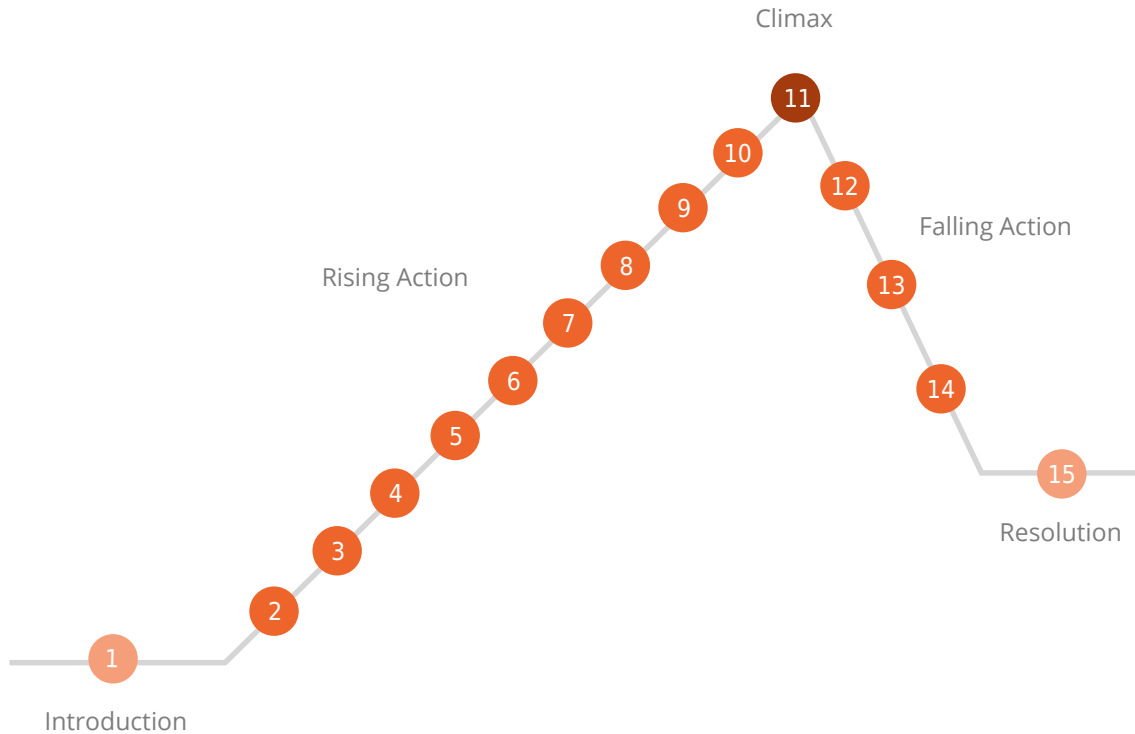
## Part 3, Benito Juarez Infirmary, Tomatlan, Mexico

Pi is the *Tsimtsum's* only survivor, and two shipping company employees, Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba, question Pi about the shipwreck in an interview transcribed by the visiting writer.

Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba don't believe Pi's story of survival on the lifeboat. Pi grows agitated and asks them if they need to see to believe. At their prompting he tells another version in which he lands on the lifeboat with a cook, a sailor, and his mother, who are all murdered. Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba realize the humans in the second story act similarly to the animals in Pi's first story. Pi asks them which story they prefer. They prefer the version with the animals. In Mr. Okamoto's official report, he commends Pi for surviving at sea in the company of a tiger.



## Plot Diagram



### Introduction

1. The visiting writer arrives in India.

### Rising Action

2. The visiting writer meets Pi Patel.
3. Pi describes his upbringing in the Pondicherry Zoo.
4. Pi adopts his new name in secondary school.
5. Pi's father demonstrates the danger of tigers.
6. Pi embraces Hinduism.
7. Pi is introduced to Christianity.
8. Pi is introduced to Islam.

9. The Patel family leaves India for Canada.

10. The visiting writer meets Pi's new Canadian family.

### Climax

11. The *Tsimtsum* sinks.

### Falling Action

12. The hyena, the zebra, and Orange Juice die.
13. Pi and Richard Parker find the algae island.
14. Pi and Richard Parker reach Mexico.

## Resolution

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15. Pi tells his story to Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba.

## Timeline of Events

1970s

Pi adopts his new name in secondary school.

February 1976

Delhi takes over the Tamil Nadu government.

July 1, 1977

The *Tsimtsum* sinks.

1977

Pi decides to train Richard Parker and keep him alive.

c. 1977-78

Pi and Richard Parker arrive at the algae island.

February 1978

Pi tells his story to Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba.

November 1, 1954

Pondicherry joins the Union of India, and Pi's parents open the Pondicherry Zoo.

1970s

Pi is baptized and receives a prayer rug.

June 21, 1977

The Patel family leaves India for Canada.

1977

The hyena, the zebra, and Orange Juice die.

c. 1977-78

Near death, Pi meets the blind Frenchman.

February 14, 1978

Pi and Richard Parker reach Mexico.

1996

The visiting writer meets Pi in Toronto.

1978

Pi moves to Canada and attends university.

## 🔍 Chapter Summaries

Yann Martel divided *Life of Pi* into three parts, further divided into chapters. For the purposes of summary and insight, this study guide groups some chapters together.

### Author's Note

#### Summary

In 1996 the visiting writer is struggling to sell books in Canada. Restless, he flies to Bombay, India, to work on a novel about Portugal. He's soon disappointed by his new book. Despite its technical perfection, the novel lacks "that spark that brings to life a real story." Discouraged, the visiting writer travels to the town of Pondicherry, the former capital of French India. At a coffeehouse he strikes up a conversation with an elderly man.

The man, Mr. Adirubasamy, tells the writer he has a story that will make him "believe in God." The writer is skeptical and wonders if the man is a Christian or Muslim proselytizer. He tells the writer there was once a zoo in the Pondicherry Botanical Garden and refers the writer to the story's main character.

The writer nervously calls the main character, Pi Patel, an Indian man living in Toronto, Canada. As the writer hears Pi's story, he agrees the story will make listeners believe in God. The writer thanks the people who made his book possible, including Pi, Mr. Adirubasamy, and others.

#### Analysis

The Author's Note positions the book as a frame narrative, or a story within a story. Though the visiting writer bears many similarities to Yann Martel—they are both Canadian writers who travel to India after a failed second novel—the author is distinct from the character of the writer. The visiting writer is a fictional character and a narrative conceit. His presence gives validity to the autofiction aspect of the novel.

The note functions as an introduction, bringing up ideas that will resurface. The writer's reference to doctors as "purveyors of magic and miracle" introduces the idea of the miraculous, as

Pi is a big believer in miracles. The writer also discusses the history of Pondicherry's French colonization, its unique position in British-colonized India, and the various cultural influences, such as Hinduism, that will affect Pi's upbringing.

Even though the writer is not religious and mentions making him believe in God is a "tall order," he knows major world religions and beliefs have similarities as well as differences. Mr. Adirubasamy's reference to Pi's story places Pi himself in the canon of miraculous heroes and tale-tellers. Mr. Adirubasamy also begins with "Once upon a time," indicating his story will be told to create belief in the supernatural and include an element of magic.

The visiting writer thanks Moacyr Scliar for partially inspiring him in the Author's Note. This is Martel's way of paying tribute to Scliar, the Brazilian author whose book *Max and the Cats* tells the tale of a young boy shipwrecked with a panther. The statement in favor of supporting artists reflects the importance of collective dreams and imagination. In fact Pi's stories, whether real or imagined, are necessary to his survival.

### Part 1, Chapters 1–3

#### Summary

##### Part 1, Chapter 1

Pi Patel begins Part 1 by writing, "My suffering left me sad and gloomy," but adds academic studies at the University of Toronto and religious practice has helped his healing. His zoology thesis examined the three-toed sloth, an animal whose calm demeanor reminds him of meditative yogis and hermits. Pi does well in school, though he was beaten out for a competitive undergraduate award, a slight he calls "both unbearable and trifling" after all he's been through.

He loves Canada but misses India, as well as someone called Richard Parker. Pi references time spent recovering in a hospital in Mexico, and how he was astounded by its abundance of tap water. During Pi's first visit to an Indian restaurant in Canada, a waiter mocked him for eating with his hands and he lost his appetite.

## Part 1, Chapter 2

The visiting writer recounts his first impressions of Pi. No older than 40, Pi is slim with graying hair and a parka despite the warm weather. Pi speaks quickly and earnestly.

## Part 1, Chapter 3

Pi explains the origins of his unusual name. One of Pi's father's business associates and a family friend was a man named Francis Adirubasamy, whom Pi called Mamaji (an Indian term of affection). Mamaji, a former competitive swimmer, taught young Pi to swim. Mamaji had visited pools worldwide and described the Piscine Molitor in Paris as the most beautiful pool in the civilized world. Pi's parents name him Piscine Molitor Patel after the French word for *pool*.

## Analysis

The reader learns about Pi slowly through backstory that he doesn't tell in strictly chronological order. He begins by explaining where he is now, as an adult. But the hints at medical suffering add tension and questions for the reader. Some details, such as Pi's reaction to the "wasteful" hospital water tap, only add up after the reader learns the full picture of young Pi's deprivation. Part 1 incrementally adds clues like puzzle pieces.

The organization mirrors the way a real person might talk to an interviewer—with awareness of audience but without clear organization. Pi's curiosity and intelligence come across, and he has a variety of interests, including animals, science, academics, religion, and belief. Like most people he's influenced by past experiences, which inform both his scholarly interests and his perspective on his fellow students.

The reader may be confused at first by the mentions of Richard Parker. Nothing in Part 1 indicates clearly that Richard Parker is a tiger. Pi thinks of Richard Parker first as a companion and then as an animal. The "nightmares tinged with love" suggest an intimate relationship or friendship.

The visiting writer's description of Pi is generous and vivid. It marks Pi, with the parka in warm fall, as a little odd. Indications he's "expressive" with "hands flitting about" suggest an eager storyteller with a manic energy. The visiting writer is an

outsider to Pi's story, a kind of reader surrogate who is learning alongside the reader.

Water is a critical symbol in the narrative, representing both life and death. Water gets some of the most vivid descriptions in the book, turning from "molten lead to liquid light" as Pi swims. His swimming lessons will become significant later, not only because his familiarity with water will save his life but also because he persists in the face of larger forces. Pi is connected to these larger forces, too, with the meaning of his name. This is Mamaji's gift to him.

Pi's recitation of facts, such as the names of different pools Mamaji swam in, will recur. Pi is someone who learns as much as he can about everything, and who also accepts the unknowable. Specific physical descriptions of people, like Mamaji and Mr. Kumar the teacher, show humans as well as animals can be diverse life forms. As a scholar Pi finds joy in diversity.

## Part 1, Chapters 4–6

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 4

In 1954 Pondicherry enters the Union of India. A portion of the Pondicherry Botanical Garden is set aside for a zoo, which Pi's father runs. Flowers and wildlife fill the grounds, and the zoo is "paradise on earth." Living in a zoo shows Pi the diversity and beauty of animals. But for Mr. Patel, a former hotel manager, dealing with his new and unreasonable animal "guests" provides a daily challenge.

Pi refutes the common notion of zoos as prisons. Animals in the wild, he says, are unhappy because they live lives dominated by "compulsion and necessity," not real freedom. Animals are territorial and stick to patterns. A zoo environment provides animals with food, shelter, routine, and protection from enemies. Animals often stay in zoo enclosures even if they can escape. Pi says he doesn't mean to defend zoos. But he's noticed "certain illusions about freedom" affect popular notions of both zoos and religion.

## Part 1, Chapter 5

Pi's unusual name, Piscine Molitor Patel, has always affected him. Fellow schoolchildren mockingly call him "Pissing" instead of Piscine. The nickname sticks with him until he moves from primary to secondary school. On the first day there the students each say their names. Pi goes to the board and writes, "My name is Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as ... Pi Patel." He then writes the mathematical symbol for pi and the number 3.14 used to calculate the circumference of a circle in geometry. Soon his classmates all call him Pi or Three Point One Four. Pi feels relieved and reborn.

Pi begins to use overt religious allusions, referring to Jesus's crown of thorns and the prophet Muhammed. When he gives his name as "I am who I am" to the pizza place, it's another reference to God. These references clearly frame his life and the way he sees himself: as a character in an unfolding story.

## Part 1, Chapter 6

The writer joins the adult Pi for a meal, which Pi prepares. The writer praises Pi's vegetarian cooking and notices Pi's cupboards are packed with huge reserves of food.

## Analysis

The novel emphasizes the juxtaposition (contrast) and the tension between old and new. Chapter 4 shows Pondicherry joining the "New India." The zoo is built with "modern, biologically sound principles." But animal behavior is as old as time. Pi builds the reader's knowledge of animals slowly, though its real importance won't be revealed until Part 2. The descriptions of the zoo animals are colorful and thorough—and, since the zoo no longer exists, they are made magical by memory. "Language founders in such seas" is an invitation for the reader to rely on the picture in their own mind and is an additional reference to water as an uncontrollable force.

Pi brings up ideas of freedom, enclosure, and escape as well. What's the nature of freedom? What's the importance of territory? What's the importance of the places humans call home? Pi will lose his home permanently, build a new one, and feel trapped in the emptiness of the Pacific Ocean. His family will uproot everything and leave, like the example he gives of humans being "freed" from their homes. He has ample

opportunity to challenge "illusions about freedom."

Pi's naming ceremony in Part 1, Chapter 5 occurs within the ceremonial and ritualistic recitation of names in his classroom. It's an empowering enough event for him to describe the renaming as a rebirth. The power of naming will recur in the book—Pi conquers his fears by naming them and relates to Richard Parker through the tiger's human name.

The concept of the circle recurs in this chapter. Pi frequently feels himself to be at the center of a circle—whether through Hindu concepts of reincarnation or through the "harrowing ballet of circles" he's caught in as a castaway. Like a scientist he's trying to understand the universe through "elusive, irrational" concepts, not simply accepting what's in front of him. He always wants to know more.

Food means many things to Pi—comfort, home, hospitality, and territory. In Part 1, Chapter 6 his ability to create dishes from around the world reflects an interest in and desire to understand the entire world. As an immigrant Pi is used to breaking cultural barriers.

Even many years after his ordeal, he still hoards food and supplies. He is, like animals and other humans, a creature of habit. This note from the visiting writer is the first clear indication of Pi's former deprivation.

## Part 1, Chapters 7–9

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 7

Young Pi has several excellent teachers, including Mr. Satish Kumar, who teaches biology. An odd-looking and intelligent man, Mr. Kumar is the first atheist Pi meets. When Mr. Kumar comes to the zoo, he tells Pi the zoo is his only temple. "Religion is darkness," he says, to Pi's confusion. Mr. Kumar believes science has all the answers mankind needs.

Adult Pi cites Mr. Kumar as the reason he studied zoology. Pi admires atheists but dislikes agnostics—those who believe the existence of God is possible but unproven. He says they choose "doubt as a philosophy of life."

This chapter gives the first indication of the political strife created by Mrs. Gandhi, or Bapu Gandhi, and the Indian people's reactions to her leadership.

## Part 1, Chapter 8

Pi says most zookeepers know man is the most dangerous animal in the zoo. He describes tortures humans have inflicted on animals. An even more dangerous animal, however, is the animal seen through human eyes. Humans "look at an animal and see a mirror," mistaking dangerous creatures for adorable pets.

Young Pi's father plans an object lesson to teach his sons the dangers of zoo animals. He takes Pi and his older brother Ravi to see Mahisha, a 550-pound Bengal tiger in the zoo. Mr. Patel tells his assistant Babu to release a goat into Mahisha's cage. Mahisha devours the goat immediately. Mr. Patel leads Pi and Ravi to the cages of other zoo animals, such as lions, hippos, camels, deer, and orangutans, explaining the harm each can do.

As the third prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi was a controversial figure. She successfully led diplomatic efforts with Pakistan following the Indo-Pakistani War (1971), and she led a Green Revolution that increased food supplies and created jobs. However, she was an authoritarian ruler, and corruption plagued her government. In 1984 she was assassinated by members of a Sikh (monotheistic Indian religion; rejects idolatry and caste) separatist movement. Her assassination led to anti-Sikh riots during which thousands died.

## Part 1, Chapter 9

Pi explains techniques zookeepers use to get animals accustomed to humans. Diminishing the animal's flight distance, or the minimum distance at which it keeps enemies, is key. Mr. Patel achieved this goal admirably by providing his animals food, shelter, and protection.

## Analysis

Pi has an innate interest in biology and why humans do what they do. Mr. Kumar's recovery from polio as a child led to his

faith in modern medicine and influenced his respect for the scientific universe. He's comfortable with order and evidence. But the two don't see the world the same way. Pi doesn't view religion versus science as a contrast between knowledge and ignorance. He views the contrast as knowable versus unknowable. Humans need both, he thinks.

God's salvation is a trickier question. Both Mr. Kumar and Pi deal with God's silence. Mr. Kumar prays for God to lift his polio affliction, with no result. Pi prays for salvation after the shipwreck, with no answer. One turns away from God; the other turns to God. What is central to Pi is belief and humility. He believes atheism is a faith of its own kind; a faith in science. Even scientists acknowledge the unknowable through new discoveries, as Pi will explain in Part 3.

In Part 1, Chapter 8 Pi builds on the previous descriptions of animal psychology to give a more complete picture of his own faith and worldview. The "excessive predatoriness" of man leads to cruelty. Pi sees another trend, which is disbelief in anything larger than oneself, whether it's science or faith or the unknowable universe; believing the world is yours to take. The graphic descriptions of man's inhumanity to animals show how Pi looks at hard, unflinching truth.

In this chapter Pi explores the concept of anthropomorphism, or giving animals human qualities. The danger in anthropomorphism, as Mr. Patel explains to his sons, lies in assuming animals are similar to humans in the way they think, feel, and contend with other life forms. This hint of danger foreshadows the real danger Pi will find himself in when confronted by animals in a radically different setting—Pi, not the animals, will have to adjust.

Though Pi denounces anthropomorphism, he admits as a child he "dressed wild animals in tame costumes of my imagination." Young Pi knows he is only pretending, but the book's testament to the power of imagination and people's ability to create their realities show the consequences of even pretending animals are like humans.

One of the gifts his father gives him is a lesson that does save his life; though his father can't have imagined Pi would ever be alone with a tiger in a lifeboat, he shows his son that animals deserve respect and proper handling. The lessons stretch beyond life in a zoo—every life deserves to be treated with reverence, and death is always close at hand. Though the goat's death is tense and frightening, Pi's father's tour of the zoo has a rhythmic, fairy tale quality—another example of



storytelling.

Part 1, Chapter 9 gives more detail about zoo keeping and the psychology of animals, especially as it relates to human psychology. On the lifeboat Pi will have an opportunity not only to diminish Richard Parker's flight risk but also to analyze his own reaction to danger and threat. He'll have to get accustomed to Richard Parker, too.

## Part 1, Chapters 10–12

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 10

Animals will occasionally escape from zoos, Pi says, especially if the zoo habitat is unsuitable. Besides, all living things have "a measure of madness" that sometimes saves them. He emphasizes animals escape "from something" instead of "to somewhere."

#### Part 1, Chapter 11

Pi describes the case of a female black leopard that escaped from a Switzerland zoo. The leopard remained undetected in the Swiss winter for two months. This proves to Pi that escaped animals are only "wild creatures seeking to fit in." Pi says, for example, that hundreds of exotic animals might be hiding in a large city like Tokyo. He laughs at the possibility of trying to find an animal in the Mexican tropical jungle.

#### Part 1, Chapter 12

The writer notices Pi's agitation as he relates his story and worries Pi will want to stop. "Richard Parker still preys on his mind," the writer says. But Pi continues to talk and regularly cooks meals for the writer, although the food is too spicy for his taste.

### Analysis

The idea of enclosure and escape recurs in Part 1, Chapter 10. With the reference to animals escaping "from something"—as Pi's family goes to Canada to escape the increased restrictions and political oppression of Indira Gandhi's political regime in India—the zoo-keeping metaphor becomes more and more a reflection on human behavior. Later in Part 1, in Chapter 29, Mr. Patel will reference Indira Gandhi's practice of throwing dissidents in jail, again bringing up the idea of enclosure. Nothing—not humans, animals, or human-made ships—behaves predictably, including Pi with his own "irrational" name and nature. There's always a "measure of madness," a wild card. Pi realizes the importance of adapting to an environment, but he recognizes adaptation is easier when security and safety are assured.

This story, or a version of it, will recur in Part 3 when Pi attempts to tell Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba that Richard Parker is untraceable in the Mexican tropical jungle. The reader is predisposed to accept the story of the escaped black leopard as fact, and the reference to the many animals in Tokyo as fact, because here Pi presents it as fact. He's a reliable narrator so far. In Part 3 he'll be less of a reliable narrator when his story is called into question. The inability to find Richard Parker will later be a key reason investigators doubt Pi's story. But for now the visiting writer never doubts him, so the reader doesn't either.

The book emphasizes the body's physical reaction to outside intrusions. Pi spends almost a year exposed to the weather. The visiting writer is simply not accustomed to spicy food. Both must adapt to their surroundings as outsiders.

## Part 1, Chapters 13–15

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 13

Pi explains the importance of territorial dominance to animals. A lion tamer in a circus, he says, succeeds by establishing his authority over the lions. Animals are usually hostile because of "social insecurity" or not knowing where they stand in a

hierarchy. The circus trainer can tame an animal through psychological tricks such as an authoritative posture and gaze.

## Part 1, Chapter 14

Pi notes the lion with the lowest social standing in the pride—the "omega animal"—is easiest to train. In general "socially inferior" animals will make better efforts to befriend their keepers.

## Part 1, Chapter 15

The visiting writer observes adult Pi's home, which he describes as "a temple." Pi has shrines to the Hindu god Ganesha and to the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, a Christian icon. His home is decorated with images of other Hindu gods, a Bible, a crucifix, a cloth with Arabic writing, and a prayer rug.

## Analysis

The information about animal dominance may seem out of context to Pi's own story in Part 1, aside from showing off his storytelling skills in describing a circus scene. But he's introducing the ideas of captivity and subjugation, different aspects of enclosure and escape. He's also explaining how he survived on the lifeboat.

He references "doubt and fear" as healthy for an animal. The "brute force" described in Part 1, Chapter 8 doesn't always give an animal the upper hand. There are psychological tricks humans can use to give animals the comfort of certainty about their social standing.

In Part 1, Chapter 14 Pi shows his intricate knowledge of how animals behave in groups. Settings, surroundings, and territory are crucial to animal welfare. Part of territory and belonging is knowing where one stands in a group. Thus, animals further down the food chain will seek more desperately for approval because they want to belong.

The structure of Part 1 establishes Pi's animal knowledge, then segues into his coming-of-age story and his unique faith background. In Part 1, Chapter 15 the visiting writer provides a smooth transition, showing Pi's religious devotion based on the objects and setting around him—Pi's own territory and home—as being as meaningful to him as his devotion to

animals.

The visiting writer includes stories about Ganesha and Shiva to demonstrate the importance of storytelling and mythology to faith. He emphasizes the colors and the beauty of Pi's objects; aesthetic appreciation of his world is significant to Pi.

## Part 1, Chapters 16–18

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 16

Pi believes we're all born in limbo "until some figure introduces us to God." He tells how he went to a Hindu temple with his Auntie Rohini at a young age. Pi describes the symbols, rites, and images that define his Hindu faith. Hinduism helps him "see my place in the universe." He believes Christians, Hindus, and Muslims are all reflections of one another.

#### Part 1, Chapter 17

Pi tells how he became a Christian. He relates how at age 14 he goes on a family vacation to Munnar and finds a Christian church. He's amazed by the church's beauty but confused by the notion of sacrifice associated with Christianity. Over time he gets to know Father Martin, the welcoming parish priest. Pi doesn't think Christianity's human and vulnerable Jesus compares to Hinduism's magnificent gods, but he is still fascinated by the faith and decides to become a Christian as well as a Hindu.

#### Part 1, Chapter 18

Pi discovers Islam when he is 15. He explores the Muslim quarter of his town and meets a baker. When the baker follows the Muslim call to prayer, Pi is intrigued watching him pray. He compares Muslims kneeling for prayer to Christians kneeling at the cross.

## Analysis

Hinduism is Pi's first religion and part of his ethnic heritage. He's led to it not by abstractions and ideas but by the physical experiences of his five senses. As a child he's as mesmerized by the sounds, smells, and tastes of Hinduism as he is by the diversity in the zoo. Pi emphasizes both the body and the spirit's importance in practicing religion and belief.

He's also led by "exaltation" and awe; like an animal Pi wants to know his place. He finds it in worshipping something larger than himself, a "Presence" with a capital P. The largeness of time and sense of infinity in Hinduism is like the infinity expressed by the repeating digits of the number pi. The analogy of "Hairless Christians" that Pi shares at the end succinctly describes how the trappings and practices change from faith to faith but the goal does not.

Pi, who sees the world through color, notices the "bold colors" and graphic nature of Christ's suffering in Part 1, Chapter 17. Christ's kneecap is "fire-engine red" and his skin like "petals of a flower." Pi can appreciate the human, visceral nature of Christianity, even its relative speed through time. For the first time Pi connects fragility, pain, and need with love.

He compares the speeds through time of the two religions. Christianity is a "religion in a rush" while Hinduism is a relay race. Both faiths reflect Pi's own experience of time as drawn out and eternal on the lifeboat and hurried in the human world.

By Part 1, Chapter 18 Pi is beginning to identify himself more closely with each religion, saying "us Christians" and considering "callisthenic communion with God." His new attraction to Islam helps him discard his preconceived notions about religion and violence. Though he knows religious stories are violent and religion leads to wars, his first encounter with Islam is gentle and scholarly and includes the nourishment of food.

He learns things aren't always how you see them at first glance. For instance, the unappetizing bread leads Pi to Mr. Kumar the baker. He almost doesn't see the baker at first, although Mr. Kumar is right in front of him. This echoes the theme of the relativity of truth—reality is deeper and wider than any one perception.

## Part 1, Chapters 19–22

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 19

Pi continues to visit the baker and learns more about Islam, which he calls "a beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion." He begins joining Muslims in prayer.

#### Part 1, Chapter 20

The baker, named Mr. Satish Kumar like Pi's biology teacher, is a Sufi or Muslim mystic. The two Mr. Kumars were "prophets of my Indian youth," says Pi. Mr. Kumar the mystic's humble living quarters feel sacred to him. One day coming home from school in India, Pi feels an incredible closeness with the divine. He feels the same closeness years later in Canada on a snowy day.

#### Part 1, Chapter 21

After spending an afternoon talking with Pi, the writer thinks about his story. He takes notes on their dialogue. The writer notes an emphasis on "the moral sense" over intellect in understanding the universe and on love as "the founding principle of existence." He also contemplates "God's silence."

#### Part 1, Chapter 22

Adult Pi imagines atheists and agnostics on their deathbeds. He thinks the atheist might have a last-minute conversion to faith after seeing God, or love. The agnostic will have the same sight but attribute it to failing oxygen in the brain. Pi thinks the agnostic misses "the better story" because of reliance on facts over imagination.

### Analysis

In Part 1, Chapter 19 the reader sees for the first time the role of community in Pi's worship. Prayer is kinetic, something he

knows in his body. An "open construction" of the mosque allows for greater communion with the nature Pi loves.

As Pi refers to "the prophets of my Indian youth" in Part 1, Chapter 20 he makes these ordinary men holy. He believes divinity is accessible, even in something as simple as alteration of perception. Once Pi's way of seeing the sea and the road change, his world changes, too. Water imagery continues as well. Mr. Kumar the baker recites guttural vowels like a "beautiful brook" in a voice "as deep as the universe." Pi is learning to see the universe everywhere.

Martel has said Part 1, Chapters 21 and 22 are the core of the novel. They are short and, at first glance, not connected to the plot. But they examine the novel's deepest ideas. The visiting writer, as reader surrogate, tries to parse Pi's story for a greater meaning he can use in his own life.

Like love Pi's story is worked out "not clearly, not cleanly, not immediately." He loses his entire family and takes years to find a new home and family. His experience confounds the intellect and rivals other castaway stories. Despite its "ultimate purpose" Pi knows how horrible his journey was. But he's learned to rely on a more moral sense of the truth, larger than he can understand, not just what he knows intellectually to be true.

Pi feels imagination and love are the keys to survival. Imagination is central to belief. The agnostic he imagines in Part 1, Chapter 22, by not choosing a faith or a path to follow, refuses to imagine anything. When the Japanese officials later don't know whether to believe Pi, he will accuse them of a kind of agnosticism with its "dry, yeastless factuality."

Love, in turn, can cross the boundaries between science, religion, and even species. Pi thinks everyone, no matter what they believe, will experience love in some form and will need to react with a leap of faith. As he says later, "Isn't love hard to believe?"

## Part 1, Chapters 23–25

### Summary

### Part 1, Chapter 23

Teenage Pi hides his practice of three faiths from his parents. Mr. Patel is secular, priding himself in his modern views. Mrs. Patel and Ravi are indifferent to religion. One day Pi is at a seaside walkway with his family. The family runs into a Christian priest, a Hindu pandit, and a Muslim imam all at the same time. The three "wise men" have all seen Pi in their places of worship.

When the priest, pandit, and imam all commend Pi's faith, they are sure the others must be mistaken about which religion Pi practices. The three men get into a heated argument over whose faith is superior. They insist Pi pick one religion. Pi says he just wants to love God. His father says they're all trying to love God in their own ways and takes the family out for ice cream.

### Part 1, Chapter 24

Ravi gently mocks Pi for his practice of three faiths at once. His confidence and lighthearted approach to life in Part 1, Chapter 24 contrasts with Pi's earnestness and thoughtfulness. Despite Ravi's mocking he does seem to care about Pi, and Pi admires his older brother. They get along well as opposites.

### Part 1, Chapter 25

Pi notes the tendency of religious believers to rush to God's defense while they ignore humans in need. He feels they don't realize religion is about dignity. After the meeting on the esplanade, Pi is rejected by all three churches.

## Analysis

The setup of the meeting of the three faith leaders is a huge coincidence. They argue in abstractions and their dialogue is almost comically theatrical. However, the argument gives insight into each religion, as the men pick apart the other faiths for inconsistencies. They're attacking the other stories and claiming theirs is "the better story." No one is a clear winner. Again the truth is a matter of which story the listener prefers.

This chapter is an important step in Pi's coming-of-age story.

He realizes the difference between his inner world and the way people perceive his behavior. He can't simply pick one story and say it's true. He wants the freedom to believe all three.

Pi's secular, modern father, whom the religions' leaders feel should speak for Pi, simply supports his desire to "love God" as essential to all humans—even though Pi's father doesn't believe in God. Nor does Mr. Patel like Bapu Gandhi, a controversial political leader. He wants Pi to select his own identity, but he also knows communities and groups are just as important to humans as they are to animals. Pi, who can't pick one group, will be rejected by them all.

Ravi's teasing presents another challenge to Pi's beliefs. Pi doesn't describe many scenes with Ravi, but he does imply his brother's teasing forced him to grow up more quickly than he otherwise would have.

Part 1, Chapter 25 shows the heart of Pi's dislike of religious zealots and buffets his desire to believe in three faiths. Pi's unusual experiences have given him perspective on the power of religion and belief, and he scoffs at the idea of God benefiting from human defense. He sees how limited humans can be in their thinking, just as he's seen their self-centered cruelty to animals. After Pi's former religious communities reject him, he continues to be faithful on his own. Even in physical depravity Pi will be sustained by his dignity.

## Part 1, Chapters 26–28

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 26

Teenage Pi tells his father he'd like to be baptized and receive a prayer rug. Both his parents are mystified by Pi's religious enthusiasm. They tell him he can only pick one faith, and he doesn't need to practice faith at all. Pi is unconvinced. He compares religions to nations. People can have residencies in multiple countries, why not residencies in multiple faiths?

#### Part 1, Chapter 27

Pi overhears his parents discussing him. They don't know what

attracted him to religion. The Patels consider themselves a secular, modern family of the "New India." They don't revere Mrs. Gandhi, or Bapu Gandhi, as much as Pi appears to. They're particularly puzzled by his interest in Islam, since Muslims are "outsiders" in India. Despite their reservations, Pi's parents conclude his religious obsession is a mostly harmless phase.

#### Part 1, Chapter 28

Pi receives a prayer rug, which he loves. He prays outside, ignoring his family's curious looks. He can see an aviary and an open yard from the spot where he prays. The place where Pi prays is important and described in loving detail, but the rug makes him feel he can be "at home anywhere."

He is also baptized, a ritual he describes as "slightly awkward" but cleansing. The baptism water trickling down Pi's neck has the effect of a "monsoon rain."

### Analysis

Pi's religious zeal for Islam and Christianity directly conflict with his Indian identity. His parents have a better sense of what it means to be Indians in a world dominated by colonialism and whiteness. They understand the need to preserve their heritage. However, they want to move forward into the modern world. Pi's parents' bewilderment at their "old-fashioned" son reflects an inversion of the typical parent-child dynamic.

Mrs. Patel, an avid reader, does love a good story. She doesn't mention religious stories to Pi but classic adventures—Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. It isn't a coincidence that several of these books are about shipwrecks and castaways. Pi already sees his life as a great adventure, but he has no idea how great it will become.

Part 1, Chapter 27 leads up to the family's move to Canada by planting more direct references to political unrest and disapproval of Mrs. Gandhi. It also hints at Islamophobia as part of the Hindu character, a part Pi seeks to change. Earlier he challenged the reader to learn about Islam to love the brotherhood it stood for.

Mr. Patel is a zealot in his own way, devoted to modernism. He feels, like Pi's other role model Mr. Kumar the teacher, that technology and progress are incompatible with religion. Mrs.

Patel sees "a different drumbeat of progress," marking Pi as an explorer, an adventurer, and an individual. Though his parents don't take his religious views seriously, they do seem to respect the individuality of their son.

Nature has different meanings to Pi and his father. Mr. Patel's reference to the "laws of nature" seems to have nothing to do with the laws of nature that help his zoo keeping. Instead, he praises technology and good ideas. To Pi, in contrast, the natural world is an intrinsic, inextricable part of his faith, perhaps because of his upbringing in a zoo. The prayer rug reminds him "earth is the creation of God and sacred the same all over." When he is baptized the element of water recurs symbolically as a warm, cleansing, powerful, and necessary element.

## Part 1, Chapters 29–31

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 29

Pi describes the mid-1970s, the decade when he was a teenager, as "troubled times in India." As a 16-year-old he didn't understand the extent of the political unrest. The Tamil Nadu government, the local government of Pondicherry, is overtaken by Mrs. Gandhi in 1976. Pi's father considers this overthrow a troubling symptom of Mrs. Gandhi's dictatorial power over the country. Angry, he worries for the future of his zoo and the future of India.

Mr. and Mrs. Patel agree to move to Canada. They want a better life for both themselves and their children. To Pi and Ravi, Canada seems impossibly far away.

#### Part 1, Chapter 30

The visiting writer meets Pi's wife. She's a pharmacist who, like Pi, is Indian. The writer never noticed Pi was married; Pi is a shy man who hides what's precious to him.

#### Part 1, Chapter 31

Mr. Kumar the baker comes to visit Pi at the zoo. They run into Mr. Kumar the teacher. Both men feed the zebra (an animal the baker has never seen before).

### Analysis

The tension implied in the name of Part 1, "Toronto and Pondicherry," gains ground in the next several chapters. Pi thinks in natural metaphors as he prepares to enter the "jungle of foreignness" of a new country. Humans, as a group, are just as confused as animals when they transplant themselves. But humans have different needs and aspirations and can leave "in the hope of a better life." The reader will slowly realize the irony in the Patels' hopeful move.

Though Pi explains that outside events seemed irrelevant to his rich interior world, these events set the narrative in motion. Mr. and Mrs. Patel, as adults, feel their identity wrapped up in the fate of their country. They want a better world for their children, something Pi doesn't fully realize until he has children himself. They want, essentially, to be part of a better story.

Mr. Patel is also affected by the government's lack of support for the "cultural institution" of the zoo. He echoes the visiting writer's plea in the Author's Note for citizens to support art—another type of cultural institution. The echo is even more pronounced when Pi compares a zoo to a "public library" and a "museum."

In Part 1, Chapter 30 and its shift to the visiting writer's perspective readers see Pi's hoarding extends not only to food but also to people who are important. He will gradually share more with the visiting writer, who must earn his trust. For now the reader is reassured that Pi has a new family, whatever the fate of his old family may have been. This chapter builds on the previous chapter's assertion that family members will go to drastic lengths to build "happiness and prosperity" for future generations. Pi has begun to build a foundation for himself in Canada.

In Part 1, Chapter 31 Pi becomes comfortable with opposites, things "strange in a familiar way, familiar in a strange way." Two adults he admires, one an atheist lover of science and one a devout Muslim, come together in admiration of a zebra. Pi admires the zebra, too—the animal is awe inspiring enough to

transcend cultural differences. Both men honor nature in their own way, and the scene ends simply: "We looked on." This scene becomes especially poignant when the zebra ends up in the lifeboat near death.

## Part 1, Chapters 32–33

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 32

Animals can come to unusual living arrangements if necessary, explains Pi, through a process called zoomorphism—where an animal treats another animal as one of its own kind. In the Pondicherry Zoo he's seen examples of the "freak suspension of the predator-prey relationship." He attributes zoomorphism to the "measure of madness" in all living things.

#### Part 1, Chapter 33

The writer and Pi look through Pi's photo albums. Pi has many records of his wedding, his college graduation, and his student life. But he has few photos of his childhood in India and none of his family. Pi points out Richard Parker in one hazy, black-and-white zoo photo. Pi can't remember what his mother looks like, and he's distressed.

### Analysis

Part 1, Chapter 32 seems out of place as Pi returns to detailed zoological discussions. In fact he's preparing the reader to encounter things that are unusual or hard to accept. The reader has already seen how people can't accept Pi's practice of three religions. Now they see animals suspending the predator-prey relationships that normally keep them alive. Pi again reminds the reader of the "measure of madness" he sees in humans and animals, the unpredictable instinct that sometimes causes living things to act in surprising ways for survival's sake.

Pi places the animals as characters in stories with their own personalities, using anthropomorphism, or the giving of animal traits to humans. Are animals, for example, capable (like

humans) of feeling "something greater was just missed"? Pi thinks they might be. He also mentions motherlessness as the "worst condition imaginable" right before the visiting writer delves into Pi's memories of his own mother in Part 1, Chapter 33.

Autofiction imitates life—the visiting writer and Pi don't give more importance to the photos than they hold. The visiting writer dismisses the images as "nearly irrelevant" to the story of Pi's life. The writer tries to "extract personality from appearance" in Richard Parker's photo. He implies the animal has a distinct personality.

The reader still doesn't know Richard Parker's identity, but they begin to piece together Pi's loss of his family. From Pi's inability to even picture his mother, the reader can tell Pi lost his family a long time ago and is still grieving the loss. Even as Pi smiles in later pictures of a rebuilt life, his "eyes tell another story."

## Part 1, Chapters 34–36

### Summary

#### Part 1, Chapter 34

As they prepare to move to Canada, the Patels sell the zoo. They need to find homes for all the animals at other zoos around the world. The process is long and difficult. To make matters worse, Pi and Ravi don't want to move to Canada. Many of the zoo animals are finally sold to enthusiastic Americans.

#### Part 1, Chapter 35

Pi's family embarks on a Japanese cargo ship named the *Tsimtsum*, headed for Canada, on June 21, 1977. They say good-bye to friends and neighbors. Adult Pi imagines his mother's sadness upon leaving and her curiosity about how life will be different in Canada. Teenage Pi is excited for the boat journey, which he's sure will be an adventure. As an adult he mentions things didn't turn out the way the family planned.

## Part 1, Chapter 36

The writer is visiting Pi's house when he notices a teenage boy he's never seen before—Pi's son Nikhil, who goes by "Nick." The writer notices other residents for the first time, too. Pi has a dog, an orange cat, and a young daughter named Usha. As Pi and his daughter talk lovingly, the writer notes, "This story has a happy ending."

## Analysis

The challenge of selling the zoo increases the sense of excitement, anticipation, and anxiety for the Patel family. It also gives Pi another opportunity, which he never passes up, to show the reader the diversity of animal life and the intricacies of animal care.

Pi's memory is tinged with sadness now, though he can't help showing some retroactive excitement at the possibility of adventure. He can understand his mother's homesickness more as an adult. She's territorial, not wanting to escape her familiar ancestral homeland. She even feels a devotion to the brands that made up her childhood. She feels she isn't escaping to somewhere but from something. Young Pi feels his childhood is over. He's embarking on a journey, both literal and metaphorical, and he thinks he knows what it will look like.

This picture of typical middle-class domesticity in Part 1, Chapter 36 comes with trappings of modern life—a child dressed for baseball practice, a mother who works as a pharmacist. Nothing seems unusual about Pi's Canadian life. He even has pets, which seems obvious considering his love of animals.

But other details presented here tie in to Pi's extraordinary story. The orange cat reflects Richard Parker. The writer gives Pi's full name, mentioning he's "known to all" as Pi. Even though the reader knows the chronological ending of the story before the hero's biggest trials begin, the story to come is filled with expectation, surprise, and still-unanswered questions.

## Part 2, Chapters 37–39

## Summary

### Part 2, Chapter 37

Part 2 begins with an overview of the events that Pi will retrace with more detail in the following chapters. As Part 2, Chapter 37 begins, a ship sinks. Pi calls from a lifeboat to Richard Parker, who's struggling in the water, to swim to the lifeboat. Pi hopes he's having a dream and will wake to safety on the *Tsimtsum*. But he knows he's not dreaming. He's lost his family and all their animals. Pi throws Richard Parker a life buoy. As he pulls him in, Pi realizes what he's doing and begins to shove the cat away with an oar. He's too late. Richard Parker climbs with him into the lifeboat. Pi steps over a zebra and jumps overboard.

### Part 2, Chapter 38

Before the *Tsimtsum* wrecks, the ship pushes bravely through all kinds of weather. Pi enjoys taking care of the animals and seeing new countries. But on his fourth day at sea the ship sinks. An explosion wakes Pi, who wanders onto the main deck. It's raining and windy, but he's confident the well-built cable ship can withstand the weather. He feels adventurous and eager to get to Canada.

When Pi sees a lifeboat and hears noises on the ship, he begins to worry. He runs to find the ship's officers. Pi finds three crew members and asks them to save his family. One crew member throws a life jacket at him and tosses him overboard.

### Part 2, Chapter 39

Pi lands on the tarpaulin covering a lifeboat on the ship's side, losing the life jacket in his fall. The crew members toss a zebra out of the ship. It lands on a bench and injures itself; the added weight of the zebra causes the lifeboat to plunge into the water.

## Analysis

Part 2, Chapter 37 seems to be placed out of chronological order—a teaser for the coming drama. It's a more dramatic and



emotional rendition of the ship's sinking than the calmer story in Part 2, Chapter 38. Many details are missing, and the ones presented are confusing. But this version gives more insight into Pi's mindset and his relationship with Richard Parker, who—the reader finally learns—is a tiger.

Pi slowly realizes reason is inadequate to give answers in his situation. He deals with the question of theodicy, or why a loving, involved deity allows bad things to happen. Again, embracing opposites he demands an "account from heaven" if he's going to suffer hell. The "measure of madness" mentioned in earlier chapters may be what leads him to save Richard Parker. But at first Pi operates on instinct—once he wakes up to the reality of his situation, he wants the tiger gone.

As Part 2, Chapter 38 retraces the events of the sinking of the *Tsimtsum*, Pi's first impressions of the sea are of wonder and adventure. But he still sees powers greater than humankind at work. The sea is "impressive and forbidding, beautiful and dangerous." Water will become a symbol of an almost godlike force—a force Pi cannot control but on which his survival depends. As he makes this observation he doesn't know yet that he'll be at the mercy of the ocean, but he senses the strength of the water. He describes the ship's confidence as "slow" and "massive"—both awe-inspiring words. The ship is the epitome of human-made technology, a modern world like the modern India. Pi still doesn't know why it sank.

The pacing is abrupt to match the pacing of the actual event. The shipwreck happens quickly, without time for good-byes. Human authorities refuse to help Pi, despite his begging. Like animals they're protecting themselves.

Pi's subsequent fall onto the lifeboat seems like "a miracle" to him, just as his survival in an impossible situation will seem miraculous to readers. The story will strain credibility and seem more absurd as it unfolds.

## Part 2, Chapters 40–42

### Summary

### Part 2, Chapter 40

Pi is now in the water, having jumped off the lifeboat to escape Richard Parker as readers saw in Part 2, Chapter 37. He sees a shark in the water and pushes an oar onto the boat's tarpaulin to get himself above the surface. Richard Parker, the tiger, is in the lifeboat under the tarpaulin. Holding onto the oar, Pi floats safely through the night.

### Part 2, Chapter 41

Pi watches the cargo ship sink completely and scans his surroundings for survivors or rescuers. He figures he's safe from the tiger below the tarpaulin if he stays out of Richard Parker's vision. The zebra, still on the boat, has a broken leg. Pi can't believe the zebra has survived Richard Parker's presence—until he notices the hyena. A hyena and a tiger can't share such a small space. He also realizes the ship's crew members threw the hyena overboard from the sinking ship, hoping it would kill Pi and save space for themselves in the lifeboat.

The weather changes quickly. It is now sunny and warm on the Pacific Ocean. Pi looks around again for other lifeboats but sees none.

### Part 2, Chapter 42

Pi is happy to see the zoo's prized Borneo orangutan, Orange Juice, floating toward him on "an island of bananas." He knows he and Orange Juice will both die soon, but he's glad for the company. Orange Juice is surrounded by spiders and traveling on a nylon net. Pi says the net will later become one of his most precious possessions. He will also deeply regret not taking any of the bananas when he had the chance. Orange Juice joins him on the lifeboat.

### Analysis

To save himself Pi relies first on his animal instincts, then on his brain. He admits he would have drowned if he considered his situation in "the light of reason" but he held on through faith, and "God only knows why." He needs both faith and reason to survive, however. When he uses reason as a tool for his benefit, it won't make him lose hope; it will save him instead.

Part 2, Chapter 40 begins to focus on water as a destructive power: "forbidding, beautiful and dangerous." The water is "black and cold and in a rage"—an enemy to be defeated. Sharks are introduced, and they'll resurface.

Martel has said he wanted to portray three human traits in the three animals initially on the lifeboat with Pi and Richard Parker. The hyena represents "cowardliness," the zebra "exoticism," while the orangutan, Orange Juice, stands for "maternal instincts." Orange Juice, in the color Pi associates with salvation and survival, is bathed in light like a religious vision. The image is so allegorical and symbolic Japanese officials will challenge its truth much later by saying bananas don't float. Orange Juice is clearly maternal as the "Great Mother" and "Pondicherry fertility goddess." Even the spiders gather around her like "malevolent worshippers."

Pi recognizes another human trait in Part 2, Chapter 41: self-preservation to the point of depravity. The crew members were trying to kill him. He's more concerned with the hyena, who has no moral code and no reason not to kill. Its scream indicates things will soon turn for the worse.

Pi is about to begin a true adventure, though not one he would have chosen—one complete with risks and decisions between fear and reason. He will travel "around the world in eighty swells," a reference to Jules Verne's adventure story *Around the World in Eighty Days*.

## Part 2, Chapters 43–45

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 43

Seeing a patch of oil from the ship, Pi thinks some official must have been notified of the shipwreck and will be coming to save him. His family, too, must be alive. But the animals with him aren't doing so well. Orange Juice is ill and in shock. The hyena leaps menacingly above the tarpaulin and screams, running in circles. Pi assesses the threats to his own existence. Orange Juice won't threaten him, but the unpredictable hyena might. The zebra simply lies in silence.

#### Part 2, Chapter 44

Pi passes a day and a night on the lifeboat. He is surrounded by flies and growing more anxious. When darkness falls, it obscures his vision. He lies awake all night, fearing for his life.

#### Part 2, Chapter 45

As day breaks Pi is cold but hopeful of rescue. He imagines the reunion with his family but is interrupted by a horrible sight. The hyena is eating the zebra's broken leg. Queasy from seasickness, Pi notices Orange Juice also exhibiting humanlike seasickness symptoms. He considers the bizarre ecosystem of animals on the lifeboat. A sea turtle butts up against the boat, and Pi tells it to go tell a ship where he is.

### Analysis

Despite Pi's humility, he is still convinced he can find hope in the world of human beings. Pi's rescue fantasies show how certain he is of his place in the universe and how important he feels. He imagines pilots, ship's officers, and submarines working themselves into a frenzy over the *Tsimtsum's* disappearance. In time he will realize the insignificance of his life and suffering.

Pi is selfish, too, defending his life, however small it is. Although he loves the orangutan and is sympathetic to the zebra, he hopes they will distract the hyena from him and die first. Readers are getting to know the animals as characters through the descriptions of their repetitive patterns and physical appearances. Pi, who has a refined aesthetic sense and loves beauty, associates the hyena's cowardliness with its physical ugliness.

In the lifeboat Pi will develop new dimensions to his senses. He'll see, hear, and experience things he's never encountered before, like "floating in pure, abstract blackness." He appreciates forms of life he doesn't usually notice except as a nuisance—flies in Part 2, Chapter 44, spiders in the previous chapters. Pi imagines what the flies' lives are like, how they faced their deaths or died of old age. He imagines the "battle for life" sea animals fight below the tarpaulin.

With daybreak Pi finds "the calm sea opened up around me like a great book"—a story yet to be told and an adventure. He sees

the sun as "electrically lit orange," the color of life. He's touched and baffled by Orange Juice's resemblance to a human. Pi is truly in a world he doesn't recognize.

Why hasn't the hyena eaten Orange Juice yet? The details defy even Pi's own open-minded beliefs. "Nature forever holds surprises," he thinks. The predator-prey relationship seems to be suspended. Pi hopes this will bode well for him.

## Part 2, Chapters 46–48

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 46

Pi's second night at sea is one of the nights he suffers the most. Though the sunset is extraordinarily beautiful, he fears the sharks circling the lifeboat. Orange Juice doesn't recognize him. Then worst of all the hungry hyena eats the zebra alive. Orange Juice roars at the hyena, and Pi is shocked by this aggressiveness from the orangutan. Later in the night Pi realizes his brother, father, and mother are most likely dead. He compares his mother to the sun, a life-giving force, and thinks that Ravi was a potential lifelong companion while Mr. Patel was Pi's foundation. He weeps.

#### Part 2, Chapter 47

When Pi wakes, to his astonishment, the zebra is still clinging to life, but it is dead by noon. He's sure Orange Juice will be next. Instead, however, the orangutan thumps the hyena on the head as it makes a lunge at her. Orange Juice's self-defense surprises and warms Pi, but not for long. The hyena then kills and beheads her.

Now Pi is certain he's next to die. He glances below the tarpaulin and sees Richard Parker's head, confirming the tiger has been aboard the entire time. Pi collapses from fright.

#### Part 2, Chapter 48

Pi explains the story of Richard Parker's human name. A hunter in Bangladesh, hired to kill a panther that had been terrorizing

humans, found a tiger and her cub. The hunter's name was Richard Parker. While the cub ran to the river to drink, the hunter immobilized the adult tiger. Both tigers were sent to the Pondicherry Zoo. The hunter named the cub Thirsty, but a shipping clerk switched the hunter's name and the cub's name by accident.

### Analysis

At first nights in the lifeboat are hopeless and days are more hopeful. Later Pi will feel the opposite way, agonizing over his situation by day and accepting it at night.

Pi's journey is spiritual just as much as it is physical, complete with spiritual pain. He is confounded by the lack of purpose for evil. There's "no order" to how the hyena eats the zebra, which is "appealing to heaven" with no luck. What's more, Pi realizes he has lost his family and community. He'll have to find a new community with his animal companions.

The animals are expanding the boundaries of what Pi knows is possible. Orange Juice displays an uncanny courage in standing up to the hyena. She may be protecting Pi, though he's not sure; he compares her to a "simian Christ on the Cross." The animals are acting like humans, and the ecosystem on the lifeboat is falling apart. Richard Parker represents a bigger danger than just a tiger—he represents every large force working against Pi's survival.

Like Pi, Richard Parker has an origin story behind his name; the tiger's first encounter with humans was a kind of rebirth and transformation. And like Pi, Richard Parker has lost his mother in an event that changed his life. The tiger becomes anthropomorphized (taking on characteristics of a human) with a pedestrian, generically Western human name. Just as Orange Juice's name denotes a human affection for her, Richard Parker's name reduces some of Pi's fear.

The tiger's original name, Thirsty, reinforces the symbol of water and the idea of thirst. He's not the only character affected by mix-ups and confusion. Mix-ups abound in the book: for instance, Pi's Auntieji thinks Hare Krishnas are "Hairless Christians." Pi records such errors out of a keen sense of the world's irrationality and absurdity.

## Part 2, Chapters 49–52

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 49

Convinced he can't possibly survive, Pi suddenly feels relieved. He wants to find his most immediate need—fresh water—on the boat, but he's afraid to move and invite Richard Parker's aggression. Pi moves slowly and carefully. He thinks the hyena's reluctance to kill the zebra, and to kill Pi, came from fear of Richard Parker, the greater beast. Pi owes his life to Richard Parker. He's curious why the tiger has been passive for so long.

#### Part 2, Chapter 50

Pi examines the lifeboat. He notes its length, width, and depth, both outside and inside. Most of the equipment, including tarpaulins and life jackets, are orange. He mentions he noticed all the nuances of the lifeboat's equipment gradually as they became essential to save his life.

#### Part 2, Chapter 51

Pi can't find the supplies that must be on the lifeboat somewhere. To search further he'll have to intrude on Richard Parker's den. Thirst drives him to open the tarpaulin, where he sees the tiger and thinks, "God preserve me!" He manages to move part of a bench to block off the tiger's lair.

In the locker under the tarpaulin he finds cans of drinking water and drinks greedily. Thirst sated, Pi looks for food and finds emergency rations of biscuits. He calculates he has food rations to last 93 days and water to last 124 days. He's grateful.

#### Part 2, Chapter 52

Pi lists all the items on the lifeboat. They include rocket flares, solar stills, vomit bags, life jackets with whistles, a hunting knife, a notebook, one Bengal tiger, and one God. Relieved, Pi sleeps through the night.

### Analysis

"Incredible that such a thing should need consent to be true," Pi says of Richard Parker's presence. This thought reflects the relativity of truth for Pi. He needs to agree the tiger is in the lifeboat for it to be there; the tiger's objective presence isn't enough. Besides, humans are the recorders of stories, and Pi is the only human on the lifeboat. He can make up whatever he wants.

The reader may wonder whether Pi even trusts his own version of events. Repeatedly during Part 2, Pi admits he is addled by hunger, thirst, shock, and exhaustion, especially in the early days on the lifeboat. Is he embellishing or making up details? Is he a reliable narrator? His reference to the "divining rod in my mind" implies the strong power of imagination.

The lifeboat is a symbol of life, so Pi's inventory and exploration of its contents takes on life-or-death urgency. "Orange, such a nice Hindu colour, is the colour of survival," he says when he notices the boat's color theme. The word *Tsimtsum* is on the bow. *Tsimtsum* is a Hebrew Kabbalist term expressing "divine presence and absence" in the world; the divine is concealed from human view. On Pi's new *Tsimtsum*, he feels God's concealment and silence.

Pi begins to sense the constant presence of danger as he must invade Richard Parker's territory for the first time. His instinctual "God preserve me!" shows the significance of prayer. Indeed, Pi often uses the language of divinity to express his feelings. Water brings him "back to life from the dead," showing divine healing. Drinking becomes a religious, symbolic ritual, the "wine of life," like eating bread with Mr. Kumar the baker or taking communion.

Lists and facts comfort Pi. The reader learns the practical nuts and bolts of his journey as part of their immersion in the tale. Survival narratives and sea stories often give this intricate level of detail; objects take on more weight in isolation. *Moby-Dick*, another story that takes place at sea, is famous for its explanations on whale anatomy—similar to Pi's detailed observations of the animals he encounters. Pi is listing his objects for another reason. He wants to feel they are all there for a purpose; he wants the universe on his side.

## Part 2, Chapters 53–56

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 53

Despite his earlier happiness at finding supplies, Pi feels desperate when he wakes the next day. He thinks of his oncoming death and laments the life he might have had. But a voice from within urges Pi to hold onto life, to "turn miracle into routine," and tells him he will survive. Pi realizes he has a fierce desire to live that will keep him going no matter what.

He builds a raft to give himself space from Richard Parker, who he believes won't jump into the water. When Pi is almost finished, Richard Parker appears from under the tarpaulin. Pi is mesmerized by the tiger's enormous size, grace, and majesty. He describes the tiger in detail, emphasizing his size. Just as Richard Parker rears up to approach Pi, a rat appears, and Pi throws it at Richard Parker. The tiger eats the rat and then eats the hyena. Pi seizes the chance to finish his raft.

As Pi eases the raft into the water, he realizes it won't save him. The raft could sink too easily. However, he stays on the raft until Richard Parker has disappeared below the tarpaulin again. While gathering supplies from below, Pi accidentally makes a loud noise that startles the tiger, but the tiger leaves him alone.

#### Part 2, Chapter 54

It rains all night. Pi tries in vain to keep himself warm and dry. Awake and restless, he tries to decide how to deal with Richard Parker. Pi thinks of and dismisses several imperfect plans, including pushing the tiger off the lifeboat, killing him with morphine syringes or weapons, choking him, poisoning him, and setting him on fire. The tiger is too strong for any plan to work. Pi eventually decides to hoard supplies such as food and fresh water and let the tiger die—a "war of attrition."

#### Part 2, Chapter 55

At dawn it's still raining. Eventually, the rain stops and Richard Parker emerges. As Pi remembers the details of his plan—to

starve the tiger and let nature run its course—he realizes this is the worst idea of all. Richard Parker's thirst and hunger will eventually overcome fear. The tiger will do whatever is necessary to live, including swimming, drinking salt water, and killing Pi.

Pi notices the beauty of the ocean and describes it as "a smooth skin reflecting the light with a million mirrors." He's paying more attention, however, to the feeling of infinity. This isn't the sense of calm he gets when contemplating "the infinite within the finite" in Hinduism. This is more like terror and fright. He has the sense of being in the middle of nowhere, alone, "surrounded by flatness and infinity."

#### Part 2, Chapter 56

Pi describes fear as "life's only true opponent." Fear begins in the mind as doubt, slowly supplanting reason. Then fear takes over each part of the body. Finally fear leads to rash decisions that defeat any hope. To conquer fear Pi believes one should express fear and "shine the light of words upon it."

### Analysis

Pi vividly imagines his own death many times on the lifeboat. He knows the line between life and death is thin and tries as hard as he can to preserve life. He repeats words and names from his past. Pi isn't sure if his will to live no matter the cost, his "life-hungry stupidity," is a positive trait or not. For instance, he soon must answer the question of whether or not he will kill the tiger to preserve his own life.

The narrative style in Part 2, Chapter 53 imitates the events it describes. Pi's grieving scenes are heavy with emotion. Pi's action scenes are quickly paced with simple, direct language. When he gets out the life jackets and builds the raft he is making urgent, split-second decisions.

The description of Richard Parker is almost godlike, like Pi's tales of the powerful Hindu gods. All the tiger's gestures are grand and majestic. He has human-sounding characteristics, too; "self-possession on the point of exploding with rage." Pi is in awe, the kind of awe that comes with dread and terror. Why does Richard Parker spare his life? He's not sure.

As Pi contemplates his situation with the tiger he imagines himself "at the centre of a great nest of angry snakes." He likes

to speak in animal metaphors, and he'll frequently feel at the center of a force stronger than he is. Whether the force is benevolent, malevolent, or indifferent (and the weather, at times, is all three), he'll feel its power.

The rain in Part 2, Chapter 54 is spreading "with preverse determination," showing the power of water and weather over Pi's life. In the middle of a dilemma he can't control, he tries to focus on one he can control—only to find out he can't control the tiger either. Pi knows his place as just another animal, "a puny, feeble, vegetarian life form." But he knows the strength of nature and decides to leave it up to nature to defeat Richard Parker. Once the tiger emerges in Part 2, Chapter 55, however, he realizes this plan will not work. Even though he's helpless, he needs to take charge.

Expressing and naming always brings things into the light for Pi, and in Part 2, Chapter 56 he reinforces the power of words. The second paragraph of the chapter compares humans to multiple animals in their physiological fear responses. Humans are only different, Pi implies, because we have words and storytelling abilities. He contrasts reason and instinct, machines and nature. Like the *Tsimtsum*, "fully equipped with the latest weapons technology," reason loses to instinct, nature, and the inexplicable.

## Part 2, Chapters 57–60

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 57

Richard Parker observes Pi from the boat. The tiger snorts through his nostrils, a call known as *prusten* expressing "friendliness and harmless intentions." Pi has never heard this sound from a tiger before; he realizes he needs to tame Richard Parker. Pi also confesses that Richard Parker's companionship gives him a hopeful distraction and keeps him alive during his ordeal. Pi takes a whistle from a life jacket and imitates a lion tamer in the circus ring. He blows the whistle, inspiring fear in Richard Parker. Pi settles on a new plan: to keep the tiger alive.

#### Part 2, Chapter 58

After reading the detailed survival manual in the lifeboat, Pi thinks of the many things he needs to do, like improve his raft, fish for food, find a way to shelter himself from the weather, and develop a training program for Richard Parker. Overwhelmed and lonely, he weeps.

#### Part 2, Chapter 59

Pi notices the raft is acting as a sea anchor to the lifeboat, keeping the boat from steering into the wind. He observes Richard Parker's territory under the tarpaulin, evidently sprayed with his urine, and thinks of how he'll establish his own territory. Pi busies himself with tasks, including fixing his life raft and setting up solar stills to collect and purify evaporated water. As the sun sets Pi notices the diversity and patterns of marine life in the sea that most sea craft pass too quickly to observe.

#### Part 2, Chapter 60

Pi wakes during the night. The sea is black and silver, and stars shine in a dark sky. Pi feels "half-moved, half-terrified." The night shows him how grand the setting of his suffering is and makes him feel insignificant.

### Analysis

Despair will take Pi's soul, not just his life. He decides despair is a worse foe than a tiger. At this point in the journey Pi starts, both by decision and default, to see Richard Parker as a companion and not an obstacle. This way of seeing leads Pi to thank Richard Parker years later. The tiger's use of *prusten* gives Pi hope they can have a mutually beneficial relationship. Tigers, as he describes, can communicate in diverse ways, just like humans can.

Official-sounding lists like those in Part 2, Chapter 58 are a trick of autofiction. The survival manual writer is another voice adding to Pi's story. Pi, turning into an adult well before he's ready, knows he needs self-determination: "survival had to start with me." He's a contemplative castaway, mirroring the stories of other castaways before him who survived the impossible.

Once Pi understands what he must do for survival, he sets about doing those tasks. His explanations of exactly how he survived increase his credibility to readers. The tension of whether he can get drinking water goes on for two or three pages, as if proceeding in "real time."

Pi contrasts the real trouble of survival with the beauty he sees underwater in Part 2, Chapter 60. The undersea civilizations enhance his respect for all sentient life, which he shows with his sorrow at flies and cockroaches leaving the lifeboat. The extended metaphor of the sea as a city reinforces how the animal world is like the human world in many ways.

Despite his upbringing as a zookeeper's son, Pi has grown up in the human world. When he compares the sea to a city, he's consoling himself by finding a parallel to his familiar world in this unfamiliar one—anthropomorphizing, or giving animals human tendencies, again. He shows a similar instinct to anthropomorphize when he uses human names and gendered pronouns for Richard Parker and Orange Juice. He feels closer to these companions if he sees them as partially human.

Light is significant in the novel: it brings clarity. When the light of the sun isn't shining on him, Pi feels less self-aware and less important and can place his suffering in perspective. He turns to Hindu legends and Muslim prayer. With the physical world hidden, he feels relieved of the need to "fit anywhere." Day brings illumination. In the day he feels he "can't help but mix my life with that of the universe."

Does one person's life and suffering matter? How much of an effect can one person have on the natural world? Pi will ask these questions implicitly throughout the novel.

## Part 2, Chapters 61–62

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 61

The next day Pi attempts to fish, using his shoe as bait. The attempt doesn't go well. He tries and fails to catch a sea turtle. Knowing he must feed and give water to Richard Parker if he wants to survive himself, Pi panics. As he searches for bait in the locker, he is struck in the face; at first he believes he has

been attacked by Richard Parker but then discovers he has been hit by a flying fish. Pi throws it to Richard Parker hoping to tame him with rewards, but the flying fish swerves away from the tiger and back into the ocean. Fortunately, a school of flying fish, chased by dorados, strikes the ship. Richard Parker eats his fill.

Some fish land in the locker, and Pi takes one to kill it for bait. A lifelong vegetarian, Pi has never killed a living thing before. The process is wrenching and emotional. Pi mentions he still prays for the fish regularly. Later in the night Pi tries fishing again and catches a dorado. His second kill is less of a challenge, and he reflects "a person can get used to anything, even to killing." After throwing the dorado in front of the surprised Richard Parker, Pi falls asleep satisfied.

#### Part 2, Chapter 62

Pi wakes, restlessly, to another hot day. He realizes both he and Richard Parker urgently need fresh water. He checks the solar stills, which have filled with water, and tends them carefully so they will produce more. As Pi tosses fish to Richard Parker, he thinks the lifeboat resembles a zoo enclosure with specific territories. He estimates he's spent a week at sea since the *Tsimtsum* sank.

### Analysis

Pi's vegetarianism is mentioned several times in the story, by Pi himself and the visiting writer. His belief in animals' souls is a significant part of his life. But he has a greater responsibility than keeping fish alive. He is responsible for Richard Parker's well-being. This task gives him courage, and he takes it seriously. And miracles keep happening to help him, showing the universe may be on his side. The school of flying fish hits just when Pi needs fish to feed Richard Parker. When he says, "at the heart of life is a fuse box," he references another psychological idea that helped him survive: pain has limits, and suffering is temporary.

Part 2, Chapter 62 is the last chapter in "The Pacific Ocean" to mark time. Pi narrates each day and night of his first week at sea when he's getting his bearings and adjusting to his new life. Then he loses track of time altogether. He is transitioning from time in the human world to time in the ocean world, from the finite to the infinite. Will he be able to maintain his humanity in

this new world?

## Part 2, Chapters 63–69

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 63

Pi tells the reader of other castaways who survived long periods at sea. He himself survives 227 days, over seven months—longer than any other castaway he mentions. Keeping busy helps. Pi's daily ritual on the lifeboat includes prayers; inspecting the lifeboat, raft, and food stores; resting; fishing; and observing Richard Parker.

Despite "the emptiness of time," Pi always has something to do. Accommodating Richard Parker requires constant vigilance, for instance. One thing he stops doing is looking for a rescue ship. He also stops counting days, weeks, and months. His memories, later, are mostly "events and encounters and routines."

#### Part 2, Chapter 64

Pi describes his physical transformation on the lifeboat. His clothes wear away, and painful boils appear on his body.

#### Part 2, Chapter 65

Pi tries and fails to learn to navigate from the survival manual, so he simply drifts. "Time became distance," he says. He'll learn later he traveled a narrow route.

#### Part 2, Chapter 66

Over time Pi becomes a better hunter and fisher. He loses his anxiety about killing and pays attention to the habits of fish. His body begins to glitter from fish scales. Turtles are easy to catch, and he captures and butchers many. He "[descends] to a level of savagery" he never imagined before. Trying to keep his soul intact, he compares the fish scales covering him to the "symbols of the divine" that mark the bodies of Hindus.

#### Part 2, Chapter 67

Sea life accumulates on the underside of Pi's raft. He spends hours observing the plants and small animals under the raft, which move about in peace.

#### Part 2, Chapter 68

Pi grows accustomed to sleeping for only an hour at a time. "Apprehension and anxiety" wake him constantly. Richard Parker naps frequently, and Pi gets to know the tiger's sleeping habits.

#### Part 2, Chapter 69

When Pi sees lights in the distance he thinks are ships, he sends off rocket flares. But he knows he won't be safe until he reaches land. The flares smell like cumin, reminding him of Pondicherry.

### Analysis

The chapters in the middle of Part 2 are brief. Pi, aware of his audience, says "my memories come in a jumble," and he remembers sensations and patterns more clearly than specific days and nights. He only survives because he "[make]s a point of forgetting" how time is kept in the human world.

Pi wants to feel his life is working and sustaining him, so he keeps a schedule. The schedule signifies the importance of prayers and routine. He's a creature of habit, much like the animals in the zoo. He's his own zookeeper, tending his enclosure and keeping his enemy at a good flight distance. He and Richard Parker develop a strange, friendly, and antagonistic relationship. Richard Parker keeps Pi alive, but Pi knows the tiger will eat him if given the chance.

Clothing was a marker of social status and cultural identification. When Pi loses his clothing, he's losing part of who he is. His self is changing; he's becoming more animal than human. The goal of going somewhere and getting there on time, keeping to a structure, becomes irrelevant.

Pi compares the saltwater boils on his skin to a "leprosy of the high seas." The image of leprosy, a disfiguring illness, again



reinforces the idea of water as a destructive force. Even as drinkable water refreshes Pi and gives him life, salt water tries to erode his body.

Pi knows distance matters as much as time does to our human lives. He was taken aback by Canada's distance from India when the family decided to emigrate. Now distance doesn't matter. Every point is equally far away. For this reason Pi doesn't try to navigate by the stars, like other castaways. He realizes in some ways the natural world is beyond understanding. When he refers to time as distance "in the way it is for all mortals," he references something he's understanding more and more—his proximity to death.

Food means many things to Pi: sustenance, life, culture, aggression, authority, and territoriality. Though he hasn't killed a human or led (yet) to a human's death, his belief in the sacredness of life may be evolving with his hunger. When he considers his descent into "savagery" in Part 2, Chapter 66 he refers to his fight for survival.

Pi examines his own position, or absence, in the many ecosystems in the world. He still appreciates the lower life forms—algae, shrimp, worms, crabs—as sacred, but now they're both distraction and food. Still he notices their community and the way they belong, "an upside-down town" where the residents move around with the "sweet civility of angels." Pi detects community everywhere, including between himself and Richard Parker. Intimate physical details, like the tiger's preferred position when he sleeps, show Pi getting closer to Richard Parker and getting to know his habits.

In Part 2, Chapter 69 Pi imagines himself in the center of a circle, as he did in Part 1, Chapter 20. The circle, which the mathematical pi helps scientists understand, connects the human Pi to the larger world. Can he achieve this bond adrift in the Pacific? He makes a small connection as he associates the smell of cumin with home, food, heritage, and now rocket flares.

## Part 2, Chapters 70–77

### Summary

### Part 2, Chapter 70

Pi's first time butchering a turtle is a challenge. He gathers the blood to drink himself, then tosses the rest of the turtle to Richard Parker, who consumes it quickly. Pi knows he must show Richard Parker who's boss. Pi needs consistent access to the locker and the top of the tarpaulin, which are in Richard Parker's territory. He decides to carve out his own territory.

### Part 2, Chapter 71

Pi shares the steps he takes to establish his authority over Richard Parker in the form of advice to anyone who's in his predicament. On a calm day at sea, he rouses Richard Parker and provokes an intrusion into Pi's territory. Once Richard Parker encroaches on Pi's area, Pi blows the whistle and trips the sea anchor (his lifeboat). Richard Parker begins to associate a border intrusion with seasickness. Eventually, Pi can control him with only the whistle.

### Part 2, Chapter 72

To protect himself from Richard Parker during training, Pi makes a shield from a turtle shell. Richard Parker knocks Pi into the water during his first four attempts. The fifth attempt is successful. Pi knows Richard Parker doesn't want to attack him—animals avoid violence if they can.

### Part 2, Chapter 73

Pi wishes for a book at sea—"a never-ending story." When he's rescued, he'll be deeply moved by the Gideon Bible in his hotel room. He will write to the Gideons and tell them to expand their reach and include sacred texts from other religions. On the lifeboat Pi keeps a diary. He compresses time in his diary; "several days, several weeks, all on one page."

### Part 2, Chapter 74

At sea Pi adapts Hindu, Christian, and Muslim rituals to his unusual circumstances. Though the rituals comfort him, he finds it difficult to love in his despair. Pi reminds himself everything around him belongs to God, and he and Richard Parker have a place in creation. He's grateful even his darkest

moments of despair pass.

## Part 2, Chapter 75

Pi sings "Happy Birthday" to his mother on what he believes to be her birthday.

## Part 2, Chapter 76

Pi cleans up after Richard Parker. When the tiger tries to hide his feces, Pi can tell the animal is nervous around him. Pi takes Richard Parker's feces in his hand and blows the whistle as an act of authority and "psychological bullying."

## Part 2, Chapter 77

The rations on the boat are diminishing, so Pi restricts his food intake. He fantasizes constantly about massive amounts of food and finds live sea turtles delicious. As his rations run out, Pi eats anything he can get his hands on. He even attempts to eat Richard Parker's feces. Pi's feet and ankles swell, and his body deteriorates.

## Analysis

Now that the act of killing animals no longer disturbs Pi on a moral level, he becomes more serious about taking on authority with Richard Parker. He knows which life he'll put first—his own. But he still notices how the turtle he kills in Part 2, Chapter 70, like the zebra, clings to life.

The novel alters its format through list making frequently, as it does in Part 2, Chapter 71. Pi is writing his own survival manual through his account of his experience training Richard Parker. He wants to emphasize how difficult the procedure is so the reader will have no delusions about the danger of animals and the need to handle them carefully. He's also carrying on the zoo-keeping work of his father.

Pi references the psychological element of animal training. His attempt to get Richard Parker to associate the whistle with danger and seasickness recalls the scientist Pavlov's experiments, which controlled dogs with only the sound of a bell.

Even though Pi has a plan, experience on his side, and the benefit of human reason, he is still dealing with a stronger force in Richard Parker. Animals are predictable, so he expects Richard Parker to behave in a certain way, and most of the time Richard Parker does not surprise him. But occasionally he does—for instance, when he'll later jump into the water in the algae island, the last thing Pi expected him to do. Pi has already experienced plenty of the unexpected, but he'll need to prepare for more.

As Pi copes with his situation, stories and their ability to place a reader in the context of a greater world continue to give his life meaning. He is attracted to religions because of their stories. His actions after he is saved prove stories work better than traditional conversion attempts because they appeal to imagination. How did Pi tell his own story on the lifeboat? His diary, which he admits isn't interesting reading, gives a clue to his survivalist mindset and the way he no longer regards the passage of time.

There is a poetic cadence to the repetition in Part 2, Chapter 74. Pi wants to make everything around him holy. The reference to "God's Ark" is both Jewish and Christian, referring to the Ark of the Covenant in Jewish mythology. The paragraph that begins "but God's hat was always unravelling" shows Pi's use of metaphor to understand his world and the tension he feels between the human and the divine. Readers continue to see that love saves Pi: camaraderie and affection for Richard Parker and admiration for creation. Love is presented as the opposite of despair.

Part 2, Chapter 76 marks a new turn in Pi and Richard Parker's relationship. At first Pi was afraid of Richard Parker, and this fear evolved into awe. Then Pi struggled to keep the tiger subordinate. Now they both know their place. As Pi explained in Part 1, what animals want to know is where they stand.

As Pi's relationship with Richard Parker changes, his self-perception shifts, too. He may be lord of the boat, but he's still ruled by hunger and thirst. His exaggerated descriptions of food foreshadow his excellent cooking abilities as an adult. The visiting writer's body rejects Pi's food despite his best attempts to eat. And Pi carries a revulsion for salt into his adult life. This chapter shows how our tastes—what we eat and what we don't—reflect ourselves and affect who we are.

## Part 2, Chapters 78–82

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 78

Pi describes the "many skies" and "many seas" of the Pacific Ocean. The winds, nights, and moons also offer diversity and change. But as a castaway he's trapped in a "harrowing ballet of circles" and caught between unpleasant extremes—light and dark, heat and cold, rain and drought, boredom and terror. Life at sea is less a life than a high-stakes game. Despite the constant despair, small things like a dead fish can make Pi happy.

#### Part 2, Chapter 79

Pi sees sharks daily and becomes fond of them, even catching a few to eat. The first shark on the boat fights with Richard Parker until the tiger kills the shark. Pi can't get much meat from the large animal and catches smaller sharks in the future.

#### Part 2, Chapter 80

Although Pi caught many dorados, he remembers one in particular that flopped onto the boat. Starving, Pi prepares to eat it. But Richard Parker is also starving and moves to attack Pi. Though Pi knows Richard Parker is close enough to kill him easily, he stares into the tiger's eyes and holds the gaze for as long as possible. Finally Richard Parker retreats. Pi has established his dominance permanently. He rewards Richard Parker with a few pieces of fish.

#### Part 2, Chapter 81

Pi knows his survival is hard to believe. He survives in part because he's the source of food and water for a weak Richard Parker.

#### Part 2, Chapter 82

Pi diligently maintains his solar stills. During rain he fills every bucket available. Despite his work he and Richard Parker barely have enough drinking water. Water is their most pressing need constantly. Even food is secondary. Richard Parker eats more than Pi does, and Pi is dismayed to find himself eating like an animal, as quickly as possible and without discernment.

### Analysis

The descriptive, poetic repetition returns in Part 2, Chapter 78. Metaphors suggest many worlds in one. Pi returns to the idea of circles and their irrationality and mysticism. Circles have no end, like the mathematical pi. In fact, he says, "the circles multiply." He's trapped in an infinite-seeming world, knowing his existence is finite. Fortunately, he's learned early in his religious life to be comfortable with opposites and contradictions.

Pi is not shy in depicting the emotional ramifications of subsistence-level existence on human beings. Earlier he cried after killing a fish; now a dead fish makes him rejoice. He doesn't apologize for the depths to which he has stooped, however. He knows they are necessary.

In Pi and Richard Parker's still-evolving relationship, Pi notices for the first time when Richard Parker fights the shark that the tiger isn't perfect, "that despite his honed instincts, he too could bumble." Pi is not as afraid of Richard Parker as he has been. He's feeling more secure and comfortable with predatory animals. Sharks scared him the first time he saw them on the lifeboat. Now he's fond of them.

The final showdown between Pi and Richard Parker in Part 2, Chapter 80 cements their dynamic. The "terrific battle of minds for status and authority" makes Pi the leader. But Pi takes pains to point out he is not extraordinary. He is only saved by his determination to eat. His remark "Isn't that what all survivors say?" suggests Pi knows his story is not unique in its spirit though it may be unique in its details. Nothing is especially amazing about Pi—he's simply fighting for survival, as many people would do, he thinks.

Again Pi wants to establish his story's authenticity. But his ultimate survival will be the only proof that can be

independently verified; Richard Parker is never found. Pi feels his lived experience should be proof enough, even without a tiger to show for it. He is claiming story as a way of claiming selfhood.

In Part 2, Chapter 82 readers see water, the life-giving force, as even more significant than food. Water can both give life and take it away. This chapter also describes the final stage in Pi and Richard Parker's relationship. Pi is still the alpha, but now he feels he's more animal than human. The human and the tiger are united in their goal of trying to survive.

## Part 2, Chapters 83–89

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 83

One cloudy afternoon the sea swells rise to heights Pi has never seen before. The sea anchors barely keep the lifeboat afloat. Soaked, Pi takes cover. The boat dips up and down until Pi has nearly drowned. After the storm Pi assesses the damage. The raft is gone. He's lost all the whistles but one, which is crucial to his survival.

#### Part 2, Chapter 84

One day Pi sees a whale close to the lifeboat. He continues to observe whales, dolphins, and a handful of seafaring birds with awe. "None of the birds ever announced land," he thinks.

#### Part 2, Chapter 85

In a downpour, lightning strikes near the boat. Pi is astounded at the closeness of the lightning, which makes the sky turn white. He's nearly hit. The lightning "thrust me into a state of exalted wonder." He praises the gods he worships.

#### Part 2, Chapter 86

Pi sees a ship, a large oil tanker, approaching. He cries out to Richard Parker, "We're saved!" Pi begins to imagine Canada

and his waiting family. Then he realizes the ship is bearing down on him and will pass without seeing or hearing him. After the ship leaves Pi tells Richard Parker he loves him and he'll never give up getting them to land and safety.

#### Part 2, Chapter 87

When he wants to escape, Pi wets a rag with sea water and drapes it over his face. He calls the rag his "dream rag" because the oxygen restriction it provides gives him visions, trances, and memories. Pi passes time quickly this way.

#### Part 2, Chapter 88

The lifeboat runs into some trash, and Pi looks through it for something he can use. He finds an empty wine bottle, and the scent from an abandoned refrigerator disgusts him. Pi writes a message in the bottle explaining his circumstances. He tosses the bottle into the sea.

#### Part 2, Chapter 89

Everything on the lifeboat is being consumed by sun, weather, and salt. Pi and Richard Parker are perishing, so slowly Pi doesn't always notice. He begins to sleep more. Pi shares the last pages of his diary at sea where he describes losing energy, dealing with changes in weather, and contemplating his approaching death. He runs out of ink after writing "I will die today" in his diary.

### Analysis

The second storm in the book provides great tension. Pi is more prepared for this storm, but not enough. He has maintained meticulous control of his world on the lifeboat up until now. But he's in "God's wide acres" and can't control the weather. The storm is not the first time, nor the last, when Pi is brought to the brink of death and saved at the last minute. The book strains credibility more and more as it proceeds, seeing how far the reader will go to believe "the better story." The incident of the whistle is an example. Pi has mentioned as he was taking stock of the lifeboat that small things will later become the most important things in the world. The last orange whistle, the only weapon he has to control Richard

Parker, saves his life in chapters to come.

Pi is writing a travelogue as well as a survival narrative. Most ships travel too fast to see the diversity of undersea life up close. Pi, drifting, discovers a new city and a new ecosystem. When Pi says, "None of the birds ever announced land," it's a reminder he's only visiting the world of the Pacific Ocean. He's still searching for home.

Mostly, Pi says, he suffers. But his emotions are heightened. When he experiences something good, like a caught fish, the experience is transcendent. He believes he's seen miracles, which is why he chooses to see the universe from a moral rather than an intellectual perspective. Intellectually, miracles are hard to believe.

Pi deals again in opposites, like how "everything was either pure white light or pure black shadow," as well as exaggeration, like when Pi claims "ten thousand trumpets and twenty thousand drums" couldn't have made as much noise. While Pi feels he's being pulled out of his mortal ways, Richard Parker reverts to instinctual fear. The two are different, after all. Pi remembers his humanity.

When Pi sights the tanker, for the first time in a long time he pictures a reunion with his family as a possibility. The reader knows his hope is in vain, but Pi's excitement at seeing an ambassador of the human-made world still makes the reader hope, too.

The departure of the ship doesn't make Pi give up, as it might have earlier in his lifeboat journey. Instead, it makes Pi even more grateful for Richard Parker and determined to get them both to land. His words of love are "pure and unfettered, infinite," revealing love as the foundational force of Pi's existence.

The narrative's dreamlike quality is reinforced by Pi's actual dreams, including those he induces with his dream rag. He no longer measures time, and his experiences are becoming more extraordinary. This chapter adds to the book's surreal quality. Is Pi's experience hallucinated or invented? Which parts? The reader again questions the relativity of his truth and the reliability of his narration.

Pi is by now disgusted by the refuse of the human world. He's done many things that would disgust him in his previous life, including eating meat and killing fish. But he's transformed in many ways also.

The message in a bottle that he sends in Part 2, Chapter 88 may seem like a castaway cliché. But it subverts the cliché by never being found—just as none of the birds ever announce land and the tanker departs without seeing the lifeboat. Pi truly must save himself.

Pi is moving into the final, dreamlike stages of his journey. As he approaches death again, the story becomes more unrealistic. He says "daydreams and reality were nearly indistinguishable," which is important for the reader to remember.

## Part 2, Chapters 90–94

### Summary

#### Part 2, Chapter 90

Pi worries for Richard Parker's health. They are both eating slowly. Pi's eyes begin to sting and ooze with pus, and soon he's temporarily blinded from malnutrition. He knows he will die and feels sad he can no longer care for Richard Parker.

As Pi prays and leaves his death in the hands of God, he hears a voice asking if someone's there. Certain he's hallucinating, Pi answers. He and the voice begin to talk about their favorite foods. While Pi describes vegetarian food, the voice fantasizes about meat in many forms, including calf's brains and beef tongue. Pi thinks the voice must be the carnivorous Richard Parker. He asks the voice if he's ever killed a man—the voice replies he's killed a man and a woman to preserve his own life.

Then Pi notices an accent belonging to a Frenchman, who is also blind. The two castaways compare items they've eaten in starvation. They meet and embrace. Pi hears Richard Parker stirring, and the blind Frenchman moves to kill Pi and eat him. Instead, Richard Parker kills the Frenchman. Pi grieves, though he knows his own life has been saved.

#### Part 2, Chapter 91

Pi raids the Frenchman's boat for supplies and finds food; his vision returns. Seeing the dead body of the Frenchman on the lifeboat, Pi reluctantly uses his arm for bait. He even eats part

of the dead man's flesh. Yet each day Pi prays for the Frenchman's soul.

## Part 2, Chapter 92

Pi warns readers they may disbelieve the story he's about to tell. At sea he comes upon an island—a forest of brilliant green trees. An ecstatic Pi brings the boat to land. He eats some of the algae covering the island and drinks fresh water. He explores the trees, praising Allah for the newfound discovery. But he worries Richard Parker's behavior may change with the new territory.

Pi learns to walk again, and uses the whistle to keep Richard Parker at bay when the tiger attacks. Slowly Pi explores the island. He encounters a huge population of meek and curious meerkats who behave unusually—for instance, the meerkats bring dead fish ashore. Pi slowly returns to health but still can't figure out the island's "stripped-down ecology." Richard Parker adapts to a new setting, and Pi retrains him with a hoop to keep his own alpha status.

One night Pi decides to sleep in a tree. He's surprised when the meerkats scurry up the trees at night and surround him. They're fleeing something, but he doesn't know what. In the morning he notices dead fish all over the island.

Sometime later Pi discovers a tree growing green fruit. He takes a piece of fruit and peels it only to discover the fruit is leaves wrapped around a human tooth. Pi unwraps more teeth. He realizes—to his horror—the island is carnivorous and is killing the fish. The ground burns Pi's own feet when he climbs down. The teeth show a human died on the island, too, and the teeth are the human's only remains.

Pi is reluctant to go back to the ocean, but he knows he must. The next morning he leaves in the lifeboat with Richard Parker.

## Part 2, Chapter 93

Experiencing nothing but "grief, ache, and endurance," Pi elevates his thoughts to think of the divine. The lower he is, he says, the higher his mind will soar.

## Part 2, Chapter 94

After a challenging landing, Pi reaches Mexico. He's weak and has trouble getting off the boat. Richard Parker jumps over Pi to reach land and walks away without looking back, leaving Pi forever. A group of humans finds Pi and carries him away.

Pi weeps, distraught because of Richard Parker's unceremonious disappearance. He wishes he could have told Richard Parker good-bye and thanked him for saving his life. Locals take care of Pi and feed him. The next day a police car brings him to a hospital. Pi thanks everyone who cared for him upon his return and helped him put his life back together.

## Analysis

Blindness means Pi doesn't see a light at his death, as he had speculated in Part 1, Chapter 22; instead, he hears a voice. Is the Frenchman real? Is he a projection of Pi's own desperation and moral questions? Does it matter, as long as Pi opens himself up, as he invites readers, to believe the better story?

The Frenchman, who brags about eating every part of an animal, is exactly who Pi doesn't want to become and fears he has become. He's also a vehicle for Pi to evaluate his relationship with Richard Parker, his "need expressed in all its amoral simplicity." The "vulgar curiosity" Pi confesses to means he's interested in what Richard Parker represents about human nature (as is Martel).

Does Pi take pride in distinguishing himself from the Frenchman since he hasn't killed or eaten a human? In Pi's second lifeboat story to the officials, the cook will mirror the Frenchman in killing "the man first, the woman second." Pi himself will kill and eat the cook, proving he, too, can change his morals under stress.

The tension is undercut by the wit and comedy in the dialogue, including a brief rhyming exchange. Martel experiments in form throughout the novel, including the theatrical absurdity of this scene. It takes a dark and possibly unexpected turn toward the end with the Frenchman's death. Pi's link to humanity, his belief in religion to make him a better person no matter what happens, may be the dead element inside of him. But one thing he knows for sure—Richard Parker is on his side.

Part 2, Chapter 91 is a confession to both the reader and the

visiting writer. Pi lapses into a confessional mode throughout the book, revealing secrets about himself. He's committed to telling the whole story as he sees it, including details that reflect poorly on him. Anticipating the reader's alarmed reaction to his deeds, he apologizes defensively: "my suffering was unremitting and he was already dead."

But because of Pi's belief in the relativity of truth, he's more dedicated to confessing the truth of his own nature than to relating factual events. He, too, is a human animal who will cannibalize to survive. By referring to the Frenchman as his "brother," Pi shows he still feels a connection to and compassion for all living things.

Martel said his goal in *Life of Pi* was to make the story progressively less believable. The island Pi reaches in Part 2, Chapter 92 could be a result of Pi's starving hallucinations. Pi admits the biological world, as he understands it, could not have created such an island. The reader who hasn't doubted Pi so far may doubt him now.

The island is also an allusion to the "argument from design," a philosophical argument for the existence of God. The theory holds that the world has been too perfectly designed not to be created, just the way a watch can't make itself. The island, though, is baffling and seems to be a failure of design. Martel says the design argument itself, like the island, is beautiful but doesn't stand up to logic. It's a place of protection and shelter, like the *Tsimtsum*—inexplicable, holy, but ultimately dangerous.

Pi's compromised state means he's "getting used to the mental delusion" of living in what might be a dream. At the same time his senses are coming back to him; the ability to walk and relieve himself, the sensation of tasting sweet things, and the ability to see and appreciate colors. Richard Parker also heals, becoming a "magnificent animal bursting over the ridge at full gallop." As he heals he becomes more of a threat to Pi.

At this point Pi's learned enough about himself to know he wants more than simple survival. He won't stay trapped on the island just so he can live in comfort. And he is comfortable—he even survives a storm. But he sees the island for the illusion it is. He also wants to protect Richard Parker from harm, so in a way he makes a sacrifice by leaving.

It's unclear how much time elapses in Part 2, Chapter 93. Pi has no more events to bear witness to, so he ends his shipwreck story on a slightly optimistic note. He found a worldview that helped him survive.

When Pi reaches inhabited land at last, the reader may be surprised at the depth of his sadness over the departure of Richard Parker. How else would this zookeeper's son expect an animal to act? Does he feel Richard Parker should have bonded to him more as a caretaker? Or is he simply overwhelmed?

Clearly the tiger has come to mean much more than a tiger to Pi. As Richard Parker walks away, Pi nearly feels God has left him. His reaction, confused and bereft, is not unusual for a survivor of trauma. His narrative of the good-bye he would have said to Richard Parker is a testament to the power of words. Pi knows Richard Parker will never hear or understand his long good-bye, but saying the words is a healing act.

## Part 3, Chapters 95–100

### Summary

#### Part 3, Chapter 95

As Part 3 begins the visiting writer introduces Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba. They are the officials in the Japanese Ministry of Transport who were informed of Pi's arrival as the single survivor of the *Tsimtsum*. The officials plan to drive from California to Tomatlán, Mexico, to meet Pi. But Mr. Okamoto misreads the map and mistakenly drives to Tomat, a California town.

The officials take 41 hours to travel to Tomatlán. Their car breaks down twice, and they're exhausted when they arrive. The visiting writer explains he's about to share the transcript from Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba's three-hour interview with Pi Patel. He'll print portions in a different font to indicate spoken Japanese.

#### Part 3, Chapter 96

Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba introduce themselves to Pi. They've seen the lifeboat and agree when Pi says he had a terrible trip. They offer him a cookie.

## Part 3, Chapter 97

Part 3, Chapter 97 consists only of the words "The story." The implication is that during the time represented in this chapter Pi relates his tale to his interviewers.

## Part 3, Chapter 98

After Pi tells the officials his story, Mr. Okamoto says in Japanese, "He thinks we're fools." Pi requests another cookie, which they give him, despite noticing the cookies he's hoarded in his bedsheets. The officials request a few minutes alone.

## Part 3, Chapter 99

Mr. Okamoto tells Pi they don't believe his story. He claims bananas don't float and could not have held up an orangutan; Pi proves them wrong. They also find the algae island impossible to believe. Pi says scientists are constantly making new discoveries.

Mr. Okamoto points out no one has found a trace of the tiger in Mexico, and Pi couldn't have survived in a lifeboat with one. Pi describes animals' innate fear of humans and the many escaped wild animals who are hiding in cities such as Tokyo. When the officials insist he's lying, Pi becomes angry and says both love and life are hard to believe. He also defends the existence of the blind Frenchman and the presence of meerkat bones in the lifeboat.

The officials request the story of what really happened. Pi thinks they want a story "that will confirm what [they] already know." So Pi tells his new version. The ship sank, and he landed on a lifeboat with three other people—his mother, a cook, and a young sailor with a broken leg. The cook amputates the sailor's leg, saying the amputation will save his life. But the cook wants to use the leg for bait. Pi's mother accuses the cook of gorging on their available supplies. The sailor dies, and as Pi and his mother look on in horror, the cook eats the sailor's body.

Pi and his mother retreat to one end of the lifeboat, and the cook takes the other. They sail for days, eating the raw fish and turtles the cook catches from the sea. Despite himself Pi starts to feel a tenderness toward the cook. Then the cook kills Pi's mother in a scuffle over a sea turtle. Pi watches from the raft. The next morning Pi fights with the cook, kills him, and

then eats his flesh.

Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba discuss the story privately. They notice the people in the second version parallel the animals in the first—the orangutan is Pi's mother, the zebra is the sailor, the cook is the hyena, and Pi is the tiger. Mr. Okamoto asks Pi if the cook mentions a mechanical or structural failure or foreign object as the cause of the *Tsimtsum's* wreck. Pi says he did not. Pi can't think of anything that caused the *Tsimtsum* to sink. He answers the officials' specific questions about the shipwreck as briefly as he can, noting the "third-rate" nature of the ship and its crew.

The officials realize they'll never know what really happened with the *Tsimtsum*. As they prepare to leave, Pi tells them he's given two stories to explain his survival and neither can be proven. He asks which is the better story. The officials agree on the story with animals. Pi responds, "And so it goes with God."

## Part 3, Chapter 100

The visiting writer shares Mr. Okamoto's official report on the *Tsimtsum's* wreck. Mr. Okamoto poses some theories of the wreck's cause in his report but concludes the cause is impossible to determine. He adds Pi's survival is "an astounding story of courage and endurance," a story that stands alone in the history of shipwrecks. Finally Mr. Okamoto mentions Pi crossed the sea with a tiger.

## Analysis

Part 3 functions as a postscript to the novel and provides a twist ending. The characters of Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba will cast Pi's entire story into doubt. They are credible witnesses—intelligent, thoughtful men in the Ministry of Transport. Their reaction to Pi's castaway narrative will inform the reader's perception. To add to the confusion, the officials go on an unexpected journey of their own, having misread the map. This detail shows even humans with the best of intentions are fallible.

Martel adds to the authentic feel of the story by providing a facsimile of a taped transcript. For instance, Mr. Okamoto records the date and case file number in the transcript.

The reader may not have expected an incredulous reaction



from officials to Pi's story. Pi is now reintegrating into the human world, but he's been changed permanently. Those who haven't been with Pi during the shipwreck and journey, as the reader has, won't understand his motivations.

Part 3, Chapter 99 opens the entire narrative. A reader tends to trust a narrator, even an unreliable one. When Martel introduces new narrators to the mix, the reader has new perspectives to consider. Maybe events didn't unfold the way Pi says they did. Maybe Richard Parker, who can't be found anywhere in the Mexican jungle, didn't survive or exist. Pi admitted to hallucinations, dreams, and less-than-reliable recording of facts. Did he invent the entire story he told the visiting writer? And if he did, what really happened?

But Pi has a counterargument for both the reader and the skeptical officials. "What do you do when you're in the dark?" he says when the officials say people believe what they see. He knows animals better than anyone else in the room because of his background, and he backs up his explanation for the missing tiger with facts and examples.

When so much else has been taken from him, Pi grows angry at the officials who try to take his story from him, too. Inventing, he feels, is different than lying. He doesn't intend to deceive, but he feels his listeners are arrogant in their reliance on facts they already know. Even scientists must constantly stretch the boundaries of what they believe. Why shouldn't everyone else? Why shouldn't a story teach its reader something new?

He complicates the matter by having the officials choose between his first story and his second. As he points out, there's no practical difference. Neither story will provide adequate answers to the officials' questions or change Pi's situation. The second story, however, is in many ways more tragic; it shows man's inhumanity to man. It involves Mrs. Patel being killed right in front of her son, and Pi killing the cook himself. His summary lacks the first story's small triumphs, magic, beautiful sights at sea, courage, prayers, and bonding with Richard Parker. In the second story Pi learns nothing new except how cruel people can be.

The officials realize slowly if they choose the story with animals, they're choosing to let Pi have a story full of dignity, hope, and optimism—even if it's more far-fetched and fantastic.

Martel also uses this chapter to comment on the nature of reading fiction. He's writing a novel that passes itself off as an

autobiography, and which includes a thinly fictionalized version of himself as a character. He's already playing with narrative form. He implies any story someone tells—whether it is an autobiographical recounting of facts or a whimsical novel with fantastic characters—becomes fiction, an invention, through the retelling.

Martel concludes the book with another official-seeming document, the report to the Ministry of Transport. Mr. Okamoto's voice is the last voice the reader hears, and it is a hopeful one. He did select the "better story" and is willing to back it up in his report.

The last paragraph gives Pi what he wanted: full credit for his story and validation of his suffering. It also acknowledges the existence of Richard Parker. Mr. Okamoto's reference to Pi's "impressionistic and unreliable" descriptions of the weather indicates he may not fully believe everything Pi says. However, he's electing to choose the Story (with a capital S) representing the larger, moral truths of Pi's journey.

## “” Quotes

*"I have a story that will make you believe in God."*

— Mr. Adirubasamy, Author's Note

The visiting writer is looking for a story with emotional life. He is converted after hearing Pi's story, though not to faith—by "God" he means the impossible and the unknowable. Mr. Adirubasamy promises a story that will change listeners' outlooks on the world.

*"The finite within the infinite, the infinite within the finite."*

— Pi Patel, Part 1, Chapter 16

Pi describes Hinduism here and the mysteries of Hindu gods. He feels himself connected to the "world soul," a connection that gives meaning and context to his suffering. By imagining

the infinite, like the numbers in mathematical Pi, he sees his place in the universe.

*"The agnostic ... [will] lack imagination and miss the better story."*

— Pi Patel, Part 1, Chapter 22

Pi respects faith, whether the faith is in religion or science. He rejects "doubt as a philosophy of life." Faith, he feels, takes imagination and courage, as well as a willingness to believe in something larger than oneself. Scientists have this belief as well, since they're open-minded to new discoveries. The doubt which characterizes agnosticism makes agnostics miss the discoveries they could have reached with a more open mind.

*"To me, religion is about our dignity, not our depravity."*

— Pi Patel, Part 1, Chapter 25

Pi struggles for dignity throughout his journey on the lifeboat. He suffers physical depravity and even resorts to cannibalism. But he prays for those he's killed and relies on religion for a sense of dignity and purpose. In this quote he's explaining how religion dictates his own behavior—faith makes him more sympathetic to people who are suffering, not (like other believers) angry at slights to God.

*"Why can't reason give greater answers?"*

— Pi Patel, Part 2, Chapter 37

After he's lost his family and everything he loves at sea, Pi, naturally, wants an explanation. But there is none. He doesn't expect an answer to his question, and he never finds a satisfactory one, but eventually he accepts his situation.

*"Now I will turn miracle into routine. The amazing will be seen every day."*

— Pi Patel, Part 2, Chapter 53

Pi is determined to survive in seemingly impossible circumstances. Though he starves and nearly drowns, Pi sees many amazing things on the ship, like Richard Parker's successful training, the abundance of undersea life, and the algae island.

*"At moments of wonder, it is easy to avoid small thinking."*

— Pi Patel, Part 2, Chapter 85

Pi is nearly struck by lightning in the ocean, and the experience is transcendent. The concerns which have consumed him daily on the lifeboat—food, water, and staying out of danger—matter much less when he's confronted with the power of nature.

*"Isn't just looking upon this world already something of an invention?"*

— Pi Patel, Part 3, Chapter 99

The book asks readers to consider whether reality is simply interpretations and perceptions, rather than an objective reality which is the same for everyone. Pi's seen people in his life experience similar realities but hold different perspectives, like the two Mr. Kumars observing the zebra. He thinks we all bring our own "invention" to our worlds, and he wants his story validated on those terms.

*"If you stumble at mere believability, what are you living*

*for?"*

— Pi Patel, Part 3, Chapter 99

Pi argues that the believability of his story is unrelated to its truth. Many of life's most essential experiences lack believability—the existence of life, the presence of God, and the force of love. Yet, like Pi's survival, all are real to the believers. Pi challenges Mr. Okamoto and Mr. Chiba's notion that believability is an essential element of truth.

*"Which story do you prefer? Which is the better story?"*

— Pi Patel, Part 3, Chapter 99

Pi gives two accounts that could each explain his survival on the lifeboat. Neither will bring his family back nor explain the sinking of the ship, and neither can be proven—so the Japanese officials have no factual basis for their choice. The story with humans is macabre and tragic; the story with animals is far-fetched but triumphant. In the end the officials choose the story with animals, signaling their willingness to accept an unrealistic possibility and open their minds.

## Symbols

### Mathematical Pi

Tired of being called "Pissing" Piscine shortens his name to an "elusive, irrational number." Pi is a mathematical constant, 3.14, and its digits repeat endlessly. Mathematical Pi matches the character Pi's interest in the infinite and unexplainable.

Pi is used to find the ratio of a circle's circumference. Circles reoccur—Pi feels at the center of a circle when he has religious experiences and later when he's lost at sea.

### Lifeboat

In the lifeboat Pi grows to a man. It is both a vehicle and giver of life: the supplies on it save Pi from death. The boat also becomes a zoo, a home, and "God's ark."

Pi's conversion into a Christlike figure is on the lifeboat. Pi survives on the oar for three days and nights, like Jesus's resurrection. It is a temple as Pi spreads fish scales on his body like the Hindu tilaks. He endures suffering like St. John of the Cross, who believed the soul must experience a dark night of faith to reunite with Christ.

### Algae Island

Algae island is the novel's greatest illusion. It seems full of promise—edible algae and water. Pi thinks it's miraculous but discovers it's a threat. Pi's decision to leave shows his new maturity.

The island may represent faith that is too secure. Here tests of faith are too easy: Richard Parker is tamed. If Pi stays he gives up the challenge of survival. Pi experiences spiritual death because his faith is no longer tested.

### Water

Water represents life and death. Pi longs for drinkable water during his ordeal but fears the water in the storm.

Water is Pi's name, Piscine Molitor, and he finds comfort in the "humble tidal ripples" where he learns to swim. Water is Pi's greatest need—life.

Water also takes his family. Pi describes it as an enemy "surging from below like a riotous crowd." Water represents loss of family and certainty.

On the ocean Pi realizes the natural world's forces can't be controlled or explained. Water symbolizes Pi's acceptance of

realities that are "hard to believe," such as love and survival.

## Themes

### Religion and Belief

Pi's beliefs affect the way he sees the world as well as the writer's analysis of Pi's story. Pi believes in Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. He finds them to be similar on divinity, love, and morality. Pi also admires atheists' beliefs, which he compares to religion.

*Life of Pi* shows how faith can give meaning to existence and suffering, even if it gives no logical explanation. Yann Martel is not persuading readers to believe in God; he is justifying *belief*. Scholar Florence Stratton points out, "God's existence has the same status in relation to truth and reality as Pi's experience of shipwreck." The story of God's existence is better than a story of doubt.

### Nature

The zoo in Part 1 builds up slowly to the novel's events in Part 2. Pi explains animal behavior, such as social hierarchy and loyalties and attacks. Pi compares animals to humans in their reactions to stress and life-threatening situations, such as the humans on the lifeboat in Part 3.

Images of enclosure and escape fill the novel, from the cages at the zoo to Pi trapped in the ocean. The story considers what freedom means to animals and humans.

### Truth

The novel contains stories within stories. The writer is a novelist who writes fiction but casts Pi's story as fact.

Part 3 casts doubt about Pi's story. Pi argues it doesn't matter: "Doesn't the telling of something always become a story?" Stories shape beliefs about the world. Pi's tale helped him survive, and stories should help readers "see higher or further or differently."

### Surviving the Impossible

Pi compares the time he survived to other castaways. At 227 days he makes it the longest. His vow to "turn miracle into routine" becomes reality. Inexplicable events help him, such as the algae island and the Frenchman's food. His ingenuity helps him, too. Pi constructs a raft and uses his knowledge to turn Richard Parker into an ally. *Life of Pi* is a coming-of-age tale or a hero's journey, where the hero overcomes obstacles and personal loss.

## Motifs

### Prayer

Pi prays throughout the novel. His prayers represent his moods—anger, gratitude, grief, and awe. Pi prays out of reverence in Part 1, Chapter 16 as a devoted Hindu whose "hands naturally come together in ... worship." Pi prays out of frustration in Part 2, Chapter 37 when he asks why everything he loves has been destroyed. Pi prays out of guilt for the souls of the Frenchman and the fish he kills. When Pi is suffering in Part 2, Chapter 60 he murmurs "words of Muslim prayer." Prayer is Pi's search for meaning and purpose.

Prayer is how Pi communicates with the natural world and the divine. The physical act of Muslim prayer makes him feel close to the earth. The design of Pi's prayer rug reminds him "the earth is the creation of God." On the lifeboat in Part 2, Chapter 74 Pi prays by claiming the objects he sees is part of God's creation.

## Territory and Belonging

Animals are territorial, Pi explains. He survives with Richard Parker on the lifeboat because he establishes his territory and gives Richard Parker his own. Territory is home, control, and shelter. When Pi takes control of Richard Parker in the lifeboat in Part 2, Chapter 70 he knows what will save his life: "It was time to impose myself and carve out my territory." His training is survival.

Belonging is also central to Pi's story. His family searches for a place to belong. They want the kind of freedom Pi describes in Part 1, Chapter 29—constitutional rights and a better future. Belonging is also part of family. When Pi's family dies he has to reassess where he belongs.

Pi questions belonging and group identity when he joins three religions at once. Each house of worship is a community, and each leader is territorial. They want Pi to belong to their religion only. Mrs. Patel offers the example of "one nation, one passport" to show Pi the importance of loyalty. Pi believes belonging is more fluid. He can belong to multiple communities—Hindu, Christian, and Muslim and his past and his future families.

## Suggested Reading

De Boever, Arne. "Allegories in an Emergency: Yann Martel's 'Life of Pi.'" *LA Review of Books*. 24 Apr. 2013. Web.

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