



Summer Reading: Topics for Discussion- Life of Pi

Be prepared to defend your answers with logical analysis and specific support (evidence) from the book.

Journal Questions

1. Martel's voice – Find your favorite passage. Explain what you like about it. Get specific and explain fully.
2. Would Pi make a good movie? What changes/ suggestions would you make if you were a consultant to the director?
3. Animals are used as symbols in this novel. What animal would you pick to symbolize yourself and why?

Questions to Analyze and Discuss:

1. The allegory: the journey *Many authors use the story of an actual journey to symbolize the “journey of life,” or if the journey is that of an adolescent, the journey from childhood to adulthood. How can the challenges and experiences of Pi on his journey be said to symbolize such a journey?*

Consider:

- Start with thinking about what the sea and the lifeboat might symbolize.
- What does the sinking of the ship and loss of Pi's family represent?
- Who or what does Richard Parker represent or symbolize? (Several answers are possible here—just make sure you can back up your idea with logical support.)
- What might the magic dorado, the Blind Frenchman, and the carnivorous island represent?
- How has Pi changed by the time he arrives in Mexico?
- What are some of the lessons that Pi has learned?

2. Other Symbols:

- Do you see any color or number symbolism?
- Do any other characters, events, or objects in the text appear to be symbols to you?

3. One of the major themes that many readers have noted about the book is that it seems to convey the idea that truth is sometimes found by uniting or combining what appear to be opposites (sort of like the philosophical equivalent to Einstein's search for a “Grand Unifying Theory” in physics.) This is known as *syncretism*. What evidence can you point to in the text that Pi (or the author himself) might believe in *syncretism*? What text examples of opposites presented together—in harmony preferably—can you find?

4. The fictional author/narrator claims that Pi's story “has a happy ending” (93). Does it?

5. The fictional author/ narrator also claims that Pi's story will “make you believe in God” (xi). But does it? **What is this book saying about faith and religion? Is it supporting or questioning these?**

6. THE BIG ONE: **What story is “true”? Which is the “better” story? Is there a difference?**

Identify: Who or what are the following? What is the factual connection of each to the story?

Prustan

Ravi

Tsimtsum

Mr. Kumar

Plan Number Seven

Pimphoo

Mamaji

Thirsty

227

Pondicherry

Tomatlan,

Paris

Manila

Winnipeg

Toronto

a whistle

an island of bananas

a human tooth

meerkats

dream rag

Comprehension: Explain what Pi means: He's yawning. My, my, what an enormous pink cave. Look at those long yellow stalactites and stalagmites. Maybe today you'll get a chance to visit (179).

Thank you for saving my life. And now go where you must. You have known the confined freedom of a zoo most of your life; now you will know the free confinement of a jungle (286).

Syn? Why did Pi at first try to save Richard Parker?

Some dry yeastless factuality

Poor hygiene and dehydration can actually cause temporary or permanent blindness. Trachoma is one such example of a treatable condition.

Richard Parker's names

Algae island mAbout the carnivorous alga island in the book. i found an narticle confirming that there are certain species of alga that do such a thing.

_"Fish farmers suffered major economic losses in the Neuse estuary in North Carolina, United States, when a billion fish were killed by a recently discovered carnivorous species of alga. Pfiesteria chemically senses fish and produces lethal toxins which kill in only a few hours, and then feeds off their decaying remains. The toxins can also cause skin ulcers on people exposed to them."

This article even talks about the chemicals released in the small ponds. I thought this might be helpful because i was interested at this.

Posted by: Rusty Shakleford | [October 10, 2005 08:32 PM](#)

Oh yeah, if you don't believe me check it out yourself AT,
http://atlas.aaas.org/index.php?part=2&sec=waste_=agchem

Survival story of Mexican fisherman
Animal fables - panchatantra
Is reality so awful that we need a better story?

What would be Pi's advice for facing adversity or fear?

1.

Overall

How should summer reading books be selected? What qualities should a summer reading book have?
What should the purpose of summer reading be?



Summer Reading

Reading Literature – Nailing the Basics with Pi.

When you discuss a work of literature, you should have a few terms at your fingertips (and be sure that you can accurately identify and apply these basics):

Read about the following terms in your SHHS Handbook (see pages 132-138), and be able to explain what the term means and how it applies to your summer reading book by answering the following questions. Be sure to be able to defend your answers with examples from the book and logical analysis.

Plot

- What exactly is “plot”? (Be ready with a clear, accurate definition.)
- Is the plot linear (events are presented in chronological order) or non-linear?
- What is the climax in Life of Pi?

Application TYPE: Can you summarize the plot of Pi in 1-2 sentences. (This is harder than you think.)

Setting

- What *exactly* is “setting”?
- How important is the setting of Pi to the plot and characters? Explain. In what type of book does the setting seem to be the most creative part?

Application TYPE: Explain the setting of Pi in 1 – 2 sentences.

Characters/ Characterization

- Who is the main character/ protagonist of Pi? Defend your answer.
- Who is the antagonist of the book? Defend your answer?
- Give an example of a round character.
- Give an example of a flat character.
- Give an example of a static character.
- Give an example of a flat character.

Application: Type up your conclusions with support for your answers. Provide one adjective or phrase that best describes the protagonist and explain why with examples from text.

Conflict

- Identify and explain the conflicts that the plot presents. Pick one and identify **what type** it is. (See p. 132.)

Point of View

- From whose point of view is the story told? (Think about this one.) Give evidence.

Voice – Watch out for this term because “voice” has two meanings as it concerns creative writers:

1. Voice is the author's style, the quality that makes his or her writing unique, and which conveys the author's attitude, personality, and character; or
2. Voice is the characteristic speech and thought patterns of a first-person narrator; a persona. Because voice has so much to do with the reader's experience of a work of literature, it is one of the most important elements of a piece of writing.

Question for analysis: How would you describe Pi's voice? Explain/ defend your answer.