

Life of Pi

by Yann Martel

About the Book

Pi Patel, a God-loving boy and the son of a zookeeper, has a fervent love of stories and practices not only his native Hinduism, but also Christianity and Islam. When Pi is sixteen, his family and their zoo animals emigrate from India to North America aboard a Japanese cargo ship. Alas, the ship sinks — and Pi finds himself in a lifeboat, his only companions a hyena, an orangutan, a wounded zebra, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger. Soon the tiger has dispatched all but Pi. Can Pi and the tiger find their way to land? Can Pi's fear, knowledge, and cunning keep him alive until they do?

Life of Pi is at once a realistic, rousing adventure and a meta-tale of survival that explores the redemptive power of storytelling and the transformative nature of fiction. It's a story, as one character puts it, to make you believe in God.

Praise for the Book

“A story to make you believe in the soul-sustaining power of fiction.”

— *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“An impassioned defense of zoos, a death-defying trans-Pacific sea adventure a la *Kon-Tiki*, and hilarious . . . This audacious novel manages to be all of these.”

— *The New Yorker*

“*Life of Pi* could renew your faith in the ability of novelists to invest even the most outrageous scenario with plausible life.”

— *The New York Times Book Review*

“*Life of Pi* is a real adventure: brutal, tender, expressive, dramatic, and disarmingly funny. . . . It's difficult to stop reading when the pages run out.”

— *San Francisco Chronicle*

Courtesy of Harcourt

About the Author

Yann Martel

Canadian Writer (1963–)

Updated: 12/02/2004

Personal Information: Family: Born June 25, 1963, in Salamanca, Spain; son of Emile (a civil servant) and Nicole (a civil servant; maiden name, Perron) Martel.

Education: Attended Trent University, 1981–84 and 1986–87; Concordia University, B.A., 1985.

Politics: “Social politics: left wing. Economic politics: confused. Overall politics: moderately nationalist — don’t want to be an American.”

Hobbies and other interests: Writing, yoga, volunteering in a palliative care unit.

Memberships: PEN Canada.

Addresses: Home: Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Agent: c/o Author Mail, Harcourt Brace and Co., 15 East 26th St., New York, NY 10010.

Career: Author. “Odd jobs at odd places at odd times.” Has worked as library worker, tree planter, dishwasher, security guard, and parking lot attendant.

Awards: Journey Prize for the best short story in Canada, 1991, for “The Facts behind the Helsinki Roccamatios”; National Magazine Award for best short story, 1992, for “The Time I Heard the Private Donald J. Rankin String Concerto with One Discordant Violin, by the American Composer John Morton”; story selected for 1991–92 *Pushcart Prize XVI Anthology*, Best of the Small Presses; Air Canada Award, Canadian Authors Association, 1993, for “Bright Young New Thing”; short-listed, First Novel Award, Chapters/Books in Canada, 1997, for *Self*; short-listed, Governor General’s Literary Award for fiction, 2001, Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction, 2001, and Booker Prize, 2002, all for *Life of Pi: A Novel*.

WRITINGS

- *The Facts behind the Helsinki Roccamatios and Other Stories*, Knopf Canada (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), 1993, Harcourt (New York, NY), 2004.
- *Self*, Faber and Faber (London, England), 1996.
- *Life of Pi: A Novel*, Knopf Canada (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), 2001; Harcourt (New York, NY), 2001.

Media Adaptations: Fox Studios bought film rights to Martel’s novel *Life of Pi* and assigned screenwriter Dean Gorgaris to the project.

Sidelights

Yann Martel, Canadian author of fiction, “is being hailed as a remarkable voice,” wrote Rosemary Goring in the Glasgow *Herald*, “the harbinger of a fresh wave of literary invention from a nation already famous for its fiction.” Following in the footsteps of Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, and Alice Munro, Martel has earned international repute for his fiction, in particular the award-winning 2001 title, *Life of Pi: A Novel*. Born

in Spain to Canadian parents, Martel grew up and has lived all over the world, including Alaska, Costa Rica, France, Mexico, Iran, Turkey, India, and Canada. His father was a diplomat and poet from the province of Quebec, one-time winner of the Governor General's Award for poetry. Martel, who began to write after studying philosophy at college, once told *CA*: "I write because it's the only way I know how to create, and to create is to live."

Martel's short story, "The Facts behind the Helsinki Roccamatios," first appeared in the *Malahat Review* and won the 1991 Journey Prize for the best Canadian short story. Two years later, Martel published that story along with three others as *The Facts behind the Helsinki Roccamatios and Other Stories*, in a collection that dealt with the final hours of a condemned man, an AIDS patient's imaginary life, and the debut of an amazing and rather bizarre symphony. A reviewer for *Quill and Quire* felt that while the title story is a "good" tale, another of the stories collected in the book, "The Time I Heard the Private Donald J. Rankin String Concerto with One Discordant Violin, by the American Composer John Morton," is an even "better story, and one that more clearly says, This is something new." The same reviewer further compared Martel to writers such as Paul Theroux, Bruce Chatwin, Paul Auster, and Allan Gurganus. "Martel . . . writes in a way that makes a lot of other fiction look like, well, like fiction."

In 1996, Martel published his first novel, *Self*, the fictional autobiography of a young author and traveler who suddenly finds he has changed genders. The *Quill and Quire* reviewer praised the "candid, intelligent, likable, life-embracing, protean, chatty, smug, and mischievous" narrator of that work, which views the events of thirty years through a mirthful and perceptive prism. Similarly, a contributor to the Toronto *Globe and Mail* felt that Martel "wonderfully represents the child's universe in a seamless whole," calling his novel a "penetrating, funny, original and absolutely delightful exploration."

With his 2001 novel, *Life of Pi*, Martel continued his growth as a writer in a mixture of animal tall-tale and high-seas adventure that had critics comparing him to Joseph Conrad and Salman Rushdie. The narrator, Piscine Molitor Patel, known as Pi, is now a middle-aged man living in Canada. But as a youth, he lived in the Indian city of Pondicherry where his father ran the zoo. The young boy developed an encyclopedic knowledge of animal behavior, loved stories, and learned to practice three religions: Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. When he was sixteen, Pi's parents decided to immigrate to Canada, taking along part of the menagerie with them in a Japanese cargo ship. However, when the ship sank during a storm, there were only six survivors inhabiting a lone lifeboat on that vastness of the Pacific: Pi, a rat, a female orangutan, a zebra with a broken leg, a hyena, and a four-hundred-fifty pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.

Life of Pi is the recounting of the fight for survival that ensued, in which Martel, via Pi, takes the reader into the food-chain politics aboard the lifeboat. The hyena manages to devour the few flies that have been buzzing around the boat, but that does not quite stave off hunger. Thereafter the hyena makes a meal of the zebra and orangutan, in that order. The Bengal tiger then eats the hyena, and makes eyes at the young human cargo. To keep himself alive, Pi feeds the tiger the rat, but he recognizes that the only way he will be able

to survive in the long term is by somehow living with the tiger. He trains Richard Parker, feeds, marks out separate territories on the boat with his urine, and comes to love the tiger. When they finally land in Mexico over two hundred days later, Pi is half blind, and the tiger runs off into the jungle. Because the authorities there do not believe Pi's fantastic tale, Pi tells a version with no animals involved, and suggests that they believe the better of the two stories.

Martel's blending of fantasy and nautical lore in *Life of Pi* prompted a reviewer for the Toronto *Globe and Mail* to note that the "whole fantastic voyage carries hints of [Ernest Hemingway's] *Old Man and the Sea* and the magic realism of [Jorge] Amado and [Gabriel Garcia] Marquez and the absurdity of [Samuel] Beckett." "Ever aware of clichés, and using them to his advantage, Pi is Martel's triumph," the same reviewer further commented. "He is understated and ironic, utterly believable and pure." Similar words of praise greeted the book's English publication around the world. "If Canadian writer Yann Martel were a preacher, he'd be charismatic, funny and convert all the nonbelievers," wrote *Nation's* Charlotte Innes. Innes commented on the postmodernist elements of the story: "multiple narrators, a playful fairytale quality . . . , realistically presented events that may be hallucinations or simply made up," even the duplicate ending at the end of the novel and the symbolism of Pi's name, as "the irrational number with which scientists try to understand the universe." Thus the author presents his readers with a "sea of questions and confusion," yet Innes felt that Martel "makes one laugh so much, and at times feel so awed and chilled, that even thrashing around in bewilderment or disagreement one can't help but be captured by his prose." *Book's* Paul Evans called *Life of Pi* a "work of wonder," while *Booklist's* William Hickman called it a "strange, touching novel" that "frequently achieves something deeper than technical gimmickry." In a *Publishers Weekly* review a contributor described Martel's second novel as a "fabulous romp through an imagination by turns ecstatic, cunning, despairing, and resilient," and an "impressive achievement." The same reviewer felt that Martel "displays the clever voice and tremendous storytelling skills of an emerging master." *Los Angeles Times* reviewer Francie Lin appreciated the "lightness and humor that gives it the quality of a fairy tale," and *New York Times Book Review* contributor Gary Krist thought *Life of Pi* "could renew your faith in the ability of novelists to invest even the most outrageous scenario with plausible life."

Reception of the novel in Britain was equally positive. Novelist Margaret Atwood, writing in the London *Sunday Times*, commented, "It's fresh, original, smart, devious, and crammed with absorbing lore." Through this novel, Atwood noted, "[o]ur customary picture of life is torn apart and through the rent in the canvas we see the real world. And it's a world of wonders, and there are tigers in it." London *Times* reviewer Glyn Brown felt the story was "so magical, so playful, so harrowing and astonishing that it will make you believe imagination might be the first step [in believing in God]." Allan Massie, writing in the Edinburgh *Scotsman*, observed, "The story is engaging, Pi's resourcefulness both pleasing and amusing." Massie further noted, "What makes this novel so delightful is its light-heartedness." And for Justine Jordan, writing in the London *Guardian*, the novel was "not so much . . . an allegory or magical-realist fable, but . . . an edge-of-seat adventure." *New Internationalist* reviewer Peter Whittaker called it an

“astonishingly original novel,” and William Skidelsky in the *New Statesman* also praised the “compelling” storytelling.

For Jane Shilling, writing in the London *Sunday Telegraph*, however, the novel was “flawed” by what she found to be the unbalanced structure of the book, yet she still found it a “fascinating novel — though as with some jewels, the flaws are arguably part of the charm.” Toby Clements also had reservations in the London *Daily Telegraph*, feeling that *Life of Pi* “never really comes alive in the emotional sense. It is more a novel of proposition and conjecture, a series of narrative questions and solutions.” Yet Clements added, “Despite this, *Life of Pi* is a hilarious novel, full of clever tricks, amusing asides and grand originality.”

Critical acclaim also met the Australian publication of *Life of Pi*, with Rebekah Scott noting in the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* that the novel is “strange, but it draws a gleaming confidence from its strangeness.” Francesca Cann found Martel’s to be an “involving narrative,” in a Melbourne *Herald Sun* review, and Michelle de Krester, writing in the *Weekend Australian*, felt that “what is enchanting about this novel is not the sweep of its intellectual concerns but the intensity of its imagination. Martel is a natural.”

Awards committees agreed with these reviewers, and *Life of Pi* catapulted Martel’s name into the first rank of international authors, earning him a short-list position on England’s prestigious Booker Prize list, as well as a similar honor on Canada’s list for Governor General’s Literary Award for fiction, and the 2001 Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction.

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PERIODICALS

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- *Daily Telegraph* (London, England), June 1, 2002, Toby Clements, “The Tiger Who Went to Sea,” review of *Life of Pi*, .
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- *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, June 5, 2002, Charles Matthews, review of *Life of Pi*, p. K146.
- *Library Journal*, June 15, 2002, Edward Come, review of *Life of Pi*, p. 95.
- *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 2002, Francie Lin, “Floating on Faith, “ review of *Life of Pi*, p. BR7.
- *Nation*, August 19, 2002, Charlotte Innes, “Robinson Crusoe, Move Over, “ review of *Life of Pi*, pp. 25-28.
- *New Internationalist*, August, 2002, Peter Whittaker, review of *Life of Pi*, p. 33.
- *New Statesman*, July 29, 2002, William Skidelsky, “Novel Thoughts, “ p. 39.
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- *Scotsman* (Edinburgh, Scotland), May 11, 2002, Allan Massie, review of *Life of Pi*, p. 9.
- *Seattle Times* (Seattle, WA), June 16, 2002, David Flood, “*Life of Pi* Is Exhilarating Castaway Tale, “ p. K9.
- *Spectator*, May 18, 2002, Francis King, “Ghastly Crew, “ review of *Life of Pi*, p. 43.

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ONLINE

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Source: *Contemporary Authors Online*, Thomson Gale, 2004

Source Database: Contemporary Authors Online

Author Interview

Q: Can you tell us how you became a writer?

Yann Martel: It was never on my list of things to be. But by the end of my adolescent years I had struck out being an astronaut and a politician, and at university I eventually struck out everything a bachelor's degree could deliver, from archaeology to zoology — each chosen at one point or another because of the pageant and drama they seemed to promise. I was 19 years old and desperate. I was wasting my time at university, didn't belong there, but was terrified of the working world. So, I wrote. The first thing I wrote was a play. It was a very, very bad play — the story of a young man who falls in love with a girl and commits suicide when a well-meaning friend chops his beloved up to pieces and uses her as firewood, I kid you not — but there was joy in the creating, a thrill in putting characters on a stage and giving them lines. I wrote another equally bad play, then switched to prose, which I thought would suit me better. I proceeded to write a number of bad short stories. I didn't show them to anyone. I was too embarrassed. Still, each time, it was the same: to play with words, to construct sentences, to create situations, to invent characters and dialogue, was something I found deeply exciting and fulfilling and that I could do hour after hour, day after day. I continued writing, not knowing why or where it would lead me. I never thought of it as a *career* — and still don't now.

Q: What inspired you to write this particular book? Is there a story about the writing of this novel that begs to be told?

YM: I would guess that most books come from the same mix of three elements: influence, inspiration and hard work. Let me detail how each one came into play in the writing of *Life of Pi*.

Influence: Ten or so years ago, I read a review by John Updike in the *New York Times Review of Books*. It was of a novel by a Brazilian writer I'd never heard of, Moacyr Scliar. I forget the title, and John Updike did worse: he clearly thought the book as a whole was forgettable. His review — one of those that makes you suspicious by being mostly descriptive, without critical teeth, as if the reviewer were holding back — oozed indifference. The story, as far as I can remember, was about a zoo in Berlin run by a Jewish family. The year is 1933 and, not surprisingly, business is bad. The family decides to emigrate, to Brazil. Alas, the ship sinks and one lone Jew ends up in a lifeboat with a black panther. What could displease Updike about such a story? Was it that the allegory marched with too heavy a tread, the parallel between the black panther and the Nazis too obvious? Did the premise wear its welcome out? Was it the tone? The style? The translation? Whatever it was, the book fatigued Updike, but it had the effect on my imagination of electric caffeine. I marvelled. What perfect unity of time, action and place. What stark, rich simplicity. Oh, the wondrous things I could do with this premise. I felt that same mix of envy and frustration I had felt with Mishima's *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea*, that if only I had thought of it I could have done something

great with it. But — damn! — the idea had been faxed to the wrong muse. I looked for the book. It was nowhere to be found in Montreal. I chose not to order it. I didn't really want to read it anyway. Why put up with the gall? Why put up with a brilliant premise ruined by a lesser writer. Worse, what if Updike had been wrong? What if not only the premise but also its rendition were perfect? Best to move on. I wrote my first novel. I travelled. Romances started and ended. I travelled some more. Four or five years went by.

Inspiration: I was in India. It was my second time. The start of the trip had been rough. I had arrived in Bombay. I felt terribly lonely. One night I sat on my bed and wept, muffling the sounds so that my neighbours would not hear me through the thin walls. Where was my life going? Nothing about it seemed to have started or added up to much. I had written two books that had sold about a thousand copies each. I had neither family nor career to show for my thirty-four years on Earth. And if that weren't enough, the novel I had planned to write while in India had died. Every writer knows the feeling. A story is born in your mind and it thrills you. You nurture it like you would a fire. You hope to see it grow and eventually be born on paper. But at one point, you look at it and you feel nothing. You feel no pulse. The characters don't speak naturally, the plot does not move, the descriptions don't come to you — everything about your story is thankless work. It has died.

I was in need of a story. More than that, I was in need of a Story.

I got to Matheran, the hill station closest to Bombay. It's a small place high up, with beautiful views over the surrounding plains, and it has the peculiarity of not being able to accommodate cars, autorickshaws or motorcycles. You get there by toy train or by taxi, and then you must walk or ride a horse. The closest you get to the noises of a motor on Matheran's streets are the rumbling, horking sounds of Indians spewing out betel juice. The peace of the place is blessed and utterly un-Indian. It was there, on top of a big boulder to be precise, that I remembered Sciar's premise.

Suddenly, my mind was exploding with ideas. I could hardly keep up with them. In jubilant minutes whole portions of the novel emerged fully formed: the lifeboat, the animals, the intermingling of the religious and the zoological, the parallel stories. I was telling myself the story as I created it.

I now had a reason to be in India.

Hard work: I visited all the zoos I could find in the south of India. I interviewed the director of the Trivandrum Zoo. I spent time in temples, churches and mosques. I explored the urban settings for my novel and took in the nature around them. I tried to immerse myself as much as possible in the Indianness of my main character. After six months I had enough local colour and detail.

I returned to Canada and spent a year and a half doing research. I read the foundational texts of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. I read books on zoo biology and animal psychology. I read castaway and shipwreck stories.

All the while, in India and in Canada, I took notes. On the page, in a smashed-up, kaleidoscopic way, *Life of Pi* began to take shape. I took a while to decide what animal would be my main animal protagonist. At first I had an elephant in mind. The Indian elephant is smaller than the African, and I thought an adolescent male would fit nicely in the lifeboat. But the image of an elephant in a lifeboat struck me as more comical than I wanted. I changed to a rhinoceros. But rhinos are herbivores and I could not see how I could keep a herbivore alive in the high seas. And a constant diet of algae struck me as monotonous for both reader and writer, if not for the rhino. I finally settled upon the choice that in retrospect seems the obvious one: a tiger.

For the algae island, I chose meerkats because I wanted a small ferret-like creature without the connotations that ferrets have. I wanted a neutral animal upon which I could paint a personality of my choice. Also, *meerkat* rhymes somewhat with *mirage* and *meekness*, which makes no particular sense, but there you go, whoever said writers always know what they're doing.

The blind, cannibal Frenchman in the other boat came to me in those first moments of inspiration in Matheran; in other words, I don't know where he came from. In my first draft, the scene with the Frenchman was much longer, close to 45 pages. It was one of my favourite sections. It was Beckett in the Pacific, I thought. Which was precisely the problem, my editor told me. It was funny and absurd, she told me, but in the wrong place, like a good joke told at a funeral. The tone was wrong; it broke with what came before and after. So I had to cut it down substantially.

The rest was fun hard work, a daily getting it down on the page that came not without hurdles, not without moments of doubt, not without mistakes and rewrites, but always, always with deep, gratifying pleasure, with a knowledge that no matter how the novel would fare, I would be happy with it, that it helped me understand my world a bit better.

Q: What is it that you're exploring in this book?

YM: The nature of belief. The role of imagination in understanding life. The role stories can play in our lives. The nature of religion. The workings of zoos. Humanity's relationship to animals.

Q: Who is your favourite character in this book, and why?

YM: Richard Parker. He's colourful.

Q: Are there any tips you would give a book club to better navigate their discussion of your book?

YM: Dream and speculate away.

Q: Do you have a favourite story to tell about being interviewed about your book?

YM: Interviews have merged into one big blur.

Q: What question are you never asked in interviews but wish you were?

YM: Would you like a thick, creamy hot chocolate made with real chocolate, Mr. Martel?

Q: Has a review or profile ever changed your perspective on your work?

YM: A book is 50%. The other half of it is what the reader brings. So every review brings something, some perspective, some point, some observation, that is new to me. I'm glad for that.

Q: Which authors have been most influential to your own writing?

YM: The usual suspects, the Great Dead White Males of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Hardy, Conrad, Kafka, Hemingway, Hamsun, etc.

Q: If you weren't writing, what would you want to be doing for a living? What are some of your other passions in life?

YM: Let's see . . . If I weren't me, I'd like to be the Pope's cat. Or an astronaut. Or a caper farmer in Portugal.

Q: If you could have written one book in history, what book would that be?

YM: The Bible.

Courtesy of Random House Canada

Discussion Questions

1. In his introductory note Yann Martel says, “This book was born as I was hungry.” What sort of emotional nourishment might *Life of Pi* have fed to its author?
2. Pondicherry is described as an anomaly, the former capital of what was once French India. Do you think the town made a significant difference in Pi’s upbringing?
3. In the Author’s Note, Mr. Adirubasamy boldly claims that this story “will make you believe in God,” and the author, after researching and writing the story, agrees. Did Pi’s tale alter your beliefs about God?
4. Chapters 21 and 22 are very short, yet the author has said that they are at the core of the novel. Can you see how?
5. Early in the novel, we discover that Pi majored in religious studies and zoology, with particular interests in a sixteenth-century Kabbalist and the admirable three-toed sloth. In subsequent chapters, he explains the ways in which religions and zoos are both steeped in illusion. Discuss some of the other ways in which these two fields find unlikely compatibility.
6. In the Author’s Note, Martel wonders whether fiction is “the selective transforming of reality, the twisting of it to bring out its essence.” If this is so, what is the essence of Pi and of his story?
7. There is a lot of storytelling in this religious novel. Is there a relationship between religion and storytelling? Is religion a form of storytelling? Is there a theological dimension to storytelling?
8. Pi’s full name, Piscine Molitor Patel, was inspired by a Parisian swimming pool that “the gods would have delighted to swim in.” The shortened form refers to the ratio of a circle’s circumference divided by its diameter, the number 3.1415926 . . . , a number that goes on forever without discernable pattern, what in mathematics is called an irrational number. Explore the significance of Pi’s unusual name.
9. One reviewer said the novel contains hints of *The Old Man and the Sea*, and Pi himself measures his experience in relation to history’s most famous castaways. How does *Life of Pi* compares to other maritime novels and films?
10. How might the novel’s flavor have been changed if Pi’s sole surviving animal had been the zebra with the broken leg? Or Orange Juice? Or the hyena? Would Pi have survived with a harmless animal or an ugly animal, say a sheep or a turkey? Which animal would you like to find yourself with on a lifeboat?

11. In chapter 23, Pi sparks a lively debate when all three of his spiritual advisors try to claim him. At the heart of this confrontation is Pi's insistence that he cannot accept an exclusively Hindu, Christian, or Muslim faith; he can only be content with all three. What is Pi seeking that can solely be attained by this apparent contradiction? Is there something common to all religions? Are they "all the same"? If not, how are they different? Is there a difference between faith and belief?
12. What do you make of Pi's assertion at the beginning of chapter 16 that we are all "in limbo, without religion, until some figure introduces us to God"? Do you believe that Pi's faith is a response to his father's agnosticism?
13. Among Yann Martel's gifts is a rich descriptive palette. Regarding religion, he observes the green elements that represent Islam and the orange tones of Hinduism. What color would Christianity be, according to Pi's perspective?
14. How do the human beings in your world reflect the animal behavior observed by Pi? What do Pi's strategies for dealing with Richard Parker teach us about confronting the fearsome creatures in our lives?
15. Besides the loss of his family and possessions, what else did Pi lose when the Tsimtsum sank? What did he gain?
16. Nearly everyone experiences a turning point that represents the transition from youth to adulthood, albeit seldom as traumatic as Pi's. What event marked your coming of age?
17. How do Mr. Patel's zookeeping abilities compare to his parenting skills? Discuss the scene in which he tries to teach his children a lesson in survival by arranging for them to watch a tiger devour a goat. Did this in any way prepare Pi for the most dangerous experience of his life?
18. If shock hadn't deluded him, do you think Pi would have whistled and waved at Richard Parker? What would you have done?
19. Pi imagines that his brother would have teasingly called him Noah. How does Pi's voyage compare to the biblical story of Noah, who was spared from the flood while God washed away the sinners?
20. Is *Life of Pi* a tragedy, romance, or comedy?
21. Pi defends zoos. Are you convinced? Is a zoo a good place for a wild animal?

22. What did you think of Pi's interview with the investigators from the Japanese Ministry of Transport? Do you think Pi's mother, along with a sailor and a cannibalistic cook, were in the lifeboat with him instead of the animals? Which story do you believe, the one with animals or the one without animals? When the investigators state that they think the story with animals is the better story, Pi answers "Thank you. And so it goes with God." What do you think Pi meant by that? How does it relate to the claim that this is a story "that will make you believe in God"?
23. The first part of the novel starts twenty years after Pi's ordeal at sea and ends with the words "This story has a happy ending." Do you agree?

Courtesy of Harcourt