

Ninth Grade Honors Summer Reading Study Guide

Life of Pi

While reading *Life of Pi* this summer, complete the following questions on a separate piece of paper. Please answer in complete sentences. Answers will be collected on the first day of school and a five-paragraph essay, regarding a theme in the book, will be assigned that first week

Summer Reading Study Guide – *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

1. Yann Martel recalls that Mr. Adirubasamy said Pi's tale would make him believe in God. How could Pi's tale do that?
2. Early in the novel, we discover that the narrator 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. Consider some of the other ways in which these two fields find unlikely compatibility.
3. 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. Explore the significance of Pi's unusual name.
4. How might the novel's flavor have been changed if Pi's sole surviving animal were the zebra or Orange Juice? (We assume that if the hyena had been the only surviving animal, Pi would not have lived to tell us his story.)
5. 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?
6. How do the people in your world reflect the animal behavior noted by Pi? What do Pi's strategies for dealing with Richard Parker teach us about confronting the fearsome creatures in our lives?
7. Besides the loss of his family and possessions, what else did Pi lose when the *Tsimtsum* sank? What did he gain?
8. Nearly everyone experiences a turning point that represents the transition from youth to adulthood, albeit seldom as traumatic as Pi's. What event marks your coming of age?
9. 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?
10. Why did Pi at first try so hard to save Richard Parker?

11. Pi imagines that his brother would have 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?

12. Is *Life of Pi* a tragedy, romance, or comedy?

13. Do you agree with Pi's opinion that a zoo is more like a suburb than a jail?

14. How did you react to Pi's interview by the Japanese transport ministers? What is the alternative (animal-free) version of the story? Which story do you believe and why?

15. The opening scene occurs after Pi's ordeal has ended. Would you say that this novel has a happy ending? How does the grown-up version of Pi contrast with his little-boy scenes