

**ENGLISH HL 17 May 2025**

**GRADE 12 LITERATURE NOTES ON: Life of Pi - `Part 2**

|  |
| --- |
| **Symbols, Style and Authors Note** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pi Patel**  | Not just a shortened version of Piscine. An allegorical figure with multiple levels of meaning.  = value of the circumference of a circle (related to the circle of life) – representing eternity. This could also be linked to endless ocean that surrounds Pi - hopeless situation. Pi = Irrational recurring number.Pi is also an informal British term meaning “pious”. (Devoutly religious)  |
| **Piscine**  | Piscine is related to “fish” in English as well as a famous “pool” (Piscine Molitor) in France. “Pissing” – exposed to incessant teasing which actually built his character which was important for survival. |
| **The colour orange**  | Hope and survival. All survival equipment (whistle, life jackets ..-orange) Orange - Colour of Hinduism & Richard Parker. Rising and setting of the sun- Pi thanks God for a new day and at the end of the day he thanks God for protecting him for another day. The orangutan represents Pi’s mother who is seen as Pi’s protector. Failed flare- only negative thing that is orange. All items are bright orange at the beginning but as the colour fades so too does Pi’s hope of survival. |
| **The colour green**  | Islam, growth, fertility, nature and Algae Island.  |
| **Tsimtsum**  | Name of the ship. The word “tsimtsum” (or tzimtzum) describes an idea derived from the Jewish Kabbalah teachings of Isaac Luria who is a mystic and a rabbi. This idea describes the process of creation. Tzimtzum is a word used to describe “empty space”. The belief is that God retracted (removed) his light in order to create a space for finite things (like humans) to develop. Through experiences (hardships), we grow in our faith and independence. Pi experiences this growth in his journey.  |
| **Algae Island****Garden of Eden** **Carnivorous Island****Meerkat Island** | The Garden of Eden – Biblical reference, offers Pi food, water and other essentials but in reality, it could kill him (the “forbidden fruit” with the teeth inside). The surface turns acidic at night and will eventually kill him so he decides to leave. The harsh lesson that Pi learns on algae island makes him aware of the need to distinguish between a true and a shallow faith; he is prepared to choose the true faith despite the greater suffering that he knows will ensue. N.B Richard Parker never sleeps on the island but rather in the lifeboat. |

**Activity 1 -Symbols**

1. **Pi**

An allegorical figure with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ levels of meaning.

 Represents a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of a circle (related to the \_\_\_\_\_\_ of life) – representing eternity and it is an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ recurring number.

Pi is an informal British term meaning \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (Devoutly religious)

“Pissing” – exposed to incessant teasing – built his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Colour Orange**

Symbol of Hope and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ All survival equipment (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) Which Religion is associated with the colour orange? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The only orange item with negative connotations is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As the colour fades so too does Pi’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_of being rescued.

1. **Colour Green**

Which religion is represented by the colour green? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Tzimtzum is a word meaning that God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_his light in order to create a space for finite things (like humans) to develop.

1. **Algae Island**

Makes reference to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The Island offers Pi \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ but it turns \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at night so Pi needs to leave.

**Style**

Style refers to how the writer tells the story. In this case, Martel varies the narration of the story from the adult Pi, young Pi and the fictitious author. Each of these narrations presents an observation and view of the story.

The use of the first-person narrator - Pi, recounting his journey at sea, for example, makes the story authentic and therefore believable. This conversational style is also accessible to the reader as it allows the reader to experience the story as well.

Martel uses humour to create interest. An example of this is his account of Pi’s interaction with the two Mr Kumars. The humour allows the reader to connect with Pi. Think also of his “training” of his teachers and peers to change the pronunciation of his name.

|  |
| --- |
| **For example, consider the following:** “Salt-water boils – red, angry, disfiguring – where a leprosy of the high seas, transmitted by the water that soaked me. Where they burst, my skin was exceptionally sensitive; accidentally rubbing an open sore was so painful I would gasp and cry out.” (Chapter 64 page 191) Take note of the use of colour, imagery, touch, emotive words, etc. used in this paragraph. How does this contribute to Pi’s feelings at this point in the novel?  |

 The use of **varied imagery** enhances the reading experience. The imagery is used to **stretch the reader’s imagination** and create a **sensory experience**. For example, he captures both **beauty and danger** in his description of the **algae island**. In many ways, this **links** to the **theme of the nature of the storytelling** – **the better story** is the one that people enjoy more.

* The author uses **particular language** that relates to **animal psychology** and **nautical jargon** (vocabulary specific to sailing). This creates **credibility** and therefore makes the story more **believable**. As the story unfolds, take note of how **diction** (word choice) is used to create **tone** and **mood.**

The use of **varied fonts** differentiates the **two narrators** and the **dialogue** between the **Japanese officials**. The **roman (upright font)** is used for **Pi’s narration** and for his interview in Part Three. **Italic font** is used to express the **author’s** observations. In Part Three the **cursive font** represents the **Japanese dialogue** between the sceptical officials, so that Pi cannot understand them.

**Activity 2- Style**

The narrators are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Martel makes use of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_narrator - Pi, recounting his journey at sea, for example, this makes the story \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and therefore believable.

A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ style is also accessible to the reader as it allows the reader to experience the story as well.

Martel uses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to create interest.

The author uses particular language that relates to­­­­ ­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vocabulary specific to sailing). This creates \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and therefore makes the story more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The use of varied fonts differentiates the two \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the dialogue between the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ officials.

| **Author’s Note**  |
| --- |
| **Summary** | **Analysis & Themes** |
| An italicized section precedes Chapter 1. This section is written as if by Yann Martel himself, but it is actually part of the novel told by a fictional Canadian author. The author says that he had published two earlier books which were ignored, and he went to Bombay, India to clear his mind and try to write again. This was his second trip to India.  | With this Author’s Note Martel immediately introduces the idea of using **alternate stories** to describe the **same reality**, an idea that will apply to religion and Pi’s accounts of his survival. The fictional author is very similar to Martel himself, who was also Canadian, had previously published two unsuccessful novels, and went to India for inspiration. |
| The Portugal book quickly lost momentum and sputtered out. The author felt desperate and depressed, wondering what to do with his life next. He left Bombay and travelled to southern India, eventually arriving in the town of Pondicherry. Pondicherry had once been ruled by the French Empire (as opposed to most of the rest of India, which was ruled by Britain), but the town had gained its independence decades before.  | The idea of storytelling itself is worked throughout the novel’s complex framework. Martel is writing as a fictional version of himself, who is writing as an adult Pi remembering his youth. Pondicherry’s uniqueness in India makes it an ideal setting for Pi’s blending of religions and philosophies. |
| In a local coffee house, the author met an old man named Francis Adirubasamy. Mr. Adirubasamy offered to tell the author a story “that will make you believe in God.” The author accepted the challenge, and he took notes on Mr. Adirubasamy’s story. The author then returned to Canada and found the protagonist of Mr. Adirubasamy’s story, Mr. Patel. The author began visiting Mr. Patel and taking notes.  | From the start Martel encourages us to suspend our disbelief and accept “the better story” over “dry, yeastless factuality” – ideas that will be threaded throughout the book. He is basically inventing a different origin story for *Life of Pi*, choosing a more interesting tale than the gruelling, unexciting work of writing every day. |
| Mr. Patel showed the author old newspaper clippings about the events of the story, and also let him read his diary. Many months later, the author received a recording and transcript from the Japanese Ministry of Transport, confirming Mr. Patel’s tale. The author agrees that it is “a story to make you believe in God.” He says that he has written the novel in the first person, as through Mr. Patel’s voice. He ends with some acknowledgements, including Mr. Patel and the novelist Maocyr Scliar, thanking him “for the spark of life.”  | Francis Adirubasamy introduces the important theme of religion with his claim. After *Life of Pi*’s success Martel was criticized for taking the idea (a castaway alone with a wild cat) from Scliar’s book *Max and the Cats*, but Martel claimed that he had only read a review of Scliar’s novel, not the novel itself. The two works are very different, and Scliar himself dropped his plagiarism accusations eventually. |

**Activity 3 – Authors Note**

The fictional author is similar to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_who is also Canadian and suffered from writer’s block. Francis Adirubasamy introduces the important theme of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.Mr Patel showed the author old \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_about the events of the story Pi lets him read his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Many months later, the author received a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from the Japanese Ministry of Transport, confirming Mr. Patel’s tale.