

Summer Reading English 12th College Prep - *Life of Pi*

Life of Pi is a novel by Yann Martel that addresses such powerful and all-encompassing issues regarding the nature of faith, friendship and fiction. Martel explores these questions through the eyes of a devoutly religious boy from India nicknamed Pi who is stranded on a lifeboat with a 450-pound tiger. Pi uses his knowledge and experiences with wild animals to secure an uneasy peace with the tiger in an effort to ensure his own survival. The novel cleverly blends religious exploration, practical zoo keeping advice, meditation on the nature of truth, with a shipwreck survival tale.

As you read, explore, and experience the novel, write in your books. Underline pivotal quotations and particularly powerful phrases and passages. Write your comments or questions in the margins. Your assignment, which is due the second week of class, is to compile a double-sided journal that will work to illuminate major themes, attitudes, and literary devices employed throughout the text.

While this novel and journaling assignment may be challenging, it will also be fun and enlightening. Enjoy the reading experience!

***Life of Pi* by Yann Martel**

As you read *Life of Pi*, respond to the text in a double sided journal using the following format. Create a document with two columns. For each category, or topic, list appropriate examples and evidence from the text with page numbers on the left side of the page and commentary about the text on the right side of the page. Include a minimum of five entries for each of the five required categories.

The journal categories must be in the following order:

1. Attitude toward self, narrator
2. Attitude toward life and existence
3. Imagery to create tone
4. Use of diction (word choice) to create tone
5. Theme

Example of a journal entry

The following example demonstrates how an entry should look and also what information a response should contain. The cited page is for example only; you may not use this entry in your own journal. However, tones, themes, images, and attitudes may be replicated in your commentary.

Category: Attitude toward self, narrator

"I am a person who believes in form, in the harmony of order...we must give things a meaningful shape...that's one thing I hate about my nickname, the way that number runs on forever. It's important in life to conclude things properly" (Martel 285).

Pi's obsession with "form" and "the harmony of order" explains why religion appeals so strongly to him. He finds great importance in concluding things "properly." Pi is essentially asking what kind of life would we be leading if, when it was over, we simply died and remained dead to rot for eternity? Pi hopes and believes that there is more. He believes what he is told about afterlives and moral judgment because he is afraid of his life ending in a pointless and almost anticlimactic manner. Pi's obsession with closure can also be found in the founder of almost any religion to have ever been preached throughout history.