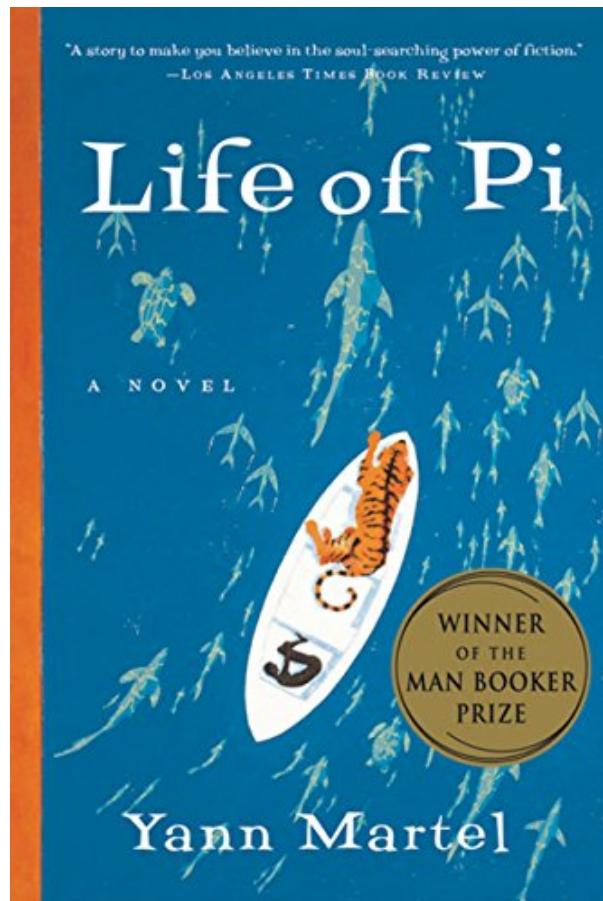


LIFE OF PI BY YANN MARTEL



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Life of Pi

A NOVEL



WINNER
OF THE
MAN BOOKER
PRIZE

Yann Martel

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Amazon.com Review

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An award winner in Canada (and winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize), Life of Pi, Yann Martel's second novel, should prove to be a breakout book in the U.S. At one point in his journey, Pi recounts, "My greatest wish--other than salvation--was to have a book. A long book with a never-ending story. One that I could read again and again, with new eyes and fresh understanding each time." It's safe to say that the fabulous, fablelike Life of Pi is such a book. --Brad Thomas Parsons

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A fabulous romp through an imagination by turns ecstatic, cunning, despairing and resilient, this novel is an impressive achievement "a story that will make you believe in God," as one character says. The peripatetic Pi (ne the much-taunted Piscine) Patel spends a beguiling boyhood in Pondicherry, India, as the son of a zookeeper. Growing up beside the wild beasts, Pi gathers an encyclopedic knowledge of the animal world. His curious mind also makes the leap from his native Hinduism to Christianity and Islam, all three of which he practices with joyous abandon. In his 16th year, Pi sets sail with his family and some of their menagerie to start a new life in Canada. Halfway to Midway Island, the ship sinks into the Pacific, leaving Pi stranded on a life raft with a hyena, an orangutan, an injured zebra and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. After the beast dispatches the others, Pi is left to survive for 227 days with his large feline companion on the 26-foot-long raft, using all his knowledge, wits and faith to keep himself alive. The scenes flow together

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From Library Journal

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The son of a zookeeper, Pi Patel has an encyclopedic knowledge of animal behavior and a fervent love of stories. When Pi is sixteen, his family emigrates from India to North America aboard a Japanese cargo ship, along with their zoo animals bound for new homes.

The ship sinks. Pi finds himself alone in a lifeboat, his only companions a hyena, an orangutan, a wounded zebra, and Richard Parker, a 450-pound Bengal tiger. Soon the tiger has dispatched all but Pi, whose fear, knowledge, and cunning allow him to coexist with Richard Parker for 227 days while lost at sea. When they finally reach the coast of Mexico, Richard Parker flees to the jungle, never to be seen again. The Japanese authorities who interrogate Pi refuse to believe his story and press him to tell them "the truth." After hours of coercion, Pi tells a second story, a story much less fantastical, much more conventional--but is it more true?

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- Great product!

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Most helpful customer reviews

556 of 613 people found the following review helpful.

Definitely Worth A Read

By A Reader

I passed this book up perhaps dozens of times in the bookstore, before finally relenting. From the description on the back of the dust jacket, it just did not seem like a story that would interest me. Plus, several of the review snippets on the book -- essentially praising the author for making a book with such a spare story into a great novel -- seemed to me a little like damning with faint praise.

As it turns out, I was half right. I didn't like the story very much. Well, actually, I very much liked the first hundred pages or so, which took place on land and described our protagonist; a young Indian son-of-a-zookeeper. But I found the story thereafter that took place at sea to be a little too slowly paced for my tastes. And some of the gore -- particularly the detailed discussion of the butchering of various sea fish and animals -- was too repetitive and, well, gross.

But, it turns out, the story of a boy on a boat with a tiger is not really what the novel is "about" at all. Instead, it's a novel that uses its backstory to ask a straightforward question: Do we need stories and fables to believe in God? (SPOILERS follow.)

At the end of this novel, we are confronted squarely with enduring questions about the limits of faith. How can we believe in God when a wonderful, kind, vegan, pious boy endures tragedy for no good reason? How can that boy continue to believe in God when he witnesses, first hand, how human nature emerges in its cruelest form as 4 castaways on a life boat essentially turn into animals in less than 24 hours. How can he believe in God when he watches helplessly as his mother is brutally murdered for no discernable reason? And how can any of us believe in God when extraordinary measures turn this gentle, pious boy into a murderer himself? Can we find God, this novel asks, solely in the "dry, yeastless, factuality" of this everyday world, where God seemingly refuses to intervene?

The answer, the boy decides, is that we cannot. We need the stories, the fables. So the boy spins a yarn that we are told, "will make you believe in God" -- a phrase that seems filled with hope and faith in the book's first chapter but drenched in irony in its final chapter.

It is interesting to read the other Amazon reviews -- many of which are simply outstanding. But it appears that many of you take away from this novel a sense of spirituality and view it as a faith-reaffirming book. I must respectfully disagree. In fact, it is a book that is very pessimistic about faith and about the legends that various faiths use to help themselves believe. Not that it is entirely bleak about faith; as Pi tells us, to ignore or doubt the fables and doubt the existence of God, "is to miss the better story," and to live a life that, at least in Pi's view, is hardly worth living. (And Pi practices what he preaches -- actively observing multiple faiths even years after his horrible experience.) Still, the final message -- that "the story with the animals is better," and "so it goes with God" is, in some senses, heartbreaking, and hardly faith-affirming.

Still, a novel that makes you think about such things is difficult to criticize merely because its conclusions might be somewhat pessimistic. And if you're afflicted with the type of mind that likes to continue to mull books over after you've put them down, this one will not disappoint.

Or, maybe it's just a book about a boy and a tiger on a boat, in which case it's probably not worth reading. (Insert smiley face.)

208 of 233 people found the following review helpful.

The Unbelievable Truth

By Paul McGrath

That Pi is the nickname of the main character and narrator of this tale is only the first little tidbit to digest in this delicious smorgasbord of a novel. Pi the number, you see, goes on to infinity, so Pi the person, it can be reasonably assumed, does the same. But there's so much more than this, it's almost impossible to get your mind around it.

As everybody already knows, the plot has to do with Pi, a sixteen-year old Indian boy who practices three religions, and who gets shipwrecked in the Pacific Ocean on the way to Canada with his emigrant family. He

is the sole human survivor, but unfortunately--or fortunately as it turns out--not the sole survivor. On the lifeboat with him are a 450 pound tiger and several other animals, and within a day or so, a 450 pound tiger. The bulk of the novel has to do with the story of his survival, not only from the catastrophic wreck, but from the almost surreal horror of being confined in a ridiculously small space with one of the most dangerous animals on the earth.

For the rich thematic nature of this novel come into bloom, this aspect of the story must be entirely believable, and I'm here to tell you, it is. This is no Tom Robbins nonsense in which all living things get along simply because they are too cool for reality, this is nail-bitingly realistic, and nothing is left out. In fact, if you're in this for the pure adventure of it, you can't do much better.

Young Pi has a lot of things to think about. First, there is the fact that his family has suddenly disappeared forever. Then, there is the food and water problem. Finally, there is, well, the tiger problem. Should he try to kill it? How? With a knife, a rope, a flare gun? What if he only wounds it? Can he make it go away? Can he somehow live with it? He manages, in a clever way, but just barely. His relationship with the tiger can be described as no better than uneasy even on the best days.

His survival at sea, from the food and water he must meticulously procure, to the sharks he must avoid, to the storms he must suffer through, to the eruption of boils on his body, and many, many other tribulations, are carefully and realistically portrayed. As are his emotions, which range from terror, loneliness, sadness, despair . . . and hope. The experience he relates is nothing less than fascinating, and there are a multitude of surprising--and entirely credible--revelations. He endures this for 272 days before he finally washes up in Mexico.

But here is where it really gets interesting. See, nobody believes the business about the tiger, which unceremoniously took off the moment it and Pi hit the beach. Oh, they believe he's a sixteen-year old Indian boy who somehow manages to be standing on the coast of Mexico after being shipwrecked in the Pacific Ocean somewhere between Manila and Midway--they have to believe that, he's standing there--but that there is a 450 pound tiger at loose and undetected in the jungles of Mexico? No way! Can't be!

So Pi tells them another story. One that is more believable. Far more believable, in that it involves men only, and even better, men acting brutally towards one another. But neither story can be proved, one way or the other.

What we have, therefore, is a treatise on the nature of truth, and on a far deeper level, the nature of faith. Don't go back and look for clues in order to figure out which of Pi's stories are true: you won't be able to. The point is this: it is a matter of choice. One can choose to believe either one. Just as one can choose to have faith. Or choose not to.

Pretty heavy-duty, no doubt about it, but there is a whole lot of other great stuff, too, and you'll find yourself twirling the possibilities around in your brain for days. By its end you realize that just about everything in the novel is symbolic of something, seemingly, although there are not always clear answers. The tiger, for example, might be God, but I'm not absolutely sure about that. Arguably, he saved Pi, in that he kept his mind occupied and off the horrible contemplation of his fate. Also, there is the nature of it, which is beautiful, undeniable, and under the circumstances, all-powerful. Of course, it must also be fed, perhaps, or sacrificed to. If not, both man and beast will die.

The boat, I think, orange and white, represents Hinduism. Pi could not have survived the elements without the boat, but over time it becomes weather-beaten, and he knows he can't live on it forever. The island,

green, represents Islam. Pi finds great succor on the island and is brought back to life by it, but discovers that unless he conforms to its laws strictly, it will kill him. Christianity, I think, is the blue ocean, unfathomably deep, mysterious, and teeming with life, but loaded with deadly, dangerous creatures. His survival depended on all three, a point which is reinforced by Pi's life pre- and post-disaster, in that he worshipped God as God is manifested in all three religions.

You could philosophize about this type of thing for days, I suppose, and have a lot of fun doing so, but the main thing to remember is that above all else, it's a great yarn, told by a warm, engaging, and clever narrator. That's the main thing. But in all respects, this is first class literature.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Beautifully written. Very descriptive.

By Elizabeth B

I bought this book for my daughter because she had to read it for her high school English class. Now, it is important to tell you that my daughter and I are very close and prior to this she absolutely hated reading. I have tried for years to help her find a book that would hold her attention, but have had no luck. She hadn't seen the movie "Life of Pi" and had no interest in the subject matter so she was especially dreading this particular book. I had seen the movie and knew it was a fascinating story so I told her to keep an open mind, but I feared that every night would be a battle to get her to read the assignments. You can imagine how pleasantly surprised I was when she fell in love with Life of Pi. She said she loved Yann Martel's descriptive writing and that it was the first book that she had read that really helped her visualize what was happening in the story. She was excited to tell me everyday what she had read & what was happening with Pi. Some days she was confused, some days sad, some days hopeful. A friend of hers let the "twist" at the end slip, but that only intrigued her more and seemed to make her read more carefully into it. Even though I've seen the movie and know the story, hearing her talk about how much she was enjoying the book made me want to read the it too. So I did. Yann Martel is an amazing wordsmith. In Life of Pi, he tells a beautifully written, exciting, thought provoking story of physical and emotional survival.

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Once again, checking out habit will certainly consistently give valuable perks for you. You may not require to invest lots of times to review guide Life Of Pi By Yann Martel Simply reserved numerous times in our spare or downtimes while having dish or in your office to check out. This Life Of Pi By Yann Martel will show you new point that you could do now. It will certainly assist you to improve the high quality of your life. Event it is just an enjoyable publication **Life Of Pi By Yann Martel**, you could be happier and also much more enjoyable to appreciate reading.

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