

**Seven million readers can't be wrong. What makes *The Life of Pi* so special?**

### The book and its author

*The Life of Pi* tells the story of Pi, a teenage boy from India, who finds himself trapped in a lifeboat in the Pacific Ocean with a tiger. It is the third book by the Canadian author Yann Martel, and was published in 2001. It has sold seven million copies worldwide, won several prizes and been translated into 41 languages. Yann Martel is the son of a diplomat and spent his childhood in Costa Rica, Canada, France and Mexico. After finishing university in Canada, he spent two years travelling round India and then decided to be a writer.

### The plot

At the start of the book, we learn about Pi's childhood in Pondicherry in India. His father owns the city zoo and the family home is in the zoo. When they aren't at school, Pi and his brother help their father at the zoo and he learns a lot about animals. Pi is very interested in religion. His family are Hindu, but he is curious about Christianity and Islam too and decides to believe in all three religions.

When Pi is 16, his parents decide to close the zoo and move to Canada. They sell some of the animals to zoos in North America and the family travel by ship to Canada taking the animals with them. On the way, there is a terrible storm and the ship sinks. Sadly, Pi's family and the sailors all die in the storm, but Pi lives and finds himself in a lifeboat with a hyena, zebra, orang-utan and an enormous tiger. At first, Pi is scared of the animals and jumps into the ocean. Then he remembers there are sharks in the water and decides to climb back into the lifeboat. One by one, the animals in the lifeboat kill and eat each other, till only Pi and the tiger are left alive. Luckily for Pi, there is some food and water on the lifeboat, but he soon needs to start catching fish. He feeds the tiger to stop it killing and eating him. He also uses a whistle and his knowledge of animals to control the tiger and show it that he's boss.

Pi and the tiger spend 227 days in the lifeboat. They live through terrible storms and the burning heat of the Pacific sun. They are often hungry and ill. Sometimes, Pi finds comfort in his three religions, but sometimes he feels sad and lonely. Finally, they arrive at the coast of Mexico, but you will have to read the book to find out what happens in the end!

### What do the reviewers think?

'It's a great book and I couldn't stop reading it, but I didn't want it to end either! As you read, you share Pi's emotional journey through hope, despair, exhaustion, loneliness and joy. There's one chapter where Pi sings "Happy Birthday" to his mother on the day that he guesses is her birthday, even though he thinks she is dead. It's a heart-breaking moment and it made me want to cry.'

Alex, 15

'I found some sections of the book very boring and slow. For me, there were too many chapters without any action and just long explanations of Pi's thoughts or his memories. Also, to be honest, I found the plot really unrealistic. I think the tiger would have eaten Pi straight away!'

Danny, 16

'What a fascinating book! I enjoyed the story, but I also learnt a lot about animal psychology, religion and how to survive a shipwreck (you never know, it might happen to you one day!). I would recommend this book to anyone, old or young, men and women. It's a good read!'

Paula, 18

Robin Newton

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