

Summer Reading Assignment

This summer, you will complete three tasks with *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel. You will:

1. Actually **read** the book. Every page.
2. Annotate for **theme** as you go, specifically the three themes listed here.
3. Analyze the plot in terms of the archetypal **hero's journey** as outlined below.

Details:

- Acquire whatever format of the book works for you—hard copy or digital—just be sure you can easily annotate and show those annotations to your teacher in August.
- You will reference your annotations during in class discussions and assignments in the first week of school.
- You will also take an objective test over the novel in the first week of school.

Themes in *Life of Pi*:

As you read, you will annotate your book. If you are not sure how to annotate, start by reviewing this link: [How to Annotate](#). In addition to annotating for interesting details, symbols, significant passages etc., you are specifically to mark passages in the book that pertain to the three themes below. Be sure to code your annotations to match these three ideas (using different colored highlighters, marking passages with a letter or symbol to correspond with the theme, using colored sticky notes/tabs, etc.).

- **Faith and Religion** – Pi Patel, while struggling for survival in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, faces both physical and mental hardships. How does religion and/or faith factor into his experience of survival and ability to overcome these hardships? What conclusions does Pi draw regarding different world religions and his own personal faith?
- **Duality** – Duality is the idea that all humans have two contradictory selves: the primal and the civil. Every person has to contend with these two competing aspects of the personality. The primal side is animalistic, savage, and willing to do the necessary things to keep us alive. The civil side is shaped by our parents, society, and the rules that keep us a part of the larger community. Ultimately, we need both to survive and thrive in the world. As you read, pay attention to how Pi exhibits these two different sides.
- **Coming of Age/Maturity** – Growing up and maturing (mentally or physically) is a progression; it's not something that happens to a child overnight. When a child loses his innocence, he gains awareness and understanding of the world in which he lives. Examine Pi's progression over the course of the novel. Annotate examples when Pi, through experiences and mental struggles becomes an adult and learns to understand the world in which he exists. Focus closely on the passages when he is on the raft.

Before starting the book, read this page and keep these ideas in mind as you read.

Honor Code Reminder: Summer reading assignments must be completed individually and without the use of unauthorized online sources (including AI) or study aids. Students will submit their work on Turnitin.com for plagiarism and AI detection. Students who commit an infraction of the Honor Code will receive a grade of zero on the assignment, an N in conduct for this semester in Honors 10th Grade Literature, and an administrative referral.

Examining the Hero's Journey in *Life of Pi*

Archetypes are patterns that exist in the literature and stories of all cultures and time periods. These patterns exist in our stories because they are tied to our deepest unconscious understanding of our world. For example, many myths about the beginning of the universe include a great flood that represents a cleansing and rebirth for mankind. One of the most common archetypes in literature is known as the **Monomyth**—the Hero's Journey. Click on the link below to watch a short video and review the characteristics of the Hero's Journey below. Then use the document on the next page to complete an outline of Pi's Journey.

Watch this first: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhk4N9A0oCA>

Characteristics of the Hero's Journey

1. The hero is naïve and inexperienced.
2. The hero meets monsters or monstrous men.
3. The hero has a strange, wise being as a mentor.
4. The hero yearns for the beautiful lady who is sometimes his guide or inspiration.
5. The hero must go on a journey, learn a lesson, change in some way, and return home.
6. The hero often crosses a body of water or travels on a bridge.
7. The hero is born and raised in a rural setting away from cities.
8. The origin of the hero is mysterious or the hero loses his/her parents at a young age, being raised by animals or a wise guardian.
9. The hero returns to the land of his/her birth in disguise or as an unknown.
10. The hero is special, one of a kind. He/ she might represent a whole nation or culture.
11. The hero struggles for something valuable and important.
12. The hero has help from divine or supernatural forces.
13. The hero has a guide or guides.
14. The hero goes through a rite of passage or initiation, an event that marks a change from an immature to a more mature understanding of the world.
15. The hero has a loyal band of companions.
16. The hero makes a stirring speech to his/ her companions.
17. The hero engages in tests or contests of strength (physical or mental) and shows pride in his/her excellence.
18. The hero suffers an unhealable wound, sometimes an emotional or spiritual wound from which the hero never completely recovers.

The next part of the assignment should be completed after you have finished reading the book.

Do not consult online sources for "answers;" doing so is plagiarism.

Simply analyze the book according to your own understanding.

The Hero's Journey in *Life of Pi*

Instructions: **Open a separate word document** and in it respond to each of the prompts below with at least three sentences. Number your responses to correspond to the numbers below. You will submit this assignment digitally during the first week of school.

Stage 1: Ordinary World

This is where the Hero's exists before his present story begins, oblivious of the adventures to come. It's his safe place. His everyday life where we learn crucial details about our Hero, his true nature, capabilities and outlook on life. This anchors the Hero as a human, just like you and me, and makes it easier for us to identify with him and hence later, empathize with his plight.

Using the description above as a guide, describe Pi's Ordinary World. What crucial details do we learn about his true nature, capabilities, and outlook on life?

Stage 2: Call to Adventure

The Hero's adventure begins when he receives a call to action, such as a direct threat to his safety, his family, his way of life or to the peace of the community in which he lives. It may not be as dramatic as a gunshot, but simply a phone call or conversation but whatever the call is, and however it manifests itself, it ultimately disrupts the comfort of the Hero's Ordinary World and presents a challenge or quest that must be undertaken.

What is Pi's Call to Adventure? Why does he leave his safe place? How is Pi's comfort disrupted?

Stage 3: Refusal of The Call

Although the Hero may be eager to accept the quest, at this stage he will have fears that need overcoming. Second thoughts or even deep personal doubts as to whether or not he is up to the challenge. When this happens, the Hero will refuse the call and as a result may suffer somehow. The problem he faces may seem too much to handle and the comfort of home far more attractive than the perilous road ahead. This would also be our own response and once again helps us bond further with the reluctant Hero.

Does Pi have any fears about starting his journey? If so, what are they? How does Pi articulate this "refusal"?

Stage 4: Meeting the Mentor

At this crucial turning point where the Hero desperately needs guidance, he meets a mentor figure who gives him something he needs. He could be given an object of great importance, insight into the dilemma he faces, wise advice, practical training or even self-confidence. Whatever the mentor provides the Hero with it serves to dispel his doubts and fears and give him the strength and courage to begin his quest.

Who is Pi's Mentor? Could Pi have more than one mentor? What does the mentor give Pi? Is it a material object or something abstract?

Stage 5: Crossing the Threshold

The Hero is now ready to act upon his call to adventure and truly begin his quest, whether it be physical, spiritual or emotional. He may go willingly, or he may be pushed, but either way he finally crosses the threshold between the world he is familiar with and that which he is not. It may be

leaving home for the first time in his life or just doing something he has always been scared to do. However the threshold presents itself, this action signifies the Hero's commitment to his journey and whatever it may have in store for him.

At what point does Pi “cross the threshold”? What new world does he enter from which he cannot return unchanged?

Stage 6: Tests, Allies, Enemies

Now finally out of his comfort zone the Hero is confronted with an ever more difficult series of challenges that test him in a variety of ways. Obstacles are thrown across his path; whether they be physical hurdles or people bent on thwarting his progress, the Hero must overcome each challenge he is presented with on the journey towards his ultimate goal.

What obstacles does Pi have to overcome? How does he overcome them, and what does he gain through this process?

The Hero needs to find out who can be trusted and who can't. He may earn allies and meet enemies who will, each in their own way, help prepare him for the greater ordeals yet to come. This is the stage where his skills and/or powers are tested and every obstacle that he faces helps us gain a deeper insight into his character and ultimately identify with him even more.

List any allies (friends/helpers) and enemies that Pi may have.

Stage 7: Approach to The Inmost Cave

The inmost cave may represent many things in the Hero's story such as an actual location in which lies a terrible danger or an inner conflict which up until now the Hero has not had to face. As the Hero approaches the cave, he must make final preparations before taking that final leap into the great unknown.

What in Pi's journey could be considered his inmost cave?

(At the threshold to the inmost cave the Hero may once again face some of the doubts and fears that first surfaced upon his call to adventure. He may need some time to reflect upon his journey and the treacherous road ahead in order to find the courage to continue. This brief respite helps the audience understand the magnitude of the ordeal that awaits the Hero and escalates the tension in anticipation of his ultimate test.)

Stage 8: Ordeal

The Supreme Ordeal may be a dangerous physical test or a deep inner crisis that the Hero must face in order to survive or for the world in which the Hero lives to continue to exist. Whether it be facing his greatest fear or most deadly foe, the Hero must draw upon all of his skills and his experiences gathered upon the path to the inmost cave in order to overcome his most difficult challenge.

What could be considered Pi's Ordeal?

(Only through some form of "death" can the Hero be reborn, experiencing a metaphorical resurrection that somehow grants him greater power or insight necessary in order to fulfill his destiny or reach his journey's end. This is the high point of the Hero's story and where everything he holds dear is put on the line. If he fails, he will either die or live as he knows it will never be the same again.)

Stage 9: Reward (Seizing the Sword)

After defeating the enemy, surviving death and finally overcoming his greatest personal challenge, the Hero is ultimately transformed into a new state, emerging from battle as a stronger person and often with a prize. The Reward may come in many forms: an object of great importance or power, a secret, greater knowledge or insight, or even reconciliation with a loved one or ally. Whatever the treasure, which may well facilitate his return to the Ordinary World, the Hero must quickly put celebrations aside and prepare for the last leg of his journey.

What is Pi's reward?

Stage 10: The Road Back

This stage in the Hero's journey represents a reverse echo of the Call to Adventure in which the Hero had to cross the first threshold. Now he must return home with his reward but this time the anticipation of danger is replaced with that of acclaim and perhaps vindication, absolution or even exoneration. But the Hero's journey is not yet over, and he may still need one last push back into the Ordinary World. The moment before the Hero finally commits to the last stage of his journey may be a moment in which he must choose between his own personal objective and that of a Higher Cause.

Is there an instance in the novel that Pi experiences this? What is it?

Stage 11: Resurrection

This is the climax in which the Hero must have his final and most dangerous encounter with death. The final battle also represents something far greater than the Hero's own existence with its outcome having far-reaching consequences to his Ordinary World and the lives of those he left behind. If he fails, others will suffer and this not only places more weight upon his shoulders but in a movie, grips the audience so that they too feel part of the conflict and share the Hero's hopes, fears and trepidation. Ultimately the Hero will succeed, destroy his enemy and emerge from battle cleansed and reborn.

Is there a moment of resurrection that Pi experiences? Explain.

Stage 12: Return with The Elixir

This is the final stage of the Hero's journey in which he returns home to his Ordinary World a changed man. He will have grown as a person, learned many things, faced many terrible dangers and even death but now looks forward to the start of a new life. His return may bring fresh hope to those he left behind, a direct solution to their problems, or perhaps a new perspective for everyone to consider.

The final reward that he obtains may be literal or metaphoric. It could be a cause for celebration, self-realization or an end to strife, but whatever it is it represents three things: change, success and proof of his journey. The return home also signals the need for resolution for the story's other key players. The Hero's doubters will be ostracized, his enemies punished, and his allies rewarded. Ultimately the Hero will return to where he started but things will clearly never be the same again.

Describe Pi's return. What did he learn?