

## Making Sense of the Last Part of *Life of Pi*

*There is no single answer, no single perspective that is "correct" concerning my novel, or any other for that matter. But I did have a certain intent. Whether readers see and agree with my intent is entirely up to them. Any work of art is 50% the creator's. The other 50% comes from the reader's, viewer's, spectator's imagination. It's together, as a co-creation, that a work of art comes to life. So with Life of Pi. My intent, therefore, is only the expression of my starting point. Readers are welcome to start from there and wonder elsewhere.*

Yann Martel

### **Our Question:**

*So what exactly does Richard Parker represent or show us in the Life of Pi?*

This is the question that we have, as a group, decided that we would like to address. Of course your “all knowing” (NOT!!) teacher, could attempt to answer this biggie for you. And, as the comment Yann Martel provided when addressing the “Big Question” that the class two semesters ago had to answer, suggests, my answer to a toughie like this one wouldn’t be “the answer”—it would be “an” answer. Hopefully it would be a fairly good, well thought out, organized answer. But any answer to a question like this one can, by definition almost, only ever be one person’s response. Because this project requires us to put together material that is slippery, weird and at times contradictory—because this work is, in this respect, pretty “Post Modern”—there really can’t be “the” answer: there can only ever be what we manage to put together as individuals. So with this in mind...

### **Assignment question:**

In a short discussion explain Richard Parker’s role in “The Life Of Pi.”

### **Process:**

This is clearly a difficult question and like all difficult questions, it is probably more easily solved if a bunch of brains get together, consider what’s going on, share their thoughts, mull things over, collect up what they think is good, throw out what’s not so good, and then develop a theory. I have, to help us share our explanations set up a blog--a tool that really lends itself to the process of working together to respond to difficult questions. So let’s take advantage of this tool:

1. We will discuss this question in class a little, and then I am going to ask you to provide a blog entry in which you indicate what you think is going on in the book where the question for this assignment is concerned. I would also like you to use the blog to respond to two entries by other students. You can agree or disagree with them, or you could do things like confirming what someone else is saying and develop their response further. Or you might modify what someone else has come up with, or provide a further question or set of questions about what others are saying.

The idea behind this process is for you to develop the most thoughtful set of ideas that you can come up with not on your own, but with the help of the group. The understanding here is that the process of developing a good theory often involves attending to what others, and taking advantage of what they have to say about a topic. And there are lots of good minds in these two classes.

2. Having completed the blog process you will provide an in-class written discussion in which you present your answer to this question. This time around things will be a little different, in terms of the material that you will be able to bring to class: this time you will not be able to bring notes, but you will be able to bring the book. And this piece of writing will be developed in its entirety in class.

Timelines:

1. You must provide your first blog entry by the end of Friday December 16<sup>th</sup>.
2. You will then have until Midnight Tuesday December 20<sup>th</sup> to provide responses to two other people's ideas. You may do so well in advance of this date though.
3. The in-class portion of this assignment will be written on Wednesday December 21<sup>st</sup> and Thursday December 22<sup>nd</sup> on foolscap in class. You may only bring the text itself to this in-class assignment.

## Life Of Pi: Relationships Discussion

| Knowledge and Understanding   |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Understanding of key developments in <i>Life of Pi</i>  | Some understanding of developments evident but some characteristics not correct, or misunderstood | Understanding is evident but may be minor flaws evident                               | Clear understanding of events described in this text evident | Thorough understanding of events described evident                            |
| Knowledge of Key Issues included in <i>Life of Pi</i> (Religious Background)  | Some understanding Evident  | Understanding of ideas but some key elements necessary for understanding not included | Key components of religious background apparent              | Key components of religious background provided in a clear, efficient manner. |
| Thinking  |   |   |  |   |
| Identifies how Religious material appearing in first part of the book relates to events outlined in latter part of the book | Some understanding of relationship is evident but may not be explained clearly                    | Understanding evident, but not explained fully.                                       | Relationship is clearly explained.                           | Explanation is thorough, clear, efficient and easy-to-understand              |
| Communication   |   |   |  |   |
| Debate Structure  | Some elements of argument evident   | Most elements of a clear argument included  | Clear convincing argument presented                          | Compelling argument presented   |
| Use of Ordering Strategies  | Some order present but limited but focus problems evident   | Occasional but major breaks (trans. problems) evident                                 | Minor breaks (minor trans) in argument evident               | Organization strategy "transparent" ( <i>don't even notice it</i> )           |
| Inclusion of Examples Drawn From Text   | Examples are present but may not be the best for explanations being developed                     | Examples are present but not described clearly  | Examples are present and help explain topic                  | Examples are appropriate, and support ideas being developed efficiently       |
| <b>Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation</b>  | Errors present that hinder comprehension  | Errors present but do not interfere with understanding                                | Few errors present   | Only a minimal number of very minor errors present                            |
| Application   |   |   |  |   |
| Explanation of Effect   | Some evidence of position being presented evident   | Argument presented but with gaps  | Clearly expressed opinion                                    | Subtle, thoughtful argument presented in an efficient, easy-to-understand way |

**Comments:**

**Life Of Pi: Relationships Blog Entries**

|  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Knowledge and Understanding</b>                       |   |   |  |   |
| Understanding of key developments in <i>Life of Pi</i>   | Some understanding of developments evident but some characteristics not correct, or misunderstood | Understanding is evident but may be minor flaws evident                               | Clear understanding of events described in this text evident                   | Thorough understanding of events described evident                      |
| Information Presented Demonstrates Understanding of Text | Minimal information presented, understanding unclear.   | Information presented shows understanding but some gaps present also                  | Clearly has read text and discussion indicates understanding of events in text | Thorough understanding of text evident                                  |
| <b>Communication</b>                                     |   |   |  |   |
| Main ideas presented clearly and directly                | May include jargon and unnecessary language   | Ideas are evident but still may include some extra verbiage                           | Ideas are communicated clearly   | Clear, concise, efficient, easy-to-understand discussion.               |
| Use of Ordering Strategies                               | Some order present but limited but focus problems evident   | Occasional but major breaks (trans. problems) evident                                 | Minor breaks (minor trans) in argument evident                                 | Organization strategy "transparent" ( <i>don't even notice it</i> )     |
| Inclusion of Examples Drawn From Text                    | Examples are present but may not be the best for explanations being developed                     | Examples are present but not described clearly  | Examples are present and help explain topic                                    | Examples are appropriate, and support ideas being developed efficiently |
| <b>Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation</b>                 | Errors present that hinder comprehension  | Errors present but do not interfere with understanding                                | Few errors present   | Only a minimal number of very minor errors present                      |
| <b>Application</b>                                       |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Credibility of Thesis Presented</b>                   | Major problems, omissions in thesis. Simplistic discussion  | Thesis is reasonably thoughtful but major components of Book are still not considered | Thoughtful thesis that takes major developments in the book into consideration | Well supported thorough, sophisticated explanation of the problem.      |

**Comments:**