



**Western Cape
Government**

Education

TELEMATIC TEACHING 2017

**ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE
GRADE 12**

LEARNER RESOURCE

FOREWORD

Dear Grade 12 Learner

Welcome to the Telematics teaching and learning programme of 2017. We want to encourage you to make full use of this additional learning programme by attending all broadcasts, working with the presenters and doing additional work on your own at home. The purpose of the programme is not to replace your teacher. The presenters are expert teachers and have been specially selected. The success of the project and your success will depend on your level of participation and commitment before, during and after each broadcast. A useful site to visit is the Moodle website. There are a number of interactive activities to help you. Ask your teacher to show you how to log in.

Refer to the programme for the broadcast schedule.

Please bring the following to each broadcast:

- A note book and pen / pencil
- This learner resource booklet
- Your literature study texts when needed: poetry / Novel
- Your text book when needed for specific broadcasts

The lessons broadcasted from 2010-2014 have been recorded on DVD. These DVDs are available for learners and teachers from:

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I wish you well with your preparation for the end of year NSC examination. Success is within your grasp if you believe in yourself, apply your mind and work hard consistently.

F. Haffejee

SENIOR CURRICULUM PLANNER: ENGLISH

DATE: April 2017

Schedule for English HL

29 May	15:00 – 16:00	Grade 12	English HL	Life of Pi
1 June	16:00 – 17:00	Grade 12	English HL	Life of Pi
17 August	15:00 – 16:00	Grade 12	English HL	Poetry
24 August	15:00 – 16:00	Grade 12	English HL	Poetry

LESSON 1,2 – EHL – LIFE OF PI BY YANN MARTEL

A Plot Summary of *Life of Pi*

Below is an outline of the main events in the novel in chronological order. In other words, they have been written in the order in which they take place.

Read it through carefully and see if it matches the picture of the story you have in your mind.

1. The author figure tells us how his book came about:
 - How he travelled to India and his failed attempt at writing a novel
 - How in Pondicherry he met Mr Adirubasamy, from whom he first heard of Pi Patel
 - How in Toronto he tracked down Pi Patel, met him and came to tell his story
2. The adult Pi tells us of when he lived in Pondicherry with his parents and his brother, Ravi.
3. Pi tells us how he got the name Piscine and how it was changed to Pi.
4. The young Pi becomes a follower of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.
5. When Pi is a teenager his parents decide to emigrate from India to Canada.
6. The family leave India on a Japanese cargo ship, the *Tsimtsum*, heading across the Pacific.
7. They take many of their zoo animals with them, to sell them for a higher price in Canada.
8. Pi is woken by a loud noise in the night, goes onto the deck and finds that the ship is sinking.
9. Pi is tossed onto a lifeboat by sailors.
10. The ship goes down, taking his family with it; Pi is the only human survivor.
11. Pi finds he is sharing the lifeboat with a zebra, a hyena, an orangutan and a tiger, known by the name of Richard Parker.
12. Before long, the zebra, hyena and orangutan are dead; Pi finds himself alone with the tiger.
13. Pi finds a survival kit and learns skills that will keep him alive.
14. To keep himself alive, Pi has to supply the tiger with food and water or be eaten.
15. Pi suffers many things, including loss, grief, thirst, hunger, heat and cold; he faces dangers, such as those posed by storms, sharks and the tiger.
16. Pi and Parker discover a mysterious island of trees and meerkats.
17. Pi finds human teeth in the trees and begins to imagine that this is a man-eating island.
18. Pi and Richard Parker set off on the lifeboat again.
19. The boat washes up on the Mexican coast and the tiger disappears into the jungle.
20. Pi is rescued by villagers who take him to a hospital.

21. Pi is interviewed by two officials from the Japanese government who want to find out how and why the *Tsimtsum* sank.
22. Pi tells them the story we have read, but the men do not believe it.
23. He tells them a shorter, different account of what happened in which:
 - when the ship sinks he swims to a lifeboat
 - on the lifeboat he finds his mother, the cook and the sailor
 - the cook kills the sailor and Pi's mother
 - Pi later kills the cook and eats him
 - Pi is the only survivor when the boat washes up on the Mexican coast.
24. Pi asks the officials which story they prefer – it is the story of the tiger.

Questions about the plot summary

1. Which events, in your opinion, are the most important ones? Pick three from the list and write a few sentences explaining your reasons for choosing these events.
 2. Are there any key events that have been omitted and that, in your opinion, should have been included in this list? What are they and where in this list would you place them?
 3. Which event in the above list has not been placed in the correct chronological order?
- (Summary adapted from the Introduction to the 2015 Oxford University Press edition of Life of Pi)

Themes in *Life of Pi*

When we read a novel, we need to pay attention not only to the story, but also to find out more about **the book's themes**. A theme can be a **main idea** (or subject or topic) which the author wants to explore. A theme could also be a **message** the author wants to bring across to the reader.

The main themes of a novel are usually quite easy to spot. As we read the story, its plot, setting, dialogue and characters will bring to our attention certain themes.

If someone were to ask you "**What is Life of Pi about?**" you could reply by telling the story.

For example: It's about a boy whose family decide to move from India to Canada, but on the way, their ship sinks and the boy ends up in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger.

Alternatively, you could answer the question by listing some its themes.

For example: It's about survival – about physical, mental and spiritual survival in harsh conditions. It's also about religion and faith.

The trick here is to find the best words to name and describe the themes that you have come across in the book.

Now, if we ask the question "**What is Life of Pi about?**" we can put together a list of themes often mentioned:

- Survival / the will to survive
- The importance of stories
- Religion, faith and spirituality
- Science
- Truth and reality
- Territory
- Animals
- Man and Nature
- Madness
- Suffering
- Death and mortality
- Anthropomorphism

Questions about themes

1. Do you agree that the above ideas can all be considered themes of Life of Pi? (Are there any that you would (a) leave off the list, or (b) add to the list?)
2. Which of the themes above do you think is a main theme in the book? Pick three and give reasons for your answer.
3. Find a minor theme in the list that could be considered part of a bigger theme?

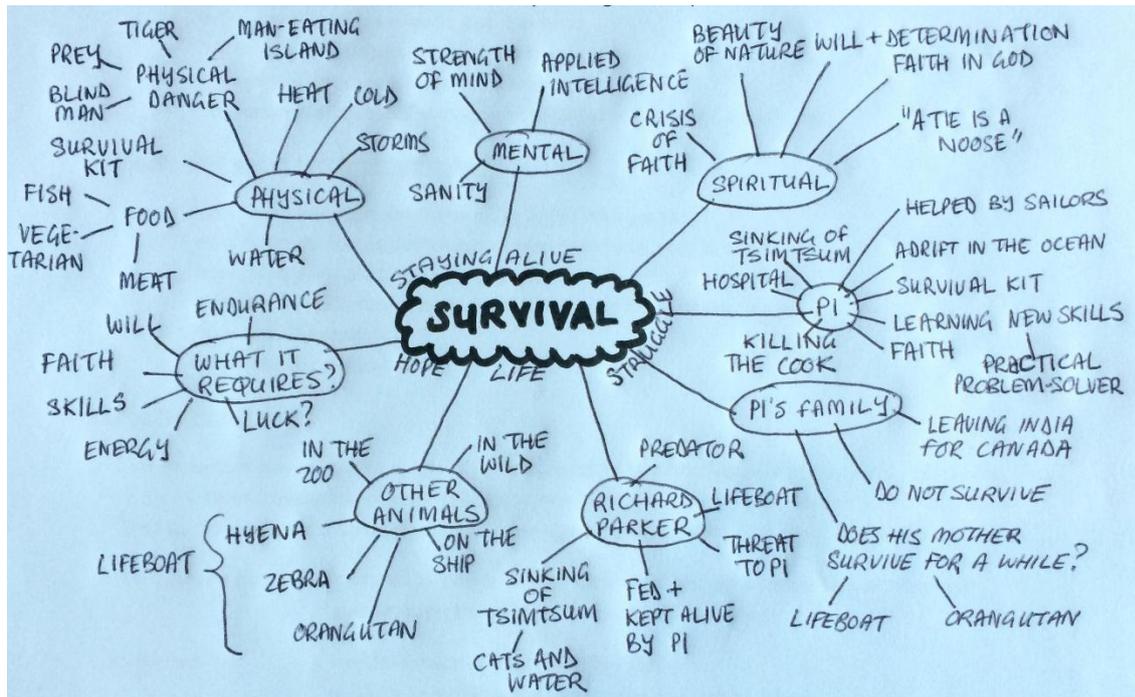
Taking it further: exploring a theme

Once you have identified a theme, you need to be able to take it further. You need to be able to do the following:

- give evidence of where the theme occurs in the novel (e.g. how is it introduced; how and where does it develop)
- see how the theme is shown in certain events, characters, symbols and settings
- show your understanding of the theme

You can do this as a list of bulleted points or you could draw a mind map. Both methods of exploring a theme are useful. (While doing this, keep your copy of the book close at hand.)

Here is an example of a mind map on **the theme of Survival**. This kind of mind map can help you in taking notes, in studying or even in planning essay in an examination.



Theme activity

1. Pick another one of the major themes of the book and, using your copy of Life of Pi, explore the theme by creating a mind map or a list of bulleted points.

Aspects of Narrative in Life of Pi

A) Narrative technique in Life of Pi.

The word **narrative** is a synonym for **story**. **Narrative technique** refers to **the way** in which someone tells a story.

When we look closely at a novel, we can consider the techniques the author has used in order to tell the story. There are many choices an author can make in deciding *how* to tell the story.

Some aspects of storytelling to consider when looking at narrative technique are:

- Who tells the story? Who is the narrator?
- Is there more than one narrator?
- How does the story begin? How does the story end?
- Is the story divided into parts and chapters?
- Are there any flashbacks or any flash forwards?
- Is there any foreshadowing of later events?
- Have any other forms of writing been included (e.g. a letter, a diary, etc.)

Questions about narrative technique

1. How many narrators are there in Life of Pi? Who are they?
2. Why do you think the author has chosen to include more than one narrator?

3. How many parts are there to the book?
4. Why do you think Martel decided to divide his book into sections?

Narrative voice

One important way of looking at Life of Pi is to consider the narrative voice in the novel. This refers to the narrator (the person or voice telling the story). In Life of Pi, it is important to look at narrative voice as there is more than one story and more than one storyteller.

The author's note: narrated by an author figure (who shares some similarities with the real author, Yann Martel, but is not exactly the same)

Part one: narrated mostly by the adult Pi Patel;
includes some chapters narrated by the author figure

Part two: narrated mostly by the adult Pi Patel

Part three: chapters 95 and 100 are narrated by the author figure;
excerpts from the verbatim transcript of an interview conducted by Mr Okamoto and Mr Chiba (written in dialogue using direct speech)

Questions about Narrative voice

1. How does the adult Pi Patel differ from the young Pi Patel in his role in the story?
2. How significant is the voice of the author figure in the story? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Who is the primary narrator? (Through whose voice do we hear most of the story?)

Narrative frames

What is a framed narrative?

- It is "a story within a story".
- The outer story provides a frame for the story inside it.
- It is possible to have many layers – a story within a story within a story. (Like the layers of an onion. This can also be seen, for example, in the film Inception, in which one dream unfolds inside another dream.)

Yann Martel makes use of a framed narrative. This is how he sets up the layered structure of his book:

- Martel is the real author of the novel *Life of Pi*.
- Martel's book begins with an author's note, narrated by an anonymous author figure.
- This creates the illusion that the book is factual or real, when in fact it is fictional.
- Then, within this frame, Pi Patel in the present narrates the story of his younger self.
- Then, alongside Pi's story, the author figure includes another story – a transcript of the interview between the two Japanese men and Pi in hospital.

Reflection: What did you think about the framed narrative of the book when you first read it?
(Were you surprised, intrigued, interested...? Could you follow what was happening?)

EXTRACT A

I was at the Indian Coffee House, on Nehru Street. It's one big room with green walls and a high ceiling. Fans whirl above you to keep the warm, humid air moving. The place is furnished to capacity with identical square tables, with its complement of four chairs. You sit where you can, with whoever is at a table. The coffee is good and they serve French toast. Conversation is easy to come by. And so, a spry, bright-eyed elderly man with great shocks of pure white hair was talking to me. I confirmed to him that Canada was cold and that French was indeed spoken in parts of it that I liked India and so on and so forth – the usual light talk between friendly, curious Indians and foreign backpackers. He took in my line of work with a widening of the eyes and a nodding of the head. It was time to go. I had my hand up, trying to catch my waiter's eye to get the bill.

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Then the elderly man said, "I have a story that will make you believe in God." I stopped waving my hand. But I was suspicious. Was this a Jehovah's Witness knocking at my door? "Does your story take place two thousand years ago in a remote corner of the Roman Empire?" I asked.

"No."

Was he some sort of Muslim evangelist? "Does it take place in seventh-century Arabia?"

"No, no. It starts right here in Pondicherry just a few years back, and it ends, I am delighted to tell you, in the very country you come from."

"And it will make me believe in God?"

"Yes."

"That's a tall order."

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"Not so tall that you can't reach."

My waiter appeared. I hesitated for a moment. I ordered two coffees. We introduced ourselves. His name was Francis Adirubasamy. "Please tell me your story," I said.

"You must pay proper attention," he replied.

"I will." I brought out pen and notepad.

"Tell me, have you been to the botanical garden?" he asked.

"I went yesterday."

"Did you notice the toy train tracks?"

"Yes, I did."

"A train still runs on Sundays for the amusement of the children. But it used to run twice an hour every day. Did you take note of the names of the stations?" **36**

"One is called Roseville. It's right next to the rose garden."

"That's right. And the other?"

"I don't remember."

"The sign was taken down. The other station was once called Zootown. The toy train had two stops: Roseville and Zootown. Once upon a time there was a zoo in the Pondicherry Botanical Garden."

He went on. I took notes, the elements of the story. "You must talk to him," he said, of the main character. "I knew him very, very well. He's a grown man now. You must ask him all the questions you want."

*Later, in Toronto, among nine columns of Patels in the phone book, I found him, the main character. My heart pounded as I dialled his phone number. **48** The voice that answered had an Indian lilt to its Canadian accent, light but unmistakable, like a trace of incense in the air. "That was a very long time ago," he said. Yet he agreed to meet. We met many times. He showed me the diary he kept during the events. He showed me the yellowed newspaper clippings that made him briefly, obscurely famous. He told me his story. All the while I took notes. Nearly a year later, after considerable difficulties, I received a tape and a report from the Japanese Ministry of Transport. It was as I listened to that tape that I agreed with Mr. Adirubasamy that this was, indeed, a story to make you believe in God.*

(628 WORDS)

QUESTIONS TO EXTRACT A

1.1) Where is the coffee house situated? (1)

1.2) Quote a THREE-word phrase that shows the coffee house is well-equipped. (2)

1.3) Refer to 'And so, a spry ...talking to me' (Line 6 – 7).

Evaluate the writers' use of language when describing Mr Aridubasamy. (3)

1.4) What do the two men first speak about? (2)

1.5) Refer to paragraph 1

- 1.5.1) At what point of their conversation does Mr Aridubasamy lean towards telling the narrator Pi's story? (2)
- 1.5.2) Quote to support your answer. (1)
- 1.6) Why is the narrator suspicious at first? (Line 14.) Discuss. (4)
- 1.7) What does Mr Aridubasamy mean when he says:
'Not so tall that you can't reach'? (Line 25.) (2)
- 1.8) Provide a suitable synonym for 'amusement' (line 35). (1)
- 1.9) Discuss the following excerpt with relevance to the theme of storytelling:
'Once upon a time there was a zoo in the Pondicherry Botanical Garden.'
He went on. I took notes, the elements of the story' (lines 42 – 44). (4)
- 1.10) Refer to lines 47 – 50 ('Later ... incense in the air').
- 1.10.1) How does the narrator feel when contacting Pi Patel? (2)
- 1.10.2) Name the figure of speech in line 49. (1)

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EXTRACT B

The reason death sticks so closely to life isn't biological necessity – it's envy. Life is so beautiful that death has fallen in love with it, a jealous, possessive love that grabs at what it can. But life leaps over oblivion lightly, losing only a thing or two of no importance, and gloom is but the passing shadow of a cloud. The pink boy also got the nod from the Rhodes Scholarship committee. I love him and I hope his time at Oxford was a rich experience. If Lakshmi, a goddess of wealth, one day favours me bountifully, Oxford is fifth on the list of cities I would visit before a I pass on, after Mecca, Varanasi, Jerusalem and Paris. **9**

I have nothing to say about my working life, only that a tie is a noose, and inverted though it is, it will hang a man nonetheless if he's not careful.

I love Canada. I miss the heat of India, the food, the house lizards on the walls, the musicals on the silver screen, the cows wandering the streets, the crows cawing, even the talk of cricket matches, but I love Canada. It is a great country much too cold for good sense, inhabited by compassionate, intelligent people with bad hairdos. Anyway, I have nothing to go home to in Pondicherry.

Richard Parker has stayed with me. I've never forgotten him. **18**
Dare I say I miss him? I do. I miss him. I still see him in my dreams. They are nightmares mostly, but nightmares tinged with love. Such is the strangeness of the human heart. I still cannot understand how he could abandon me so unceremoniously, without any sort of goodbye, without looking back even once. That pain is like an axe that chops at my heart.

The doctors and nurses at the hospital in Mexico were incredibly kind to me. And the patients, too. Victims of cancer or car accidents, once they heard my story, they hobbled and wheeled over to see me, they and their families, though none of them spoke English and I spoke no Spanish. **27**
They smiled at me, shook my hand, patted me on the head, left gifts of food and clothing on my bed. They moved me to uncontrollable fits of laughing and crying.

Within a couple of days I could stand, even make two, three steps, despite nausea, dizziness and general weakness. Blood tests revealed that I was anemic, and that my level of sodium was very high and my potassium low. My body retained fluids and my legs swelled up tremendously. I looked as if I had been grafted with a pair of elephant legs. My urine was a deep, dark yellow going on to brown. After a week or so, I could walk just about normally and I could wear shoes if I didn't lace them up. My skin healed, though I still have scars on my shoulders and back. **36**

The first time I turned a tap on, its noisy, wasteful, superabundant gush was such a shock that I became incoherent and my legs collapsed beneath me and I fainted in the arms of a nurse.

The first time I went to an Indian restaurant in Canada I used my fingers. The waiter looked at me critically and said, "Fresh off the boat, are you?" I blanched. My fingers, which a second before had been taste buds savouring the food a little ahead of my mouth, became dirty under **45** his gaze. They froze like criminals caught in the act. I didn't dare lick them. I wiped them guiltily on my napkin. He had no idea how deeply those words wounded me. They were like nails being driven into my flesh. I picked up the knife and fork. I had hardly ever used such instruments. My hands trembled. My sambar lost its taste.

(641 WORDS)

QUESTIONS TO EXTRACT B

- 2.1) Refer to line 8 and find a TWO-word phrase that is a euphemism for death. (2)
- 2.2) Who is Lakshmi? (1)
- 2.3) Refer to 'The reason death...shadow of a cloud' (lines 1 – 4).
Explore and comment on the writer's use of personification these lines. (4)
- 2.4) What does the speaker mean when he says 'favours me bountifully' (line 7)? (2)
- 2.5) Give TWO things that Pi misses about India (paragraph 3). (2)
- 2.6) In which country is the hospital that the speaker mentions? (1)
- 2.7) Refer to 'strangeness of ... heart' (line 21)
What is it that Pi finds strange? (3)
- 2.8) Refer to 'I looked as if I had been grafted ... legs' (lines 34 – 35)
Account for Pi's description. (3)
- 2.9) Refer to 'I blanched' (line 44).
- 2.9.1) What is the effect of the waiter's statement on the speaker? (1)
- 2.9.2) Why does Pi feel this way? (2)
- 2.10) How does Extract B effectively set the scene for the rest of the novel? (4)

[25]

MEMORANDUM

EXTRACT A

- 1.1) Nehru street. ✓ (1)
- 1.2) 'Furnished to capacity'. ✓✓ (1 mark for correct phrase and 1 for correct punctuation)(2)
- 1.3) 'Spry' and 'bright' suggest that he is lively and alert, as does 'sparkle in the eye'. (3)
- 1.4) They engage in small talk / general introductory questions – he mentions Canada's weather / language /like of India (ANY ONE for a second mark). ✓✓ (2)
- 1.5)
- 1.5.1) He realises the authors' line of work. The author calls for the bill (the author is about to leave). ✓✓ (2)
- 1.5.2) There is a 'widening of the eyes...head'. ✓ (1)
- 1.6) He thinks that the story will be a hoax. Subsequently, the deities mentioned in next few lines add to the scepticism one may go through when approached in this manner. He is also ready to leave and may be an atheist, so he does not want to waste time with something he has already been through. (Other valid /justified answers). ✓✓✓✓ (4)
- 1.7) He encourages the narrator to have "faith". He suggests that it is not impossible to believe / not impossible to believe the veracity of the story. ✓✓ (2)
- 1.8) Enjoyment / Entertainment. ✓ (1)
- 1.9) 'Once upon a time' is characteristic of fictional stories. It introduces a story, which is what Aridubasamy does. 'He went on' refers to him developing the story. 'I took notes' refers to the authors engaged in the story. 'The elements of the story' shows the author is aware of his craft; thinking about how it could be told. ✓✓✓✓ (4)
- 1.10)
- 1.10.1) He feels nervous; his heart pounded. ✓✓ (2)
- 1.10.2) Simile. ✓ (1)

[25]

EXTRACT B

- 2.1) 'pass on'. √√ (1 mark for knowing euphemism and 1 for correct quoting). (2)
- 2.2) The 'goddess of wealth' / A deity representing 'wealth'. √ (1)
- 2.3) 'Life' and 'death' are personified.
The one is envious of the other.
Life is described as a beauty.
This love is a possessive love. √√√√ (4)
- 2.4) To be very blessed, √ in this case – with riches. √ (2)
- 2.5) The heat / food / house lizards/ musicals/ cricket / cows wondering the streets /crows cawing (ANY TWO). √√ (2)
- 2.6) Mexico √ (1)
- 2.7) The relationship between Pi and Richard Parker is a close one. Even though a tiger is a dangerous animal /posed a threat in his life, he is surprised to find that he missed him.
√√√ (3)
- 2.8) 'Grafted' suggests that his human body has been linked / joined to elephant legs. His body has retained fluid and is swollen – these are physical extremities described here. √√√ (3)
- 2.9)
- 2.9.1) The statement causes shock/ horror/embarrassment /humiliation/ashamed, etc.√ (1)
- 2.9.2) He feels like a social outsider, and this is exacerbated by the waiter's comment on way of eating (his way of eating is normal to him). (2)
- 2.10) It refers to the move from India to Canada.
Indicates that he survives / does survive in the end/ suggests that he and Richard Parker survived.
Refers to his relationship with Richard Parker - and his emotional attachment. √√√√ (4)

[25]

Essay Questions

How to approach an essay question

Here are some pointers on the three stages of writing an essay: preparing to write, writing the essay, and checking your work.

A) In preparing to write an essay on a work of literature:

- make sure you have done the necessary revision and preparation beforehand;
- where you have a choice of questions, pick one that you understand and like, and about which you have enough things to write;
- look carefully at the precise way in which the question has been phrased;
- identify the instruction words (that tell you what to do) and the key content words (what to cover in your essay);
- make a mind map (or some rough notes) on points to include in your essay;
- Note: your approach to the essay will differ depending on whether you are writing an essay for a homework assignment or writing one in a test or an examination. *If you have the book with you, look for relevant sections of the novel and good quotations that you can use in supporting your main points (i.e. substantiating your essay).*

B) In writing the essay itself:

- first consider which of your ideas belong together – how might you develop the structure and progression of your essay (or your argument);
- write an introduction to your essay that clearly introduces the reader to what the essay is about;
- form each paragraph around one of the main points that you would like to focus on
- state this point clearly, elaborate where necessary, and support the point with relevant evidence from the book;
- try to make coherent and logical transitions from one paragraph to the next;
- finish with a clear conclusion in which you sum up the main points made in your essay.

C) In checking your work:

- Read through your essay a few times, editing, rewriting and polishing where necessary:
 - Have you indicated the title of the book with underlining or inverted commas?
 - Have you avoided, where possible, using the first person pronoun “I”?
 - Have you removed all vagueness and ambiguity?
 - Have you written in a suitable register, avoiding slang and colloquialisms?
 - Have you spelt the characters’ names and place names correctly?

Examples of essay questions

Here are some examples of possible essay questions on *Life of Pi*, gleaned from various sources such as gradesaver.com and sparknotes.com on the Internet.

First, read them through and consider, if you had a choice, which one you would choose and how you would respond to the question in your essay.

1. Both worship of God and survival are hugely important to Pi – which one does he attach more importance to? In your answer, consider both worship of God and survival.
2. What does Pi try to communicate through his choice of animals, other than the tiger, with whom he shares the lifeboat? Consider each of these animals and its significance in the novel.
3. In the *Life of Pi*, Martel tells the reader early in the novel “This story has a happy ending” (end of Chapter 36 and Part 1). In your essay, defend or challenge the validity of this statement. Be sure to support your position using the novel.
4. What is the significance of the stories behind how Pi and Richard Parker got their names?
5. Why does Pi give Richard Parker credit for his survival?
6. One of the ways that Pi keeps himself sane and occupied while alone in the middle of the ocean is by writing in his journal. What does his journaling say about the human need for communication?
7. In light of the fact that this is a novel about imagination, why does Martel begin with the Author’s Note, which gives the impression that Pi’s account is truth, not fiction?

An approach for getting started:

Start off by carefully reading the question and identifying its question and instruction words as well as its key content words. For example, if you look at the first question in the list, you will notice the following:

Question and Instruction words: which one; in your answer, consider both

Content words: worship of God; survival; hugely important; Pi

Now put the question into your own words. In rephrasing this question for myself, I might say:

In this novel there are two things that are very important to Pi – his worship of God (which also includes his belief in God), on the one hand, and his survival (especially after having been shipwrecked), on the other hand. In writing this essay, I need to look at how and why each of these is important to Pi and present an argument for one being more important to him than the other.

Try this same approach to getting started with some of the other essay question

Resources and links for Life of Pi

E- Portal

1. <http://wcedecatalogue.co.za/eresource/48671> - life of Pi Audio Book
2. <http://wcedecatalogue.co.za/eresource/27361> - Literary Analysis
3. <http://wcedecatalogue.co.za/eresource/50366> - Life of Pi Analysis part 1
4. <http://wcedecatalogue.co.za/eresource/50371> - Life of Pi Analysis part 2
5. <http://wcedecatalogue.co.za/eresource/50376> - An interview with Author of Life of Pi – Yann Martel

Poetry section to follow

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE	
POEM	POET
1. Remember	C Rossetti
2. First day after the war	K Mazisi
3. The Zulu Girl	R Campbell
4. Motho ke motho ka batho babang	J Cronin
5. Funeral Blues	WA Auden
6. A Hard Frost	CD Lewis
7. An African thunderstorm	D Rubadiri
8. An African Elegy	Ben Okri
9. Somewhere I have never travelled	ee cummings
10. The garden of Love	W Blake
11. Felix Randal	GM Hopkins
12. Vultures	Chinua Achebe

VULTURES Chinua Achebe



Chinua Achebe

GLOSSARY

- Despondent – hopeless
- Harbingers – messengers
- Nestled – cuddled up
- Inclined – moved towards
- Gorged – stuffed with food
- Remnant – left-overs
- Charnel-house – Vault of skeletons
- Belsen Camp – Nazi concentration camp
- Tender – gentle
- Offspring – children
- Bounteous – generous
- Providence – provider
- Encapsulated – covered
- Germ – seed
- Lodged – living
- Perpetuity – persistence

In the greyness
and drizzle of one despondent
dawn unstirred by harbingers
of sunbreak a vulture
perching high on broken
bone of a dead tree
nestled close to his
mate his smooth
bashed-in head, a pebble
on a stem rooted in
a dump of gross
feathers, inclined affectionately
to hers. Yesterday they picked
the eyes of a swollen
corpse in a water-logged
trench and ate the
things in its bowel. Full
gorged they chose their roost
keeping the hollowed remnant
in easy range of cold
telescopic eyes ...

Strange
indeed how love in other
ways so particular
will pick a corner
in that charnel-house
tidy it and coil up there, perhaps
even fall asleep – her face
turned to the wall!
... Thus the Commandant at Belsen
Camp going home for
the day with fumes of
human roast clinging
rebelliously to his hairy
nostrils will stop
at the wayside sweet-shop
and pick up some chocolate
for his tender offspring
waiting at home for Daddy's
return ...

Praise bounteous
providence if you will
that grants even an ogre
a tiny glow-worm
tenderness encapsulated
in icy caverns of a cruel
heart or else despair
for in the very germ
of that kindred love is
lodged the perpetuity
of evil.

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SUMMARY

The poet paints the picture of two vultures lovingly cuddling up together after eating the guts of a corpse. He is astonished by the fact that love can find its way into a scene that is so gruesome and filled with death. It's as if love were making herself comfortable in a vault filled with skeletons. Similarly, a commandant from a Nazi concentration camp can walk home, after a day spent killing people in gas chambers, and buy his children a chocolate, showing them love. The poet praises a higher power for the fact that even an evil person can show a tiny spark of love. But then he supplies an alternate perspective which argues that even within that spark of love lies the seed of more evil.

Questions?

- 1) What do the images of the vultures "nestled" together (lines 1-21), love sleeping in a "charnel-house" (lines 22-29) and the commandant buying a "chocolate" for his children (lines 30-40) all have in common?
- 2) Do you "praise bounteous/providence" (lines 41-42) or do you "despair" (lines 47)? Explain fully with reference to the poem.

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond

- e. e. cummings

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond
any experience, your eyes have their silence:
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclose me
though i have closed myself as fingers,
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens
(touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose

or if your wish be to close me, i and
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,
as when the heart of this flower imagines
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture
compels me with the colour of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands



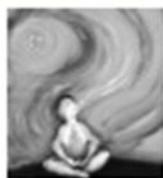
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GLOSSARY

Frail – delicate, gentle
Gesture – movement
Descending – falling
Perceive – observe
Intense – powerful
Fragility – frailty
Compels – persuades
Rendering – creating



e. e. cummings

SUMMARY

The poet describes how the woman he loves can very gently, but very passionately, open him up, petal by petal, so that he can be vulnerable to her tender love. He is utterly exposed because he trusts that she will not harm him. It is a mystery to him how something so fragile and small, like her hands, are able to unlock his heart that is closed so very tightly. She leads him into a world in which he has never travelled, and he goes with her gladly.

Questions?

- 1) How does the title create a sense of expectation for the rest of the poem?
- 2) The poet compares his life to closed up "fingers" (line 6) and describes how his lover opens him "petal by petal" (line 7). Discuss the meaning and effect of these images in detail.
 - 3.1) What is an oxymoron?
 - 3.2) Why is "intense fragility" (line 14) a good example of an oxymoron?
- 4) Why do you think the poet uses brackets enclosing lines 17-20?
- 5) Critically discuss the recurring images of hands and eyes.
- 6) What is the tone of the poem? Justify your answer.

SECTION A: Assessment rubric for literary essay: Poetry (10 marks)

Criteria	Exceptional 8-10	Skilful 6-7	Moderate 4-5	Elementary 2-3	Inadequate 0-1
CONTENT Interpretation of topic. Depth of argument, justification and grasp of text. 7 MARKS	-In-depth interpretation of topic -Range of striking arguments; extensively supported from poem -Excellent understanding of genre and poem	- Shows understanding and has interpreted topic well - Fairly detailed response -Sound arguments given, but not all of them as well motivated as they could be -Understanding of genre and poem	- Fair interpretation of topic - Some good points in support of topic - Some arguments supported, but evidence is not always convincing -Basic understanding of genre and poem	- Unsatisfactory interpretation of topic - Hardly any points in support of topic - Inadequate understanding of genre and poem	-No understanding of the topic -No reference to the poem -Learner has not come to grips with genre and poem
STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE Structure, logical flow and presentation. Language, tone and style used in the essay 3 MARKS	-Coherent structure -Arguments well-structured and clearly developed -Language, tone and style mature, impressive, correct -Virtually error-free grammar, spelling and punctuation	-Clear structure and logical flow of argument -Flow of argument can be followed -Language, tone & style largely correct	Some evidence of structure - Essay lacks a well- structured flow of logic and coherence - Language errors minor; tone and style mostly appropriate	Structure shows faulty planning - Arguments not logically arranged - Language errors evident - Inappropriate tone & style	- Poorly structured - Serious language errors and incorrect style
MARK RANGE	8-10	6-7	4-5	2-3	0-1

NOTE: If a candidate has ignored the content completely and written a creative response instead, award a 0 mark for both Content and Structure and Language.