

Life of pi: dramatic story



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Life of Pi is a wild and dramatic story about a young boy raised in India, who attempts to move to Canada on a cargo ship. Something goes awry, and the ship sinks. The main character, Pi Patel, is stranded in the middle of the ocean with an orangutan, a hyena, a zebra, and an adult bengal tiger named Richard Parker.

It's a story about becoming an adult, and persevering even in the face of the toughest challenges and adversities. Pi has a lot of beliefs that formed in India, from past experiences and from family advice, prior to being stranded on the lifeboat. During his time on the lifeboat, a lot of those beliefs he had before are changed, either by his own doing or by an event on his journey that caused the change of that belief. Pi's three beliefs were that: taming a tiger is too dangerous and impossible to do, that Pi would always be a vegetarian and would stick to his word, and that Pi would never have to be a leader and would always take the backseat to others. Those three beliefs that were modified on the lifeboat, and they were modified when: Pi realized Richard Parker was his most important asset on the lifeboat, when Pi had to kill a flying fish in order to eat, and when Pi decided that the only way that he and Richard Parker would survive is if Pi asserted his dominance over Richard Parker and deemed himself the alpha male of the boat.

Pi's first belief, taught to him by his father in the Pondicherry Zoo, was that any person shouldn't try to tame a tiger, much less approach one, regardless of their prior knowledge or information concerning the various behavioral changes and emotions of a powerful and dangerous beast like the Bengal tiger. When Pi was a child, his father decided that it was important for Pi and his brother, Ravi, to learn an important lesson about the animals in the zoo,

especially the tigers. His father forced them to watch as one of their tigers ruthlessly mauled a helpless goat. Pi recalls that moment in a particularly blurred fashion in his story, saying that he didn't know if he actually saw blood or simply imagined it, but it nonetheless, ...it was enough to scare the living vegetarian daylights out of me. (Martel 36) Naturally, Pi never forgot this moment, and eventually had to challenge what it taught him, years later on the lifeboat.

Pi realized on the boat that he simply would not survive on the boat if he couldn't tame or restrain Richard Parker somehow. He knew that, eventually, Richard Parker would become hungry and eat Pi just like the goat many years before. He had to find a way to keep himself alive, but also keep Richard Parker alive with him, because he knew if Richard Parker died, he would be completely without company, alone in the middle of the ocean, and would most definitely give up and die. He also knew that he had all the things necessary to attempt to tame Richard Parker. As Pi says while pondering his options to survive, What was missing here to tame Richard Parker? Time? It might be weeks before a ship sighted me.. Resolve? There's nothing like extreme need to give you resolve. Knowledge? Was I not a zookeeper's son? Reward? Was there any reward greater than life? Any punishment worse than death? (Martel 165) Pi knew that taming Richard Parker was the difference between him living and dying. So, Pi composed himself, found a whistle on one of the lifeboats, and got to work in taming Richard Parker by asserting himself and making his presence known.

Pi's second belief, formed by his past experiences and by his own decisions, was that he would always be a vegetarian and would never ever eat meat.

There is no true explanation as to why he chose to be vegetarian, but one of the reasons could be that Pi grew up watching primary examples of the food chain because he lived in the Pondicherry Zoo. He watched the aforementioned lesson that his father taught him with the tiger and the goat, and he likely watched many other feedings along with it. It also could be contributed to him being a self-proclaimed Hindu. Many Hindus prefer to abide to a basic lacto-vegetarian diet excluding meat and eggs partly due to their beliefs. Pi had to confront this belief and inevitably change it in order to survive, much to his dismay.

Pi changed his second belief by adapting to the situation at hand and setting aside his past, knowing this was absolutely necessary for him to live. Pi's first three days on the boat were very bad. He couldn't find food and he was simply shriveling and dying. Eventually, Pi found a locker full of things he would later utilize, but the main two items Pi found were some cans of water and emergency rations. As Pi read the packaging for the rations, he noticed that the rations included animal fat. Pi is adamantly vegetarian, so, despite being disturbed, he pinched his nose and ate the ration. Later, however, Pi was blessed with a bundle of flying fish that had landed in the boat while jumping from the water. Pi knew that this was his main source of food, but his vegetarian morals prevented him from killing the innocent fish. Pi describes this moment in the book as, Tears flowing down my cheeks, I egged myself on until I heard a cracking sound and I no longer felt any life fighting in my hands I wept heartily over this poor little deceased soul. It was the first sentient being I had ever killed. I was now a killer. I was now as guilty as Cain. I was sixteen years old and now I had blood on my hands.

(Martel 183) After this, Pi became accustomed to killing fish, and didn't give it any second thoughts. He knew he had to do this in order to survive the rest of the voyage, so he adapted and got used to it, for the sake of his life.

Pi's third and final belief, created from his lifestyle and his family, was that he would always be submissive and would follow in the footsteps of others. This belief originated due to living in the shadow of his popular and athletic older brother, Ravi, but also due to being ridiculed in his primary school days due to his strange name and its origin. He came to believe that he would never need to lead others because of his introverted nature and social obscurity in the public eyes. Nobody knew who he was, so nobody would want him to lead them. Pi gives us a glimpse of this in his first year attending Petit Seminaire, when he states, Ravi was already there, and like all younger brothers, I would suffer from following in the footsteps of a popular older sibling. He was the athlete of his generation...That I was a swimmer made no waves (Martel 21-22) Pi had to change this belief and take control of his situation. He knew he needed to step up and become the alpha of the boat, and take control of his fragile and fleeting life, and that's what he did.

Pi changed his third belief by stepping up and becoming a leader. He made his own decisions in order to protect his life and Richard Parker's life along with it. He gave up on eating emergency rations and began fishing for food and making clean water using rain catchers and solar filters. He then began to tame Richard Parker using a whistle and food as leverage to make Richard Parker not only acknowledge him as the alpha, but treat him as a friend and companion. He knew that Richard Parker was clearly hoping for him to be his companion, due to Richard Parker's use of the prusten sound, indicating a

desire for friendship. Pi took advantage of all of those signs, and used them well. He became the alpha and led Richard Parker to safety in Mexico using his intelligence to guide them. He saved the lives of both himself and of the adult Bengal tiger.

Pi needed to modify those three beliefs that he formed in India. If he didn't, he would have starved and died very early in his voyage, or would have been killed by Richard Parker. In order to survive in Pi's cruel and unforgiving situation, he needed to adapt and find a way around his problems. He certainly did that and more, not only living for months at sea with a dangerous Bengal tiger, but keeping the Bengal tiger alive and well along with him. Pi lost his family, cheated death multiple times, and came out with a phenomenal and nearly unbelievable story of overcoming the odds despite them being stacked so much against him. Pi was lucky enough to have the intelligence, knowledge, calmness, determination, and overall emotion to work hard enough to survive whatever was thrown his way. We can relate to Pi because sometimes things change, and you need to adapt to it in order to be comfortable in your new situation. Have you ever had to adapt and change your beliefs? Have you ever been forced to do so? Have you ever thought of the times where you could change your beliefs for the better, but you didn't? Think about it as you reflect on this amazing novel and all that it means to you.