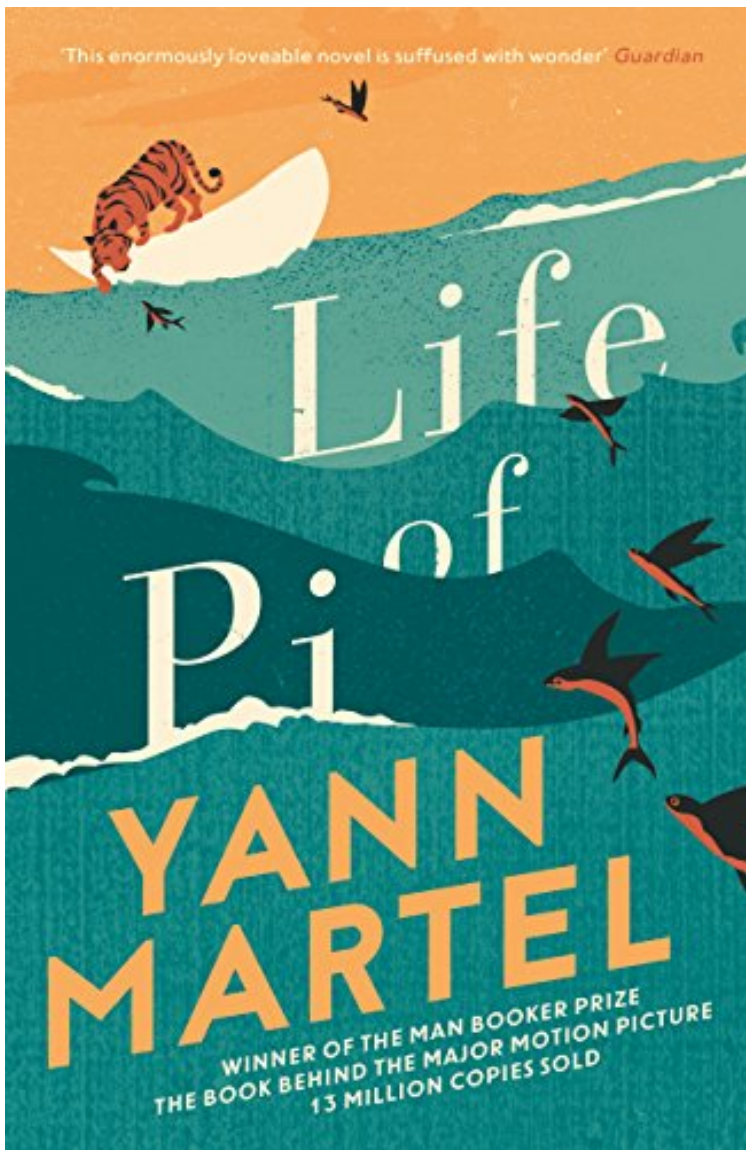


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Life Of Pi



Par Yann Martel
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurOne boy, one boat, one tiger . . .After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship, a solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wild, blue Pacific. The only survivors from the wreck are a sixteen year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orang-utan -- and a 450-pound Royal Bengal tiger. The scene is set for one of the most extraordinary and best-loved works of fiction in recent years..comYann Martel's imaginative and unforgettable Life of Pi is a magical reading experience, an endless blue expanse of storytelling about adventure, survival, and ultimately, faith. The precocious son of a zookeeper, 16-year-old Pi Patel is raised in Pondicherry, India, where he tries on various faiths for size, attracting "religions the way a dog attracts fleas." Planning a move to Canada, his father packs up the family

and their menagerie and they hitch a ride on an enormous freighter. After a harrowing shipwreck, Pi finds himself adrift in the Pacific Ocean, trapped on a 26-foot lifeboat with a wounded zebra, a spotted hyena, a seasick orangutan, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker ("His head was the size and color of the lifebuoy, with teeth"). It sounds like a colorful setup, but these wild beasts don't burst into song as if co-starring in an anthropomorphized Disney feature. After much gore and infighting, Pi and Richard Parker remain the boat's sole passengers, drifting for 227 days through shark-infested waters while fighting hunger, the elements, and an overactive imagination. In rich, hallucinatory passages, Pi recounts the harrowing journey as the days blur together, elegantly cataloging the endless passage of time and his struggles to survive: "It is pointless to say that this or that night was the worst of my life. I have so many bad nights to choose from that I've made none the champion." An award winner in Canada (and winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize), *Life of Pi*, Yann Martel's second novel, should prove to be a breakout book in the U.S. At one point in his journey, Pi recounts, "My greatest wish--other than salvation--was to have a book. A long book with a never-ending story. One that I could read again and again, with new eyes and fresh understanding each time." It's safe to say that the fabulous, fablelike *Life of Pi* is such a book. --Brad Thomas

Parsons
Extrait
Chapter 1
My suffering left me sad and gloomy. Academic study and the steady, mindful practice of religion slowly brought me back to life. I have remained a faithful Hindu, Christian and Muslim. I decided to stay in Toronto. After one year of high school, I attended the University of Toronto and took a double-major Bachelors degree. My majors were religious studies and zoology. My fourth-year thesis for religious studies concerned certain aspects of the cosmogony theory of Isaac Luria, the great sixteenth-century Kabbalist from Safed. My zoology thesis was a functional analysis of the thyroid gland of the three-toed sloth. I chose the sloth because its demeanour calm, quiet and introspective did something to soothe my shattered self. There are two-toed sloths and there are three-toed sloths, the case being determined by the forepaws of the animals, since all sloths have three claws on their hind paws. I had the great luck one summer of studying the three-toed sloth in situ in the equatorial jungles of Brazil. It is a highly intriguing creature. Its only real habit is indolence. It sleeps or rests on average twenty hours a day. Our team tested the sleep habits of five wild three-toed sloths by placing on their heads, in the early evening after they had fallen asleep, bright red plastic dishes filled with water. We found them still in place late the next morning, the water of the dishes swarming with insects. The sloth is at its busiest at sunset, using the word busy here in a most relaxed sense. It moves along the bough of a tree in its characteristic upside-down position at the speed of roughly 400 metres an hour. On the ground, it crawls to its next tree at the rate of 250 metres an hour, when motivated, which is 440 times slower than a motivated cheetah. Unmotivated, it covers four to five metres in an hour. The three-toed sloth is not well informed about the outside world. On a scale of 2 to 10, where 2 represents unusual dullness and 10 extreme acuity, Beebe (1926) gave the sloths senses of taste, touch, sight and hearing a rating of 2, and its sense of smell a rating of 3. If you come upon a sleeping three-toed sloth in the wild, two or three nudges should suffice to awaken it; it will then look sleepily in every direction but yours. Why it should look about is uncertain since the sloth sees everything in a Magoo-like blur. As for hearing, the sloth is not so much deaf as uninterested in sound. Beebe reported that firing guns next to sleeping or feeding sloths elicited little reaction. And the sloths slightly better sense of smell should not be overestimated. They are said to be able to sniff and avoid decayed branches, but Bullock (1968) reported that sloths fall to the ground clinging to decayed branches often. How does it survive, you might ask. Precisely by being so slow. Sleepiness and slothfulness keep it out of harms way, away from the notice of jaguars, ocelots, harpy eagles and anacondas. A sloth's hairs shelter an algae that is brown during the dry season and green during the wet season, so the animal blends in with the surrounding moss and foliage and looks like a nest of white ants or of squirrels, or like nothing at all but part of a tree. The three-toed sloth lives a peaceful, vegetarian life in perfect harmony with its environment. A good-natured smile is forever on its lips, reported Tirlor (1966). I have seen that smile with my own eyes. I am not one given to projecting human traits and emotions onto animals, but many a time during that month in Brazil, looking up at sloths in repose, I felt I was in the presence of upside-down yogis deep in meditation or hermits deep in prayer, wise beings whose intense imaginative lives were beyond the reach of my scientific probing. Sometimes I got my majors mixed up. A number of my fellow religious-studies students muddled agnostics who didn't know which way was up, in the thrall of reason, that fools gold for the bright-minded me of the three-toed sloth; and the three-toed sloth, such a beautiful example of the miracle of life, reminded me of God. I never had problems with my fellow scientists. Scientists are a friendly, atheistic, hard-working, beer-drinking lot whose minds are preoccupied with sex, chess and baseball when they are not preoccupied with science. I was

a very good student, if I may say so myself. I was tops at St. Michaels College four years in a row. I got every possible student award from the Department of Zoology. If I got none from the Department of Religious Studies, it is simply because there are no student awards in this department (the rewards of religious study are not in mortal hands, we all know that). I would have received the Governor Generals Academic Medal, the University of Torontos highest undergraduate award, of which no small number of illustrious Canadians have been recipients, were it not for a beef-eating pink boy with a neck like a tree trunk and a temperament of unbearable good cheer. I still smart a little at the slight. When youve suffered a great deal in life, each additional pain is both unbearable and trifling. My life is like a memento mori painting from European art: there is always a grinning skull at my side to remind me of the folly of human ambition. I mock this skull. I look at it and I say, Youve got the wrong fellow. You may not believe in life, but I dont believe in death. Move on! The skull snickers and moves ever closer, but that doesnt surprise me. The reason death sticks so closely to life isnt biological necessity its 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, goddess of wealth, one day favours me bountifully, Oxford is fifth on the list of cities I would like to visit before I pass on, after Mecca, Varanasi, Jerusalem and Paris.