

2021

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Recommended Citation

Werner, Jackson (2021) "Faith in Film as Depicted by the Final Scenes of 'Life of Pi'," *Pepperdine Journal of Communication Research*: Vol. 9 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/pjcr/vol9/iss1/9>

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Faith in Film as Depicted by
the Final Scenes of *Life of Pi*

Jackson Werner

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Introduction

Rarely does a film come along which perfectly blends intensity with levity, hope with sorrow and spirituality with reality. *Life of Pi* is one such film: the story of a boy and a tiger stuck on a lifeboat in the Pacific Ocean can simply be viewed for entertainment, but on closer inspection it also has a lot to say about life, spirituality, and human suffering. It is a deeply touching film with an air of timelessness, but what makes this true? To best understand the film and its meaning one should look to the film's final moments, where the main character Pi offers his own thoughts on his journey and defends it against a world which struggles to believe it. This scene ultimately concludes that when faced between the ugliness of the world and a still tragic but inspiring story, people will choose the inspiring story. This essay will examine how the film uses patterns of anomaly and repetition in tandem with Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm in its final scene to effectively establish narrative rationality in communicating its final, faith-based moral to the audience.

This essay seeks to highlight the effectiveness of *Life of Pi* as a story of hope and inspiration amidst seemingly overwhelming suffering and tragedy. It might just so happen that the world needs stories like this now more than ever: during a year of quarantine in which many may be struggling with their faith and considering themselves trapped in their own personal "lifeboat", the tale of a boy surviving in his own lifeboat against the odds can serve as inspiration and encouragement to any who view it.

Literature Review: Faith and Film

Before delving into *Life of Pi*, it may be helpful to consider the thoughts of other communication scholars in regards to the relationship between faith and film; afterall, *Life of Pi* ultimately serves to deliver a message about faith and its presence in the world. In her 2017 article “Film as medium for meaning making: A practical theological reflection”, Anita Cloete likens film and faith together, stating that “Both religion and film as part of culture reflect the values, dreams and hopes of societies.” She delves deeper, identifying the concept of meaning making as an essential component of the relationship between the two: “The content of film and what the producers have in mind, however, is only one side of the coin, while what the audience makes of it is the other side.” She ultimately argues that any religious experiences felt by viewers are a result of their own attempts to create meanings out of what they have viewed (Cloete, 2017).

In her 2019 work *Interdisciplinary reflections on the interplay between religion, film and youth*, Cloete hones in on the topic further, this time examining young viewers’ thoughts and relationships with explicitly religious films: “[...] one of the significant findings was that it is not religious films that are their [young film viewers’] favourites, but rather films with no explicit religious themes or focus. Personal stories are the most important lens used to engage with film and construct meaning.” Cloete furthers this train of thought, positing that “Engagement with film assists them [young viewers] to navigate difficulties they experience, while their contexts and especially religious backgrounds play an important role in the interpretation process.” Essentially, she argues that young viewers are more likely to gain (potentially religious) meaning from a film more focused on personal struggles than a film directly about religion (Cloete, 2019).

In her 2006 book *Religion and film: An introduction*, Melanie Wright echoes Cloete's idea that a religious experience is not entirely generated by the film itself, but rather in its resonance with whomever views it: "The determining factor in what makes a religious film does not, then, rest with narrative or stylistic elements of the film text itself. Rather, 'religious film' is better understood as a process, a function of a dynamic exchange between screen images and sound, and viewer activity and perception" (Wright, 2006). These texts all seem to agree that the relationship between film and faith is a two-way street: the film will only take on as much religious meaning as the viewer attempts to make out of it.

While the relationship between film and faith has been well explored, this essay seeks to submit its analysis of *Life of Pi* into the ever-ongoing discussion of communication scholars.

Method: Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm

Walter Fisher developed the idea of the narrative paradigm with the concept of rhetorical exigence in mind. Rhetorical exigence is defined as "an issue, problem, or situation that causes or prompts someone to write or speak" (Nordquist, 2020). In the case of Fisher's narrative paradigm, he argues that humanity's utmost basic response to a rhetorical exigency is to tell a story. The narrative paradigm "[...] insists that human connection should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories [...]." So, which stories win out in this competition and stick around in the public eye? Fisher argues that the stories which win out are those which possess narrative rationality. He states that stories are rational "[...] they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements" (Fisher, 1984).

So what are narrative probability and fidelity, the two elements which give a story rationality? Mark Stoner and Sally Perkins' *Making Sense of Messages: A Critical Apprenticeship in Rhetorical Criticism* defines narrative probability in terms of narrative coherence: does the story being told "hang together"? Is its plot sensible and free of contradictions? Such issues are concerns of narrative probability. Narrative fidelity is defined in terms of narrative correspondence: is the logic of the story sound? Is what it is trying to say relevant or important? Such issues are concerns of narrative fidelity (Stoner & Perkins, 2005).

The following analysis will explain how *Life of Pi* uses rhetorical patterns of anomaly and repetition to establish narrative rationality for the film.

Analysis: The Narrative Paradigm and Rhetorical Patterns in *Life of Pi*

The final scenes begin with a scene of Pi and Richard Parker finally reaching the Mexican coast. Despite the film tirelessly setting up the friendship of Pi and Richard Parker, the first pattern of anomaly appears as Richard Parker leaves Pi without saying goodbye (Magee, 2012, p. 66). Earlier on in the film, Pi tries to befriend Richard Parker but his father chastises him and tells him that he cannot befriend a wild animal as they have no soul and will therefore see people as food instead of a friend. The entire arc of the film seems to go against Pi's father's advice, as Pi and Richard Parker appear to become friends throughout the story. However, the pattern of anomaly comes into play as the audience's expectation of a meaningful goodbye from Richard Parker is quickly subverted, as the tiger leaves without so much as a second glance. While at first appearing to be a contradiction in the rules established by the film, this still helps establish narrative probability: the characters live in the real world, where not everything works

like it does in a movie, and this is an idea which many audience members can connect to. Next examined was a pattern of repetition which helps establish narrative fidelity by adding relevance to the film's message: the recurring theme of spirituality, represented through language, character action, and imagery. The theme of spirituality repeats as Pi goes on to explain that even though Richard Parker left him without saying goodbye, he still believes that he has a soul and emotions (Stoner & Perkins, 2005).

The next anomaly to pattern is observed in the film's visual presentation as the severely malnourished Pi is brought to a hospital. There he is interviewed by Chiba and Okamoto, two Japanese businessmen representing the company of the ship Pi was on which sank and left him stranded at sea. The film has been filled with vibrant colors up to this point, from the array of colors of India, to the intense blues, oranges and blacks of the Pacific Ocean to the warm, inviting browns of present day Pi's home. However, for the first time the film's color palette becomes an all-encompassing white as Pi enters the hospital and talks to the two businessmen. The visual coherence of the film is almost contradicted, but this color change is done to highlight the draining intensity of the scene and therefore contributes to narrative probability.

The dialogue that unfolds in the hospital is decidedly very important to the film's final moral, but has also been identified through analysis as a rhetorical situation. The scene is marked by a rhetorical exigence: a ship from Chiba and Okamoto's company has sank, and they need to figure out what happened from Pi (Bitzer, 1968, p. 6). Seeing as Chiba and Okamoto are seeking information from Pi, it can be inferred that they are capable of being influenced by his words and becoming "capable of serving as mediator of the change which the discourse functions to produce." (Bitzer, 1968, p. 8). Finally, Pi's encounter with the two businessmen is filled with

constraints: Pi's two differing stories serves as the artistic proofs of the situation while Chiba, Okamoto, and the two's doubts of Pi's initial story serve as inartistic proofs which affect the outcome of the scene's discourse (Bitzer, 1968, p. 8).

The film once again contradicts its inspirational tone, but in a way which makes sense and further builds narrative fidelity through the second story which Pi tells Chiba and Okamoto. After he tells the two the story the film has told the audience, the two businessmen fail to believe the story and ask Pi to tell them "a story we can all believe" (Magee, 2012, p. 69). Whereas Pi's first story and the story of the film were filled with strife but still possessed optimistic and redeeming qualities, the second, more realistic story that he tells is uncharacteristically dark and cruel in tone compared to the rest of the film, possessing no redeeming qualities. Instead of a story of fantastical survival alongside a tiger, Pi tells a story of escaping with a wounded Buddhist sailor, his mother, and a murderous cook who ended up killing everybody on the boat except for Pi, who killed the cook himself (Magee, 2012, pp. 70-71).

Pi's second narrative also seems to challenge narrative fidelity in that its main characters are the cook, the sailor, and his own mother (Stoner & Perkins, 2005). While all three characters were real people Pi interacted with on the ship, none of them had any significant amounts of screen time or lines of dialogue; even Pi's mother, while getting a little more focus than the cook and sailor, barely has any lines in the film. To see these three characters suddenly thrust into the spotlight despite having so little screen time almost goes against logic, but that's just what the filmmakers want: they want this moment to feel contradictory in tone from the rest of the film to really highlight the differences between Pi's two stories.

As Pi tells his stories to Chiba and Okamoto, a pattern of sequencing is observed. The film really follows two narratives: the story of Pi surviving at sea with Richard Parker, and the story of Pi in the present day talking about his life with an author intending to make a novel out of it. The two stories often flash back and forth between each other, but in this final scene the switching between times increases in frequency to the point where lines are occasionally overlapping and interweaving with each other to make one through line of dialogue. This definitely bolsters both narrative probability and fidelity, as the dialogue is woven together in a way that keeps the story understandable and makes the film's progression still seem logical despite hopping between two different times.

The next pattern of repetition is observed in the dialogue between Pi and the author, as Pi asks the author a series of questions about the story. The author functions in the film as a stand-in for the audience, listening and asking questions of Pi when appropriate, so to have Pi ask questions of the author can be interpreted as Pi asking questions directly to the audience, which adding relevance (AKA narrative fidelity) to the film by attempting to question the viewer themselves rather than just being a contained story. After telling the author about the two stories he told to Chiba and Okamoto, Pi asks the author and therefore the audience: "I've told you two stories about what happened out on the ocean. Neither explains what caused the sinking of the ship, and no one can prove which story is true and which is not. In both stories, the ship sinks, my family dies, and I suffer. [...] So which story do you prefer?" (Magee, 2012, p. 72) Later, when the author asserts that he thinks Pi's story has a happy ending, Pi responds with "Well, that's up to you. The story is yours now" (Magee, 2012, p. 73). This is said to the author and the audience, who now have the ability to spread the story as much or as little as they care to. As

evidenced by the quotes above, the pattern of repetition shows itself through the film's continued practice of putting questions to the audience itself; famed critic Roger Ebert himself even echoes this, saying in his review of the movie that "what it finally amounts to is left for every viewer to decide" (Ebert, 2012).

The fidelity-bolstering pattern of repetition of spirituality as a theme re-emerges when the author answers Pi's question regarding which story he liked better, telling Pi he liked the story of Richard Parker more. Pi, in line with the film's repetitious spiritual theme, responds with "Thank you. And so it goes with God" (Magee, 2012, p. 73). This pattern of repetition continues into one of the film's final shots, where the author reads the official report on the shipwreck published by Chiba and Okamoto's company. It is revealed that the two ultimately decided to believe Pi's original story and publish it as the official report, once again hitting on the theme of spirituality, belief, and faith versus the mundane world and generating fidelity: the wording of Pi's responses and the result of the situation carry heavy spiritual tones with them, adding a sense of importance to the scene. In this way it could be argued that the film is attempting to give Pi a prophetic voice (Vail, 2006, p. 54).

The final pattern of relationship becomes observable through the juxtaposition of the film's treatment of Pi's two different stories. The "Richard Parker" narrative, despite still containing hardships for Pi, is presented in a more optimistic and inspiring light, while the "truthful" narrative Pi tells Chiba and Okamoto is marked with a sudden absence of vibrant color, focus on characters who have received little screen time, and sullen reactions from every character that hears it. In creating this relationship between the two stories where one is supported by the film and the other is presented as disheartening, *Life of Pi* does everything it

can to give viewers the tools to make meaning out of it, with the hope that said meaning will be one of faith; in this way it is attempting to gain relevance and narrative fidelity, and as the film has been doing this throughout its runtime it helps keep the story together to add narrative probability.

Conclusion

Largely through its use of patterns of repetition and anomaly—while also engaging patterns of omission, sequencing and relationship—*Life of Pi* develops narrative probability and narrative fidelity by effectively presenting and juxtaposing the two parallel stories told by Pi, guiding its characters and audience alike to a satisfying, meaningful conclusion—especially in a year as remarkable as this one. As men and women struggle all around the globe struggle with feelings of loneliness amidst a year of pandemic and turmoil, many people most likely feel trapped in their own metaphorical lifeboats. However, Pi's story of not only surviving in isolation but strengthening himself through it may be just what the world needs right now. Roger Ebert perhaps sums the film up best when he starts his review with the following statement: "Ang Lee's 'Life of Pi' is a miraculous achievement of storytelling and a landmark of visual mastery. [...] It is also a moving spiritual achievement, a movie whose title could have been shortened to 'life'" (Ebert, 2012).

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Appendix A

Rhetorical Analysis Notes

Analysis Notes	Commentary About Analysis Process
<p>1. <i>Anomaly to Pattern</i>: After the film sets up an arc of Richard Parker and Pi miraculously befriending each other, Richard Parker leaves Pi without so much as a glance.</p> <p>2. <i>Pattern of Repetition</i>: Language of spirituality used again as Pi still expresses love for Richard Parker and continues to believe he has a soul.</p> <p>3. <i>Anomaly to Pattern</i>: The film’s usual color scheme is interrupted by the hospital scene which is very whited out.</p>	<p>1. At the beginning of the film, Pi’s father tells him to never trust a wild animal, they’re not your friend at the end of the day. The film spends the bulk of its run time debunking this advice, as Pi and Richard Parker actually become close companions due to the hardships they both face. However, at the end the rug of niceness is pulled from under the viewer and we see that Pi’s dad was right: the second he is free, Richard Parker leaves and doesn’t look back. This is done to inject a sense of realism into the film: while miraculous things do happen in this story, we still live in reality.</p> <p>2. While Pi’s father is shown to be right in his advice that RP wasn’t truly Pi’s friend, Pi’s sense of spirituality is a driving force in this film and his father’s advice still won’t stop him from injecting it into the situation. Pi still believes that RP had a soul and felt emotions in his own way, and refuses to believe that he was staring at nothing but his own reflection in the tiger’s eyes. Given that RP is heavily used to symbolize God/the fear of God throughout the film, by having Pi reaffirm him having a soul Pi is almost defending the sanctity of his journey.</p> <p>3. <i>Life of Pi</i> is a beautiful film to look at. From the vibrant colors of India at the beginning, the intense blues, oranges and blacks of the ocean in the middle, and the warm brownish colors from the safety of Pi’s home in the future, this film is certainly very colorful. However, there is one exception to this: the hospital scene, where Pi is interrogated by the businessmen Chiba and</p>

<p>Bonus → EXIGENCE!</p> <p>4. <i>Anomaly to Pattern</i>: The story Pi tells to Chiba and Okamoto breaks the mold tone-wise of everything the film has presented so far.</p> <p>5. <i>Pattern of Omission</i>: The Buddhist sailor, the cook, and (to a lesser extent) Pi’s mother are presented as central characters of Pi’s “truthful” story, despite having little to no presence in the film prior.</p>	<p>Okamoto from the ship’s company. These two businessmen represent any doubt of Pi’s story that might exist both within the narrative itself and also for the audience, and so the scene is rather intense. To show that the film is no longer in the world of the fantastical and back into cold, doubting reality, the color scheme goes almost entirely bland white for the hospital scene. While the white could be used to represent safety, I believe it represents the colorlessness of the cold, mundane “all-business” world that Pi finds himself confronted with in the scene.</p> <p>Pi’s “truthful” narrative is in response to an exigence, that exigence being Chiba and Okamoto’s company seeking to gain Pi’s knowledge about why their company’s ship sank.</p> <p>4. Don’t be mistaken, bad things happen to the characters of <i>Life of Pi</i>, especially to Pi himself. However, there’s a strange sort of beauty to Pi’s journey. His tale of surviving at sea with a tiger is analogous to the journey of faith many people go through in their lives, and there always seemed to be this hopeful sense of optimistic wonder in Pi’s journey. This is not so in the story that Pi tells to Chiba and Okamoto. Pi’s “truthful” story is uncharacteristically dark and cruel compared to the rest of the film’s tone. This goes to show that sometimes people will accept the dark and gritty as reality more often than the wondrous or fantastical.</p> <p>5. The sailor and the cook that Pi mentions in his story are real characters that he met on the ship, but both only had about 20-30 seconds of screentime, each. First-time viewers might not even remember who Pi is talking about. In the scope of the narrative, these are characters we have spent barely any time with, so to believe that <i>this</i> is the true narrative of the</p>
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<p>6. <i>Pattern of Sequencing</i>: The film seamlessly flips back and forth between past and present Pi, weaving together their dialogue.</p> <p>7. <i>Pattern of Repetition</i>: Putting questions to the audience.</p> <p>8. <i>Pattern of Repetition</i>: Language/theme of spirituality is continued as the author chooses the story of Richard Parker over the “truthful” story.</p> <p>9. <i>Pattern of Repetition</i>: The faith theme returns again when it is revealed which of Pi’s two stories Chiba and Okamoto decided to publish in the official report of the accident.</p>	<p>film is already subconsciously viewed as unpleasant by the audience.</p> <p>6. The film has flashed back and forth between present and past Pi throughout the movie in order to tell a cohesive story, but in these last few scenes the switches begin more and more frequently, occasionally overlapping each other and weaving together to make one continuous line of dialogue at some point. This is the end of the movie, so it makes sense thematically for it to be the moment where the past and the present collide to reveal one final lesson of the story.</p> <p>7. Especially at the end of the film, Pi asks a handful of important questions to the author, who represents the viewer as it is also his first time hearing this story as well. Therefore it could be implied that Pi’s questions are for the audience itself as well as the author. He asks which story we prefer. When the author asserts that he thinks Pi’s story has a happy ending, Pi says “Well, that’s up to you. The story is yours now”. This is for the author and the viewer, as the story is now part of the viewer and they can choose to share it however they want with whoever they want.</p> <p>8. The author chooses the story that is fantastical but meaningful over the story that is realistic but filled with darkness. Rather tellingly, Pi responds to the author’s choice with “Thank you. And so it goes with God.” This is the film’s final moral about faith, and ultimately reaffirms the film’s theme of spirituality.</p> <p>9. One of the film’s last shots is the author reading over the official report published by the Japanese company. It is revealed that they chose the story of Richard Parker over the</p>
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<p>10. <i>Patterns of Relationship</i>: Pi's tiger story presented in a positive light vs. his "truthful" story presented in a negative light.</p>	<p>story of the murderous cook. This once again affirms the faith-narrative of the story, showing that even Pi's doubters accepted his story at the end of the day.</p> <p>10. While one story certainly is more fantastical than the other, the film does everything in its power to get us to root for one story more than the other. From the sudden absence of vibrant color, the focus on characters with little screen time, and the actual content of the story and the way the characters are shown reacting to it, it seems apparent that we are not supposed to like this version of the story. This is opposed to the Richard Parker story, which is still filled with hardship but is shown to have a more optimistic, inspiring tone to it. While you may agree with the ultimate decision the film makes, it still pulls a ton of cards to guide its audience to that decision.</p>
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Appendix B

Excerpt from *Life of Pi* script (1:43:50-1:58:26 in the film):

Pi leans over the side of the lifeboat. He falls overboard.
We follow him underwater, his feet - hit a sandy bottom.

ADULT PI (V.O.)

By the time we reached the Mexican
shore, I was afraid to let go of
the boat. My strength was gone. I
was so weak. I was afraid that in
two feet of water, so close to
deliverance, I would drown. I
struggled to shore and fell upon
the sand. It was warm and soft,
like pressing my face against the
cheek of God. And somewhere two
eyes were smiling at having me
there.

An empty coastline, nothing but sand, rocks and jungle. Pi
struggles to bring the lifeboat ashore. Richard Parker is
hiding under the tarp, nowhere to be seen. Pi pulls the
painter line until the boat is on the beach, then collapses
on the sand.

177 EXT. THE MEXICAN COAST/THE JUNGLE - DAY

177

Pi collapses on the beach. He hears Richard Parker coming a
moment before he sees him; Pi turns, looking up as the tiger
jumps over the boy, stretching in the air above him and
landing in the water ahead of him.

ADULT PI (V.O.)

I was so spent I couldn't move. And
so Richard Parker went ahead of me.

Richard Parker walks along the beach, his gait clumsy and
uncoordinated from so much time spent at sea.

ADULT PI (V.O.)

He stretched his legs and walked
along the shore.

66.

Richard Parker stops, staring ahead into the forest, his back
to the boy. Pi watches the tiger from behind, Richard
Parker's ribs gently rising and falling as he smells the
jungle air.

ADULT PI (V.O.)

At the edge of the jungle, he stopped. I was certain he was going to look back at me, flatten his ears to his head, growl - that he'd bring our relationship to an end in some way. But he just stared ahead into the jungle.

178 INT. PI'S HOME, DINING ROOM, MONTREAL - SUNSET 178

On Adult Pi alone:

ADULT PI

And then Richard Parker, my fierce companion, the terrible one who kept me alive, disappeared forever from my life.

181 EXT. THE MEXICAN COAST/THE JUNGLE - DAY 181

Pi lies on the sand a few yards from the water. A group of six MEXICAN LOCALS hurry down the beach to him.

ADULT PI

After a few hours, a member of my own species found me. He left and returned with a group who carried me away.

Pi sobs uncontrollably as they carry him to safety.

ADULT PI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I wept like a child, not because I was overwhelmed at having survived, although I was. I was weeping because Richard Parker left me so... unceremoniously. It broke my heart.

174 INT. PI'S HOME - DINING ROOM - MONTREAL - NEAR SUNSET 174

It is near sunset, the light from the windows casting the room in a golden hue - the same lighting we have just seen as Pi was leaving the island.

ADULT PI

You know, my father was right.
Richard Parker never saw me as his
friend. After all we'd been
through, he didn't even look back.
But I have to believe that there
was more in his eyes than my own
reflection staring back at me. I
know I felt it - even if I can't
prove it. I just wish...

(Beat. He sighs.)

You know, I've left so much behind.
My family, the zoo, Anandi, India -
I suppose in the end the whole of
life becomes an act of letting go.
But what always hurts the most is
not taking the moment to say
goodbye. I was never able to thank
my father for all I learned from
him, to tell him that without his
lessons I would never have
survived...

And I know he's a tiger, but I wish
I'd said: 'It's over. We've
survived. Thank you for saving my
life. I love you, Richard Parker.
You will always be with me. May God
be with you.'

The Writer shakes his head, astonished.

WRITER

I don't know what to say.

ADULT PI

Hard to believe, isn't it?

A pause as the writer decides how to respond.

WRITER

It is a lot to take in, to figure
out what it all means.

ADULT PI

If it happened, it happened. Why
should it have to mean anything?

WRITER

Well, some of it is pretty
incredible.

Pi nods - a half-smile - then rises, crossing to the
bookshelf.

68.

ADULT PI

I was the only one who survived the
shipwreck, so the Japanese shipping
company sent two men to talk to me
in the Mexican hospital where I was
recovering. I still have a copy of
their report.

Pi takes a tattered notebook out of the bookcase.

ADULT PI (CONT'D)

They had insurance claims to
settle, and they wanted to find out
why the ship sank. They didn't
believe me either.

Pi hands the notebook to the Writer. On top, there is a
newspaper article with the headline "BOY RESCUED: 227 DAYS IN
THE PACIFIC." The Writer unclips the article, revealing the
insurance report beneath. We hear Okamoto's first line over
the report.

A175 INT. INFIRMARY - MEXICO, 1978 - DAY

A175

OKAMOTO

Thousands of meerkats? On a
floating carnivorous island? And no
one has ever seen it?

YOUNG PI

Yes. Just like I told you.

CHIBA

Bananas don't float.

OKAMOTO

(In Japanese:)
Why are you talking about bananas?

CHIBA

You said the orangutan floated to

you on a bundle of bananas. But
bananas don't float.

OKAMOTO

(In Japanese:)
Are you sure about that?

YOUNG PI

Of course they do. Try it for
yourself.

69.

OKAMOTO

In any case, we are not here to
talk about bananas or meerkats.

YOUNG PI

I've just told you a long story.
I'm very tired.

OKAMOTO

We're here because a Japanese cargo
ship sank in the Pacific.

YOUNG PI

Something I never forget. I lost my
whole family.

Pause.

OKAMOTO

(In Japanese:)
Get him some water.

(In English:)

We don't mean to push you. And you
have our deepest sympathies. But
we've come a long way. And we're no
closer to understanding why the
ship sank.

YOUNG PI

Because I don't know. I was asleep.
Something woke me up. It may have
been an explosion; I can't be sure.
And then the ship sank. What else
do you want from me?

CHIBA (OFF)

A story that won't make us look

like fools.

OKAMOTO

We need a simpler story for our report. One our company can understand. A story we can all believe.

(Chiba gives Pi a glass of water.)

YOUNG PI

So... a story without things you never seen before.

OKAMOTO

That's right.

70.

YOUNG PI

Without surprises. Without animals or islands.

OKAMOTO

Yes. The truth.

B175 INT. PI'S HOME, MONTREAL - DAY

B175

WRITER

So what did you do?

ADULT PI

I told him another story. Four of us survived...

YOUNG PI (V.O. - OVERLAPPING)

Four of us survived...

C175 INT. INFIRMARY, MEXICO, 1978 - DAY

C175

YOUNG PI

...The cook and the sailor were already onboard. The cook threw me a lifebuoy and pulled me aboard. Mother held onto some bananas and made it to the lifeboat. The cook, the cook was a disgusting man. He

ate a rat. We had food enough for weeks, but he found the rat in the first few days - and he killed it, and dried it in the sun and ate it. He was such a brute, that man. But he was resourceful. It was his idea to build the raft to catch fish. We would have died in those first few days without him. The sailor was the same man who brought rice with gravy, the Buddhist. We didn't understand much of what he said, only that he was suffering. I can still hear him - the happy Buddhist who only ate rice with gravy. He had broken his leg horribly in the fall. We tried to set it as best we could, but the leg became infected and the cook told us we had to do something or he'd die. The cook said he'd do it, but mother and I had to hold the man down. And I believed him - we needed to do it.

(MORE)

71.

YOUNG PI (CONT'D)

So... I kept saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry", but he just kept.. looking at me, his eyes so... I'll never understand the point of that man's suffering. We didn't save him, of course. He died. The morning after, the cook caught his first dorado, and I didn't understand what he'd done at first, but Mother did, and I'd never seen her so angry. 'Stop whining and be happy,' he said. "We need more food or we'll die. That was the whole point." "What was the point?" Mother asked. "You let that poor boy die in order to get bait? You monster!" The cook got furious. He started towards her with his fists raised, and Mother slapped him hard, right across the face. I was stunned. I thought he was going to kill her right then. But he didn't. The cook didn't stop at bait either, no. The sailor, he

went the same way the rat went -
 the cook was a resourceful man. It
 was a week later that he... Because
 of me. Because I couldn't hold onto
 a stupid turtle. It slipped out of
 my hands and swam away and the cook
 came up and punched me on the side
 of the head and my teeth clacked
 and I saw stars. I thought he was
 going to hit me again, but then
 Mother started pounding on him with
 her fists and screaming, "MONSTER!
 MONSTER!" She yelled at me to go to
 the raft - "Nee poda!" I thought
 she was coming with me or I'd never
 have... I don't know why I didn't
 make her go first. I think about
 that every day. I jumped over and
 turned back just as the knife came
 out. There wasn't anything I could
 do; I couldn't look away... He
 threw her body overboard. Then the
 sharks came. I saw what they... I
 saw. The next day I killed him. He
 didn't even fight back. He knew he
 had gone too far, even by his
 standards. He'd left the knife out
 on the bench. And I did to him what
 he did to the sailor. He was such
 an evil man, but worse still, he
 brought the evil out in me.

(MORE)

72.

YOUNG PI (CONT'D)

I have to live with that. I was
 alone in a lifeboat, drifting
 across the Pacific Ocean. And I
 survived.

176 INT. PI'S HOME - DINING ROOM - MONTREAL - SUNSET 176

ADULT PI

After that, no more questions. The
 investigators didn't seem to like
 the story, exactly - but they
 thanked me, they wished me well,
 and they left.

Pause. The Writer speaks his thoughts aloud as the realization strikes.

WRITER

So... the stories... Both the zebra and the sailor broke their leg. And the hyena killed the zebra and the orangutan. So ... the hyena is the cook. And the sailor is the zebra, mother is the orangutan... and you're... the tiger.

ADULT PI

Can I ask you something?

WRITER

Of course.

ADULT PI

I've told you two stories about what happened out on the ocean. Neither explains what caused the sinking of the ship, and no one can prove which story is true and which is not. In both stories, the ship sinks, my family dies, and I suffer.

WRITER

True.

ADULT PI

So which story do you prefer?

WRITER

The story with the tiger. That's the better story.

73.

ADULT PI

(Heartfelt:)

Thank you. And so it goes with God.

WRITER

(Pause. He looks up.)

Mamaji was right. It is an amazing story. Will you really let me write

it?

ADULT PI

Of course. Isn't that why Mamaji sent you here, after all?

They hear a car pulling into the alleyway alongside the house.

ADULT PI (CONT'D)

My wife is here. Would you like to stay for dinner? She's an incredible cook.

WRITER

I didn't know you had a wife.

ADULT PI

And a cat, and two children.

WRITER

So your story does have a happy ending.

ADULT PI

Well, that's up to you. The story's yours now.

The Writer smiles. Outside, car doors slam; we hear voices as Pi's wife and children cross around to the front. Pi rises and moves to the door. The Writer glances one final time at the report. He flips the page and hesitates, reading the last few lines aloud.

WRITER

(Reading:)

"Mr. Patel's is an astounding story of courage and endurance unparalleled in the history of shipwrecks. Very few castaways can claim to have survived so long at sea, and none in the company of...

(He looks up at Pi)

...an adult Bengal tiger."