*Life of Pi*

[*Life of Pi*](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0454876/?ref_=nv_sr_1); Fox 2000 Pictures, 2012; Directed by Ang Lee; Starring: Suraj Sharma, Irrfan Khan, Tabu, Rafe Spall; PG: Emotional thematic content, action sequences. DVD released March 12, 2013. [Watch the trailer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZEZ35Fhvuc).

Summary:

Pi Patel is an Indian boy forced to move to Canada. His father brings with them most of the animals from their family zoo. On the way, the ship sinks and Pi spends 227 days adrift at sea in a lifeboat with a 450-pound Bengal tiger, where he contemplates questions of faith, belief, religion, and God.

Themes:

* Pluralism. Religious pluralism vs. tolerance/ecumenism.
* Truth. Living by not what one thinks is objectively or normatively true, but what makes life tolerable.
* Names. Pi Patel is named after the French swimming pool Piscine Molitor. In the novel, an atheist and a Muslim share the same name. The Bengal tiger’s name, Richard Parker, comes from a mix-up with the name of the hunter, Richard Parker. Pi is adrift at sea 227 days, or 22/7, which is 3.14—or pi.
* Choosing a story. Of his own novel, Yann Martel says, “The subtext of *Life of Pi* can be summarized in three lines: 1) Life is a story. 2) You can choose your story. 3) A story with God is the better story.”

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways could this story be a fable, myth, allegory, or parable?
2. Pi grew up in a zoo and studied religion and zoology in the university. How are religions like and unlike zoos?
3. Pi’s name is the irrational number 3.14 as well as a shortened version of the French word for swimming pool. The tiger is called Richard Parker because of a clerical error. Discuss the significance of names, naming, and these characters’ specific names.
4. Pi tells the author who visits him in Canada two stories—one with animals and one without—and the writer says he prefers the story with the animals. Pi responds, “And so it goes with God.” What does this say about God, religions, and stories?

Read Sam Heath’s review of the film [here](http://studycentersonline.org/resource/message-in-a-name/).