

THE TONY AWARD® WINNING THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE

LIFE OF PI

EDUCATION
MATERIALS



SYNOPSIS

ASSETS LINKED

HERE

"Life of Pi" by Yann Martel tells the story of Piscine Molitor Patel, or Pi, a young Indian boy who survives a shipwreck. The book starts with an author's note about how the story came to be. It introduces Pi's childhood in Pondicherry, India, where his family owns a zoo and Pi is interested in Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, which worries his father.

When Pi is a teenager, his family moves to Canada, taking their animals on a Japanese cargo ship. The ship encounters a storm and sinks, leaving Pi alone on a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker, a zebra, a hyena, and an orangutan.

Pi faces extreme challenges as he fights for survival, dealing with hunger, thirst, and the dangerous animals on the lifeboat. He uses his knowledge of zoology and his faith to endure. Over time, he forms a fragile bond with Richard Parker, realizing they need each other to survive.

After 227 days adrift, Pi and Richard Parker reach Mexico. Richard Parker disappears into the jungle, and Pi is rescued. When officials question him about his journey, they find his story hard to believe. Pi then offers an alternative version where the animals are replaced by human characters from the ship.

The officials prefer this more believable story, but Pi leaves it up to the reader to decide which version of events is true. The novel explores themes of faith, survival, and the nature of storytelling.

TIMELINE

The Life of Pi play debuted in the U.K. in June 2019, but the show's history truly begins in the early 2000s, when its source material was published. Learn more about the history of Life of Pi below.

- 2001: Yann Martel publishes the Life of Pi novel. Though more than five publishing houses rejected the book at first, Life of Pi went on to receive critical acclaim and multiple awards.
- 2012: Life of Pi receives a film adaptation, directed by Ang Lee. The film also receives acclaim and wins four Oscars out of 11 nominations.
- 2019: Life of Pi premieres at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, England.
- 2021: The play transfers to the Wyndham's Theatre in London's West End in November. The award-winning production concluded its run in January 2023 after winning five Olivier Awards.
- 2022: The North American pre-Broadway premiere takes place at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, running from December 2022 to January 2023.
- 2023: Life of Pi premieres on Broadway in March.

ACCOLADES

The Life of Pi show has been honored with several awards since its 2019 debut, and the book and film are prize winners too. Here are all the awards Life of Pi's various versions have won.

- **Olivier Awards:** The West End production of the play won five Laurence Olivier Awards, including Best New Play, Best Director, Best Actor (for Hiran Abeysekera as Pi), and Best Supporting Actor (for the seven puppeteers playing the tiger).
 - **UK Theatre Awards:** The Sheffield production won four of these honors, including Best New Play and Best Director.
 - **WhatsOnStage Awards:** The Sheffield production of Life of Pi won the prize for Best New Play.
 - **Tony Awards:** Life of Pi received three Tony Awards. It won Best Lighting Design of a Play (Tim Lutkin), Best Scenic Design of a Play (Tim Hatley and Andzrej Goulding), and Best Sound Design of a Play (Carolyn Downing) in the 2023 Tony Awards
- Other awards:** The Life of Pi book won multiple awards, including the Booker Prize for fiction, the Boeke Prize, and the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature.

MEET THE CREATIVES

INTERVIEWS LINKED
HERE

Yann Martel



Author

Lolita Chakrabati



Playwright

Max Webster



**Original
Director**

AAPI HISTORY

ASSETS LINKED

HERE

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage/History recognizes the rich cultures, histories, and contributions of people with roots in Asia and the Pacific Islands. This diverse group includes ethnicities from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific Islands, each with unique traditions, languages, and histories.

AAPI communities have shaped societies across the globe, from the ancient civilizations of Asia to the modern-day contributions in science, technology, arts, and politics. Their influence is evident in global trade, cultural exchanges, and the spread of ideas and innovations. However, these communities have also faced challenges, including colonization, migration, and discrimination.

Celebrating AAPI Heritage means acknowledging these global contributions and understanding the complexities of identity and migration that have shaped the AAPI experience. It also emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity and inclusion in fostering a more connected and equitable world.

PUPPETRY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ASSETS LINKED

HERE

Life of Pi utilizes puppets all the way through the production. The information and activities linked above are designed to help you evaluate what you have seen and to suggest some ideas that you can use in the studio to experiment with your own.

We talked to Finn Caldwell (Puppet & Movement Director, and Puppet Designer), Nick Barnes (Puppet Designer), Scarlett Wilderink (Richard Parker – Tiger Heart) and Fred Wild (Tiger Head) to give us an insight into the use of puppetry in the show.

CREATIVE PRACTICE & CAREERS

ASSETS LINKED
HERE

In the linked materials, you'll explore the fundamental aspects of staging a production, from puppetry and movement to set, costume, lighting, sound/music, and video/projection design. These resources offer a detailed overview of the creative and technical processes involved, illustrating how each element contributes to a powerful theatrical experience. You'll also gain insights into how these behind-the-scenes roles can be pursued as fulfilling career paths in the arts, highlighting that a career in theater extends far beyond the stage.

WRITING ABOUT LIVE PRODUCTIONS

ASSETS LINKED

HERE

In this section, you'll deepen your understanding of how to analyze and write about live theater by focusing on critical elements such as performance, puppetry, lighting design, sound design, projection design, and set design. You'll learn to identify and interpret the pivotal moments in a show that define the audience's experience, from the subtle nuances of a performance to the technical artistry behind lighting and sound. These insights will enable you to craft thoughtful, detailed reviews that truly capture the essence of the production. By clicking the link, you'll embark on a journey to sharpen your analytical skills and elevate your writing, making your reflections on theater both insightful and compelling.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ASSETS LINKED

HERE

Students have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities related to the show, including thematic discussions on specific aspects, writing reflections and analyses in English class, and applying their insights in practical sessions within the rehearsal studio. These activities are designed to deepen understanding and enhance engagement with the material.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Below are resources linked for instructors to use at their discretion to enhance classroom engagement with the show:

[Teaching Artist Guide](#)

[Puppetry Workshop Handout](#)

[Pre-Show Puppetry Workshop](#)

Feel free to incorporate these materials as needed to support your classroom activities.

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