

**Yann Martel's novel, Life of Pi, demonstrates that truth only exists in the eye of the beholder.**

**Discuss with close reference to the text.**

The fictional novel, "Life of Pi" by Yann Martel, is about a 16 year old Indian protagonist who undergoes a miraculous journey of development and strength. On the way to Canada from Pondicherry, India, the Patel family travelled via the "Tsimtsum" with their animals from the Pondicherry Zoo. On the way it sinks, marking the beginning of Pi's arduous journey that will last him 227 days out in the Pacific Ocean with what it seems, a handful of animals. In Martel's novel, he constructs the novel to be divided into two parts of what is considered "truth". Through a post modernist perspective, Martel delves into two sides which are always in hot debate, Science and Religion. Throughout the novel, Martel's storytelling is deceptive but is done on purpose to demonstrate through vast complexity that truth only exists in the eye of the beholder; displaying that it's a subjective, but personal experience.

Science is a strong and complex study as objects and events must have evidence in order for it to be relative. Throughout Martel's novel, he constructs this through the use of the two Japanese investigators Mr Okamoto and Mr Chiba, who claim that Pi's story is make believe. After Pi explains his story which consists of 190 pages of the novel, they ask him to explain "what really happened." This demonstrates to the reader that unless there's scientific truth, then something cannot be, or cannot exist; such as a 16 year old boy surviving on a lifeboat for 227 days with a "450 pound Royal Bengal Tiger." These two investigators have a narrow vision and a closed mind to Pi's story as Martel is perhaps trying to convey what people are like with their "dry, yeastless factuality," Martel furthermore explores this view with the help of Mr Kumar, Pi's teacher who is against religion as he believes that "religion is darkness." This juxtaposes religion as truth is based purely on the subjective feelings of human understanding.

Martel demonstrates how religion can also be subjective to the beholder. Right at the beginning of the novel with the "Author's Note," Martel is foreshadowing and setting up the reader that by the end of novel, they will "believe in God," demonstrating that the novel will include some form of religion. Pi was born into a Hindu family but over the course of his teenage life became aware by Father Martin and Mr Kumar about Christianity and Islam. This seemingly diverse choice in spirituality is a clear testament to the reader that Pi Patel is a boy who certainly believes in God, whether others perceive them to be entirely different. The author demonstrates this view whilst Pi is on the lifeboat. When Pi is noting down all of the rations on the lifeboat, he notes down only "1 God", explaining that perhaps there is only "1 God," and that it doesn't matter what others have been taught to believe, it's subjective and personal and it's Pi decision, not what others have forced on him. Religion is the "giving up and letting go" of all things rational and all things relative, Martel has constructed his novel around this view as it's just as important as hard evidence and fact.

Martel has constructed a novel that explores both religion and science as a means of the truth. In the beginning of the novel, Part one, Pi explains to the reader how he studies both zoology and religious studies at university. Martel has done this in the beginning of the novel to not only foreshadow Pi's survival of the trip, but to suggest to the reader that in Pi's world, religion and science both coexist as one. Throughout Martel's novel, there's a constant divide between the protagonist as he has to deal with arduous adversity in regards to his beliefs and values compared to

others like the Japanese investigators, or the two Mr Kumars. Martel has constructed these seemingly opposite views and has brought them together as one through Martel's clever storytelling in order to present to the reader that life should have and consist of what they want to believe, as truth is subjective to each individual, and the truth is what the reader makes of it.

The novel *Life of Pi*, by Yann Martel explores the subjective nature of truth, and how it all exists in the eye of the beholder. Through detailing the miraculous journey of Piscine Patel with his extreme belief system, Martel is able to demonstrate to the reader the subjective and personal experience of what the truth is, and what each person makes of it. Martel uses the opposing views of science as well as religion to demonstrate to his readers the complex nature surrounding truth through a post modernist's perspective which ties them both together in a new and unique way. Truth is different to each person, and through the fictional novel "Life of a Pi", published on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, Yann Martel has made it possible.