

Life of Pi : Word Specific Analysis



Learning Objective

- To be able to understand the influence of word choice and language selection on the meaning, atmosphere, and tone of Life of Pi.

Literary Terms Clarification

- ❑ **Connotation**: societal implications that encompass a word. (Society's definition of a word.)
- ❑ **Atmosphere**: the mood created by the text.
- ❑ **Tone**: the attitude a poet (or any writer) takes toward a character, event, or subject.

The Hook (Think, Pair, Share)

- In your performance journal, be sure to jot down the first thing that you think of when I say a word. The word will change each time. For example:
- I say **rain**. You think _____
(cloud, Seattle, spring, tears, blue, Monday, etc.). Write it down.

Word Specific Analysis

- Each of you will receive a quotation that has been selected from the text. Within the quotation, there will be underlined words. For each underlined word, you need to create a mind map of words that could:
 - replace that word and still have the same meaning **AND/OR**
 - other words that are connected to that word.

You must have at least **THREE** for each underlined word. You may use a thesaurus if necessary.

Word Specific Analysis Example

The **worst** pair of **opposites** is **boredom** and **terror**. Sometimes your life is a pendulum **swing** from one to the other. The sea is without a wrinkle. There is not a whisper of the wind. The **hours** last **forever**. You are so bored you **sink** into a **state** of **apathy** close to a **coma**... In your boredom, there are elements of terror: you **break down** into **tears**; you are filled with **dread**; you **scream**; you **deliberately hurt** yourself. (Chapter 78)

Word Specific Analysis Example

- How do the words and connotations influence the tone of this excerpt?
- How does the tone reflect the greater struggle happening in the text at this point?
- What is the greater struggle throughout the text?

Sample Response

- **(Answer with a Claim)** In this section of Yann Martel's Life of Pi, the negative connotations surrounding the descriptions of the boredom and terror demonstrate the critical state of mind Pi exhibits.
- **(Elaborate)** At this point in the story, Pi and Richard Parker have nearly given up hope. They have been lost at sea for what seems like eternity.
- **(Cite Textual Support)** In the story, Martel describes life as a “pendulum swing” that breaks one down into a “state of apathy... with elements of terror.”
- **(Explanation)** By using terms like “boredom,” “worst,” “terror,” and “coma,” Martel displays a turbulent and ominous tone in the story. The setting and the inconsistent nature reflect and warn the reader of potentially negative turns in Pi's mental state. Just as there is a calm before the storm, “the sea without a wrinkle” and the “wind without a whisper” suggest the profound loneliness that leads to mental insanity.
- **(Tie Back to Claim)** When terror and boredom are the only pair in the story, the implications of Pi's negative state of mind are made explicitly clear.