

Adrift at Sea

...what happens after a shipwreck

CONNECT Have you ever helped a person or an animal in need? Tell the class about it.

REFLECT Why is it good to help someone? How do you feel after helping a person or an animal? Express it in a few lines.

IMAGINE You are stranded on an island with your friends. What will you do to survive? What precautions will you take to keep the wild animals at bay? Prepare a list.

BEFORE YOU READ

Yann Martel (b. 1963) is a Canadian author. He is best known for his bestseller novel *Life of Pi* (2001). The book has sold more than 12 million copies worldwide. It was adapted into a film by Ang Lee, and became a smashing hit. Yann has also written *Self* (1996), *Beatrice and Virgil* (2010) and *The High Mountains of Portugal* (2016). He lives in Saskatoon, Canada, with British writer Alice Kuipers and their four children.

Adrift at Sea is an extract from *Life of Pi*. The novel elevated Yann Martel to international stardom. It is a story of loss and survival. Yann asks many questions related to life, purpose of one's existence, friendship, etc. in the novel. To find the possible answers to these questions was the reason behind writing the novel.



READ

The ship sank. It made a sound like a monstrous metallic burp. Things bubbled at the surface and then vanished.

Everything was screaming: the sea, the wind, my heart. From the lifeboat I saw something in the water.

I cried, 'Richard Parker, is that you? It's so hard to see. Oh, that this rain would stop! Richard Parker? Richard Parker? Yes, it is you!'

I could see his head. He was struggling to stay at the surface of the water.

'Jesus, Mary, Muhammad and Vishnu, how good to see you, Richard Parker! Don't give up, please. Come to the lifeboat. Do you hear this whistle? TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE! You heard, right?'

Swim, swim! You're a strong swimmer. It's not a hundred feet.'

He had seen me. He looked panic-stricken. He started swimming my way. The water about him was shifting wildly. He looked small and helpless.

'Richard Parker, can you believe what has happened to us? Tell me, it's a bad dream. Tell me, it's not real. Tell me, I'm still in my bunk on the Tsimtsum and I'm tossing and turning and soon I'll wake up from this nightmare.

Tell me, I'm still happy. Mother, my tender guardian angel of wisdom, where are you? And you, Father, my loving **worrywart**? And you, Ravi, dazzling hero of my childhood? Vishnu preserve me, Allah protect me, Christ save me, I can't bear it! TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE!

I was not wounded in any part of my body, but I had never experienced such intense pain, such a ripping of the nerves, such an ache of the heart.

He would not make it. He would drown. He was hardly moving forward and his movements were weak. His nose and mouth kept dipping underwater. Only his eyes were steadily on me.

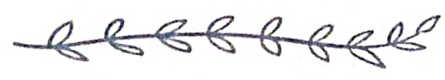
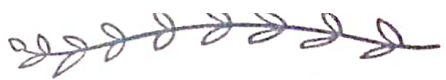
'What are you doing, Richard Parker? Don't you love life? Keep swimming then! TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE! Kick with your legs. Kick! Kick! Kick!'



Brainstorm

What kind of a swimmer was Richard Parker?

worrywart: a person who worries too much



He stirred in the water and made to swim.

'And what of my extended family—birds, beasts and reptiles? They too have drowned. Every single thing I value in life has been destroyed. And I am allowed no explanation? I am to suffer hell without any account from heaven? In that case, what is the purpose of reason, Richard Parker?

Is it no more than to shine at practicalities—the getting of food, clothing and shelter? Why can't reason give greater answers? Why can we throw a question further than we can pull in an answer? Why such a vast net if there's so little fish to catch?

His head was barely above water. He was looking up, taking in the sky one last time. There was a lifebuoy in the boat with a rope tied to it. I took hold of it and waved it in the air.

'Do you see this lifebuoy, Richard Parker? Do you see it? Catch hold of it! HUMPF! I'll try again. HUMPF!'

He was too far. But the sight of the lifebuoy flying his way gave him hope. He revived and started beating the water with vigorous, desperate strokes.

'That's right! One, two. One, two. One, two. Breathe when you can.

Watch for the waves. TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE!'

My heart was chilled to ice. I felt ill with grief. But there was no time for

frozen shock. It was shock in activity. Something in me did not want to give up on life, was unwilling to let go, wanted to fight to the very end.

Where that part of me got the heart, I don't know.

'Isn't it **ironic**, Richard Parker? We're in hell yet still we're afraid of **immortality**. Look how close you are! TREEEEEE! TREEEEEE!

TREEEEEE! Hurrah, hurrah! You've made it, Richard Parker, you've made it. Catch! HUMPF!'

I threw the lifebuoy mightily. It fell in the water right in front of him.

With his last energies, he stretched forward and took hold of it.

'Hold on tight, I'll pull you in. Don't let go. Pull with your eyes while I pull with my hands. In a few seconds you'll be aboard and we'll be together. Wait a second. Together? We'll be together. Have I gone mad?'

I woke up to what I was doing. I **yanked** on the rope.

'Let go of that lifebuoy, Richard Parker! Let go, I said. I don't want you here, do you understand? Go somewhere else. Leave me alone. Get lost. Drown! Drown!'

ironic: (here) strange
immortality: a state of not dying ever
yanked: removed suddenly



He was kicking vigorously with his legs. I grabbed an oar. I thrust it at him, meaning to push him away. I missed and lost hold of the oar.

I grabbed another oar. I dropped it in an **oarlock** and pulled as hard as I could, meaning to move the lifeboat away. All I accomplished was to turn the lifeboat a little, bringing one end closer to Richard Parker.

I would hit him on the head!
I lifted the oar in the air.

He was too fast. He reached up and pulled himself aboard.

Oh my God! Ravi was right. Truly I was to be the next goat. I had a wet, trembling, half-drowned, heaving and coughing three-year-old adult Bengal tiger in my lifeboat.

Richard Parker rose unsteadily to his feet on the **tarpaulin**, eyes blazing as they met mine, ears laid tight to his head, all weapons drawn. His head was the size and colour of the lifebuoy, with teeth. I turned around, stepped over the zebra and threw myself overboard.



Brainstorm

Is Pi afraid of Richard Parker?

oarlock: a part meant to hold an oar

tarpaulin: a waterproof plastic sheet

CONSOLIDATE

A1. Fill in the blanks with right words from the story.

1. This is a tale that takes place at the _____.
2. Richard Parker was a _____.
3. Richard Parker looked small and _____ to the narrator when he was drowning.
4. The narrator took the _____ and threw it in Richard Parker's direction.
5. The narrator grabbed an _____ and thrust it at Richard Parker.
6. Rickard Parker rose _____ on the tarpaulin.



A2. Answer these questions.

1. Who is Richard Parker?
2. How does the narrator remember his family members during the time of crisis?
3. Is the narrator wounded during the crisis?
4. Describe Richard Parker's reaction on seeing the lifebuoy.
5. What does the narrator choose to do in the end?

A3. Think and answer.

1. Why do you think the narrator suddenly changes his mind about saving Richard Parker?
2. Everything that the narrator valued in life has been destroyed. Why do you think the narrator still does not want to give up on life?

A4. Learn Interesting Terms

When a story doesn't have a definite ending, it is said to be **open-ended**. A story with an open ending leaves the reader wondering what would follow next.



Write a note on the open ending in *Adrift at Sea*.

CREATE

B1. Read these sentences.

- Tell me it's a **bad** dream.
- Tell me it's a **terrible** dream.

Base adjectives are adjectives that don't have the idea of **very**. The adjective **bad** in the first sentence is a base adjective.

