



2025 -2026 Summer Reading/Thinking Assignment for Incoming 10th Grade Advanced English II Students

Note: This is a required summer novel for *all* incoming Advanced English II students, regardless of which academy you are in; students taking grade level English II are encouraged but not required to read this novel.

Why do we have a summer reading assignment?

The key to being a great reader is to read extensively, and the key to being a great writer is exposure to great writing. Reading is not something that we want you to do just during the school year; life-long learners are also life-long readers. Summer provides time to enjoy uninterrupted reading and allows students to digest ideas prior to discussing and interpreting writing techniques in class.

The Novel

Life of Pi by Yann Martel

Life of Pi is available through [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in paperback, audible, and kindle formats.

You may order from [Book People](https://www.bookpeople.com) if you'd like to shop local!

If you have a Learning Ally account or [Audible](https://www.audible.com) account, *Life of Pi* is available in audiobook format.

Use your Austin Public Library account to [make an account on Hoopla](https://www.austintexas.gov/department/hoopla) to get the ebook for FREE

Use your [Austin Public Library account](https://www.austintexas.gov/department/hoopla) to get the ebook and/or audiobook (subject to availability)

If you are unable to order a book, here is a link to a pdf version of the novel: [Life of Pi by Yann Martel](#)

Why have my teachers selected this novel?

English II is based on world literature, so we've selected a book in which the protagonist explores multicultural identity and, quite literally, the world. In *Life of Pi*, it just so happens that the protagonist's mode of transportation is a lifeboat and his traveling companion is a tiger. The novel introduces some of the big ideas of our course: truth and fiction, heroes, journeys, storytelling, culture, etc. Completing the summer reading means you'll be ready to jump into the curriculum on Day One!

The Summer Reading Assignment

Step 1: Read and enjoy the book. You may want to write brief annotations in the margin as you read so you can remember key details, but that is not required.

Step 2: Write about 3 significant moments in the novel. See questions below.

Step 3: When you return to school next fall, we will take a quiz over the novel and hold a Socratic Seminar to discuss main ideas.

The written work you do this summer (Step 2) will help you feel more prepared for our fall activities. It will not be due during the first week of school, because we want to give you time to ask questions, if you have any. We highly recommend you complete the assignment (on your own; this is not a partner or group assignment) during the month of July or early August, so it's fresh in your mind.

More About Step 2: Significant Moments

Literature can be a window to the world, allowing us to virtually visit other cultures and time periods to learn about other people's perspectives, and literature can also be a mirror, reflecting back our own experiences and helping us process how we see the world.

For each prompt below, choose a significant moment (a key quotation/passage) from the novel and then write a detailed paragraph that analyzes or reacts to that moment from the novel.

- 1) **Literature is a Window:** Choose a passage from the novel that you think reveals something important about how Pi sees the world. It might be something related to truth v. reality, the nature of mankind, how Pi interprets belief or faith, how perspective shifts based on the speaker, or something else that you think reveals a truth about life.
- 2) **Literature is a Mirror:** Choose a moment from the novel that made you think about how you see the world. This might be something related to your own belief systems, what you think is important for both physical and mental survival, an obstacle you have had to overcome, a journey that taught you something about yourself, or a moment when your own interpretation of life was different than others around you. Connect your personal reaction to a key scene in the novel.
- 3) **Literature is a Teacher:** Choose a moment from the novel that you think helps develop or reveal a theme or lesson. You might write about:
 - Conflict (human v. human, human v. self, human v. nature, human v. society)
 - Allusions
 - Foreshadowing
 - Character Development (motivation, relationships, change over time, etc.)
 - Symbols or Motifs

Always take it back to the theme. Why did this passage from the text seem important to you?
What big ideas about life are revealed through this moment?

What makes a moment significant?

That's up to you as a reader/interpreter/thinker. Consider moments that:

- reveal a truth about a character, the theme of the novel, or life in general
- indicate a major change in the character, plot, tone, etc.
- demonstrate the writer's craft (consider how literary devices might reveal meaning)
- strike a chord in you or grab your attention, for whatever reason

If you don't have much to say, that's not the best passage to pick!

Need a re-cap of the assignment?

- Write 3 total significant moments for this assignment (a quotation plus your written response).
- There are three sections in the novel, so please choose one passage from each section.
- Each entry should address a different prompt: literature is a window, literature is a mirror, literature is a teacher
- Please type your responses – they will eventually be submitted to Blend.

Sample Entry – Literature is a Teacher:

Significant Moment (• page number):

"The sun was beginning to pull the curtains on the day. It was a placid explosion of orange and red, a great chromatic symphony, a colour canvas of supernatural proportions, truly a splendid Pacific sunset, quite wasted on me" (124).

Explanation of Significance:

This image captures a personified sun in the middle of a metaphor, "pulling the curtains on the day" like a human might end a play on a stage, closing the theater curtains. It's interesting that what is real, nature, is being compared to something imagined or make-believe, like actors on a stage. This is the beginning of a passage that includes several contrasting ideas placed side by side. The imagery of a natural phenomenon, a sunset, is compared to man-made works of art like drama, music, and art. The "explosion of orange and red" is simultaneously described as "placid," meaning calm. This is connected to a bigger message in the novel where things that seem like opposites, like truth and fiction, might be more connected than we think.

Another contradiction: the narrator uses language to describe things merging together (curtains, a symphony, a canvas on which brushstrokes exist together), while he is actually quite removed from the event. This makes him seem so small and vulnerable in a vast and beautiful world where no one notices his existence and the source of this beauty is also the source of great danger to him. The layers of the metaphor all end with the abrupt phrase "quite wasted on me." On some level he realizes what he is missing in life, but staying alive—survival—is his only reality. And while Pi says the moment is wasted on him, he captures it with such detail and emphasis on sound, repeating the "c" sound in "chromatic," "colour," and "canvas" as well as the "s" sound in "symphony," "supernatural," "splendid," and "sunset." Life lesson: these short moments in life show us how amazing and massive our world is and, at times, we may feel unworthy or insignificant in comparison to such size and splendor.

Academic Integrity:

Summer reading assignments help your English teacher gauge your critical reading, writing, and thinking skills. Therefore, all work should be completed independently; do not partner with a friend, or receive too much help from a tutor or parent.

Work submitted will be screened through a plagiarism/AI clearinghouse. Do not conduct any research online or seek out sources like gradesaver, sparknotes, cliffsnotes, schmoop, etc. which are websites designed to take advanced texts and simplify them for the reader. Using online sources like these websites and/or an AI site (including grammarly) is prohibited in the [Austin High ELA Plagiarism Policy](#). Our expectation is that you read the text and work independently with the text assigned, even if you have to grapple with some analysis. Do not work with a partner or a group of friends on this assignment. If you have any questions, please reach out to an English teacher listed on the assignment. We're here to help!

Questions?

If you have any questions over the summer about this assignment, we want you to feel free to contact a 10th grade teacher for assistance. You may not know who your teacher is next year, but any of these teachers can answer your questions.

Ms. Pritchett: jane.pritchett@austinisd.org

Mr. Goodwyn: ryan.goodwyn@austinisd.org

A note about watching the film v. reading the book: We are aware that there is a movie about the book. Read the book. Trust us.

What to do if you have already read *Life of Pi*: Don't despair! There are lots of great books out there, so keep reading whatever you love. We suggest that you re-read some key sections of *Life of Pi* (especially Section 1 and Section 3) to refresh your memory. Often you'll see deeper connections and allusions when you read it a second time. Please do the written work to be prepared for our in-class assignments. Then keep reading!