Rationale (including age/ability appropriateness and how text fits into the course’s philosophy and enduring understanding):

This book is recommended by English I teachers for 9th grade students. Yann Martel’s voice is both powerful and utterly unique as he tells the story of a precocious young boy named Pi Patel who must cope with loss, despair, faith, and a hungry Bengal tiger in the aftermath of a shipwreck in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The protagonist’s childlike imagination, combined with his very mature views of religion and fierce will to survive, enable him to brave the life-threatening challenges he faces while adrift for many months. Martel’s depiction of the ordeal takes students on a journey that is both highly fanciful and frighteningly real, blurring the line between the mundane and the divine at every turn. Major themes of the book include perseverance, faith, acceptance, and the power of imagination.

Summary (adapted from the 2001 book cover of Life of Pi):

Pi Patel, a God-loving boy and the son of an Indian zookeeper, has a fervent love of stories and practices, not only for his native Hinduism, but also for Christianity and Islam. When Pi is sixteen years old, his family and their zoo animals emigrate from India to North America aboard a Japanese cargo ship. The ship tragically sinks – and Pi finds himself alone on a lifeboat, his only companions a hyena, an orangutan, a wounded zebra, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger. Soon the tiger has killed all but Pi. Can Pi and the tiger find their way to land? Can Pi’s fear, knowledge, and cunning keep him alive until they do?

Merit Awards and Recognition:

- New York Times bestseller
- Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2002
- Boeke Prize in 2003
- Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature in Best Adult Fiction for 2001–2003

Benefit to Students:

- is a compelling modern use of the parable form and of the animal fable
- presents a compelling exploration of the power of survival instincts and the human/animal spirit
- provides excellent, student-accessible examples of the ways in which language and plot can be used to distort reality
- aligns well with topics the students will study in World Geography and later in History (such as emigration, cultural/religious/economic conflict, crisis and recovery, man vs. nature conflict)
- is multi-disciplinary in nature as it offers students engaging opportunities to discuss many related subjects/topics: race, politics, religion, psychology, sociology, anthropology, biology, zoology, etc.

**Brief description of proposed classroom activities generated by text:**

Class Discussion, Vocabulary in Context, Characterization activities, Analysis of Symbol, Motif, and Theme, Written Reflections (Short Answer or Essay, Reading Quizzes and/or Test, Creative Writing (animal fable, parable), Project

**List of the TEKS/STAAR curricular objectives the proposed text supports**

**TEKS:** E1.1.A-E (Vocabulary); E1.2.A-C (Genre/Theme); E1.5.A-D (Fiction); E1.7.A (Literary/Sensory Language); E1.8.A (Historical/Cultural Context); E1.13.A-E (Writing/Writing Process); E1.14.A-C (Writing/Literary Texts); E1.24.A-C (Listening Skills); E1.25.A (Speaking Skills); E1.26.A (Teamwork Skills)

**STAAR:** see TEKS Objectives above

**Clarification of any potentially controversial segments* and why the text remains a suitable choice, despite being potentially controversial.**

Some scenes include physical, vicious violence between the animals. These scenes explore the powerful, and often destructive, force of the instinct to survive.

**Similar Works:**

- *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding