

Part 1 Chapter 2

Part 1 Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 2 introduces a new, unnamed character who lives in Scarborough. The author provides a physical description of a "small, slim man" with an Indian complexion. He is purposeful in his movements and wears a warm, winter coat even though the weather is mild.

Part 1 Chapter 2 Analysis

The reader is given no indication as to who this newly introduced character is. The author is creating more suspense for his story by setting the stage for multiple locations. Additionally, this chapter is not written using a first-person point of view as the first chapter was but a third-person point of view instead.

Part 1 Chapter 3

Part 1 Chapter 3 Summary

The main character tells the story of how he got his name. He was named after a swimming pool in Paris that was visited by one of his father's good friends, Francis Adirubasamy. The main character feels a great deal of affection for Mr. Adirubasamy and calls him Mamji, a respectful affectionate term for uncle in his native tongue. Mamji, in his younger years, was a champion competitive swimmer.

Even though the main character's family did not enjoy swimming the same way Mamji did, the main character's father loved the talk of it. Mamji would indulge him with the talk of the swimming pools in Paris, where he studied for 2 years in the early 1930's. He would tell them about the swimming pools, about their histories and about those built and used for the Olympics. He also discussed at length and in colorful detail the lack of hygiene of the French and their swimming pools.

In Mamji's opinion, there was no rival to the spectacular pool, Piscine Molitor. It was ideal for a competitive swimmer because it contained two pools, one indoors and the other outdoors. Even more important, the water was clean. It also included changing rooms, hot showers, an exercise room, a beach, a sunning deck and a bar, among other amenities.

To Mamji and the main character's family, this pool was spoken of with reverence and admiration. When the main character was born, he was named after the swimming pool: Piscine Molitor Patel.

Part 1 Chapter 3 Analysis

In this chapter, the reader learns the main character's full name and how he got it. The reader learns more about the main character, along with a little history of his immediate family and his early years.

Swimming is an important theme for Piscine and his childhood. Also important in this chapter is the introduction of Mamji. The author begins to fill in details about Piscine and the reader gets to know more about his history in this chapter. We find out that his father is a zookeeper who loved to talk about swimming as an escape. Again, the theme of simplicity appears in Piscine's description of swimming and the pleasure of the rhythm of a good stroke.

Part 1 Chapter 4

Part 1 Chapter 4 Summary

In Chapter 4, the narrator introduces the Pondicherry Zoo. Pondicherry is the territory in India where Piscine grew up. Once Pondicherry became a territory of India in 1954, the Pondicherry Botanical Gardens became a zoo founded by Piscine's father, Mr. Santosh Patel. Mr. Patel had been a hotelkeeper and thought that the transition to zookeeping would be natural. The zoo became a source of a little enjoyment and many headaches.

To Piscine, the zoo was heaven on earth. He loved growing up in and around the zoo. His life was surrounded by animals. He awoke to the roar of lions as his morning alarm and enjoyed his meals with the sounds of monkeys and exotic birds. On his way to school, he would walk past the habitations of various other exotic animals.

Piscine then discussed the "nonsense" that animals are not happy living in a zoo. He argued that animals in the wild are driven by hunger and fear having to defend themselves from the environment, predators and parasites. Thus, they become creatures of habit, moving around in the same area and using the same routes year after year. The area they inhabit becomes their home. He used an analogy that if someone were to barge into your home and declare you free to go, you would think that person was crazy and ask him to leave. You own your home and want to remain there. Animals feel the same. Consequently, in the zoo, their home, a territory is created for them where they do not have to worry about predators or hunger. He said that after the animals settle in, they come to feel like a landowner rather than a prisoner. They become protective of their territory and treat it as they would their territory in the wild. Piscine argued that most animals actually prefer the zoo with its lack of disease and predators and abundance of food and water.

Piscine also understood that zoos are generally not favored by many because of the confinement of the animals. He likened this opinion to religion, in that both are plagued by the issues of freedom and confinement. The chapter closes by relating that the zoo no longer exists, except in memories.

Part 1 Chapter 4 Analysis

The image of Piscine as a child reveling in the wonder of the animals underscores the themes of simplicity and beauty of nature. Considering the amount of the chapter devoted to Piscine's discussion of captivity versus freedom, it foreshadows that this subject will become a more pervasive theme in the book. There is also foreshadowing in this chapter that shows the reader how Piscine may handle challenges in his life based on his experiences while he was growing up with the animals and having considered their freedom and confinement at great length.

Part 1 Chapter 5

Part 1 Chapter 5 Summary

The story about how Piscine got his name is not over. As he grew up and entered school, the trouble he received for his name was never ending from his classmates to his teachers. No one could properly pronounce his name, so they chose to call him names such as "Pissing Patel."

Finally Piscine got to change schools and attend the medium secondary school where his brother went. On the first day of school, all the students took their turns introducing themselves. When it came time for Piscine to introduce himself, he ran to the chalkboard and wrote "My name is Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as Pi Patel." Pi repeated his introduction in each one of his classes. Much to Pi's delight, the name stuck.

Part 1 Chapter 5 Analysis

We now know the full story of Pi's name. This scene is significant because it serves as further development of our main character. We have a better understanding of who he was as a young man and what he experienced as a child growing up.

Part 1 Chapter 6

Part 1 Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter 6 is a short chapter that reintroduces a nameless male character who was first discussed in Chapter 2. He is described as a great cook with an extensive spice collection. For the first time, we learn that the scene takes place in India, but this gentleman cooks Western meals, like Mexican food, very well. He also keeps an abundant amount of food in his home.

Part 1 Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter, unlike Chapter 2, in which our nameless main character is introduced, is written in first person. Both this chapter and Chapter 2 are printed in italics, clearly showing that the author wants these scenes set apart from the rest of the book. We do not yet know who this character is or what his significance is.

Part 1 Chapter 7

Part 1 Chapter 7 Summary

Pi introduces one of his favorite teachers from his youth, Mr. Satish Kumar. Mr. Kumar was a Communist and the first atheist Pi had ever met. He is described as looking quite peculiar with a balding head and a large, round belly.

Mr. Kumar visited the zoo often and Pi recalls the first time he saw Mr. Kumar at the zoo. Not knowing how to handle the situation, Pi kept his distance until Mr. Kumar saw him and waved him over to the Indian rhino exhibit. As they watched the rhinos and their roommates, the goats, Mr. Kumar remarked that he wished that the country's politicians could get along as well as the goats. Pi, not knowing much about politics answered back that religion is the answer. Mr. Kumar refuted his answer and went on to explain his atheistic beliefs to young Pi. Mr. Kumar's atheism dated back to his childhood when his body was racked with polio and he cried out to God, but God never came. Although Mr. Kumar's discussion frightened young Pi, Mr. Kumar would become his favorite teacher and mentor and the reason he studied zoology. From this discussion Pi began to learn that atheists were just people with a different faith. Pi says, however, that he cannot tolerate agnostics. We are all entitled to have doubts about our faith at one time or another. One cannot, however, choose doubt as a philosophy of life.

Part 1 Chapter 7 Analysis

As the chapters progress, Pi is being developed as a character through the impact of others on his life. For example, in this chapter we learn about the teacher who had the greatest impact on his life. We also learn that even though Pi and Mr. Kumar had differing views on religion, Pi is tolerant and without compromising his own beliefs, learns to feel kinship with those of alternate religions. The one issue that Pi and Mr. Kumar did agree upon is the sacredness of the zoo. Mr. Kumar called it his temple and for Pi, it's his paradise.

Part 1 Chapter 8

Part 1 Chapter 8 Summary

Pi's father had a sign near the entrance of the zoo that read, "Do you know which is the most dangerous animal in the zoo?" Next to the sign was a curtain with a mirror behind it. Zookeepers consider man the most dangerous threat to the zoo. The danger is manifest in man's cruelty toward the animals. Pi goes on to list incidences of foreign and dangerous objects that have been fed to zoo animals throughout history. Fortunately, at his father's zoo, they had few incidences of animal cruelty. Pi tells the story of a snake charmer who tried to steal a cobra and a woman who dangled her sari in the lion's cage thinking they ate only meat.

Pi's father taught him that the second greatest danger in the zoo was anthropomorphism. We try to see in the animal what we want to see in ourselves, for better or worse. Pi says this is the bane of theologians, as well as zoologists.

To erase any anthropomorphism in his children, Mr. Patel marched his sons out to the tiger's den where a starved tiger was given a live goat. His father lectured that the boys were never to try to pet the tiger. The family watched in terror as the hungry tiger devoured the goat. Following the tigers, Father took them to the homes of the lions and leopards, the bears, the hippos, the hyenas, orangutans, the ostrich and elephants. At each stop he revealed to them how quickly and easily each of the animals could kill or maim them. The family ended their tour at the cages of the guinea pigs where Father took a guinea pig out of its cage and handed it to Pi saying that they were not dangerous and could be touched.

Part 1 Chapter 8 Analysis

Pi presents an interesting contrast in this chapter, which opens by stating that humans are the most dangerous animals in the zoo and providing, in detail, the many ways zoo animals are tortured by humans. The chapter closes with an exhaustive description of the many ways that the animals are dangerous to humans. Pi developed a healthy respect for the power of all the animals, but at the end of the chapter, he was more frightened by what his brother, Ravi, was going to do to him for having falsely accused him of wrongdoing. Ravi provided foreshadowing when he threatened that Pi will be the next goat thrown into the tiger's den.

Part 1 Chapter 9

Part 1 Chapter 9 Summary

Another aspect of being a zookeeper is getting the animals used to having humans nearby. Pi believes that it is an art to be able to reduce the animals' flight distance or the minimum distance they need from a human before they flee. The flight distance varies from animal to animal. Pi's father had the knowledge and instinct to understand the animals and put them at ease around humans. As a result, he created a zoo of healthy, stress-free, well-socialized animals. A zookeeper knows whether he has been successful at creating a good environment for his animals if they are relaxed enough to reproduce. The animals at Pi's father's zoo multiplied readily.

Part 1 Chapter 9 Analysis

Pi continues to introduce the reader to the world of zookeeping and his observation of animal behavior. The reader is given further insight into the delicate balance between humans and animals in the zoo and that to have a successful zoo, the balance must be respected.

Part 1 Chapter 10

Part 1 Chapter 10 Summary

As comfortable as a zoo may be, there are always animals that try to escape. The desire to escape may result from unsatisfactory habitat. Another common escapist is the mature adult animal, for they are often too set in their ways to adapt to new surroundings. Animals are usually escaping from something rather than planning to escape to somewhere. Animals inherently want to feel safe, so if they don't feel safe in one place, they move to another. They become dangerous only to those who come between them and their safe haven.

Part 1 Chapter 10 Analysis

Pi further characterizes animal behavior for the reader and discusses why animals may try to escape confinement. He makes the point that animals do not try to change their surroundings unless there is something drastically wrong.

Life of Pi by Yann Martel

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