Instituto de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje

Facultad de Filosofía y Educación

Starting to believe: Elective workshop based on *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

PARA OPTAR AL TÍTULO DE PROFESOR DE INGLÉS

Y AL GRADO DE LICENCIADO EN EDUCACIÓN

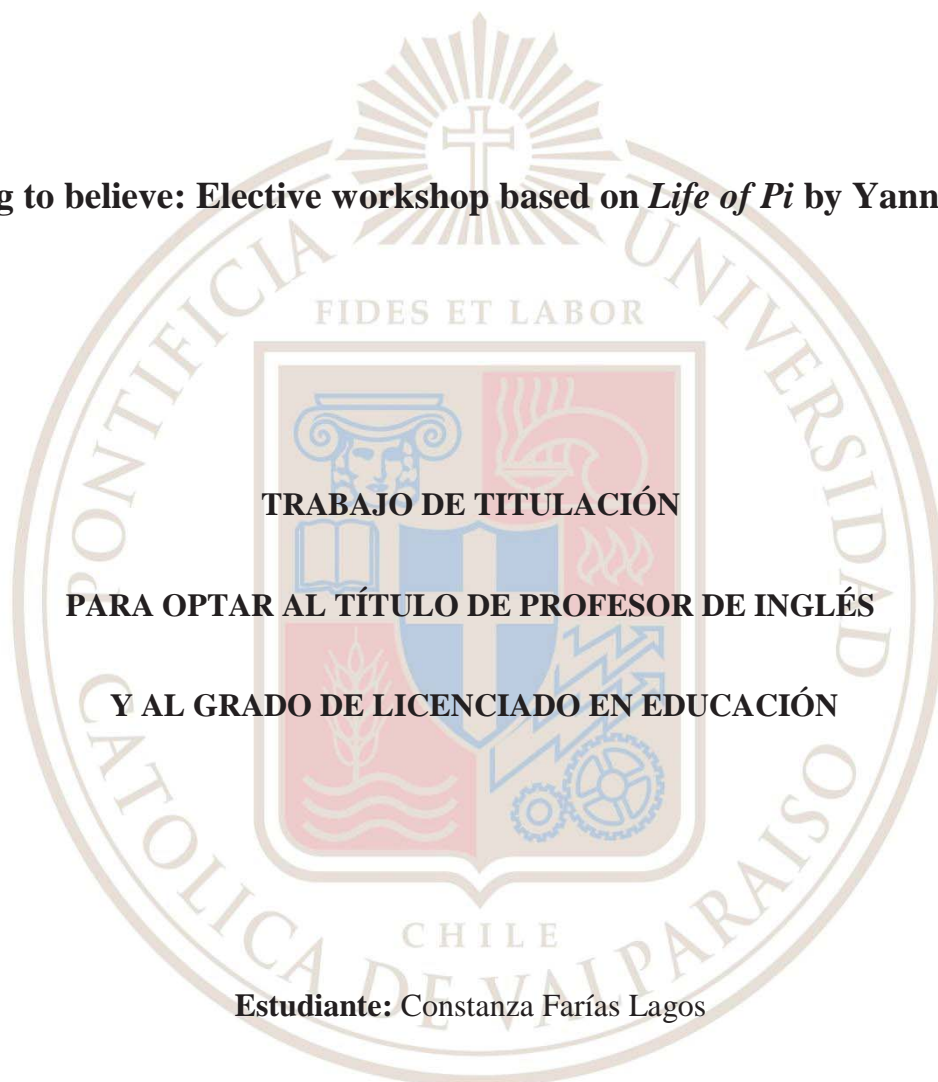**Estudiante:** Constanza Farías Lagos

Profesor guía: Sr. Pablo A. Villa Moreno

Segundo semestre 2014

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Acknowledgments

I have expected this moment for so long that it is difficult for me to say all I want to say just in a few lines. I am so proud of myself since I finally get to this point in which I can close this important period in my life.

I wouldn't be here without my family's help. I couldn't have achieved my goals if they hadn't believed in me. This is to my parents, Ines and Alberto. I could never return all that you have done for me, you are the ones who always had faith in me, from the beginning until now, you were always encouraging me and telling me that I could be better and I am now because of you. Also this is to my sister, Joanna. You were always a model to follow, and here I am now, trying to be just as good teacher as you have been. To my friends too, Cote, Vera and Nathaly, you have made these years to be simply unforgettable. To Vicente, you never left, you are here with me now.

I will always be thankful of my teacher, Pablo Villa, one the best teachers I've ever had. You are one of those teachers that one never forgets, I learned so much from you. Thank you for your endless patience and sympathy.

Finally, this workshop is dedicated to my personal Richard Parker. When things got complicated and I felt I couldn't go on, I thought of you and heard your voice deep inside of me, and I remembered my promise. "Tapita", my loving grandmother, from the sky you are watching me finally finishing the school.

"If you stumble at mere believability, what are you living for? [...] Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer. What is your problem with hard to believe?"

Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*

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Introduction

Nowadays technology has taken away young people's imagination. Even though it has allowed people to be connected, it has isolated them from looking for other ways of entertaining, like reading for example. Adolescents prefer to be at the computer or play with their cell phones than spending one afternoon with a book. Moreover, this situation has turned even worse since schools force students to read books they are not interested in and, in consequence, they associate literature with obligation and boredom.

Luckily, there are some writers who have got teenagers closer; who have rekindled adolescent interest for books. Authors such as J. K. Rowling with *Harry Potter* series or Suzanne Collins with *The Hunger games,* are great exponents of young adult literature that have captured many readers in the world. They have written stories that are so captured young imaginations due to their ability to create identifiable characters and plots which are attractive. Small wonder these books become soon film franchises which make them even more popular worldwide.

Consequently, teachers and schools should appreciate this popularity and take it as a chance to make students embrace reading habits with books they could actually like. Furthermore, it is important to encourage them to read not only because it will increase their knowledge and skills, but also because it will bring benefits to their lives since literature stimulates their imagination and makes them develop a critical thinking that will broaden their vision of reality. By including books with topics that are appealing as well as challenging for

students, teachers will be given the students the chance to read for pleasure and not for obligation.

As teachers, it is important to keep students' attention in the topics that need to be developed but through significant readings, since in this way, students will relate important themes of literary texts with their own lives; for this reason, this workshop has been made with the purpose of creating students' love for literature through the reading of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, a book that has been recognized all over the world with a plot almost impossible to write. Through the reading of this post-modern novel, this project aims to make students analyze and understand concepts that are strongly related to real life such as belief, fear and survival, but in the same way, why imagination plays an important role in the story.

During this workshop, students will be able to understand the novel and debate on their major topics through role plays, class debates, presentations, written essays and the film adaptation of the book. They will have the opportunity to develop critical thinking by discussing concepts related to literature and, at the same time, students will embrace values such as tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.

Throughout this project, it is explained some concepts that must be taken into account before explaining what the workshop is about. In the theoretical framework a definition of literature is given as well as Children's literature and Young adult literature, with the purpose of explaining certain details that may be found later in the reading and analysis of the novel. Since *Life of Pi* is presented as a postmodern novel, it is also necessary to abound on this term for understanding its implication in this project.

Theoretical framework

What is literature?

The discussion about what literature is has always been controversial. Questions such as what makes a text literary or why a text should be classified under this label are always common when we look for a general definition. People may say "anything is literature if you want to read it that way" (Meyer, 1), but who can say what literature is and what is not? A definition can be reduced to what critics say about it, or to what the readers want to believe about the books they choose to read. It can also be noticed that the way people see literature has to do mostly with their age since a grown up doesn't expect the same from a book as a child. Therefore, there is a line that stands different meanings of literature according to its readership and their background.

Moreover, people may agree that a literary work is a written text. This is one of its basic characteristics, but if the definition is only based on this term, it could be said that every written work is literature. Even if people come to an agreement to what a literary work is based on it obviously being a written text, this definition is too broad and not informative since it could include every written piece as literature: labels in supermarket products, street signs, etc. For this reason there should be more important aspects that allow readers to classify a text as literature, for example the way the message or literary text is delivered. Thus "literary works are marked by careful use of language, including features such as creative metaphors, well-turned phrases, elegant syntax, rhyme, alliteration, and meter" (Meyer, 4). In other words, the way people use language in literature is one important

factor. Language used in its denotational character (avoiding ambiguity) but in literary texts moves towards a more connotational one. The words are the same, but their use change in a poem. Clarity (necessary in a product label) becomes uncertainty that tries to create beauty through word choice, creation of rhythm and sentence combinations. For Eagleton, literature may be maybe definable not according to whether it is fictional or imaginative but because it uses language in peculiar ways. That is to say, the way the writer delivers the message is what makes the text literary.

There are others that see a suitable definition for literature, making a distinction between what are facts and imagination, giving of course the quality of the imaginative to literary texts. Even though, if we enclosure literature to such parameters, we'll be leaving aside philosophical essays, autobiographies and history. However, such classification implies leaving aside philosophical essays, autobiographies and history.

In English-speaking countries, this division is clear during the Romantic period, the term literature was related to the "imaginative", which was a synonym of non-real and was a visionary idea for that time. At this moment of history, England was deeply influenced by the French Revolution. Authorities, fearing revolution and the end of economical welfare due to the Industrial revolution, oppressed people and imposed strong censorship on every text which contained ideas. Under this situation, writing for romantic poets was more than just escape: literature turned into a voice for veiled social criticism and ideology; imagination became a political power. According to Eagleton, the word 'poetry', then, no longer refers simply to a technical mode of writing: it acquires deep social, political and philosophical implications (17). In this way, imagination gave place to romantic idealism and literary texts became a vehicle for spreading contents and with it, their ideas of justice.

But later, in the early 1920s, Russian formalists started to apply some of the concepts and principles articulated in the new-born field of linguistics to the analysis of literary texts. Formalists emerged before the Bolshevik revolution and lasted until the 20's when the Stalinism finally silenced them. They rejected the doctrines that had influenced literature before and they shift their attention to what literary texts really were. Formalists believed that literature was a particular organization of language, that it had its own rules and structures so it could be studied by itself. "The literary work was neither a vehicle for ideas, a reflection of social reality nor the incarnation of some transcendental truth: it was a material fact, whose functioning could be analyzed rather as one could examine a machine. It was made of words, not of objects or feelings, and it was a mistake to see it as the expression of an author's mind" (Eagleton, 3). Formalists focused on form, on what made a text literary; in other words, everything was about the language and its use in a different context. Literature was more than the writer's inner thought, but it was a material for everyone else who could study, classify and appreciate what it was made of. Moreover, the content was just the motivation of the form that was the center of the story; the focus was on the structure, on how the message was delivered as the way to justify and explain what it said.

Along the years there has been a shifted perception of what literature is. It has been analyzed from different perspectives during the years, each time with singular visions and emphasis. For some people, the importance resides in the structure and the way in which the message is delivered, while for others the real significance of literature is in the context, what it transmits to the audience. Nevertheless, any of these theories can give a general and final definition to what literature is. In the last years, it seems to be emphasized the way the

reader perceives a text, the unique interaction that each person can have with it, a definition that is totally individual and that is clearly connected to what people want to see or look for in a book. At the end, whatever the meaning one may give to literature, it is undeniable that it opens a widow to a new world where ideology and imagination are mixed and found.

What is children's literature?

Children's literature are all those texts that are directed to children, from their first years of life to their primary adolescence, whose focus is mainly didactic. This literary genre is truly important since it has the power of teaching first readers what may be the foundation of their future lives. Moreover, the importance also relies on the fact that these books are written for children also to help them to cope with difficult situations, "like nearly all children's books, contains comfort for the reader. Even in the presence of change and death, comfort is possible" (Lesnik-Oberstein, 8). In other words, through reading children may experience comfort and security when they face difficult situations.

Children's literature exists since there were children (Lerer, 1). Fairy tales like *Cinderella, Little red riding hood and Snow white,* are some of the stories that were considered a long time ago as "domestic art" (Tatar, x) and they were transmitted year after year through oral tradition. These folk cautionary tales were created to instruct and teach lessons to children through violent and scary stories; most of them could have an impact on anybody who read it, but especially taking into account that they were thought for kids. After the XVIth century, these stories were adapted specifically for children and some of them were first published by people such as Charles Perrault (1628-1723), and they would usually include a grotesque tone and female characters humiliated by patriarchal power. "Little riding hood", for example, may be an allegory for rape, a story to tell people there are some very bad men waiting in the woods.

In the late XIX century, the Grimm brothers collect traditional German folk tales, rewrite some of the Perrault stories and turn them into a soft way of moral message, what they

considered to be a collection of manual of manners for children. (Tatar, xi) Moreover, these fairy tales develop certain gender roles and model on how to behave "Fairy tales register an effort on the part of both women and men to develop maps for coping with personal anxieties, family conflicts, social frictions, and the myriad frustrations of everyday life" (Tatar, xi). This statement points out that fairy tales were an attempt to be a mirror of society problems, not with the purpose of solving them out, but with the aim of explaining so as people could understand and cope with them.

Children's literature has moved from its beginning as children have changed over the years, "the history of children's literature is inseparable from the history of childhood, for the child was made through texts and tales he or she studied, heard, and told back" (Lerer, 1). In other words, texts have the power of changing and modeling people's lives from the very beginning, and not only what it's read but also what is heard. Children's books may look simpler but they are not; they are a medium for ideas about role gender, society and believing, they are the ground for ideology. Its messages are implied and are more important than what is stated. Children see the beautiful complexity of life through a simple way and allow them to experience things in a safety way.

Nowadays, Children's literature has gone beyond its didactic factor since even though it still teaching children how to behave, it has moved to more complicated concepts such as homosexual parents, divorce and religion through a didactic form but also entertaining way. The kind of stories contain important knowledge for life but the content is developed in an original way where the symbolism of their characters can be analyzed from a more complex view which transform these books in perfect implement for teaching. The power that

literature can have in children is huge since they can develop imagination and critical thinking without noticing it, and moreover, children will also learn to be readers.

What is Young Adult Literature?

While children's literature is about modeling and teaching children in a didactic way, young adult literature is about self discovery and growth since it constructs personality and works through the process of identification.

In 1967, S. E. Hinton, at age seventeen, wrote *The Outsiders,* a novel treating the problems that every adolescent may face, "with characters who were both tough and vulnerable, who faced real social and emotional problems, who had economic worries and life choices to make, in a well-plotted, exciting narrative." (Trupe, vii) In other words, the stories were more realistic and the characters were about an individual confronting society, which created a plot that young people can feel identified with.

After the sixties, according to Trupe, YAL has changed and included a more complex plot and moral ambiguities. (vii) Novels of growth are mainly about issues that concern teenagers, but according to Soter, topics such as identity issues or rites of passage are a preoccupation among all authors, since we people try to grow even though they are afraid. Trying to discover oneself and defining the roles are problems that affect young adults from childhood, and they are not exclusive of adolescence but affect all human beings, no matter the age. (Soter, 64) Throughout life, people can face problems with identification and worries about life in general, even though adolescence can be a period in which these feelings are a general thing, adults can also find themselves lost.

This genre has growing up since the sixties and has included more complex topics that adolescences face. In this way, YAL became a more popular and recognizable for the

specific issues it treated, "books about drugs, suicide, sexual molestation, prostitution, parents missing due to death or divorce or desertion, runaways, anorexia." (Campbell, 12) Nowadays young adult literature includes topics that are also treated in adult literature. As Soter says, it can provide, just as adult writing, political thoughts and social issues that raise critical thinking in young people (64). Moreover, by reading about topics such as cultural diversity or religion, young people are capable of questioning complex issues of the world they are living in. It is important to embrace such aspects in order to develop the capacity of criticize concepts and ideologies before becoming into an adult.

YAL is one of the genres that have won more readers and it is always expected to see more about it. A great example of this is the *Harry Potter'*s phenomenon that has been a complete success and has caused a great impact in many young generations, and also has been included in high school readings.

In *Life of Pi,* a young boy loses his family in a shipwreck and stays trapped in the ocean on a boat with the sole company of a tiger. The impossible task that writing this novel implies, difficulties of the survival its protagonist faces and how he keeps his faith until the end, are what makes this novel appropriate for this project. Adolescents will feel identified with many concepts related to confronting life's uncertainties and what comes with it. By travelling with Pi they will recognize themselves and their own fears.

Postmodernism

There are several aspects in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* that make it a postmodern novel. To read it properly and provide effective tools for its informed understanding, the reader needs to be familiar with certain notions.

Few terms have been under discussion as postmodernism since it emerged as an area of study in the mid-1980s. This is why it is a term too difficult to define since it has been applied to many areas aside literature, however, to provide a more accurate definition; the reader must be familiar with what modernism was first.

Modernism comes from an aesthetic movement that was born in the 30's, it was a movement in visual arts, music, literature, and drama which rejected the old Victorian standards of how art should be made, consumed, and what it should mean. According to Klages, one of its main characteristics is an emphasis on how seeing takes places rather than what is perceived, an example of this would be stream-of-consciousness writing, where the narration describes the flow of thoughts in the character's minds.[1]

Postmodernism, like modernism, follows the same ideas of rejecting boundaries, rejecting rigid genre distinction, emphasizing irony, parody and playfulness. However, the conception of reality and what should be written about changes. Many modernist works try to sustain the thought that art can bring the coherence and meaning that has been lost in modern life; art will do what other human institutions fail to do. Postmodernism, in contrast, doesn't lament the idea of fragmentation or incoherence, but rather celebrates that.

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[1] Mary Klages. "Postmodernism". 2012, University of Colorado, web, 5 Nov 2014

If the world is meaningless, let's not pretend that art can make meaning then, let's just play with nonsense[2]. Even though, if it has any sense it would be the sense one gives to it since from a Post modern point of view, reality is inaccessible through facts.

Nevertheless, entering mainly to the literary field, there's an aspect of postmodern literature that is related to postmodern fiction. Kusnir argues that many ontological levels, modes and styles within a literary work can play different roles not only in the representation of reality but especially in the creation of meaning and representation of the variety of human experience (3). In postmodern fiction, the boundaries in literary fictional representation between reality and fantasy, imaginary or invented, or between true or lie, are erased deliberately and produce aesthetics of multiplicity, plurality and uncertainty. "Although all the characters, setting, times and actions belong to the homogenous and separate fictional world of a literary work, various modes of representation of the heterogeneity of this world as represented by a higher or lesser degree of semblance between the real, physical, actual world and the world of fiction" (4). That is to say that in postmodern literary works, it is created an impression of the actual real world where the truth and the non-real are mixed is created.

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[2] Klages.

Believing in Tigers

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is the story of an Indian teenager named Pi who survives a traumatic shipwreck, in which his family dies, and stays in a lifeboat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean for months just with the companion of a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. In the novel, that was a bestseller and later adapted for film, the author invites the readers to leave aside their disbelief in order to think that the impossible may happen. Indeed, the book begins with the writer's searching for a story to write about, and this is how he gets to India where he meets an elderly man in a coffee shop who assures him that he has a story that will make him believe in God (x). So, from its very first words, this novel unites writing with a human search of faith and hope.

The first chapters are about Pi's childhood and adolescence. His family owns a zoo in Pondicherry, India, and Pi's father is always remembering him about the wild nature of animals emphasizing that they must not be treated as people, especially the tiger. For leaving this clear, in one of the chapters, father forces Pi to witness the zoo's tiger killing and eating a goat.

While he is growing up, Pi faces a significant relation with religion, and eventually joins a variety of them without abandoning the previous one: Hinduism, Catholicism, and finally Islam. Although his family doesn´t completely accept Pi's plural religions, he is a devoted follower of each one of them along his life.

When Pi is an adolescent, his parents decide to sell the zoo and move with the animals to Canada on a Japanese cargo ship. One night during the trip, a storm happens while

everyone is sleeping, and Pi, excited about the storm, goes to the ship's deck without knowing that the ship is sinking. He is forced to jump into a lifeboat by the crew and his family sinks with the ship.

At the next morning Pi finds himself with an injured zebra, a dangerous hyena and a female orangutan named Orange Juice, and later because he is hiding out of sight, Pi will meet the tiger Richard Parker. The hyena ends up eating the zebra and, despite she fights for her life, killing the orangutan. At last, Richard Parker appears and kills the hyena. Now, Pi is alone in the lifeboat with the tiger.

How Pi and Richard Parker survive constitutes the rest of the story. Pi realizes that he has to survive to adversity that means being trapped in the middle of the sea, and also to the probability that Richard Parker eats him, when he discovers provisions in the lifeboat, water, food, water purifiers, a whistle and a notebook. Later, Pi decides to build another watercraft, made of other things he found, and attach it to the boat, with the purpose of staying away of the danger of being killed by the tiger. But finally, even though he is unable to domesticate Richard Parker, by blowing a whistle and rocking the lifeboat, Pi tries to secure his own territory inside of it.

After months of being a companion to each other, and suffering together as friends, Pi and Richard parker finally arrive at Mexico, where Richard Parker runs into the wild and is not seen anymore. Pi is provided with help and questioned by some officials of the Japanese Ministry of Transport. The officials don't believe in Pi's story about the tiger, so he offers a new one, with no animals in it, but similar since he shares the lifeboat with a crew member of the ship, his own mother and a French cook who eventually kills his mother and the

other man. Pi tells them how he then stabbed the French cook and watched him die. This second story seems to be more likely to have happened for the officials, but when Pi asks them which story do they prefer, they stay with the one with the tiger since it's a better story. "Thank you. And so it goes with God" (317) answers Pi.

The constant questioning of Pi's story being true is one of the major topics in the novel. His is why the previous statement is problematic in failing to recognize the difference between believing in a story, acknowledging its authentic aesthetic impact, and believing in God. (Cole, 22) Nevertheless, to use truth to measure whether we should trust something isn't very promising since not all people function under factual truth, but under interpretation. In relation with this topic, Sielke, in her interview with Yann Martel, adds "I think it's acceptable to say that God is a fiction if you understand that this doesn't necessarily mean that fiction doesn't exist. It just exists in a way that is only accessed through imagination." (25). In this way, Martel makes an analogy that highlight a similarity between fiction and religion: disbelief is anathema to both (Cole, 26) since there has to be a suspension of disbelief for fully enjoying a story or completely believe in someone who cannot be actually seen. In postmodern fiction, the line that divides fantasy and reality is erased which creates ambiguity between facts, therefore the reader doesn't know clearly whether what he is reading is real or not so nothing is totally true, everything is a text.

Cole emphasizes the aspect of anthropomorphism present in the novel, it is to say, the ascription of a human attribute of personality, and in Martel's novel, to either God or animals. One example of this aspect is the tiger's name, Richard Parker. It is explained in one of the chapters that the tiger is named in this way because of a clerical mistake, since

the hunter's name was Richard Parker and the tiger's name was Thirsty. At the moment of giving the tiger a person's name, Martel is providing it human qualities which in long terms help Pi to deal with his difficult survival. As fairy tales abound on animals with human features, in both his novel and tales, animals are used to make situations more acceptable.

Imagination helps Pi to survive the shipwreck, and finally the readers are the ones that choose which story to believe in, but Martel's narrative make it to be a difficult decision since imagination seems to be a better option upon reality.

Life of Martel

Yann Martel was born in Spain in 1963, but spent his childhood living in a variety of different places including Central America and Europe. His parents were French-Canadian and they eventually settled in Canada. After studying philosophy at university, he worked many different jobs- librarian, dishwasher, and security guard before he decided to commit himself to writing at the age of twenty six.

Martel published his first work in 1993, a collection of four short stories, called *The facts behind the Helsinki Roccamatios and other stories.* Although it didn't sell well, it received warm reports. Later, in 1996 he wrote his first novel *Self*, that had the same minor impact as his previous work.

After these two attempts, Martel travelled to India to work on a third novel and figure out some aspects of his own life as well. While he was in there, he remembered a review he had read years ago about a Brazilian novel of a Jew in a lifeboat with a panther, and the idea of Life *of Pi* came to him.

In 2001 he published is major work, the internationally acclaimed 2002 Man Booker Prize winning novel *Life of Pi,* which was translated into thirty-eight languages and spent three months on the New York Times bestseller list. Many critics admired the book's ability to suspend disbelief even as it tells an amazing story that is hard to believe in.

Martel worked during 2002 and 2003 as a professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at the Free University of Berlin, Germany. His last novel *Beatrice and Virgil* was

published in 2010, where the main characters are a monkey and a donkey evidence of Martel's continued use of animals to explore the human condition. Although he is always travelling abroad, he is living now in Saskatoon, Canada.

Description of the school

Historia

El colegio "Patmos" nace en 1957 con el optimismo de llegar a se una gran comunidad esducativa como lo es el dia de hoy. El colegio pretende ser un espacio de investigación y creación, de aprendizaje significativo para el alumno, en lo personal, social y cultural. Interesan los altos logros no en sí mismos, sino los más altos que los estudiantes puedan alcanzar con su dedicación y comprensión, con la mediación de sus profesores, compañeros y padres. Se busca la excelencia en el aprendizaje en una planificación conjunta con el alumno, donde éste se compromete en el quehacer diario, entrelazando en cada momento los valores que lo guiarán en este proceso.

Institución

Colegio particular de orientación cristiano-humanista, con formación básica y media. Ubicado en Viña del mar, en la calle Agua Santa, su visión está orientada a potenciar las habilidades sociales y emocionales de sus estudiantes para un desarrollo humano.

Proyecto educativo

Educación Centrada en el Desarrollo de Ser. Hay en cada niño un proyecto de ser, y este es el que quisiéramos descubrir para permitirle crecer y desarrollarse plenamente. Siendo el alumno el centro de nuestra acción, él debe ser consciente de su dignidad y su responsabilidad. Por esa razón, nos esforzamos por lograr una sólida formación humana y cristiana, capaz de ayudarle a descubrir el sentido de su vida; a profundizar y madurar en el

conocimiento de sí mismo y a comprometerse a participar en la construcción de una sociedad en la que todos puedan crecer y desarrollarse en forma digna.

Visión

Seremos reconocidos como una comunidad abierta y flexible frente a los desafíos que impone la sociedad del conocimiento en los siguientes ejes:

 - Acoge y atiende en diversidad para que construyan sus proyectos de vida.

- Potencia las habilidades sociales y emocionales para un desarrollo humano y su aporte social.

- Propicia el dominio del inglés, incentivando la certificación externa.

- Propicia las instancias y el trabajo en equipo promoviendo una participación activa, positiva y tolerante.

- Promueve la apertura y flexibilidad frente a los desafíos que impone la sociedad del conocimiento.

Misión

Es una comunidad cristiana-humanista donde el aprendizaje académico está al servicio de la formación humana y se aprende en la diversidad, tolerancia y diálogo, promoviendo el conocimiento de sí mismo, el desarrollo de la autonomía, el sentido positivo de la vida y la participación creativa en los desafíos del mundo actual.

Needs analysis survey

*Level***:** 3ro medio

*Number of students***:** 15

*School***:** Colegio Patmos

1) How often do you read books?

    a) Always

    b) Never

    c) Sometimes

2) Why do you read?

    a) Obligation

    b) Pleasure

    c) Curiosity

3) Have you read books in English?

    a) Yes

    b) No

4) Which one do you think is your best skill in English?

    a) Speaking

    b) Reading

    c) Listening

    d) Writing

5) How do you like to work in classes?

    a) Alone

    b) In pairs

    c) In groups

    d) All the previous ones

6) Which one of the following activities do you enjoy the most in the classroom?

   a) role plays

   b) debates /oral presentations

   c) written essays

   d) tests

   e) all of the previous ones

7) Which literary genre do you prefer?

   a) Science fiction

   b) Horror

   c) Romance

   d) Adventure

   e) Non-fiction

   f) None

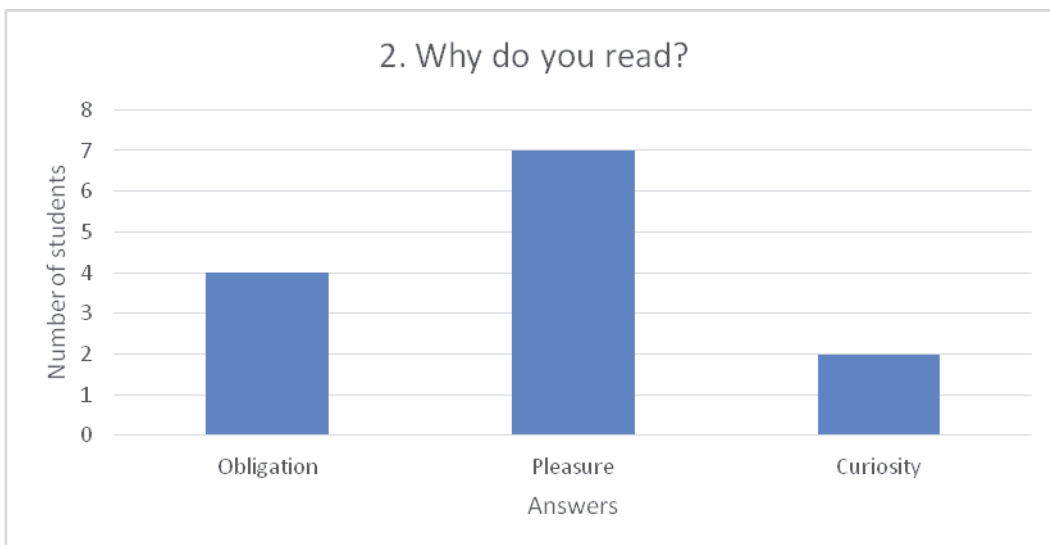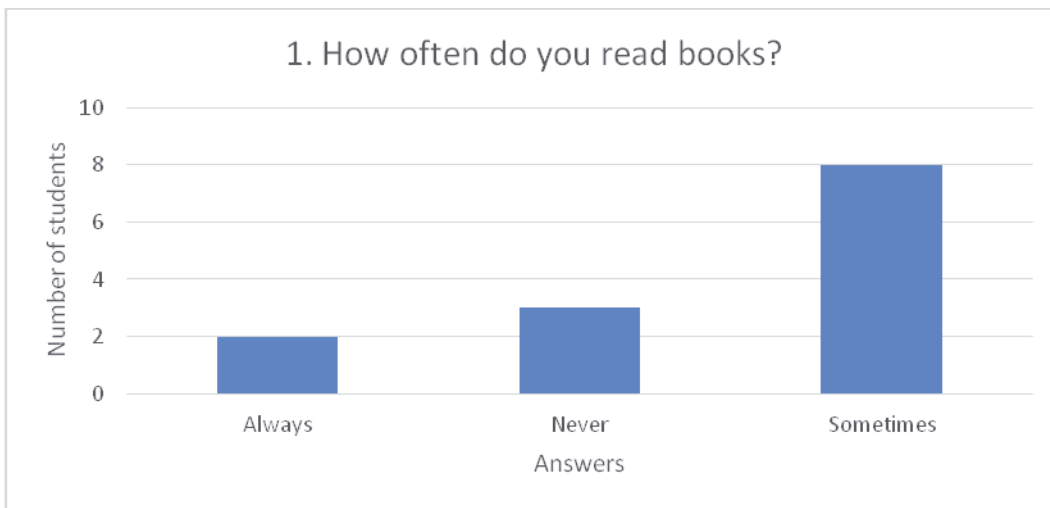8) Name three of your favorite books:

   _____
   _____
   _____

9) Do you think it is positive that books are turned into movies? Explain briefly.
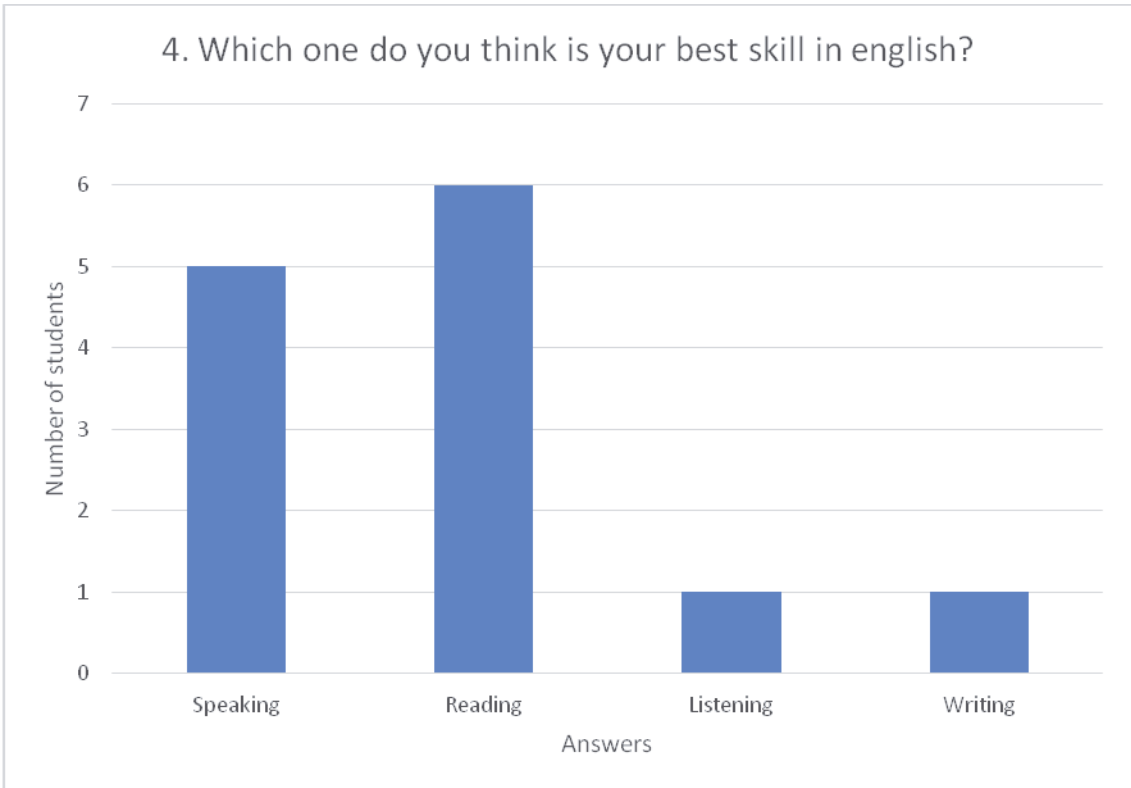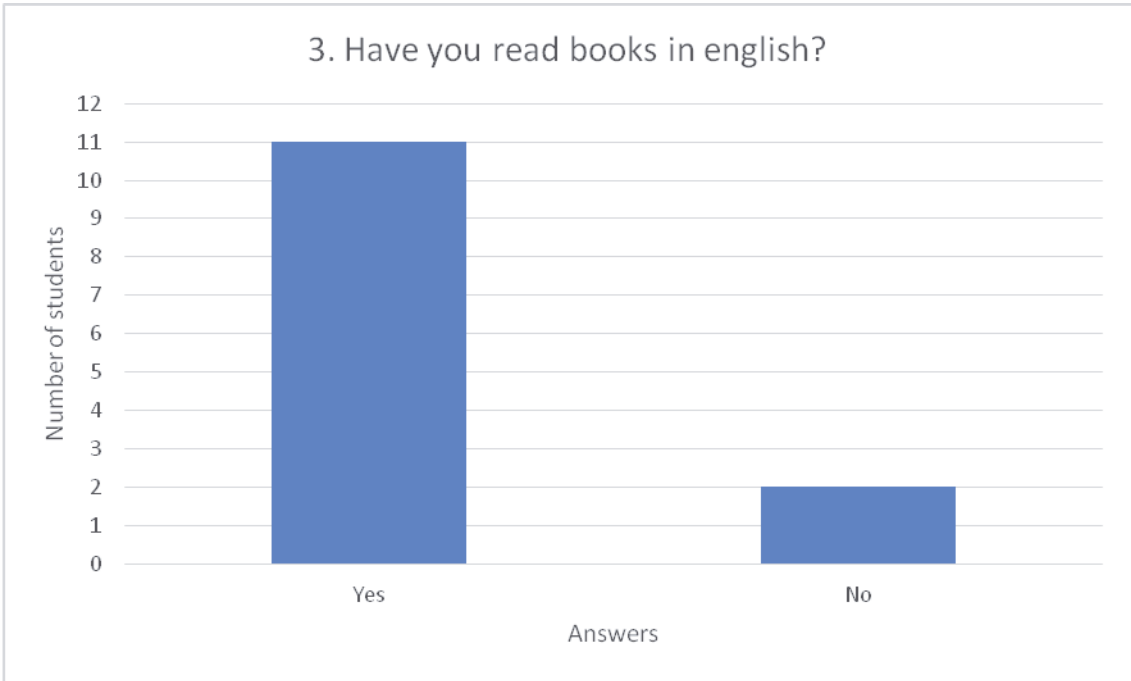
   _____
   _____
   _____

10) Would you join a literary workshop of English if you have the chance?

   a) Yes

   b) No

   c) Maybe

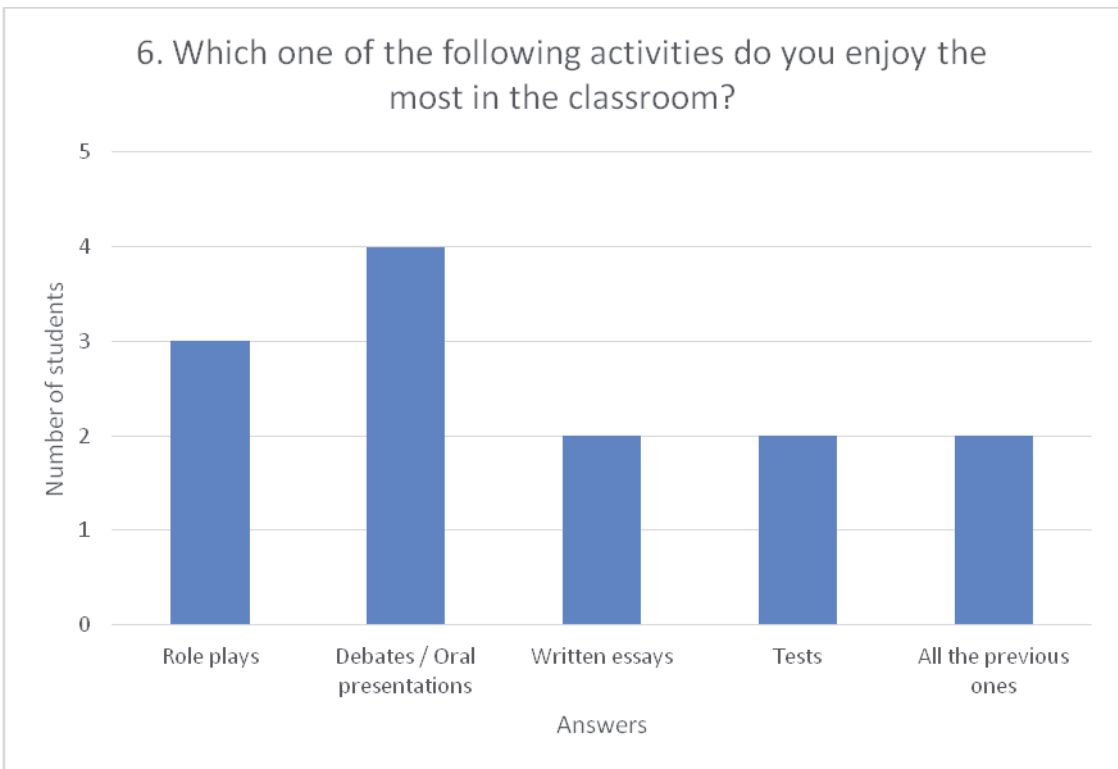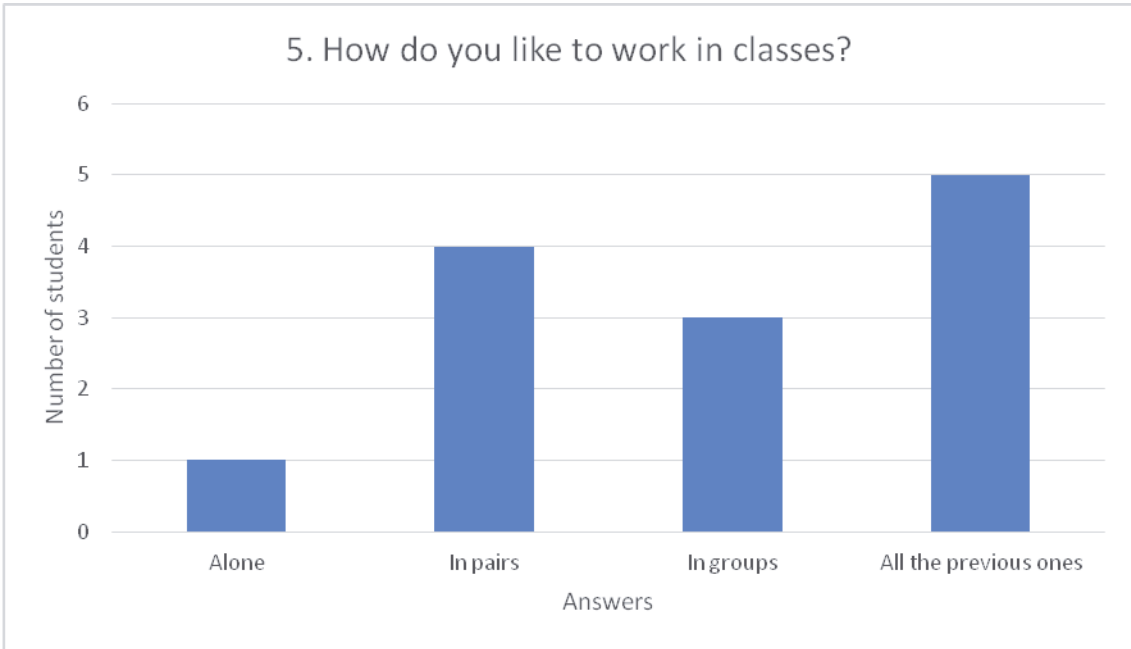# Needs analysis results

The purpose of the needs analysis survey was to evaluate two major aspects: language learning and reading habits. For this purpose students were asked questions related to their best skill in English, the way they like to learn and work in the classroom, their closeness with literature and their genre preferences.

1. How often do you read books?

2. Why do you read?

3. Have you read books in english?

Number of students

Answers	Number of students
Yes	11
No	2

4. Which one do you think is your best skill in english?

Number of students

Answers	Number of students
Speaking	5
Reading	6
Listening	1
Writing	1

5. How do you like to work in classes?

	Number of students
Alone	1
In pairs	4
In groups	3
All the previous ones	5

Answers

6. Which one of the following activities do you enjoy the most in the classroom?

	Number of students
Role plays	3
Debates / Oral presentations	4
Written essays	2
Tests	2
All the previous ones	2

Answers

7. Which literary genre do you prefer?

Chart showing "Number of students" (y-axis, 0–7) vs "Answers" (x-axis):

- Science fiction: 5
- Horror: 6
- Romance: 0
- Adventure: 1
- Non - fiction: 1
- None: 0

10. Would you join a literary workshop of english if you have the chance?

Chart showing "Number of students" (y-axis, 0–10) vs "Answers" (x-axis):

- Yes: 4
- No: 0
- Maybe: 9

From the needs analysis results it can be concluded the following information: students are advanced students who have already read books in English which is coherent with what they said it's their best ability, reading. Their second choice related to ability was speaking and also they expressed that they prefer oral tasks more than written ones.

In terms of reading habits, most of them expressed that they do not always read but when they read they do it for pleasure. When students were asked about their preferences in genre, they chose horror as first option and science fiction as second one, but when they were asked to name three of their favorite books, most of them expressed that fiction was what they look for in a novel. *Life of Pi* mixes fiction with reality to a point in which the reader cannot distinguish what is real and what is not, an aspect that can be really interesting for students, even for those who prefer non-fiction genre or horror.

When it comes to participation, students have no problem in working with their classmates or by their own, but they also showed that they prefer working in groups or in pairs.

Finally, they showed interest in participating in a literary workshop if they have the chance, being maybe the most voted option.

In conclusion, students are interested in literature and they are willing to learn more about it, this is why this workshop would be enjoyable and constructive for them.

Rationale

Life of Pi is a novel that accomplishes many aspects that are describe in the curriculum. In first place, it is rich in new vocabulary, confronts many delicate issues for discussion, and is a combination of a fiction and an information text. Even though it is not an easy book to read, students won't give up on it easily since it has the power of engaging the reader from the first chapters. This novel has strong cultural setting, strong character development, and many didactical themes that can be analyzed and argued against.

Moreover, by offering literature that represents diversity in the curriculum, students reassess their attitudes toward other cultures; they develop empathy and respect for others and foster tolerance for cultural and religious differences.

The novel treats personal and complex insights such as faith and survival through a postmodern reading of life which will help students in their road to becoming adults and at the same time to understand concepts of literature with the aim of making them aware of the world they are living in and provide thoughtful commentary about it.

The main objective is to develop critical thinking just as the minister of education states in the curriculum; students will be able to discuss on topics that are not typically treated in classrooms. *Life of Pi* is an embracing novel that will entertain and, at the same time, will leave students lessons they will apply in their own lives while they make a survival journey with a boy of his age and a Bengal tiger.

Syllabus

A language teaching syllabus is the integration of a subject matter and the linguistic matter, as Reilly mentions; it is what to talk about and how to talk about it. It is important for the teacher to decide which syllabus to work with since it establishes the learning process to follow, and in this way, the class lessons are better planned and easier to develop because the goal of each lesson will be previously determined and it will be easier to achieve.

There are six types of language teaching syllabus according to Reilly, but the differences between them may be minimal therefore the combination of two or more syllabi won't be unusual. Nevertheless, there will always be one that predominates. The syllabi are categorized in the following way:

- A structural syllabus: Forms and structures of the language, usually grammatical.

- A notional/functional syllabus: Functions that are preformed when the language is used.

- A situational syllabus: Real or imaginary situation in which language is used

- A skill-based syllabus: Specific abilities that may play a part in using language.

- A task-based syllabus: Language learning is subordinate to task performance, focused on the process.

- A content-based-syllabus: To teach content using the language that students are also learning.

With the purpose of choosing a syllabus, teacher should take into account what the outcomes and goals of each lesson. In the workshop, the main objectives are related to the analysis of the main themes and contents of the novel, therefore, two syllabi will be used, a content based syllabus and a task based syllabus. Through content based syllabus students will be able to analyze contents of the novel and at the same time learning the second language, while task based syllabus will give significant activities to students for them to understand topics from the novel and relate them to their personal lives. In both cases, students will share experiences with their partner's through the reading of the novel; meanwhile they embrace literature and English during the enjoyment of significant tasks.

Workshop description

Class Information:

Number of Students: 15
Grade: 3r grade high school
Weekly hours: 1 and a half
Area: English
Subarea: Literature
Type of Syllabus used: task based and content-based
Number of Lessons: 12

Course Description:

This elective workshop is based on reading of *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel. Students will be introduced to the major concepts of the novel and at the same time they will have the possibility of relating those concepts to their personal lives. Moreover, this workshop will encourage students to develop critical thinking through the reading of the book in order to analyze the themes and issues that will be presented. Students will read and analyze the novel through a set of lessons.

It will be part of an extracurricular lesson, after regular classes, once a week and it will be divided in two periods of 45 minutes each. There will be three units of four lessons each. Students will work independently, in pairs and in groups, focusing on the characteristics of postmodern literature and the main themes that are presented in the novel.

General Objetives:

- Through a guided reading of *Life of Pi* as a Postmodern novel, students will be able to understand concepts such as cultural diversity and imagination by relating the main topics of the novel with their personal background and world vision.

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the most important characteristics of a postmodern novel, in relation to the concept of seeing reality through imagination.

- To encourage student's discussion skills with the purpose of creating a deeper analysis of the topics in the novel that are related to our society.

- To develop respect and tolerance for cultural diversity and religion

- To analyze the concepts of power and domination in human society and nature.

- To understand and analyze allegory and how it is applied in the novel.

Expected Learning Outcomes

Students are expected to read and analyze the novel throughout the lessons. When the workshop ends, students will be able to think critically about topics such as faith and culture; in addition, they will be able to apply their knowledge in order to practice different skills.

Contents and Themes:

- Introduction to India's history and culture.

- Analysis of the postmodern novel through the elements that are present in the book.

Key concepts
- Postmodern novel, religion, culture, domination, power, animals.

Requisites:
- To be able to attend the workshop and participate actively in the class.

Required Readings:
- *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

Additional Materials:

- English dictionaries.

- Notebook, speakers and data.

- The movie *Life of Pi*.

- Worksheets will be provided during the lessons.

Evaluations:

The final grade of the workshop will be added to the final grade in the regular English lessons. The average of both grades will be the final mark.

Course Assignments:

Written essay	40%
Oral Presentations	30%
Survival diary	20%
Self-evaluation and student's participation	10%

Written essay: At the end of the workshop students have to hand in an essay based on one topic they choose from the ones studied in the course.

Oral presentations: There will be three oral presentations, one per month, and they will be done in groups. These presentations will have different structures and themes depending on the unit.

Survival diary: At the end of the first lesson the students will be given a notebook where they will have to write each week about the concepts that have seen on that week lesson.

They can relate those concepts to their lives or not, it depends on each student. The diaries will be revised at the end of each unit by the teacher.

Self-evaluation and student's participation: Students will have to attend all the lessons and their participation in classes will be evaluated during class discussions and oral presentations. This grade will be added to the student's self-evaluation at the end of the course.

Late Assignments and test absence: If the students don't give a proper justification in advance, they will fail the course.

Academic misconduct: Any academic misconduct such as plagiarism and low attendance will be graded with the lowest grade.

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Macro Planning

UNIT	CONTENT	OBJECTIVE
Unit 1: *The journey begins: Introduction to India's history and the novel major concepts.*	Key elements of Indian's history such as power, culture and society. Analysis of the first chapters of the novel through Pi's childhood in India.	Embrace political, cultural and religious concepts through the main character's life.
Unit 2: *Tigers in the sea: Watching reality through the eyes of imagination.*	Elements of post modern novel that are presents in the book. Analysis of imagination and faith throughout the second part of the novel.	Develop critical thinking through the analysis of the different concepts of the novel.
Unit 3: *Survival: The freedom to choose.*	Analysis of the movie and its main characteristics, creation of a new ending for the novel and essay.	Application of all the concepts previously studied; with the purpose of creating their own final chapter of the novel and a written essay.

Class by class description

Unit	Lesson	Objectives	Tasks
1	**1** **Introduction to the novel and the author.**	Students will be able to make predictions about the novel and relate concepts to their own lives.	T shows some pictures of India and ask students how much do they know about this place. T introduces the novel by reading the introduction of the novel aloud. Ss work on a handout with questions about the intro of the book. T writes the statement: "I have a story that will make you believe in God" Ss predict what may appear in the novel that make it be a story of faith and the reason why it is placed in India. Ss listen to a Yann Martel's interview. Ss work in some questions about the listening extract and confirm their predictions about some of the ideas they had about the novel T hands in cards with quotations about believing to the students. Ss in groups discuss their personal experiences about faith. Ss' home assignment is to read the first ten chapters of the book and work on the vocabulary worksheet. T hands in a notebook called "survival journal" where students should write weekly experiences related to the topics discussed in class.

Unit	Lesson	Objectives	Tasks
	2 **Major concepts of the Indian history**	Students will be able to analyze the context in which the novel is developed and analyze specific features in the novel.	T presents images of India and shows an extract of the Indian Emergency that occurred from June 1975 to March 1977. T presents the question: Why did Pi and his family leave India and move to Canada? T shows a video about the Indian Emergency. Ss analyze what they understood from the text and answer questions that the T hands in. Ss and the T discuss together India's situation by that time and analyze the why the Patel's family had to move to Canada. T asks if our Chilean History has some aspects similar to Indian History. Ss discuss in groups some questions about how power and domination are present in society. T shows a video about lions battle over a baby water buffalo Ss discuss about how power is also present in nature. Ss' assessment is to read from chapter eleven to twenty of the book and work on the vocabulary worksheet. T reminds students that they should write weekly experiences related to the topics discussed in class.

| 3 **Debate on religion and cultural aspects in the novel.** | Students will be able to analyze different aspects related to culture and religion. | T shows images related to different religions on one side of the board and on the other side writes five religions. Students have to match each image with its religion.

T shows a video about Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

In pairs Ss discuss about the main characteristics of these religions and fill a chart with their similarities and differences.

T makes groups and each one have a religion. Each one of the groups should give specific characteristics of its religion according to the video and what they read in the novel.

Ss analyze and choose aspects of each religion that makes sense for them.

T hands in three different papers to Ss (each paper has a number, 1, 2, 3). Two of them have questions and the other one a quotation from the book.

Ss get together first with the ones that have the same number and discuss what is in the paper. Then they get together in groups of three where each one has a different paper and share what they talked in their previous groups.

By their own, Ss write in their notebooks what their experience with faith.

Ss volunteer to share what they have written.

Ss' home assessment is to read from |
|---|---|---|

			chapter twenty one to chapter thirty of the book and work on the vocabulary worksheet. T reminds students that they should write daily experiences related to the topics discussed in the novel.
4 **Analysis of the fusion between reality and imagination**		Students will be able to analyze writer's way of storytelling and create an imaginary situation.	T opens the class by showing a picture of someone writing a book with the following question above: If you had to write a book… what would it be about? In pairs Ss discuss the previous question and analyze the way Yann Martel delivers Pi's story. T presents an extract form the movie "cast away". T writes the word survival on the board. Ss volunteer to make a brainstorm on the board related to the word. Ss think and discuss some real story they've heard about surviving. Ss work in groups and create a role play. Someone is the writer of the story and the others are the characters. After writing a short script (5-7 minutes presentation) Ss present their survival story to the rest of the class, while the writer is narrating the play. T gives feedback on the presentations and asks Ss to give some ideas of what is next in the novel. Ss reflect on what they learn today. Ss' assessment is to read chapters thirty one to forty.

Unit	Lesson	Objectives	Tasks
2	5 **Discussion on allegory and facing difficult situations.**	Students will be able to analyze allegories and its connection with imagination to face difficult situations.	T opens the class by showing an extract of the movie in the moment in which the shipwreck happens. After watching that part of the film, Ss analyze the animals that stayed on the boat with Pi. In groups discuss what represents each animal. T introduces the word allegory to the Ss and makes them realize what it is by reading the poem Tiger by William Blake. Ss work on the poem and figure out what the tiger represents on that poem. Ss go back to the novel and now give one adjective that could represent each animal in the boat from Pi's perspective. As a whole class, it is discussed what each animal represents. Ss discuss in groups how the deal with difficult situations in life and through which mechanism they deal with them. Ss have to read from chapter from chapter forty one to fifty.
	6 **Analysis of fear and its consequences.**	Students will be able to reflect on Pi's experience and relate it with their lives.	T introduces the lesson by telling the students her/his major fear. Ss talk about their own fears also. Ss read an extract from the essay "Three faces of fear" by David W. Edgerly, and Chelona Edgerly. Ss reflect on fear and discuss important aspects of the essay relating it to Pi's

			experience.
			Ss write their own experiences with fear in their survival journal and volunteer to share it with the rest of the class.
			Ss form groups and they work on a role play where they are on a boat and each one of the Ss has to represent one fear. In order to do this, they have to come to the agreement in deciding which could be the major fears in the middle of the ocean.
			Ss perform their fears through a short scene in front of the class.
			Ss have to read from chapter fifty one to sixty.
7 **Discussion and analysis of survival**	Ss will analyze and recognize major aspects of survival.		T plays the movie after the shipwreck scene.
			Ss watch a short part of Pi's survival in the lifeboat with Richard P.
			In groups Ss create their own survival guide with the aspect they consider important.
			After discussing what is important in survival, Ss analyze the importance of Richard Parker in Pi's willing to survive.
			T projects two questions on the board. What does the tiger mean for Pi? Why does Pi need to keep him alive?
			Ss work alone first writing an analysis of those questions and then the class share as a whole. Ss have to read from chapter sixty one to seventy one.

8 **Domination over** **nature**	Ss will analyze the concepts of domination and power over nature.	T shows pictures about zoos. Ss predict the topic of the lesson. Ss work in pairs sharing their thoughts about zoos. T introduces the word domination. Ss reflect on situations than can be described by this word. Ss work on the difference between human life and wild animals, what make us different? In groups, the Ss analyze this question. T shows the clip of the film in which Pi tries to win his territory in the lifeboat. Ss comment on this scene and compare what they read about this scene with the film adaptation.

Unit	Lesson	Objectives	Tasks
3	9 **Movie**	Students will compare what they have read from the novel with the film adaptation.	The class watch the movie adaption of *Life of Pi* and they will have to think and answer the following questions: Is it too different the movie from the novel? What aspects do you think are the ones that make the movie to be popular? Do you think it is because of the story or how the movie highlights important aspects of the novel? Do you prefer the movie or the novel? Explain your choice. Ss have to read chapters eighty nine and chapter 90.
	10 **Analysis of the movie and its ending**	Students will be able to recognize aspects that were previously studied and apply them.	T opens the class by asking Ss to answer the questions about the movie. The class discusses the questions as a group. T asks Ss their opinion about the two chapters that didn't appear in the movie. Ss work in groups and discuss how the conversation Pi has with Richard Parker represents the concept of imagination in the novel. Ss analyze the ending of the movie. Was it real what Pi lived or not? Which story is true? Ss create a new ending of novel and they will have to represent it next class. T explains the final workshop assignment. Ss have to write an essay about a concept studied throughout the workshop. For example imagination, fear, survival or domination and power. They will have to hand it in the final the following week.

	11 **Performance of a new ending for the novel.**	Ss will sum up all they have learned by representing a final scene for the book.	Ss present what they have created by performing their ending for the novel. Each group presents during the first period of the class. On the second period of the class, Ss work on their essays with help from the teacher who provides feedback to the students when needed. Ss have to send their essays to the teacher before next class.
	12 **Closure of the workshop**	Ss will explain what they have learned by analyzing the major concepts of the novel.	As final activity students work in groups. Each group has a card with a concept and together has to summarize what they learned about that concept. Later, they will explain and share what they did to rest of the class. Ss work with the soundtrack of the movie *Life of Pi*. Ss evaluate themselves on their participation in the workshop. T gives final feedback to the students and gives them their grades.

Sample Lesson 1

Grade/Class/Subject: 3rd year of high school.

Unit: 1 **Lesson**: 3

Theme: Debate on religions.

Content objective: Students will be able to analyze different aspects related to culture and religion.

Key Vocabulary	Supplementary Materials
Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.	Data, computer, notebooks.

SIOP Features (x)		
Preparation	**Scaffolding**	**Grouping Options**
_ Adaptation of Content Class	__ Modeling	x Whole
X Links to Background Groups	__Guided Practice	x Small
__ Links to Past Learning	x Independent Practice	__Partners
__ Strategies Incorporated	x Comprehensible Input	x Independent

| Time	Lesson Sequence
10 min 25 min	T starts the class by showing different images about religion. Ss have to match each image with its religion. T shows a video about Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.
15 min	In groups, Ss fill a chart with the similarities and differences between the five religions.
15 min	T makes groups and each one have a religion. Each one of the groups should give specific characteristics of its religion according to the video and what they read in the novel.
15 min	T hands in papers, two of them have questions and the other has a quotation from the novel. Ss have to get together first with the ones that have their number (same question) and discuss about it. Then they get together in groups of three and share what they discussed with their previous group. 1. What is faith and why do we need it? 2. Do you think religion has to make sense? 3. "To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin to choosing immobility as a means of transportation"
10 min	T asks the students to write on their notebooks their appreciation of faith throughout their own life experience. Ss volunteer to share what they have written. Ss' home assessment is to read from chapter twenty one to chapter thirty of the book.

Images on religions

Which religion represents each symbol?
Write the corresponding letter for each image.

A) Hinduism   B) Judaism   C) Buddhism   D) Christianity   E) Islam.
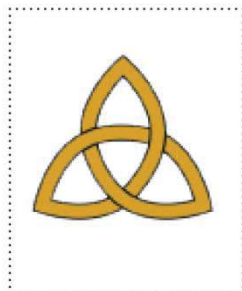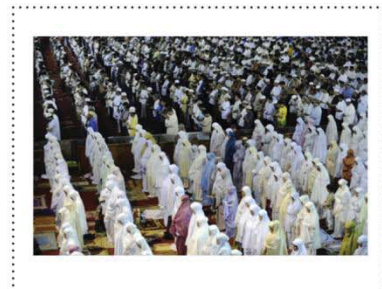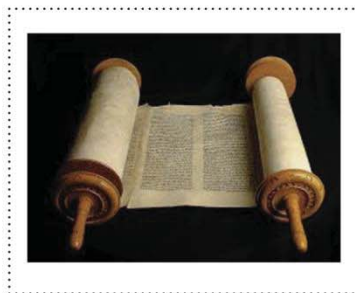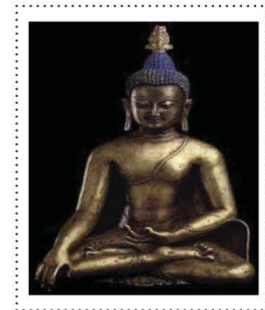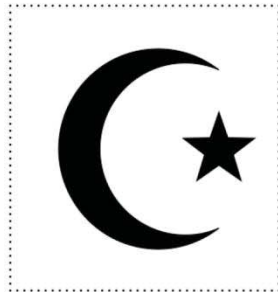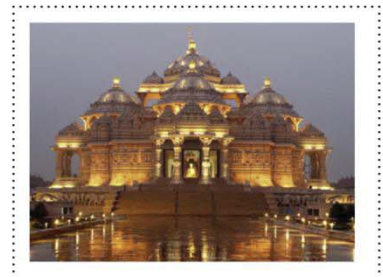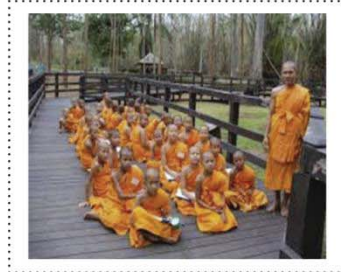
"THE FIVE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS"

JOHN BELLAIMEY

Sample Lesson 2

Grade/Class/Subject: 3rd year of high school.

Unit: 2 **Lesson:** 5

Theme: Discussion on allegory and facing difficult situations.

Content objective: Students will be able to analyze allegories and its connection with imagination to face difficult situations

Key Vocabulary	Supplementary Materials
Allegory.	Data, computer, handout.

SIOP Features (x)		
Preparation	**Scaffolding**	**Grouping Options**
_ Adaptation of Content	__ Modeling	x Whole Class
X Links to Background	__Guided Practice	x Small Groups
__ Links to Past Learning	x Independent Practice	__Partners
__ Strategies Incorporated	x Comprehensible Input	x Independent

Time	Lesson Sequence
5 min	T opens the class by showing one of the covers of the novel *Life of Pi*. Ss analyze the cover and predict why the tiger is so important to Pi.
20 min	Ss watch the movie in the moment in which the shipwreck happens.
10 min	After watching that part of the film, Ss analyze the animals that stayed on the boat with Pi and why the author puts them in the boat with Pi.
10 min	T introduces the concept of allegory to the Ss and makes them realize what it is by reading the poem "The tiger" by William Blake.
15min	Ss work on the poem and figure out what the tiger represents on that poem.
15 min	Ss go back to the novel and individually think of one adjective that could represent each animal in the boat from Pi's perspective. As a whole class, it is discussed what each animal represents.
15 min	Ss discuss in groups how do they deal with difficult situations in life and through which mechanisms.

Ss assignment is to read from chapter forty one to fifty.

Ss reflect on what they learned today. |

THE TYGER

By William Blake

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare sieze the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Sample Lesson 3

Grade/Class/Subject: 3rd year of high school.

Unit: 3 **Lesson:** 10

Theme: Analysis of the movie and its ending

Content objective: Students will be able to recognize aspects that were previously studied and apply them.

Key Vocabulary	Supplementary Materials
Imagination.	Data, computer, notebooks.

SIOP Features (x)		
Preparation	**Scaffolding**	**Grouping Options**
_ Adaptation of Content	__ Modeling	x Whole Class
X Links to Background	X Guided Practice	x Small Groups
X Links to Past Learning	X Independent Practice	X Partners
__ Strategies Incorporated	x Comprehensible Input	_ Independent

Time	Lesson Sequence
15 min	T opens the class by asking Ss to answer the questions about the movie. The class discusses the questions as a group.
15 min	T reminds the Ss about the two chapters of the novel that they had to read. Ss share their thoughts about why do they think those chapters didn't appear on the movie.
10 min	Ss work in pairs and discuss how the conversation Pi has with Richard Parker represents the concept of imagination in the novel.
10 min	Ss analyze the ending of the movie and reflect on two questions: Was it real what Pi lived or not? Which story is true? The one with the animals or the persons?
30-40 min	Ss create a new ending of novel and they will have to represent it next class. T helps and give feedback on what students are creating
10 min	T explains the final workshop assignment. Ss have to write an essay about a concept studied throughout the workshop. T provides concepts: imagination, fear, survival or domination and power.

Ss will have to hand it in the final the following week.

Ss reflect on what they learned today. |

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