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**Life of Pi Essay • Film Techniques**

[June 6, 2014](https://nicolebuchan.wordpress.com/2014/06/06/life-of-pi-essay-%e2%80%a2/) ~ [nicoleb42](https://nicolebuchan.wordpress.com/author/nicoleb42/)

**Explain how film techniques have helped you to understand a main character.**

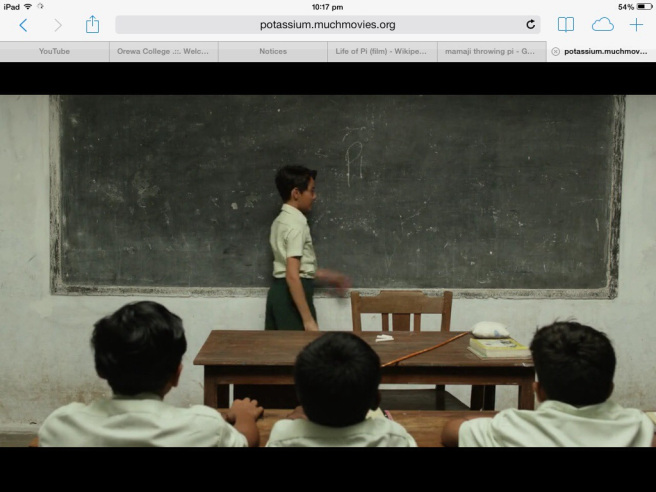
In the film Life of Pi directed by Ang Lee, film techniques help us to understand the character of Pi. We learn a lot about Pi and the challenges he faces in life, this is enhanced with film techniques such as costuming, lighting, shot types, and symbolism. I believe the director has used techniques to help the audience learn about Pi so the audience can relate to his conflict about religion and compare themselves to how they overcome problems.

In the beginning scenes the audience learns about how Pi got his name. Pi was being teased about his full name of Piscine so acted to change his name to make the bullying stop. In this scene we see a wide angle shot where Pi is up the front of the class telling his class members to call him Pi. This shot is effective as it helps the audience to see and understand Pi as we can react like we are watching him from the point of view of his class members. Also in this shot the lighting is dull and dreary which suggests school is not a fun and exciting place. This contrasts with the colors when he is stuck in the lifeboat, where the setting is brightly colored showing that they are two completely opposing places. In the classroom scene Pi uses his survival instinct to make the bullying stop and survive at school by changing his name, the same instinct he uses while in the lifeboat when struggling to survive. Even if film techniques show that they are opposing places, it shows that his survival instinct was needed in both. This teaches the audience that Pi has had this instinct from a young age. I think that the director has included this scene as it shows the audience how there is always a way out of a problem that arises. It also teaches them about Pi and how he is good at overcoming these problems, maybe what helped him survive when in the lifeboat.

After Pi’s family drowns in a shipwreck Pi is left alone on a lifeboat with a tiger, Richard Parker. In the scene we see a shot where Pi is on his hands and knees and him and Richard Parker appear to be circling each other. The shot is wide angle so the audience can see the surroundings, which while stuck on the boat is the vast ocean, this makes you focus on the lifeboat in the foreground. It helps the audience to learn about Pi’s circumstances and how alone he must be feeling with nothing surrounding him. Another feature that helps us to understand Pi’s circumstances is his costuming and the way the director has made him look. We see that his pants are faded and stained and his shirt is no longer on. This costuming shows the conditions Pi has to survive in where it must be hot as he has taken his top off and dirty, as his pants show. The audience can compare themselves to the conditions that Pi is surviving in and makes us feel for him. Other costuming or make-up techniques that we can see on Pi is that his hair has grown out and he has become very skinny, other things the audience can compare themselves and their conditions to. In this shot the technique of symbolism is used and is shown when Pi and Richard Parker are circling each other. Richard Parker symbolizes Pi’s wild survival instinct and teaches the audience that Pi’s survival instinct is similar to the way a tiger would act. The way Pi and Richard are circling each other both on all fours makes them seem similar in the way their body is shaped, but they are still different in the way they look. I think the director has done this so the audience can see how Pi and Richard are similar, but the two sides of Pi, his morals/religion and his survival instinct, are still are conflicting.

In the film when we see the older Pi talking to the writer about his story it gives the audience an insight to Pi’s life after he survived the lifeboat. Techniques such as his costuming help us to understand and learn about the older Pi and his lifestyle. In the scene Pi’s costuming is a plain white shirt and he is neatly groomed. This shows how Pi’s lifestyle is more simple including the way he dresses. Pi might like simple things because of all that he’s been through. He now enjoys the simple things more as he knows how your life can change in an instant. Also the body language the writer shows in a two person shot shows his relationship with Pi. He is leaning forward which implies he leaning in to hear Pi clearly when telling his story. Their relationship shows that on the outside Pi may look simple but really he has a depth to him illustrated by the writer’s body language showing the audience how interested he is by Pi and what he has to say. In this scene we also see Pi’s house is very tidy and clean in a wide shot and also he is very polite towards the writer in the dialogue. This shows the audience that even after the traumatic experience of losing his family and being stranded at sea Pi has managed to overcome this and lead a peaceful life. I believe the director has done this so that the audience can apply it to their lives too, even after a traumatic experience, there is a way through it to being content.

In conclusion many different film techniques have helped the audience to understand and learn about Pi. Through techniques we learn about Pi’s life story, challenges he faces and skills he has to get over them. The audience can learn from Pi’s experiences, compare them to their own lives and relate to his issues regarding religion and compare themselves on how they overcome problems.

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