Representations of discovery are made memorable by the composer’s way of communicating

Discoveries that are provocative and intensely meaningful are often made memorable to an audience by the engaging representation of discovery and its impact on the discoverer. And Lee’s bilungsroman film Life of Pi (2012) and Paulo Coelho’s allegorical novel The Alchemist (1988) both follow two young boys and their epic (heroic?) journeys across diverse and challenging landscapes. Each on a search for deeper understanding of meaning in life, both Pi and Santiago make profound discoveries of spirituality and the human experience. Both these timeless texts engage with a wide audience, credit to the exploration of these discoveries through original literary representations.

The discovery of spirituality holds deep importance to an individual, however these revelations are often intangible to a viewer. In Life of Pi, Pi who is a polytheist, abandons and re-engages with his faith many times while brutally tested on his 227 day voyage. One of his most notable encounters with God is represented through the storm scene. A low angle shot of the sky shows the storm clouds parting, and a heavenly light shining through. This symbolism of Christ’s presence allows the audience to witness in the same way how Pi sees God’s glory through the storm. Furthermore, the use of dramatic music that increases its dynamics as the storm intensifies makes it a highly emotive scene which the audience will not forget. Despite re-connecting with his faith in such a highly emotional way, Pi still loses faith subsequently, when he feels God has abandoned him once again. He arrives at a floating island, which replenishes his needs of food and water, representing a material existence in which spirituality is abandoned. At night, magical realism is used in the green colouring of the mysterious swilling pools, and again when Pi uncovers a tooth in the tree. The use of magical realism suggests that the island is only a representation of Pi’s abandoned faith, and makes the obscurity of it unforgettable. The shocking discovery of the tooth is God’s message to Pi to abandon the metaphorical island of materialism and know God still exists. Pi’s voice over exclaims that the tooth told ‘God had not abandoned me’, allowing the audience to understand the spiritual significance of this sequence. The life-threatening challenges Pi faced allowed him to meaningful connect and reconnect with his faith in God. The highly emotional and visually brilliant sequence of the storm and the carnivorous island enable the audience to experience unforgettable simultaneous emotional and spiritual discoveries.

Literary fictional recounts of physical implausible events can hold deeper significant spiritual meaning, enabling an author to effectively communicate these messages in a new way. On his journey across the desert, Santiago makes a divine spiritual encounter with the ‘Soul of the world’, the novels effective ‘God’. Santiago is faced with the challenge, and successfully completes, turning himself into the wind. This impossible but entertaining event acts as a metaphor, illustrating the literal ‘transformative’ nature of his discovery; that all of life originates from the ‘Soul of the World’. To further illustrate this spiritual understanding Coelho titles his book The Alchemist and uses alchemy as an analogy for his lesson. Santiago outlines this analogy in ‘Only wise men understand that lead will purify to gold, and that everything in the world will purify until it becomes one thing only’. By centring his novel around this analogy of Alchemy,
Coelho effectively engages the audience, as Ang Lee does through his unbelievable representations, to understand the significance of the protagonists' spiritual discoveries.

In the same way that spiritual revelations can be difficult to visualise, communication of ideas on the self and human nature can be achieved through physical representations of metaphysical concepts. The young Pi is introduced to the audience as a moral and religious character, who would struggle to act against this. In the dire circumstances of being abandoned at sea, he must engage with a previously hidden primal side. Lee effectively portrays this through Richard Parker, a physical representation of Pi’s primal nature. The tiger’s first introduction is sudden and confronting; a long shot of Pi wielding a knife, and Richard Parker launches from beneath him. By defying the Rule of Thirds in camera placement by centring Pi and Richard Parker’s sudden emergence, the discovery is confronting and unforgiving. This effectively conveys Pi’s horror and surprise by effectively inciting this in the viewers. Further into his journey, Pi comes to terms with his battling bestial persona (Richard Parker) and humane, spiritual self (Pi), as he discovers his necessity to balance both. Richard Parker is shown in a midshot, with angelic imagery of sunlight and clouds behind him. This illustrates the tiger as Pi’s saviour, illustrating that Pi would not have survived without him. Lee’s clever portrayal of Richard Parker as a representation of a divided self impeccably communicates Pi’s internal struggles and profound discoveries in a truly insightful viewing experience.

Introspective revelations can be gained through exploration of diverse landscapes, and outlined in text through engaging physical representations in character. Similar to Pi’s discoveries at sea, the desert landscape that Santiago traverses enlightens him to new perceptions on the human experience, and the human ability to learn. Coelho uses free indirect discourse to explore the boys thoughts, such as ‘I’ve learnt something from the sheep, and... from the crystal. I can learn something from the desert too, it seems old and wise’. In his train of thought, the desert is personified, to convey the natural environment as having knowledge and wisdom, and human capabilities to teach. The environment becomes more literally personified when Santiago is able to converse with the desert and the wind; where the wind states ‘we are two very different things’, Santiago responds ‘all things are one’. This literal representation illustrates his discovery of the purpose of the human experience. This confronting and meaningful discovery was conveyed through text in a truly unusual, and thus memorable way.

Discoveries in film and text can be truly profound and spiritually and personally meaningful. However, to effectively convey these impacts to an audience, composers must effectively use their medium and use original representations of discovery to engage the audience with meaning. These discoveries, such as those made by Pi and Santiago in Life of Pi (Ang Lee) and The Alchemist (Paulo Coelho) are made into truly unforgettable experiences, and lessons an audience can remember long after finishing the text.
The process of discovery is confronting, yet ultimately life-changing
Discuss with reference to your prescribed text and one related text

Confronting discoveries, and the process of discovering, can challenge an individual’s perspectives on life, nature and spiritual purpose, and as a result bring them new, life changing (transformative) understandings about the world. Unexpected revelations on individual purpose in the wider world occur can be observed in Ang Lee’s philosophical film Life of Pi (2012) and Paulo Coelho’s The Alchemist. The protagonists of both these texts undergo a series of provocative discoveries on their respective journeys, which all ultimately lead to renewed perceptions on the meaning of life and the human experience.

The confronting nature of discovery can result in transformative experiences for the individual. As a child, Pi Patel had a traumatic discovery that changed his perspectives from his innocent outlook on life to a more realistic, and darker understanding of life and the ways of nature. This occurs through the lesson his father teaches him in making him watch the zoo tiger viciously consume a goat. The dramatic use of silence, heighten the tense mood, and enhances the impact of the following diegetic sounds of the tiger eating the innocent goat, and the goats distressed bleating. This use of silence signifies the moment of Pi’s alarming and confronting discovery, and the absence of the music that was used throughout the previous scenes signifies the loss of Pi’s childish innocence. In addition, close up shots are used to show the horror of Pi’s discovery, as his previous outlooks on the friendly nature of animals is forever transformed to a tainted, realistic understanding of the viciousness reality of life and nature. The nature of this discovery thus had life changing impacts on Pi on his present beliefs, as well as influencing his later actions aboard the life boat with Richard Parker, as this transformative discovery gave him the knowledge to survive.

Provocative discoveries also be positive in the ways they impact the individual, and result in renewed understandings of the world. This is found true for Santiago, as he makes a profound discovery meeting the ‘Soul of the World’, or the universal creator. When faced with the task to transform himself into the wind, Santiago rhetorically asks ‘But what if I can’t?’. The distressed tone confirms the confronting nature of the task he is about to undertake. To illustrate the life changing impact of the revelations that accompanied his meeting with the spiritual god, Santiago physically transforms into the wind, with help of the Desert, the Wind and the Sun. The metaphor of his transformation allows the reader to understand the ways Santiago has undergone significant changes in his outlook and understanding of the world as all being part of one united being. It also demonstrates him transcending the physical world to gain divine understandings of the way that God creating the universe from one soul.

The process of profound world changing discoveries often is filled with many smaller discoveries, that build up and allow a more significant one to take place. While lost at sea for 227 days, Pi makes many discoveries about how to survive with Richard Parker. Pi’s experience of this is shown through a montage of his daily tasks, showing how he gradually learns to survive, building upon his raft, catching and drying fish and writing in his journal. The effect of fading each shot each other illustrates the passage of time over which these understandings occurred. The result of these small discoveries is highlighted in the internal monologue “I never thought... knowing Richard Parker was here might ever bring me peace. I remember that he has as little experience of the real world as I do.”. His emotive tone highlights the confronting renewed perceptions of the similarity between human and animal nature, and how his presence has actually helped Pi to survive. These
understandings of life and nature could not have occurred without the passing of time with Richard Parker, and the daily lessons and challenges that came with it.

Revelations about life and purpose frequently occur through a series of discoveries that facilitate such a significant change in understanding of the world. This was shown to be true for Santiago, who could only achieve his predestined Personal Legend through understanding the omens written by the hand of the world that led him there, and why they were there. The novel begins and ends in the same place, under a sycamore tree inside an abandoned church in Spain, where Santiago dreams of finding a great treasure. He then travels across the desert to Egypt in search of it, only to come back to Spain and find the treasure under the tree, thus fulfilling his Personal Legend. The significance of this symbolism of returning to the Sycamore tree is that the boy had to first take the journey and learn everything about god and reading the omens along the way before he could understand the purpose of the omens, and of his destined discovery of treasure. It was the therefore the process of this discovery of his Personal Legend that allowed for him to understand the role of destiny and purpose in life, giving him changed perspectives on the world.

The impacts of discovery can be confronting in nature, and can occur through a process of intermediate discoveries that brought about the more significant one. As a result, these discoveries can lead to an individuals renewed perceptions and new understandings on life, meaning and spirituality, and nature of humans and their place in the world. This is exemplified in the Bildungsroman tale in Life of Pi, and the allegorical novel The Alchemist, whose protagonists both undertake epic journeys resulting in transformative revelations.
Meaningful discoveries with ongoing, world changing impacts for the individual are often catalysed by the discoverers’ persistent curiosity for the nature and operation of the world. Curious discoverers are found throughout literature, as found in Ang Lee’s sea odyssey film Life of Pi, Paulo Coelho’s The Alchemist and J.R.R Tolkien’s The Hobbit. Each of these feature a protagonist who makes ongoing discoveries about nature and the world around them, as well as deep personal discoveries. The continual discoveries made are often driven by the ongoing curiosity of each discoverer, as they learn more about the human condition.

Initiation of meaningful worldly discoveries can be catalysed by one’s natural interest in their surroundings, and desire to find out more about the operations of what they observe. As a young boy, Pi continually shows interest in discovering new religions, as curiosity leads him to find out more about the operations of this strange new concept. This leads him to embrace polytheism, following Hinduism, Christianity and Islam while still a child. When Pi first enters the church in the mountains, panning shots are used to show Pi’s point of view as he gazes around the paintings on the walls, trying to understand what they mean. This natural curiosity to understand religion, and the creation of the world drives him to learn more about it. Pi’s eagerness is further illustrated in a high angle shot of him running back to the church, desperate to find answers for his questions on God’s mysterious ways. The boy Santiago from The Alchemist shares a similar curiosity and desire to learn about the creation of the world and the spiritual higher power responsible. While crossing the desert, Santiago learns many things about the workings of nature and discovers how to read the omens, all from observing his surroundings out of an innate curiosity. He remarks on his new found understandings in ‘I’ve learned things from the sheep, and I’ve learned things from crystal…I can learn something from the desert too. It seems old and wise’. The personification of the desert illustrates the way Santiago experiences his natural surroundings as a teacher to him, always learning new things from it. This way of learning is further emphasised as resulting from his natural curiosity and observations when he exclaims the difficulty of reading a book to understand spiritual concepts. The ‘drawings, coded instructions and obscure texts’ mean nothing to him, but it is instead his power of observation from which he learns. Lastly, The Hobbit tells of Bilbo Baggins’ epic journey across the mystical land of Middle earth, however this long process of discoveries would not have existed without Bilbo’s wavering, but ultimately prevailing curiosity of the world. Initially, when tasked with the mission to leave the comfort of his home, Bilbo is very strongly against it. However, Gandalf is able to appeal to Bilbo’s curiosity about what is in the world beyond his home in The Shire, highlighted in the quote ‘The world is not in your books and maps, it’s out there’. Gandalf uses emotively appealing language, successfully convincing Bilbo to embrace his wonder about the outside world and partake in the journey. Without inner desire to learn about operations of the outside world, and the creation of it, none of these characters would have embarked on their journeys of discovery.

Discoveries of the world around us can also trigger meaningful introspective discoveries, as understanding self and purpose is often intrinsic to understanding one’s world around them. Pi’s curiosity of religion and desire to learn about the creation of the world leads him to make many revelations about his own faith and spirituality. The ultimate test to his faith occurs through the
many challenges he faces while stranded at sea, and the many storms he survives. One storm in particular represents his ultimate reconnection with his spirituality, as his faith was lost in the tragic events that took place. This is represented through use of religious imagery in the scene, including the symbolism of the sun (representing God) shining through the storm clouds, and Pi’s body positioning reflecting Jesus’ crucifixion. These all show Pi reconnecting with his lost faith and spirituality, as it is this hope and belief that allowed him to survive his tragic ordeal. Without his prior discoveries of faith, driven by his curiosity of the spiritual realm, Pi would not have made his countless discoveries at sea of his inner strength and the human condition, including courage, grief and resilience. These discoveries can be paralleled to those made by Santiago in his own endeavours across a very different, but similarly harsh landscape; The Sahara Desert. His natural curiosity about the mysterious workings of his natural surroundings, outlined previously, lead to simultaneous intrinsic discoveries. The process of Alchemy, which Santiago comes to learn about, is a metaphor for the important life lesson that becomes apparent to Santiago through his journey and spiritual revelations of God’s workings. He outlines this metaphor of alchemy in ‘When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better, too’, describing his new understanding that like all metal can be purified to gold (through alchemy), the purpose of human life is to strive to be a better form of yourself, and help others around you improve also. Santiago thus makes significant self-discoveries on what his purpose in life is, relating to his initial curiosity into the way God operates in the natural world around him. Simultaneous discoveries of the external world and discoveries of self and the human condition can lastly be observed in the dramatic character developments Bilbo Baggins makes on his quest. Encountering landscapes, people and situations entirely unfamiliar, driven by a sudden curiosity of the world outside The Shire. Bilbo describes these concurrent discoveries in ‘I found something in the Goblin caves… My courage’. The objectification of his ‘courage’ in this phrase compares his self-discovery to the physical discoveries he has made, demonstrating the impacts his curiosity-driven physical discoveries had on his own self-development. Thus it is evident that seeking to understand the physical world and natural operations can result in unexpected intrinsic developments.

Significant and meaningful discoveries of natural operations of the world are often catalysed by the discoveries own inner desire to understand the world around them. This natural curiosity also leads to major self-discoveries of purpose and spirituality, as well as new understandings of aspects of the human condition when faced with challenges. Studying a variety of texts, including Ang Lee’s Life of Pi, Paulo Coelho’s The Alchemist and J.R.R Tolkien’s The Hobbit, makes it apparent how ongoing curiosity is a vital element in a range of discoveries.