

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 3: A TIGER IN THE ZOO



A TIGER IN THE ZOO

~Summary~

-by Leslie Norris

Stanza- 1

He stalks in his vivid stripes
The few steps of his cage,
On pads of velvet quiet,
In his quiet rage.

Explanation: The poet sees a tiger locked in a concrete cell in the zoo. It is a very small cage. The tiger can hardly take a few steps along the length of the cage. He looks majestic as he slowly moves up and down in his cage. The sharp and clear stripes on his body are of strong bright colour. His pads are velvet soft. In spite of all his strength, he now lies imprisoned behind the bars. The caged tiger is angry. He is full of rage, but is quiet because he knows that he is helpless here.

Stanza- 2

He should be lurking in shadow,
Sliding through long grass
Near the water hole
Where plump deer pass.

Explanation: Looking at the imprisoned tiger, the poet is filled with pity. He says that the poor tiger should have been in his natural habitat i.e. in the jungle, hunting and resting. Then, at this hour of the night, he would have been lying in the shadows of trees and sliding quietly through the long grass. He would, then, near the water hole, wait for some fat and healthy deer to pass that way. Thus, he would be lying there in expectation of a heavy feast.

Stanza- 3

He should be snarling around houses
At the jungle's edge,
Baring his white fangs, his claws,
Terrorising the village!

Explanation: In these lines, the poet imagines, what the tiger would be doing in case he failed to find any prey in his natural habitat. He says that the tiger would be angrily moving around the houses in a nearby village. He would be growling at the edge of the jungle near some village. He would be showing his white fangs and terrible claws while moving here and there. He would, thus, become a cause of terror for the villagers.

The poet here gives a hint that if we continue to destroy the forest cover and the natural habitat of the tigers, they will be forced to turn to our towns and villages to find their food.

Stanza- 4

But he's locked in a concrete cell,
His strength behind bars,
Stalking the length of his cage,
Ignoring visitors.

Explanation: The poet sees the tiger is locked in a concrete cell in the zoo. In spite of all his strength, he now lies imprisoned behind the bars. Very slowly and silently, the tiger moves up and down along the length of the cage. He moves in an angry and threatening manner. He takes no note of the visitors, who had come to the zoo to have a look at him. He completely ignores them as none of them thinks of releasing him from his prison. Moreover, due to their presence, he hardly gets any rest during the day.

Stanza- 5

He hears the last voice at night,
The patrolling cars,
And stares with his brilliant eyes
At the brilliant stars.

Explanation: Due to the visitors, the tiger gets no rest during the day. Even at night, he remains disturbed due to the noise that comes from the patrolling cars. The tiger has, thus, lost all hope and feels very helpless. He, thus, stares at the brilliant stars shining brightly in the sky. It seems that he is looking for some sort of comfort and hope in these stars. His brilliant eyes show that he still hopes for the day when he would be able to run free in the forest and live in natural surroundings.

Conclusion of A Tiger in the Zoo

In this poem, the poet is conveying an important message that wild animals should be in their natural habitat.

NCERT SOLUTION

Questions (Page No. 30-31)

(THINKING ABOUT THE POEM)

Question 1: Read the poem again, and work in pairs or groups to do the following tasks.

Find the words that describe the movements and actions of the tiger in the cage and in the wild. Arrange them in two columns.

Find the words that describe the two places, and arrange them in two columns.

Now try to share ideas about how the poet uses words and images to contrast the two situations.

Answer:

(i)

In the Cage	In the Wild
Stalks	Lurking in shadow
Few steps of his cage	Sliding through long grass
Quiet rage	Snarling around houses
Locked in concrete cell	Baring his white fangs, his claws
Stalking the length of his cage	Terrorising the village
Ignoring visitors	
Stares with his brilliant eyes at the brilliant stars	

(ii)

Cage	Wild
Few steps of his cage	Shadow
Locked	Water hole
Concrete cell	Long grass
Behind bars	Plump deer
Visitors	Houses at the jungle's edge
Patrolling cars	Village

Question 2: Notice the use of a word repeated in lines such as these:

(i) On pads of velvet quiet,

In his quiet rage.

(ii) And stares with his brilliant eyes

At the brilliant stars.

What do you think is the effect of this repetition?

Answer: This repetition used by the poet is a poetic effect in order to increase the intensity of the tiger's rage and his silent helplessness from the concrete cell of the cage. 'Velvet quiet' refers to the velvet pads of the tiger which are quiet and unable to run or leap. The tiger could do nothing but just walk around the limited space of his cage. The use of 'quiet rage' signifies the anger and ferocious nature of the tiger that is building up inside him as he wants to run out freely into the forest and attack a deer. However, the tiger's rage is quiet as he is locked inside the cage and is in a helpless condition. The repetition of 'quiet' has given a lyrical beauty to the poem. Similarly, the use of the term 'brilliant' for both the tiger's eyes and the stars also portrays the majestic nature of these lines. The tiger stares at the brilliant stars with his brilliant eyes as he dreams about how beautiful and pleasing life, he could have led in the forest. Thus, the repetition depicts a wonderful effect and brings magnificence to the poem.

Question 3: Read the following two poems — one about a tiger and the other about a panther. Then discuss:

Are zoos necessary for the protection or conservation of some species of animals? Are they useful for educating the public? Are there alternatives to zoos?

THE TIGER

The tiger behind the bars of his cage growls,
The tiger behind the bars of his cage snarls,
The tiger behind the bars of his cage roars.

Then he thinks.

It would be nice not to be behind bars all

The time

Because they spoil my view

I wish I were wild, not on show.

But if I were wild, hunters might shoot me,

But if I were wild, food might poison me,

But if I were wild, water might drown me.

Then he stops thinking

And...

The tiger behind the bars of his cage growls,

The tiger behind the bars of his cage snarls,

The tiger behind the bars of his cage roars.

-PETER NIBLETT

THE PANTHER

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
has grown so weary that it cannot hold
anything else. It seems to him there are
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.
As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,

the movement of his powerful soft strides
is like a ritual dance around a centre
in which a mighty will stands paralysed.
Only at times, the curtain of the pupils
lifts, quietly. An image enters in,
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,
plunges into the heart and is gone.

-RAINER MARIA RILKE

Answer: A zoo is a place where several species of animals are kept. Some of these animals are of endangered nature and are on the verge of extinction. Likewise, even endangered tigers and lions are not safe in the forest due to poaching that is mainly done by poachers for illegal trading purposes. Therefore, zoos are necessary for the conservation and protection of such species. That way, zoos are a safe haven for animals and the public should be educated about the importance of wild animals and their key role in maintaining the ecological balance in the environment. Some other alternatives to zoos could be wildlife sanctuaries, forest reserves and national parks, etc. Having these options available will not just protect or conserve these species, but also provide these animals with a habitat in the midst of nature.

Question 4: Take a point of view for or against zoos, or even consider both points of view and write a couple of paragraphs or speak about this topic for a couple of minutes in class.

Answer: Activity to be done by yourself.