

Ch 2.1 - A Tiger in the Zoo

- Leslie Norris

Theme

The poem 'A Tiger in the Zoo' by Leslie Norris. In this poem, the poet tries to depict the mental condition of a caged tiger. He compares the life of a tiger in the zoo with its life in its natural habitat. The poet conveys an important message that the wild animals should be in their natural habitat. In the poem, he heightens the contrast between freedom and captivity. He, very impressively, shows us how love for freedom is the natural instinct of every living being.

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

1. On pads of velvet quiet, In his quiet rage.
2. And stares with his brilliant eyes at the brilliant stars

What do you think is the effect of this repetition?

Ans This repetition is a poetic device used by the poet in order to increase the intensity of the tiger's rage and his helpless silence. 'Velvet quiet' refers to the quiet velvet pads of the tiger, which cannot run or leap. They can only walk around the limited space in the cage. The use of 'quiet rage' symbolises the anger and ferocity that is building up inside the tiger as it wants to run out into the forest and attack a deer, but the rage is quiet because he

is locked in the cage and is helpless. The repetition of 'quiet' has, thus, brought immense beauty to the poem. Similarly, the use of 'brilliant' for the tiger's eyes as well as the stars also brings out the magnificence of these lines. The tiger stares at the brilliant stars with his brilliant eyes dreaming about how beautiful his life could be in the forest. The repetition thus, gives a wonderful effect to the poem.

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

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

(a) Why the tiger could walk only a few steps?

A The tiger could walk only a few steps because he was locked in a very small cage.

(b) How does the tiger move in the cage?

A The tiger moves very slowly and quietly threatening.

(c) What are the two qualities of the animal under reference?

A The tiger has vivid stripes on his body a soft velvet pads.

(d) Why is he in quiet rage?

A He is in quiet rage as he is locked and his freedom has been curtailed. Thus, he is unable to show his anger and ferocity.

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

(a) Who is 'He' here?

A 'He' refers to the tiger.

(b) Where should he be lurking?

A He should be lurking in the shadows in the forest.

(c) Where should he be sliding?

A The tiger should be sliding through the long grass in the forest.

(d) A plump deer would pass through the water hole.

A A plump deer would pass through the water hole.

3 He should be snarling around houses at the jungle's
edge,
Baring his white fangs, his claws,
Terrorisising the village!

~~The~~ The poet is trying to suggest that the tiger should be
allowed to live in his natural habitat.

(a) What does the poet try to suggest through these
line?

A The poet is trying to suggest that the tiger should
be allowed to live in his natural habitat.

(b) How does the tiger scare the people?

A The tiger scares people by growling at them
and showing his teeth and claws.

(c) Why does 'he' snarl?

A 'He' snarls to show his anger and helplessness.

(d) How does 'he' show his presence?

A 'He' shows his presence by baring his white teeth and claws.

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

(a) What does the phrase 'his strength behind the bars' suggest?

A It means that he is helpless as he is locked in a cage.

(b) Why does the tiger ignore the visitors?

A The tiger ignores the visitors because he considers them devoid of feelings as none of them tries to help him out of prison.

(c) What is the tiger doing in the cage?

A The tiger is moving slowly and quietly ~~and go~~ along the length of the cage.

(d) It implies walking to and fro in helplessness.

(e) What does the expression 'stalking the length of the cage' imply?

A It implies walking to and fro in helplessness.

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

(a) What kind of voices does the tiger hear?

A The tiger hears the voice coming from the patrolling cars at night.

(b) Where does the tiger look at in the night?

A The tiger looks at the brilliant stars shining in the sky at the night.

(c) What do you mean by 'patrolling'?

A 'Patrolling' means to go around an area at regular times to check that it is safe.

(d) What is the effect of the repeated use of word 'brilliant'?

A The repeated use of brilliant shows the contrast. The brilliant stars are free while the brilliant eyes are inside the cage.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. How does a tiger create terror for the villagers?

A The tiger creates terror for the villagers by snarling around their houses as they are situated near the jungle. He frightens them by showing his white fangs and claws.

2. Leslie Norris has described some of the activities of a tiger behind the bars of its cage. Write them.

A Some of the activities of the tiger behind the bars of its cage includes stalling along the length of the cage, ignoring visitors, hearing patrolling cars and staring at the brilliant stars shining in the sky.

3. Describe the tiger in the cage.

A The tiger in the cage is just a diminished form of his original self. He paces up and down in the cage restlessly. He is confined in the narrow cell and keeps staring the stars if longing for freedom. He is helpless and draws pity for his condition.

4. Describe the tigers in the wild.

A The tiger in the wild is majestic. He is free and lies under the shades and hunts for prey. He moves near the water because food is in plenty there. Sometimes he growls and terrorizes the villagers.

5. Why does the tiger express his rage quietly?

A The tiger expresses his rage quietly because there is nothing he can do from behind the bars of his cage. He is helpless as his strength now lies inside the cage. He is no longer free as he was in the jungle.

6. Where should the tiger have been according to the poet?

A The poet thinks that the tiger should have been in the jungle, lurking in the shadows of long grass to prey on the deer near the water hole. He should also be on the outskirts of the jungle snarling around houses and terrifying villagers.

7. How does the tiger make his presence felt in the village?

A The tiger makes his presence felt by snarling around houses at the jungle's edge and by showing his white fangs and claws.

8. What does the tiger do in his cage?

A The tiger is locked in a concrete cell where he can hardly take a few steps along the length of the cage. He doesn't take any notice of the