By Leslie Norris

Thinking about the Poem

1. Read the poem again, and work in pairs or groups to do the following tasks.
(i) Find the words that describe the movements and actions of the tiger in the case and in the wild. Arrange them in two columns.
(ii) 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 a concrete cell	Baring his white fangs, his claws
Stalking the length of his cage	Terrorising the village
Ignoring visitors	
Stares at the brilliant stars	

(ii)

Cage	Wild
Few steps of his cage	Shadow

Concrete cell	Long grass
Locked	Water hole
Behind bars	Plump deer
Visitors	Houses at the jungle's edge
Patrolling cars	Village

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 is a poetic device used by the poet in order to increases 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 it cannot come out in the open as it is in the cage. This double use of 'quiet' has 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 has dreams of being free in its 'brilliant' eyes. It sees the stars (that have also been described as brilliant) with the same eyes. It stares at the brilliant stars with its brilliant eyes thinking about how beautiful its life could be in the forest. The repetitiveness of these words gives a wonderful effect to the poem.

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