



Poem 6

AUNT JENNIFER'S TIGERS

- By Adrienne Rich

THEME: The poem Aunt Jennifer's Tigers expresses the constraints of married life a woman experiences.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. The desire of a woman for freedom & strength has been brought out by the poet.
2. Aunt Jennifer has embroidered bright yellow tigers on a screen.
3. These tigers move about freely, fearlessly & confidently in the green forests.
4. They are not afraid of the hunters.
5. In contrast, Aunt Jennifer is weak & nervous.
6. To make her embroidery she finds the ivory needle hard to pull.
7. The wedding ring is symbolic of the burden of commitments & bindings of married life.
8. Her marriage with uncle has taken away her freedom & confidence to live life the way she wishes.
9. After her death, the mark of the wedding ring will continue to show her sad, burdened life.
10. She is mortal (dies) whereas the embroidery of tigers (Art) that she has made is immortal.

LITERARY DEVICES USED BY THE POET:*** SYMBOLS-**

- (I) Tigers: are fearless, bold, courageous and confident. Actually they are a reflection of Aunt Jennifer's inner self.
- * Ring & Uncle's wedding band: show power of her husband on her, bondage, burden of marriage. The band has become metaphorically too heavy to break for Aunt Jennifer.

SOLVED EXAMPLE: 1

Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing proud and unafraid.

- (a) Name the poem and the poet. (1m)
* Aunt Jennifer's Tigers & the poet is Adrienne Rich.
- (b) What is Aunt Jennifer's death symbolic of?
* Aunt Jennifer's death is symbolic of her complete submission to her suppression.
- (c) Is the society in any way affected by her death?
* No, the society is not affected by her death.
- (d) What is the significance of "terrified hands"?
* Even after her death she has not been able to free herself from the chains of her mental suppression.

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS:**

Q1 Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green,
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

(i) Where are the tigers?

(ii) Are the tigers real?

(iii) What does "denizens" mean?

(iv) What is the significance of the line, "They do not fear the men beneath the tree"?

Q.3 Answer the following in about 30-40 words each:

(a) How are Aunt Jennifer's tigers different from her?

*Value points:

Aunt: weak, docile, submissive afraid of her husband.

Tigers: bold courageous, confident, and elegant.

(b) What kind of married life did she lead? Do you sympathise with her? Why?

(c) What will happen to Aunt Jennifer's tigers after her death?

(d) Where are Aunt Jennifer's tigers?

(e) Why did Aunt Jennifer create the tigers?