

A Tiger in the Zoo

Introduction

This poem is written by Leslie Norris. It contrasts a tiger when it is in its natural habitat and when it is imprisoned in a zoo.

Summary

When the tiger is in zoo, he moves slowly up and down in his cage. He moves very softly and steadily, as his paws are as smooth as velvet. He is full of rage but is quiet in his helplessness. The poet then says that the tiger should have been in the jungle. He should have been moving quietly in the shadows near some water source, waiting for a plump deer to pass that way. The poet further adds that while roaming, the tiger might come to the outer boundary of the forest in a small village. The tiger would growl in its low and intimidating voice and would scare the inhabitants of that village by revealing his fangs and his claws. But sadly, he is locked behind bars in a concrete cell. He does not take any notice of the visitors. At night, he had to be content with merely looking at the stars with his brilliant eyes.

Message

The poem conveys the message that animals should be allowed to live in their natural habitat. They will derive true happiness only there.



Extract Based Questions

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 his quiet rage.

He should be lurking in shadow,
Sliding through long grass
Near the water hole

Where plump deer pass. (CBSE 2023)

(a) 'He' is in a rage because he is:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| (i) hungry | (ii) tied |
| (iii) thirsty | (iv) in a cage |

(b) He is lurking in the shadow because

(c) The above lines express the tiger's

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|-----------------|-----------------|
| (i) resignation | (ii) fear |
| (iii) anger | (iv) acceptance |

(d) Complete the sentence appropriately:

It is clear that metaphor is the poetic device used for 'pads of velvet' – because (Clue: explain how metaphor is applied here.)

(e) The contrast in the above extract is between life in the forest and life in the:

- | | |
|------------|--------------------|
| (i) circus | (ii) national park |
| (iii) cave | (iv) zoo |

Answers

- (a) (iv) In a cage
(b) he wants to hunt the plump deer for his food.
(c) (iii) anger
(d) The pads of the tiger are being compared to velvet – a type of cloth, without using the word 'like' or 'as'.
(e) (iv) zoo
2. He should be snarling around houses
At the jungle's edge,
Baring his white fangs, his claws,
Terrorising the village!

But he's locked in a concrete cell,
His strength behind bars,
Stalking the length of his cage,
Ignoring visitors. (CBSE 2021 Term-1, Modified)

- (a) Why should we protect the tigers?
(b) 'A tiger in the zoo ignoring visitors' is an example of:
(i) Apostrophe (ii) simile
(iii) Irony (iv) personification
(c) Fill the blank with one word.
The tiger is reacting to his in the zoo by ignoring visitors.
(d) Comment on the last four lines..

Answers

- (a) We should protect the tigers because they are part of our environment.
(b) (iii) Irony
(c) imprisonment
(d) The tiger should have been in the jungle. But sadly, he is locked behind bars in a concrete cell. He is moving slowly up and down in his cage. He does not take any notice of the visitors.
8. He hears the last voice at night,
The patrolling cars,
And stares with his brilliant eyes
At the brilliant stars.
He stalks in his vivid stripes
A few steps of his cage. (CBSE 2023)
- (a) Whose is the last voice heard by the tiger?
(i) Police jeep (ii) Patrolling cars
(iii) Watchmen (iv) Roar of a lion
(b) Complete the sentence appropriately.
It is clear that 'Repetition' is the poetic device used for 'his brilliant eyes at the brilliant stars' because (Clue: explain how repetition applies here)
(c) The main contrasting ideas in this extract are:
(i) tiger and deer
(ii) cruelty and sympathy
(iii) confinement and freedom
(iv) master and slave
(d) The use of the word 'stalks' creates an image of:
(i) cowardice (ii) frustration
(iii) lethargy (iv) purposefulness
(e) State whether the following statement is True or False:
The poem uses 'staring at the sky' to symbolise the freedom 'he' yearns for.

Answers

- (a) (ii) Patrolling cars
(b) 'Repetition' is a poetic device that involves using a word or a phrase for effect, two or more times in a speech or written work and the word 'brilliant' is repeated here.
(c) (iii) confinement and freedom
(d) (ii) frustration
(e) True



Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 1. State any three disadvantages that the tiger faces inside a cage. (CBSE 2023)

Ans. Being locked in a concrete cell of the zoo, the tiger feels quite helpless. His immense strength is of no use to him as he is put behind the bars. He only stalks the length of his cage. He misses his freedom in the forest. At night after everyone retires, he can only look at the stars from his cage. He eats the meat given to him by the zoo keepers; at times the meat might be stale.

- Q 2. On pads of velvet quiet, In his quiet rage. Why does the tiger express his anger quietly?

Ans. The tiger expresses his anger quietly inside his cage as he knows that being violent or vocal about his anger would only worsen his condition.

- Q 3. How would the tiger behave in the forest? (CBSE 2023)

Ans. In the forest, the tiger would walk freely without any boundation. He would catch his own prey and amuse himself by terrorising the villagers.

- Q 4. How has Leslie Norris contrasted the life of a tiger in the zoo with that in his natural habitat?

Ans. In the zoo, the tiger was put in a cemented cell. He could not move beyond the cage. In the forest, he was free to move wherever he liked, kill his own prey, and enjoy the greenery and natural beauty around him. At night, he could hear the sounds of other animals and not the sound of patrolling cars.

- Q 5. How does Leslie Norris use vivid imagery and metaphorical language in *A Tiger in the Zoo*, to effectively depict the confinement and oppression, experienced by the captive tiger? (CBSE SQP 2023-24)

Ans. In the poem, the use of the words 'vivid stripes' and 'pads of velvet quiet' creates a powerful image of the tiger's physical beauty and grace that is restricted within the confines of the cage. 'Sliding through long grass' and 'snarling around houses' show its expected behaviour in the wild. The metaphorical language used in 'quiet rage' and 'ignoring visitors' conveys the tiger's frustration and anger at being confined. The last two lines, 'He hears the last voice at night, the patrolling cars, and stares with his brilliant eyes at the brilliant stars', depicts the tiger's longing for freedom and its natural habitat. Thus, the poem explores the psychological impact of captivity on the tiger through the use of vivid imagery and metaphorical language.



Long Answer Type Questions

- Q 1. 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?

- Ans.** (i) 'Pads of velvet quiet' actually means that the paws of a tiger are as soft as a velvet and because of this, a tiger does not make noise while walking. The word 'quiet' in the next line is contrasted with the condition of the tiger in cage. It means that the tiger is expressing his anger and frustration in silence. He cannot express it by his actions or by roaring. The effect of this repetition is that it helps to convey two diverse meanings as well as ensure harmony in expression.
- (ii) Similarly, 'brilliant eyes' signifies the beautiful eyes of the tiger and 'brilliant stars' signifies the beautiful shining stars in the sky. The effect of this repetition adds musical rhythm to the poem.

Q 2. On the basis of your understanding of 'A Tiger in the Zoo', discuss if it is right to confine wild animals into cages.

Ans. Wild animals are meant to live in the wild. They are not meant to be caged and displayed in the zoos. We all know that the majestic species of tiger is on the verge of extinction. So, we should try to ensure that they live in their natural habitat. They are not meant to live a life in confinement. They also have the right to freedom like all other living beings. Confinement

leads to depression and misery. Moreover, their offspring lose the hunting capabilities as they are not trained to hunt in the wild. As a result, they would not be able to feed themselves. Furthermore, confining wild animals disturbs the whole ecological balance. We should, thus, let the animals run free in the wild. They belong to the forest and not to the cage.

Q 3. 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?

Ans. Zoos are essential for the protection or conservation of some endangered species of animals, such as white tigers. Various species are on the verge of extinction, thus they need to be protected. For this, zoos are the most suitable.

Zoos are also useful for educating the public about various animals, their habitats, kind of food they eat, seasons of hibernation, reproduction, etc. One need not go to the forests to study about them.

Zoos can be replaced by wildlife sanctuaries where the animals get their natural habitat and environment to live and flourish. There are no restrictions, no walls and no boundaries for the animals.