

Question Answers and RTC (Explanation with help of audio clips and study material in pdf form)

Flamingo
Poem - 6
Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

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Ques 1: How do denizens and chivalric add to our understanding of the tiger's attitudes?

Ans 1: - Tigers, like all beasts of prey, are the denizens of the forest. They live far away from human settlements.
- Tigers are called chivalric because they conduct themselves in a heroic and manly ^(mannish) fashion. They are confident and certain of who they are and what they want. They occupy majestic and honourable position in the world of animals. A tiger is truly the king of the forest.

So, the use of 'denizens' and 'chivalric' for tigers adds to our understanding of their attitudes.

Ques 2: Why do you think Aunt Jennifer's Hands are 'fluttering through her wool' in the second stanza? Why is she finding the needle so hard to pull?

Ans 2: The movement of Aunt's hands is not smooth and effortless while weaving tigers on the panel. The weight of years of her unhappy and harsh married life is lying heavy on her hands.
- The fluttering hands indicate her nervous state. The weight of marriage, gender roles and a dominating society have caused the nervousness.

Ques 3: What is suggested by the image 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band'?

Ans 3: Uncle's wedding band represents the patriarchal society. Uncle is obviously a very demanding and exacting man.

and this puts Aunt under stress.

- Massive weight of Uncle's wedding band is symbolic of the weight of harsh and bitter experiences of her married life which has been full of ordeals. Aunt Jennifer has been crushed physically and mentally in her married life.

Ques 4. Of what or of whom is Aunt Jennifer terrified with in the third stanza?

Ans 4. She is perhaps afraid of not meeting the expectations of her husband. The unhappy experiences of her married life are still clinging (stuck, attached) to her. She has passed through horrible and testing times during her married life. These ordeals crushed her physically and mentally. So, she is still ringed with those ordeals that dominated her life.

Ques 5. What are the 'ordeals' Aunt Jennifer is surrounded by. Why is it significant that the poet uses the word 'ringed'? What are the meanings of the word 'ringed' in the poem?

Ans 5. - The ordeals mentioned here are the testing times that Aunt Jennifer faced during her married life.

- The word 'ringed' conveys that the vicious grip of her unhappy married life is still holding her tightly.
- The word 'ringed' is used to mean chained or bonded. It refers to the constraints and the demands of marriage that bind a woman like Aunt Jennifer.

Ques 6. Why do you think Aunt Jennifer created animals that are so different from her own character? What might the poet be suggesting, through this difference?

Ans 6. The tigers that she creates are bold, fearless, elegant and chivalrous. Aunt herself is weak, timid and terrified. Her married life has been full of troubles and hardships.

- Perhaps the animals she creates are an extension of her own unfulfilled desires i.e., to live a free and confident life like tigers.
- It is ironical. The poet uses the element of contrast to heighten (increase) the effect. [It was also her way of exhibiting her sense of rebellion (protest) against the male dominated society | which, however, she couldn't speak out loud.]

Ques 7. Interpret the symbols found in this poem.

Ans 7. The poem is rich in symbolism and imagery.

1. Massive weight of Uncle's wedding band symbolises hardships, ordeals, and unhappy married life of Aunt Jennifer.
2. 'Terrified hands' and 'ringed with ordeals' create the image of oppression (toucher), captivity and terror^(cage) and terror^(stuck). They also convey unpleasant experiences that are clinging to Aunt Jennifer physically & mentally.
3. Tigers on the panel are the symbol of freedom, confidence, courage, strength, fearlessness, elegance and beauty.
4. Wedding Ring symbolises 'handcuff' or 'chain' that binds Aunt Jennifer and reduces her to the position of a slave. (limitations, restrictions)

Q8. Do you sympathise with Aunt Jennifer. What is the attitude of the speaker towards Aunt Jennifer?

Ans 8. - Yes, I sympathise with Aunt Jennifer because of the ordeals and hardships she experienced during her married life. All her life, she has tried very hard to live up to the expectations of her dominating husband.

- The speaker's attitude towards Aunt Jennifer is equally sympathetic because she is the alter ego of the poetess herself. Using different symbols and images, the poet presents a lady who is victimised by her dominating husband.

Additional Questions

Ques 9. How will Aunt's hands look after she is dead and why?

Ans 9. The hands will look terrified. Perhaps she has experienced so many hardships that their effect has been imprinted on her hands. The ordeals that crushed her in her married life had ringed her hands too.

Q10. What is the theme of the poem?

Ans 10. The poem addresses the constraints of married life that a woman experiences. It revolves around Aunt Jennifer who is a weak and timid woman. Her married life has been full of ordeals, hardships, unpleasant times and bitter experiences.

The poem is clearly a feminist poem which criticises the male world for terrifying and oppressing/dominating women like Aunt Jennifer.

Reference to Questions Context

Extract 1:

Aunt Jennifer's Certainty

1. What are Aunt's Jennifer tigers doing?

Ans Pouncing across a screen.

2. How do they look like?

Ans like bright topaz

3. Are they fearless? Give an example.

Ans Yes, they are

Because they don't fear the mean standing beneath the tree.

4. Where do tigers live?

Ans in the green world of forests
in the forests OK

5. How do they pace? Explain.

Ans They pace in sleek chivalric certainty

They move in an elegant, brave and well-groomed manner. They pace with confidence.

6. Where are A.J's tigers? What traits of tigers do they reveal?

OK

Describe Aunt's tigers

Ans on a screen / panel
 They have all the traits of a tiger. They are the denizens of the forest and are shiny yellow in colour. They look well groomed, fearless and confident. They conduct themselves in a manly fashion.

7. Give an example of a metaphor. Explain the metaphor.

Ans The metaphor is 'bright topaz'.
 The tigers are of the colour of topaz i.e., shiny yellow etc.

8. Find words that mean

- (a) jump ahead - prance
- (b) yellow precious stone - topaz
- (c) dwellers / inhabitants - denizens
- (d)

Extract 2.

Aunt Jennifer's hard.

1. Where were Aunt's fingers fluttering through? What was she making.

Ans Through her wool
 Tigers on a panel

2. Give an example to show that her movement through the wool isn't smooth & effortless.

Ans She finds even the ivory needle hard to pull.

3. What lies upon her hands and how?

Ans Her wedding band
 It sits heavily upon her hand

4. Explain: The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
 Refer to short Ans 3. (2nd para whole)

5. What difficulty does A.J. face while making her tigers and why?

Ans Her fingers are fluttering. She finds the ivory needle hard to pull.

The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band sits heavily upon her hand.

6. Find words that mean

(a) moving about/trembling - fluttering

(b) heavy - massive

(c) ring - band

Extract 3.

When Aunt is and unafraid.

1. Why are Aunt's hands called terrified?

Ans Because they have passed through very harsh and bitter experiences of married life.

2. What are they still ringed with?

Ans with the cordeals she was controlled by

3. What will happen to her tigers after her death?

Ans They will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

4. Why will the tigers go on prancing?

Ans (a) Aunt has created tigers on a panel. They aren't real. They are the objects of art. So, they will outlive their creator.

(b) The male domination will continue in the society even after Aunt's death. (Symbolic meaning).

5. Name the poem and the poet.

Ans 5. Poem - Aunt Jennifer's Tigers
Poet - Adrienne Rich

6. Give an example of irony from the extract (Short ans)

Ans It is ironical that the lady who herself is so timid, weak, terrified and exploited creates tigers that are sleek, bold, fearless and confident.

Poetic devices used in the poem

1. Metaphor
Bright Topaz
(Stanza 1, line 2)

2. Alliteration
Fingers Fluttering
(Stanza 2)
Prancing Proud
(Stanza 3)

3. Symbols
* wedding band
Symbol of burden in unhappy married life.

* Aunt Jennifer
A typical victim of male dominance

* Tigers
Symbol of bravery, fearless, strength, confidence and freedom.

* Uncle
Symbol of male dominance, oppression.

4. Irony
* A weak and terrified submissive woman like Aunt is weaving a picture of tigers that are strong and fearless