

A TIGER IN THE ZOO

STUDY-NOTE

- The poem 'A Tiger in the Zoo' written by Leslie Norris is about a tiger that has been caged in a zoo. The poet describes how it spends its time in the zoo and what it would have been doing if it were free and in the forest.
- The poem explains the situation of a Tiger in the Zoo. The poet narrates a tiger's erstwhile life in the jungle when he has been a free animal and now when he is caged in the zoo. The poem begins by describing the physical features of the tiger, which is kept in a little cage.
- He was confined in a cage which was made up of strong building material and he was helpless there. He could not show his power to the visitors, therefore, never tried to terrorize them.
- The tiger is described as being powerless and agonized by the poet. He says that during night also he is alone, hearing the voice of the patrolling vehicles of police and looking at the stars. The cage life has totally changed the tiger's personality. The poet is trying to say that the animal which is famous for its fearlessness and freedom is confined and sad due to the human beings who want to derive pleasure by looking at him in the zoo cage.
- In this poem, the poet is conveying an important message that wild animals should be in their natural habitat.

THEMES

- 'A Tiger in the Zoo' by Leslie Norris presents several themes such as freedom vs captivity, tamed vs wild, wilderness, and natural beauty. The most important theme of the poem is freedom vs captivity. In this poem, Norris describes how the tiger longs for its freedom. It somehow wants to break its imposed captivity to become the same wild spirit again. Thereafter, the poet talks about how men try to tame the wild. It not only destroys the beauty of the wild but it also tries to kill one's basic instincts. Moreover, the description of the tiger and its movement in the forest depict the nature of wilderness.

● The poet also speaks on the theme of natural beauty in this poem. The tiger is a part of nature that stands for the beauty of nature as a whole. It represents the wild side of nature still it has its beauty. The poet compares the luster of the tiger's eyes to that of the stars.

LITERARY DEVICES

- 'A Tiger in the Zoo' by Leslie Norris begins with a synecdoche. By using "vivid stripes" the poet refers to the body of the tiger. Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a "part" of something is used to represent its "whole."
- The poet uses personification for investing the tiger with the qualities of humans. Personification is a literary device that refers to the projection of human characteristics onto inanimate objects in order to create imagery.
- There is a metaphor in "velvet quiet". Here, the poet compares the pads of the tiger to velvet. Moreover, in "quiet rage" there is a personal metaphor and oxymoron as well. A metaphor is used to describe an object, person, situation or action in a way that helps a reader understand it, without using "like" or "as". An oxymoron is a kind of figurative language in which two contrasting things are connected together
- Apart from that, in the second stanza, the poet uses alliteration in the last line. Alliteration is a technique that makes use of repeated sound at the beginning of multiple words, grouped together. It is used in poetry and prose.
- Thereafter, in the third stanza, the poet uses asyndeton. Asyndeton is a figure of speech that occurs when words like "and" and "or" (coordinating conjunctions) are removed from sentences.
- The "concrete cell" in the following stanza contains consonance. In the last stanza, uses a metaphor of "voice" for the sound made by the patrolling cars. Consonance is the repetition of a consonant sound in words, phrases, sentences, or passages in prose and verse writing.
- The repetition of "brilliant" in the last two lines is meant for emphasizing the similarity between the stars and the eyes of the tiger. Repetition is an important literary technique that sees a writer reuse words or phrases multiple times.

