

NCERT Solutions for Class 12 English Flamingo Poem 6

Question 1.

How do “denizens” and “chivalric” add to our understanding of the tiger’s attitudes?

Answer:

Unlike their creator who sunk into the background, the tigers were described as “bright topaz denizens”. The tigers were energetic and free to “prance” or run around in the jungle, and in their creator’s imagination. The tigers were created bright, like “topaz”, and they inhabited a world that is green. The “bright topaz denizens of green” evoke a mental image of majestic tigers not bound by the whims of another being. They are in their natural environment. The tigers are conceived as inherently male, they are chivalric, hence tied to the long tradition of male authority and power. However, their “chivalric certainty” is a representation of the power envisioned by Aunt Jennifer for herself. This idea is then contrasted with Aunt Jennifer’s reality where she in turn was dominated by male superiority.

Question 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?

Answer:

Aunt Jennifer worked with a piece of wool, stitching patterns into a tapestry. Her fingers fluttered to create the beautiful image of the tigers. She expressed her desires by creating the tigers. She found it difficult to express her feelings, repressed by the weight of marriage, gender roles, and a dominating society. “Uncle’s wedding band” is representative of the patriarchal society she lived in. The weight of the ring was not something she enjoyed as the band is described to sit ‘heavily’ on her hand and kept her from the only mode of expression she had, her needlepoint.

Question 3.

What is suggested by the image “massive weight of Uncle’s wedding band”?

Answer:

The struggle for existence in a harsh world, the deep conflicts of bondage and freedom and gender conflict is portrayed through the use of the evocative image. The genders are polarised. Aunt Jennifer was victimized by the absent Uncle, represented only by his wedding band, while he is representative of the oppression of custom and law.

Question 4.

Why is Aunt Jennifer terrified in the third stanza?

Answer:

In the last stanza, the reader is told that “the tigers in the panel she made/Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid” even after Aunt Jennifer was dead. This showed her fear.

The tigers represent her spirit and how she would like to live while her hands, folded even in death, represent the reality of her life.

Question 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?

Answer:

The word “ringed” has a double association. It indicates not only the ring that “sits heavily” on her hand, but the difficulties in her life that would continue to surround her.

Even in death, she is seen to conform to the patriarchal society in which she lived. The ring on her finger symbolised the weight she had to bear, dead or alive. Just as she created and controlled her needlework, society and gender roles created and controlled her.

Question 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?

Answer:

Aunt Jennifer created an alternative world of freedom, one which she could not inhabit otherwise. The tigers of her creation represented her suppressed desires and her ambition. She was victimised, and stifled in marriage, by the absent figure of the Uncle, represented only by his wedding band. She escaped her reality through her creation. The poet presents an ironic image of a contrast between the common perception of animals as being brutal and of men being humane. Here, the ‘brutal’ tiger represents freedom while the ‘civilised’ man is exposed as the oppressor.

Question 7.

Interpret the symbols found in this poem.

Answer:

Adrienne Rich uses a number of similes and symbols in the poem to convey her theme. The tigers, of course, symbolise the freedom of spirit which Aunt Jennifer dreams of attaining but never achieves except in her dreams and her art. Aunt Jennifer represents of her gender rather than any one individual.

The tigers are symbolic of the true nature of the freedom that a woman’s soul represents. They also display in art the values that Aunt Jennifer must repress or displace in life: strength, assertion, fearlessness and fluidity of motion. The image of the tiger is both inspiring and destructive. And the poem’s conclusion celebrates the animal images as a kind of triumph, transcending the constraints of their maker’s life.

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Question 8.

Do you sympathise with Aunt Jennifer? What is the attitude of the poet towards Aunt Jennifer?

Answer:

As a reader, one sympathises with Aunt Jennifer. She aspired for a greater future and a greater standing for her generation. Her mind was liberated from the cloistered association with her sex, but the figure of Aunt Jennifer never got to see women standing strong and proud. In the end, Adrienne Rich showed that Aunt Jennifer represented every woman of her time. Ironically enough, she rebels using the oppressor's own language to feel a sense of triumph. Overwhelmed by gender roles, and torn between rebellion, the need for expression, and society, Aunt Jennifer expressed her fears and desires through the exotic images of tigers, transcending her dreams and ambitions.