

## Aunt Jennifer's Tigers (Poetry)

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1. Read the following extracts and answer the questions. (2024)

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) Which of the following are symbolised by the 'tigers' in the extract above?

- I. masculine world
- II. feminine world
- III. world of bold, fearless creatures
- IV. world of beautiful handicrafts

- (A) I, II and III
- (B) II, III and IV
- (C) III and IV
- (D) I, III and IV

**Ans.** (D) I, III and IV

(ii) State whether the given statement is True or False.

The creator of the tigers was fearless and assertive like the tigers.

**Ans.** False

(iii) Complete the following sentence.

The use of the word 'topaz' suggests that the image of the tiger on the screen is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Ans.** bright yellow colour / real / perfect creation

(iv) "Tigers do not fear the men beneath the tree' because they are



- (A) tamed
- (B) in a cage
- (C) fearless
- (D) kings of the jungle

**Ans.** (C) fearless

(v) Based on the poem's rhyme scheme evident in lines 1 and 2, which of the following will rhyme ?

mean, akin, cream

**Ans.** mean

(vi) Chivalric certainty refers to which poetic device ?

- (A) Alliteration
- (B) Metaphor
- (C) Simile
- (D) Repetition

**Ans.** (A) Alliteration / (B) Metaphor

### Previous Years' CBSE Board Questions

**SA I (2 marks)**

1. Explain the significance of the 'denizens pacing in sleek certainty' in the poem 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers'. (2022)

2. Describe the appearance of Aunt Jennifer's 'Tigers'. (2022 C)

3. Explain the irony at the end of the poem, 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers'.

(Term II, 2021-22)

4. How did Aunt Jennifer face the ordeals in her life? (2020 C)

5. What are the difficulties that Aunt Jennifer faced in her life? (Delhi 2014)

6. How are Aunt Jennifer's tigers different from her? (AI 2014)

7. How does Aunt Jennifer express her bitterness and anger against male dominance? (Delhi 2014C)

**SA II (3 marks)**



8. How do symbols in the poem, 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' help us understand her plight? (AI 2019)

9. Aunt Jennifer's efforts to get rid of her fear proved to be futile. Comment.

(Delhi 2016)

10. What picture of male chauvinism (tyranny) do we find in the poem, 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers'? (AI 2016)

11. How does the poet show the futility of Aunt Jennifer's efforts? (Foreign 2016)

12. What is suggested by the phrase, 'massive weight of uncle's wedding band'?

(Delhi 2015)

13. Why does Aunt Jennifer create animals that are so different from her own character? (Delhi 2015)

14. What will happen when Aunt Jennifer is dead? (Foreign 2015)

15. How is Aunt Jennifer different from her tigers? (Foreign 2015)

16. For Aunt Jennifer, what do the tigers symbolise? (Foreign 2015)

**SA III (4 marks)**

17. The tigers' description as 'chivalric' is a contrast to that of Aunt Jennifer. Explain. (Term II, 2021-22)

Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow:

18. Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool

Find even the ivory needle hard to pull

the massive weight of uncle's wedding band

Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

(a) Why are Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool?

(b) What is Aunt Jennifer doing that she finds very hard to do?

(c) Why does the wedding band seem too heavy?

(d) What impression do you form of Aunt Jennifer from the extract? (2019 C)

19. 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.

- (a) Why are the tigers called Aunt Jennifer's tigers?
- (b) How are they described here?
- (c) How are they different from Aunt Jennifer?
- (d) What does the word, 'chivalric' mean? (Delhi 2017)

20. 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.

- (a) Why are the tigers called 'Aunt Jennifer's tigers'?
- (b) What does the phrase, 'a world of green' mean?
- (c) How are the tigers different from their creator?
- (d) Why are the tigers not afraid of the men beneath the trees? (Delhi 2015C)

**LA II (6 marks)**

21. 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.  
Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool  
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.  
The massive weight of uncle's wedding band  
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

- (i) Denizens of the world of green refer to \_\_\_\_\_.

  - (a) huntsmen
  - (b) Aunt Jennifer
  - (c) uncle
  - (d) tigers

- (ii) Choose the option that displays the same poetic device as used in the second line of the extract.

  - (a) heart of stone

(b) trees sprouting

(c) silver spoon

(d) white murder

(iii) The men setting beneath the tree are \_\_\_\_\_.

(iv) What quality of uncle can be inferred through these lines?

(a) compassionate nature

(b) courageous

(c) confident

(d) dominating

(v) The tigers in the extract are symbolic of

(a) creativity and courage

(b) confidence and gentleness

(c) cruelty and fear

(d) aggression and starving

(vi) Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across

(1) the screen

(2) the fields

(3) the embroidered tunic

(4) the cage

Which of the following is the most appropriate choice?

(a) (1) and (2)

(b) (2) and (4)

(c) (1), (2) and (3)

(d) (1) and (3)

**(2023)**





4. Aunt Jennifer chose to use her work to silently express her bitterness and anger against male dominance. She did this by creating or weaving tigers on her tapestry; animals that are unafraid of men and are symbolic of bravery, fearlessness and strength.
5. Aunt Jennifer lived her life in accordance with the rules laid down by her domineering husband. Her life was overburdened by the demands and duties of her married life and the patriarchal society. It lacked self-expression. Although old and weak, she had to face the ordeals of her oppressive marriage all her life, there was no escape from her husband.
6. Unlike Aunt Jennifer, who feels trapped in a loveless and unhappy marriage, who is terrified of her domineering husband and the patriarchal society, her tigers prance around freely, full of confidence, fearless of the men watching them. The tigers seem to possess all the qualities, which Aunt Jennifer does not.
7. Aunt Jennifer expresses her bitterness and anger against male dominance through her art; by knitting tigers on the panel which symbolise freedom, strength and chivalry.
8. The plight of Aunt Jennifer is constantly emphasised by the use of various symbols in the poem. The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band symbolises the oppression she faced in her marriage. The image of tigers provides a contrast with Aunt's character who is timid, oppressed and victimized in her life. Aunt Jennifer tries to vent out her feelings by creating such majestic and fearless tigers.
9. Aunt Jennifer is an obedient wife, often dominated by her husband. Her efforts to get rid of her fear of an unhappy and terrifying marriage proves to be futile because she would have to wear the 'weighty' wedding ring, which has made her feel trapped all her life, even when she is dead. In other words, there is no escaping the male dominated society or the ordeals of tyrannous marriage for Aunt Jennifer, even after death.
10. The poem, 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers, shows constraints of married life every woman experience. It shows lack of freedom for Aunt Jennifer, who is forced to live in accordance with rules laid down by her husband. Uncle's wedding band, which sits 'heavily' upon Aunt Jennifer's finger, symbolises the oppressive behaviour of the patriarchal society. Aunt Jennifer feels that she would escape the ordeals of her tyrannous marriage once she is dead. However, such a thought is futile because the patriarchal society would not permit her to take off the wedding band even after death. Therefore, it is suffice to say that she is a victim of male chauvinism.
11. The poet shows the futility of Aunt Jennifer's efforts by pointing towards her fluttering fingers, which find the ivory needle hard to pull. During her death, she would have to continue to wear her wedding band.



**12.** The phrase 'massive weight of uncle's wedding band' refers to the burden of an oppressive marriage in which Aunt Jennifer was trapped. The wedding band is also symbolic of bondage; Aunt is bound to her dominating husband by marriage because of her wedding vows. She can't escape this male dominated society even after she is dead. As a dutiful wife, she must continue to be devoted to her husband.

**13.** "Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen, ....."

They do not fear the men beneath the tree; they pace in sleek chivalric certainty."

The tigers are so different from Aunt's own character because they are an expression of her hidden desires. Through them, Aunt Jennifer communicates her unfulfilled wishes.

**14.** When Aunt Jennifer is dead, she will continue to suffer because she will not be free from her marital bondage. But, her struggle for freedom will continue through the prancing tigers on the panel.

**15.** Aunt Jennifer is scared, oppressed and has no freedom in her married life because of her husband's authority. There is a stark contrast between her and the tigers' nature. The tigers are free and fearless in the presence of men; they prance around with confidence.

**16.** Aunt Jennifer lived an unhappy life in constant fear of her authoritative husband and the fact that she would never be freed not even after her death. Therefore, for her, the tigers symbolised fearlessness, confidence and freedom, something she lacked but hoped to possess.

**17.** "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" is a poem about a married woman's repressed desire to be free of her 'unhappy marriage'. Aunt Jennifer, unable to escape, had to express those desires through her artwork. Her tapestry is filled with vibrant, colourful and confident tigers leaping across the canvas. They are unafraid of the men in the canvas, walking confidently with certainty and pride.

The word 'chivalry' is mainly associated with honour, bravery, code of conduct. While the fierce animals will walk fearlessly across the tapestry even after Aunt Jennifer's death, the same is not the case for the creator. Aunt Jennifer, despite her majestic artwork, is physically bounded and weighed down heavily by the authoritative husband. And even after death, she will still be marked by the wedding band, with no real escape.

Although the tigers are chivalric and majestic, they are the opposite of what Aunt Jennifer is. Rather, they are the product of all the repressed desires of the artist, i.e. Aunt Jennifer. Though her artwork presents a majestic and even fearful artwork, it is in stark contrast to the reality of the artist's own life.



18. (a) Aunt Jennifer's fingers are fluttering as she is nervous because of her husband.

(b) Aunt Jennifer is weaving tigers on the panel. Why does the wedding band seem too heavy?

(c) The wedding band seems heavy because it is a symbol of the subjugation and oppression by her husband. What impression do you form of Aunt Jennifer from the extract?

(d) The given extract seems to show that Aunt Jennifer is terrified of her domineering husband and the patriarchal society she lives in.

19. (a) The tigers are called Aunt Jennifer's tigers because she embroidered them herself.

(b) The tigers are described as bright topaz denizens of the world of green, who prance around fearlessly and with sleek, chivalric certainty.

(c) The tigers are different from Aunt Jennifer because unlike her, they do not fear the men. The tigers prance with a certainty in their presence.

(d) 'Chivalric' means polite and kind behaviour that shows a sense of honour, specially towards women.

20. (a) The tigers are called 'Aunt Jennifer's tigers' because they are her creation. Aunt Jennifer embroidered the tigers on a screen.

(b) 'A world of green' means green forest, the natural habitat of the tigers.

(c) Unlike Aunt Jennifer, the tigers are fearless, confident and free.

(d) The tigers are 'denizens of a world of green'. They are wild beasts. Therefore, they do not fear the men beneath the trees.

21. (i) (d) tigers

(ii) (a) heart of stone

(iii) The men sitting beneath a tree are people like aunt Jennifer's husband who are dominating and misusing their power.

(iv) (d) dominating

(v) (c) cruelty and fear

(vi) (a) (1) and (2)



## CBSE Sample Questions

1. Adrienne Rich used words through her poetry to criticize the traditional institution of marriage and the constricting world it embodies for women. It is an oppressor of women in the form of a union. Similarly, Aunt Jennifer used her embroidery to express her anger and disagreement with the way she has been treated. Her unhappy marriage, being controlled by a domineering husband, makes her embroider the tigers as a symbol of her disagreement. Both women used their creative outlets as a form of protest against the societal expectations that were 'pressed' upon the female gender.

2. HINTS:

- She is burdened by the weight of her marriage/gender codes she has to follow as a woman that even holding wool firmly is a task.
- Highlights the oppressed state of women.

