

English Notes



Flamingo Chapter-6 Aunt Jennifers Tigers

About the Poet

The poem “**Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers**” is written by Adrienne Rich, a famous American poet and feminist writer. Her works often highlight **women’s struggles, gender inequality, and social oppression**. Through this poem, she exposes the difficulties faced by women in a male-dominated society.

Summary of Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers

The poem presents the life of **Aunt Jennifer**, a married woman who feels oppressed and dominated by her husband. She spends her time **embroidering a tapestry of bright, fearless tigers** that are shown prancing proudly across a green forest background.

The tigers symbolize **strength, courage, and freedom**. They walk confidently without any fear of men. These bold creatures represent the life that Aunt Jennifer secretly wishes to live but cannot experience in reality.

In contrast to the powerful tigers she creates, Aunt Jennifer herself appears **nervous, weak, and frightened**. Her fingers are described as “**fluttering**” while pulling the needle through the wool, which shows her fear and lack of confidence. This nervousness reflects the emotional burden she carries in her married life.

The poet further highlights Aunt Jennifer’s oppression through the phrase “**the weight of Uncle’s wedding band**.” This wedding ring symbolizes the **burden of marriage, responsibilities, and the dominance of her husband**. It suggests that she feels trapped in her marriage and cannot live freely.

Unable to express her desires openly, Aunt Jennifer uses **art as a form of escape**. Through her embroidery, she creates a world where the tigers are **fearless, proud, and independent**, reflecting her hidden desire for freedom and confidence.

The poem ends on a powerful note. The poet imagines that even after Aunt Jennifer dies, she will still carry the marks of fear caused by her married life. However, the **tigers she created will continue to prance proudly**, symbolizing that **art and imagination can survive beyond human suffering and death**.

Thus, the poem highlights the **silent struggles of women in patriarchal societies and their suppressed longing for independence and self-expression**.

Central Idea

The poem highlights the **oppression and struggles of women in a patriarchal society**. Aunt Jennifer lives a fearful life under male domination but expresses her **desire for freedom and strength through her embroidery**. While she remains oppressed, her art symbolizes **courage, independence, and hope**.

Theme of the Poem

1. Oppression of Women

The poem shows how women often suffer under male domination and social expectations.

2. Desire for Freedom

The fearless tigers represent Aunt Jennifer's **hidden wish to live freely and confidently**.

3. Power of Art

Art becomes a way for Aunt Jennifer to express emotions and dreams that she cannot express in real life.

4. Patriarchal Society

The poem criticizes the **male-dominated social structure** that restricts women's freedom.

Symbols in the Poem

Symbol	Meaning
Tigers	Courage, power, and freedom
Wedding Band	Burden of marriage and male dominance
Fluttering Fingers	Fear and nervousness
Embroidery	Artistic escape from oppression

Literary Devices

Literary Device	Example	Effect
Symbolism	Tigers	Represent freedom and courage
Metaphor	Weight of Uncle's wedding band	Burden of marriage
Contrast	Fearful Aunt vs fearless tigers	Highlights oppression
Imagery	Bright tigers in green forest	Creates vivid visual picture

Title Justification

The title "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" is appropriate because the poem focuses on the **tigers embroidered by Aunt Jennifer**. These tigers symbolize the **freedom, courage, and strength** that Aunt Jennifer desires but cannot achieve in her own life. The title emphasizes the contrast between **Aunt Jennifer's fearful existence and the fearless tigers she creates**.

Quick Revision Points

- Written by **Adrienne Rich**
- Theme: **Women's oppression and desire for freedom**
- Tigers symbolize **strength and independence**
- Wedding band represents **burden of marriage**
- Aunt Jennifer uses **art as an escape from oppression**
- Tigers continue prancing even after her death, showing **art's immortality**

Detailed Notes

The poet is a feminist and at the centre of the poem. She addresses the difficulties of a married woman. The woman, Aunt Jennifer, is a nervous and fearful wife. She spends good amount of time in embroidering panel of tigers prancing across the screen. The tigers are fearless creatures pacing elegantly and majestically. They symbolize the spirit of freedom. Aunt is a victim of male chauvinism (male domination). She is so nervous that her fingers 'flutter' through the wool she is using in her tapestry or panel.

The poet portrays the marriage of Jennifer as an unhappy one for her. The "weight of Uncle's wedding band" "expresses how victimized, oppressed and dominated she is. It implies that aunt Jennifer has to work hard to meet his expectation.

She spends her life in fear but she embroiders on the panel the fearless tigers to express her secret longing for a life of freedom and confidence. Perhaps Aunt Jennifer uses art as an escape from her troubles. In her artwork she imagines the kind of life she would have liked. The creatures she places there are free and proud, just opposite to her. It seems that she creates a happier looking world than the one she lives in. She makes precise and brightly coloured pictures like the sharp yellow tigers of the poem, pictured against a green background. These bright contrasting colours are probably much more vivid than her everyday world.

Her artistic work will live on after she dies, as, according to the poet, her tigers will 'go on prancing' The Aunt is terrified about the fact that when she would quit the world and when she would be lowered into the grave, she would still remain afraid of her husband and would carry the marks of torture in the form of wedding ring even in her grave. Even her death would not end the problem and torture which a married woman experiences.

- The poet is a feminist and she addresses the difficulties of a married woman.
- She spends good amount of time in embroidering panel of tigers prancing across the screen.
- The tigers are fearless creatures pacing elegantly and majestically. They symbolize the spirit of freedom. Aunt is a victim of male chauvinism (male domination).

- Aunt Jennifer is so oppressed and terrified that she finds it hard to pull the needle.
- The “weight of Uncle’s wedding band “expresses how victimized and oppressed she is. It implies that aunt Jennifer has to work hard to meet his expectation.
- She spends her life in fear but she embroiders on the panel the fearless tigers to express her secret longing for a life of freedom and confidence.
- Even her death does not end the problem and torture which a married woman experiences.

Important Exam Questions

1 Mark Question

Why are Aunt Jennifer’s fingers fluttering?

Her fingers flutter because she is nervous and oppressed by the burdens of her married life.

3 Mark Question

What do the tigers symbolize in the poem?

The tigers symbolize courage, freedom, and strength. They represent the life that Aunt Jennifer wishes to live but cannot due to the oppression she faces in her marriage.

5 Mark Question

How does the poem highlight the oppression of women in a patriarchal society?

The poem shows that Aunt Jennifer lives a life of fear and oppression under her husband’s authority. The “weight of Uncle’s wedding band” symbolizes the burden of marriage and male domination. Her trembling fingers reveal her nervous and suppressed personality. However, through her embroidery she creates fearless tigers, expressing her hidden desire for freedom and independence. The poem highlights the silent suffering of women in patriarchal societies while showing how art becomes a means of emotional escape.