

Poem 3 - A Tiger in the zoo

Summary:

The poet is Leslie Norris. The poem is about a tiger that is very beautiful and is walking in his little cage. He is having beautiful stripes on his skin and has velvet-like soft paws. But he is not happy and is quite angry in the cage. The poet says that the tiger may try to hide behind the long grass, but here he is not able to do so. He is in a strong cage and so he is helpless. He cannot show his power to the visitors. Poet is describing the tiger as being powerless and agonized. Cage life has totally changed his personality.

Thus the intention of the poet is to say that the animal, famous for its fearlessness and freedom is confined and sad only due to human beings.

This poem is showing the pitiful condition of the tiger in the zoo. It shows the poor condition of the tiger in a cage. In a zoo, the tiger walks in the limited space provided to it in the cage. He can take a few steps. There are stripes on his body which are easily noticeable. His paws are soft like velvet. He does not make any noise while walking on his 'pads of velvet'. Usually, the tiger is silent but in anger.

Poet suggests that the cage is not the proper place for the tiger, as it is not its natural habitat. Thus, the tiger in the cage is a victim of human cruelty. Generally, tigers are found sitting under some bushes or long grass near some water bodies so that the tiger can see its prey like deer coming there to drink water, and consequently can slide silently through the grass and kill them. The poet wants to convey to all humankind that the tiger should be there in the forest and not in a cage.

Further, the poet gave a suggestion that the tiger should be sitting at the jungle's edge near the village. It may terrorize the people passing that way by showing its sharp teeth, baring its claws and producing a roaring sound of anger.

Poet has deep sympathy due to the unpleasant situation of the tiger who is imprisoned in a cell made of concrete. Tiger is unable to come out due to the strong bars fixed at the concrete cell. So, the tiger's strength is locked behind the bars. All such circumstances are making tiger having no interest in the visitors. And, he keeps on stalking in the limited space of the cage.

The poet is trying to make realize the people about a tiger who is sitting in the cage and feeling unpleasant and restless. Tiger is still showing no interest in the sound created by the patrolling cars of the zoo authorities. The poet is showing him staring at the shining stars with his brilliant eyes.

The poet is raising a moral issue here and he intends to present a strong case against the cruelty of humans for the animals kept in cages.

Conclusion of A Tiger in the Zoo

In this poem, the poet is conveying an important message that wild animals should be in their natural habitat.

Another way of interpretation...?

He stalks in his vivid stripes
The few steps of his cage,
On pads of velvet quiet,
In his quiet rage.

In this stanza, the poet describes the appearance of the tiger in the zoo and its daily movements. He says that the tiger moves up and down of his cage. The stripes on its body can be distinguished even seen from far as they are darker in colour than the rest of its coat. The tiger walks quietly without making a sound because of his smooth velvet pads. The tiger is able to walk only few steps because of the length of its cage. It covers that distance in a few mere steps only. The tiger is full of anger but it is suppressed because he knows that he is helpless here.

He should be lurking in shadow,
Sliding through long grass
Near the water hole
Where plump deer pass.

In this stanza, the poet is filled with pity while looking at the imprisoned tiger. The poet imagines an another life for the tiger other than the zoo. He says that the poor tiger should have been in his natural habitat that is in the wild forest. He says that under normal conditions, this

tiger would have been moving in the darkness not in the clear daylights. It would have been lying in the shadows of trees or hiding itself behind long grass so that its prey will not be able to detect its movement. In this way, the tiger would have moved near the water hole where all the animals of the forest come to drink on sunny afternoons. There, near the water hole, he would be waiting for some fat deer to pass that way. Thus, he would be lying there in expectation of a heavy feast.

He should be snarling around houses

At the jungle's edge,

Baring his white fangs, his claws,

Terrorising the village!

In this stanza, the poet says that even though he would prefer the tiger to live in the wild, it is not as if it would lose all touch with human civilization. He imagines what the tiger will do in case he failed to find any prey in his natural habitat. He says that the tiger would be growling at the edge of jungle near some village. He would be showing his white fangs and claws while moving here and there with the intention of scaring all the inhabitants of that village.. He would thus become a cause of terror for the villagers. The poetess here gives a hint that if we destroy the natural habitat of tigers, they will be forced to turn to our towns and villages to find their food.

But he's locked in a concrete cell,

His strength behind bars,

Stalking the length of his cage,

Ignoring visitors.

In this stanza, the poet stops imaging the tiger's alternate life and returns to its real one. The poet sees the tiger caged in a small concrete cell in the zoo like a prisoner in the jail. In spite of all his strength, it now lies imprisoned behind the bars. The tiger pays no attention to the visitors who come to see him every day at the zoo. Instead of this, the tiger Very slowly and

silently, moves up and down along the length of the cage without any disturbance in the form of human intervention.

He hears the last voice at night,

The patrolling cars,

And stares with his brilliant eyes

At the brilliant stars.

In this stanza, the poet describes about the daily routine of the tiger. The tiger does not rest during the day because of the visitors. Even at night, it stays awake till the very last voice of the zookeeper locking up and going home can be heard. After that too, it does not go to sleep. All night, it remains disturbed due to the noise of the patrolling cars. He keeps staring at the brilliant stars with his brilliant eyes. Perhaps he is asking heaven why he has been imprisoned there.
