

padhai | Class X

# English

# Notes



**Full  
Explanations**



**Character  
Sketch**



**Word  
Meanings**



**Tone, Central  
idea, devices....**

**First Flight**

# A Tiger in the Zoo

- LESLIE NORRIS

## Explanation:

The poem portrays a tiger confined within a zoo **enclosure** and sets this condition against the life it would lead in its natural surroundings. By establishing this contrast, the poet brings out the **pain** and **injustice** experienced by wild animals when they are kept in captivity by human beings.

At the opening of the poem, the tiger is depicted pacing slowly within the limits of his cage. The poet notes that the tiger “**stalks in his vivid stripes**” within the narrow boundaries available to him, indicating that such a majestic creature is restricted to a very limited space. The expression “**pads of velvet quiet**” functions as both imagery and metaphor, likening the tiger’s soft paws to velvet and thereby highlighting his elegance and noiseless movement. Yet, beneath this calm exterior lies “**quiet rage**,” a symbolic phrase representing the suppressed anger and frustration the tiger feels due to the loss of his freedom.

The poet then shifts focus to the environment where the tiger rightfully belongs. In the jungle, the tiger would move **stealthily through shadows**, gliding across tall grass near a water source, waiting to hunt animals like deer. These lines employ vivid natural imagery and present the tiger fulfilling his instinctive role as a predator. The poet further imagines the tiger approaching the outskirts of jungle settlements, revealing his **sharp teeth and claws** to instil fear in humans. This portrayal emphasizes the tiger’s dominance and authority in the wild, which stands in sharp contrast to his powerless condition in captivity.

The poem then returns to the reality of the zoo. Instead of roaming freely, the tiger is confined within a “**concrete cell**.” The phrase “**strength behind bars**” symbolically suggests that although the tiger possesses immense physical power, it is rendered ineffective due to imprisonment. As he continues to move restlessly within the cage, he shows no interest in the visitors observing him. This indifference reflects a silent resistance and emotional withdrawal from his unnatural surroundings.

In the concluding stanza, the tiger listens to the sound of patrolling vehicles at night when the zoo becomes silent. He gazes out through the bars with his “**brilliant eyes**” towards the “**brilliant stars**.” This image symbolizes his deep yearning for the open sky and the freedom associated with the natural world. The stars represent the vast, unrestricted universe that remains beyond his reach.

Through this sustained contrast between captivity and natural freedom, the poet communicates the cruelty involved in confining wild animals and reinforces the idea that every living being deserves to exist freely in its natural habitat.

## Poetic Device Explanations

### Metaphor

- The expression “pads of velvet quiet” presents the tiger’s paws as soft as velvet. While it literally describes his silent movement, the metaphor enhances the sense of grace, strength, and controlled power, while also intensifying the contrast with his restricted environment.
- Another metaphor is found in “quiet rage,” where the tiger’s anger is not outwardly expressed but internally contained. This reflects the emotional suppression caused by captivity.

### Imagery

- The poem makes extensive use of visual imagery to create distinct pictures of both the zoo and the jungle. Expressions such as “long grass,” “water hole,” “plump deer,” “white fangs,” and “concrete cell” help the reader clearly visualize the contrasting settings. The jungle imagery conveys freedom and vitality, whereas the zoo imagery suggests confinement and artificiality.

### Symbolism

- The cage and bars act as symbols of human domination over nature and the restriction imposed on wild creatures. The stars symbolize freedom, vastness, and the natural life that the tiger longs for but cannot attain.

### Alliteration

- Alliteration is used through the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of nearby words. For example:

“He stalks in his vivid stripes” — repetition of the ‘s’ sound

“Sliding through long grass” — repetition of the ‘s’ sound

This device creates a rhythmic effect and reinforces the smooth, flowing movement of the tiger.

### Repetition

The poet deliberately repeats words such as “quiet” and “brilliant.”

“quiet rage”

“brilliant eyes / brilliant stars”

This repetition emphasizes the tiger’s silent suffering and enhances the visual connection between the tiger and the vast sky.

### Contrast

The entire structure of the poem is based on contrast.

Tiger in the Zoo Tiger in the Wild

Few steps of cage Long grass and jungle Concrete cell Natural water hole Strength behind bars Hunting deer Ignoring visitors Terrorising villages

This contrast underlines the unnaturalness and harshness of captivity.

### **Personification**

The tiger is attributed human-like qualities such as experiencing “quiet rage” and deliberately ignoring visitors. This personification helps the reader emotionally connect with the tiger’s condition

### **Central Message / Theme**

The poem conveys that wild animals are meant to live in their natural environments and should not be confined for human amusement.

It highlights:

The deprivation of freedom faced by animals in captivity

The injustice of restricting powerful creatures within cages

The need to respect and preserve wildlife and nature

By contrasting the tiger’s natural life with its confined existence, the poet critiques human interference with the natural world.

### **Poet’s Tone / Attitude**

The tone adopted by the poet is largely sympathetic, reflective, and critical.

Sympathetic in expressing concern for the tiger’s suffering.

Reflective while describing the tiger’s rightful place in the jungle.

Critical of human practices that involve imprisoning animals.

This tone encourages readers to develop empathy and reconsider the ethics of keeping animals in captivity.

### **Word Meanings**

Stalks – to move slowly and silently like a predator

Vivid – bright and striking in appearance

Pads – the soft feet of animals like tigers

Velvet – a very soft fabric, used here to describe smoothness

Lurking – hiding or moving stealthily

Snarling – producing an aggressive growling sound

Fangs – long, pointed teeth

Terrorising – causing fear or panic

Concrete cell – a small enclosed space made of cement

Patrolling – moving around to guard or monitor an area

Brilliant – very bright or shining

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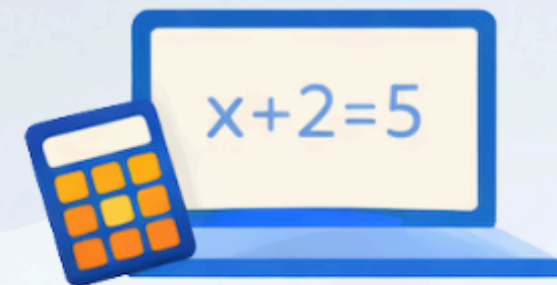
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