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Think It Out

1. How do 'denizens' and 'chivalric' add to our understanding of the tiger's attitudes?

Answer:

Like the beasts of prey, the denizens of the forest are the tigers. They lead their lives far from the human settlements and are known as 'chivalric'. This highlights the honourable and majestic position they occupy in the animal world. So, the usage of the words 'chivalric' and 'denizens' adds to our knowledge of the attitude of the tiger.

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 is weaving the tigers on a panel. With her hands moving about the wool, she is finding it difficult to pull the needle. The heaviness of years of married life is lying on her hand, which makes it hard to pull the needle.

3. What is suggested by the image 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band'?

Answer:

The image of 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band' suggests the weight of the tough and harsh experience of the married life of Aunt Jennifer. The image is suggestive, and the wedding band is symbolic. It indicates the marriage bond which is unbreakable between the wife and the husband.

4. Of what or of whom is Aunt Jennifer terrified in the third stanza?

Answer:

The poet refers to the 'terrified hands' of Aunt Jennifer in the third stanza. The unhappy memories which are old remain fresh in her mind. During her married life, she has gone through many horrible times and tests. These ordeals suppressed and crushed her, the effect of which is still visible. She is stuck with the ordeals which dominated her life.

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 marriage experiences are addressed by the poet in the background of oppression faced by women. The word 'ringed' suggests that the vicious grip of her unhappy married life is still holding her tightly. The word 'ringed' is used in two ways. The first way is conventional use, where the ring symbolises the sacred bond of marriage. The second way is the figurative use of 'ringed', which means surrounded or encircled.

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:

The tigers are 'prancing'. In 'sleek chivalric certainty', they pace and 'do not fear' the men under the tree. So, they are the symbols of beauty, fierceness and strength. On the other side, Aunt Jennifer is terrified and weak. Her hands are finding it hard to pull the needle through the wool. The huge weight of her wedding band is heavy on her hands. Her terrified hands are still ringed by the ordeals of her married life. The intensity is heightened by the contrast.

7. Interpret the symbols found in this poem.

Answer:

'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' by Adrienne Rich is rich in symbolism. 'The massive weight of the wedding band' symbolises the worries, hardships and ordeals of married life. 'Ringed with ordeals' and 'terrified hands' highlight the unpleasant experiences which are still clinging to Aunt Jennifer, both mentally and physically.

8. Do you sympathise with Aunt Jennifer? What is the attitude of the speaker towards Aunt Jennifer?

Answer:

Yes, we sympathise with Aunt Jennifer as she has gone through ordeals and hardships during her married life. The speaker's attitude towards Aunt Jennifer is sympathetic. Many suggestive symbols and images are given by the poet to present a lady who has gone through terrifying and unpleasant periods and painful experiences during her married life.

