INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Class: XII	Department: ENGLISH	2026 – 2027
Question Bank	Topic: AUNT JENNIFER'S TIGERS - ADRIENNE RICH	Note:

Word Meaning

prance: move with high springy steps	**topaz:** golden coloured	**denizens:** dwellers
world of green: green forest	**sleek:** elegant/glossy	**chivalric:** brave, kind, polite, respectful towards women
wedding band: wedding ring	**ordeals:** painful/unpleasant experience	**prancing:** springing/dancing/moving about

Mood

Aunt Jennifer is anxious, fearful, sad and nervous. She is in a state of turmoil because of her husband's dominating/terrifying nature.

The poem addresses the constraints of married life a woman experiences. Aunt Jennifer represents women all across the world, who are caught under the oppressive hand of patriarchal society. She is torn between the impulse to freedom and imagination (her tapestry of prancing tigers) and the massive weight of gender roles and expectations (symbolised by Uncle's wedding band).

Theme

"Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" reflects the gender struggle that women across the world are subject to. The poet criticizes the male-dominated world.

The poem revolves around desires, and the depressingly harsh realities of Aunt Jennifer's existence using sharp contrasts between the tigers that she sews, and her own self. The tigers that she embroiders appear to be everything that she's not. The tigers' actions are smooth, uninhibited and robust. Aunt Jennifer, on the other hand, has great trouble even embroidering because her movements are so weak and bumbling. Aunt Jennifer is evidently a lonely, pained old woman plagued with anxiety. The reason for her miserable plight is the oppresive patriarchal family system wherein 'Uncle' dominates the scene. She creates an alternative world of freedom — a world that she pines for.

Title

Aunt Jennifer's Tigers are Aunt Jennifer's as they are her creation. She has embroidered them on a screen. They are representative of her hidden aspirations and desires.

Aunt Jennifer is oppressed by the constraints of her married life and her husband's dominating nature. She feels herself as a slave. She embroiders tigers on the panel because tigers symbolize strength, confidence, fearlessness, freedom and power which she aspires for. She creates animals so different from her own character to show the bitterness in her married life, to give vent to her suppressed feelings, and to show strong resistance to male-dominated society. She wants to get out of the bondage imposed by the uncle, if not in reality, then at least symbolically. She has given an expression of her hidden, unfulfilled desires through her tapestry of prancing tigers. This shows that Aunt Jennifer is weak, submissive, meek and is scared of expressing her feelings freely. She expresses herself through art and creativity.



Poetic Devices/Figures of Speech

Alliteration	"fingers fluttering" "chivalric certainty" "prancing, proud"
Imagery	"Bright topaz denizens"
Metaphor/Personification	"Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by"
Hyperbole	"The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band"
Transferred Epithet	"terrified hands"
Symbolism	**The symbols used in the poem and their interpretation –** • **Wedding band:** Symbol of oppression in an unhappy marriage/ 'Ringed' means encircled or trapped, losing individuality and freedom. • **Aunt Jennifer:** A typical victim of male oppression in an unhappy marriage, who suffers loss of individuality, dignity and personal freedom silently. She becomes dependent, fearful and frail. • **Tigers:** Tigers symbolize untamed free spirit. Here, they are antithesis of their creator's personality. They pace and prance freely, proudly, fearless, confident and majestic in their bearing. The use of colours implies that Aunt Jennifer's tigers and their land are more vital and enjoy a sense of freedom far greater than her. Yellow (bright topaz) connotes the sun and fierce energy, while 'green' reminds one of spring and vitality. • **Embroidery:** It is a symbol of creative expression. The artwork expresses the Aunt's suppressed desires and becomes her escape from the oppressive reality of her life. • **Aunt *(last stanza)*:** As opposed to Aunt Jennifer. It shows that she has lost her identity completely, thus lost even her name.

Synopsis

Tigers are brave, dignified, chivalric, confident, strong, courageous and fearless. They are brightly coloured dwellers of green forests. They are sure of the power and strength they possess. They pace and prance freely and proudly in an elegant manner. They are not scared of men, something that Aunt Jennifer cannot do in her miserable reality because of her oppressor's looming presence. The chivalrous tigers represent everything Aunt Jennifer desires to be. *Thus, the poem opens with Aunt Jennifer's dream world. The tigers of Aunt Jennifer's embroidery are representative of her free spirit, how she pines for freedom from her burdensome husband. She is expressing her pain through art, creating a picture of how she would like her own life to be.*

The second stanza is the reality of Aunt Jennifer's life. She embroiders tigers on a screen. Her fingers are fluttering to create the beautiful image of the tigers as she is nervous and anxious. She finds it difficult to express her feelings freely as she is oppressed by the massive weight of marriage, gender roles, and a male-dominated society. Uncle's wedding band is symbolic of an oppressive marriage. She is finding the needle so hard to pull because she is afraid of her husband's dominating/ terrifying nature. She is under a state of mental suppression because of unhappy married life. She lost confidence in herself. *Her difficulty with the needlepoint represents her inability to express herself in a male dominated society.*

Aunt Jennifer will remain caught in the ordeals of her marriage till her death. She has no escape even after death in this male-dominated society. She will not be free from her bondage. Her suffering will go along with her to her grave. She would die as an oppressed and subdued woman. But the tigers in the panel which she made will go on prancing, proud and unafraid. The fearless tigers she created, an embodiment of everything she aspired to be—proud, fearless and free, will live on to immortality. *It implies that her struggle for freedom for women will continue through the prancing tigers in the panel.*

SA Short Answer Type Questions (2 marks)

Q.1 How do Aunt Jennifer's tigers symbolically represent the conflict between her aspirations and the realities of her life?

OR

Why does Aunt Jennifer create animals which were different from her own character? (NCERT)

Ans. Aunt Jennifer was oppressed by the constraints of her married life and her husband's dominating/terrifying nature. She feels herself as a slave. She chose the figure of the tigers for her panel because tigers symbolise strength, confidence, fearlessness, freedom and power which she aspired for. She created animals so different from her own character to show the bitterness in her married life, to give vent to her suppressed feelings, and to show strong resistance to male-dominated society.

Q.2 How does the poet advocate gender sensitisation in the poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"?

Ans. The poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" reflects the gender struggle. Adrienne Rich criticizes the male-dominated world for terrifying and oppressing women as symbolized by Aunt Jennifer, leaving her with no alternative but to create an alternate world of freedom and imagination for herself with her tapestry of prancing tigers. The poem is almost a tragedy relating the plight of women trapped in an unhappy marriage. Adrienne Rich yearns for freedom and equality for all women.

Q.3 Who do you think is the speaker of the poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"? Why do you say so?

Ans. The speaker of the poem is Aunt Jennifer's niece rather than her nephew. The niece voices a woman's struggle with expression, rebellion, and a society where power is defined as masculine. The poem deals with a woman's representation of Aunt Jennifer's dreams, reality and the future.

Q.4 How do "denizens" and "chivalric" add to our understanding of the tiger's attitudes? (NCERT)

Ans. 'Denizens' means – tigers of a world of green/forests and 'Chivalric' means brave, kind, polite and respectful towards women. The tigers are free to 'prance' or run around in the green forests, and in their creator's imagination. The "bright topaz denizens of green" evoke a mental image of magestic tigers not bound by the whims of another being. They can help the woman in trouble.

Q.5 Why do we think Aunt Jennifer's hands are 'fluttering' through her wool in the second stanza? Why is she finding the needle so hard to pull? (NCERT)

Ans. Aunt Jennifer embroiders tigers on a screen. Her fingers are fluttering as she is nervous and anxious. She expresses her desires by creating the tigers, but finds it difficult to express her feelings freely as she is oppressed by the weight of marriage, gender roles, and a dominating society.

She is finding the needle so hard to pull because she is afraid of her husband's dominating/terrifying nature. She is under a state of mental suppression because of unhappy married life. She lost confidence in herself. Her difficulty with the needlepoint represents her inability to express herself in a male dominated society.

Q.6 How do symbols in the poem, 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' help us understand her plight ?

Ans. *Tigers* created by Aunt Jennifer are symbolic of dynamic, dominant, chivalric, fearless and self-confident, and everything which she aspired for. *Aunt Jennifer* symbolises female suffering/ subservient / dominated – "Fingers fluttering through her wool", "ringed by the ordeals she was mastered by". *Massive weight of uncle's wedding band* is symbolic of male oppression by custom in a patriarchal society.

COMPETENCY BASED QUESTIONS

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

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. How do 'denizens' and 'chivalric' add to our understanding of the tiger's attitudes?
(a) They are bright and yellow coloured dwellers of forests.
(b) The tigers inhabit in a world of green and are conceived as inherently male; they are powerful.
(c) The tigers are energetic and free to run around in the forests.
(d) Both (b) and (c)

ii. Why are the tigers referred to as Aunt Jennifer's?
(a) As Aunt Jennifer imagines herself in the form of the tigers.
(b) As Aunt Jennifer is embroidering or creating them.
(c) As the tigers represent everything she aspired to be in her life.
(d) All of these

iii. Why do you think Aunt Jennifer created animals that are so different from her own character?
(a) The tigers of her creations represented her suppressed desires and her ambitions.
(b) The tigers are conceived as inherently male; they are chivalric.
(c) The tigers are energetic and free to prance in the world of green.
(d) The tigers are not bound by the whims of another being.

iv. What is the poetic device used in the line – "They pace in sleek chivalric certainty."?
(a) Simile (b) Metaphor (c) Alliteration (d) Personification

v. The tigers are referred to as 'topaz denizens' because….

vi. The word 'chivalric' possibly means……

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Q1. How do 'denizens' and 'chivalric' add to our understanding of the tiger's attitudes?
Ans. The word 'denizens' means that they are proud of their home, they feel safe there and have a feeling of belonging attached to it.
The word 'chivalric' shows that they have a majestic and worthy position like knights.
Q2. 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?
Ans. Her hands are fluttering probably because she is scared of her husband who could come anytime and scold her for sitting idle and wasting her time doing embroidery. She finds the needle so hard to pull because her fingers are tired of working endlessly all through her life.
Q3. What is suggested by the image 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band'?
Ans. 'Massive weight of Uncle's wedding band' suggest symbolically, that the bindings and obligations of her marriage are so much that they have put a lot of burden and stress on her.
Q4. Of what or of whom is Aunt Jennifer terrified with in the third stanza?
Ans. She is terrified of her husband.
Q5. 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?
Ans. The 'ordeals' are

- Obeying her husband's orders.
- Fear of men.
- Giving in to his dominance and fulfilling his commands.

'Ringed' indicates entrapment. As the ring encircles the finger, similarly, her husband has encircled her in his clutches. Her body and soul are both trapped, struggling for freedom and fearlessness.

Q6. 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?

Ans.

- I think that aunt Jennifer's intense desire for freedom and fearlessness came out through her creativity.
- This is the time when she is with herself, and then, her innermost feelings are expressed, here her medium of expression is the embroidery.
- Through this difference, it is shown that the lady is not what she is. Her circumstances have made her so but even she has a desire to live life with respect and pride.

Interpret the symbols found in this poem.

- 'denizens of a world of green' means inhabitants of the forest.
- 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band' means the burden of marital obligations.
- 'Sits heavily upon Aunt' means has laid a lot of stress on her.
- 'ringed with ordeals' means to get entrapped in hardships and sufferings

.

Q7. Do you sympathize with Aunt Jennifer. What is the attitude of the speaker towards Aunt Jennifer?

Ans. Yes, I sympathize with Aunt Jennifer. The speaker is also sympathetic towards her and hates dominating men.

Extract Based Questions

A. *Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.*

"Aunt Jennifer's finger 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." **(CBSE QB, 2021)**

1. How would you describe Aunt Jennifer based on the above extract?

A) oppressed
B) malnourished
C) aging
D) diseased
Ans. A) oppressed

2. Uncle's wedding band sits heavily on Aunt Jennifer's hand because

A) it is an expensive and heavy ring.
B) She was married against her will.
C) she feels burdened in her marriage.
D) their relationship is lacking in love.
Ans. C) she feels burdened in her marriage.

3. Pick the option that displays the image which correctly corresponds to the type of task Aunt is engaged in.



(i) (ii) (iii) (iv)

A) Option (i)
B) Option (ii)
C) Option (iii)
D) Option (iv)
Ans. B) Option (ii)

4. Which of the following is an example of an alliteration?
A) finger fluttering through the wool
B) upon Aunt Jennifer's hand
C) ivory needle hard to pull
D) massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Ans. A) finger fluttering through the wool

B. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.
"When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid." **(CBSE QB, 2021)**

1. *Aunt Jennifer's plight is best explained by her hands, they hold both her freedom and the instrument of her imprisonment.*
Choose the option that best explains the above statement, as per the extract.
A) Aunt Jennifer's hands are terrified, but when she is dead, her tigers will roam free.
B) Aunt Jennifer knits her desires, but is overpowered by the wedding ring she wears.
C) Aunt Jennifer's tigers are proud and unafraid, but she is mastered by ringed ordeals.
D) Aunt Jennifer makes panels of tigers when she has time from her responsibilities.
Ans. B) Aunt Jennifer knits her desires, but is overpowered by the wedding ring she wears.

2. Which of the following CANNOT be inferred from the given extract?
A) Aunt Jennifer's tigers will keep her alive in everyone's memory.
B) Aunt Jennifer feels oppressed and constricted in her marriage.
C) Even in death, Aunt Jennifer cannot escape patriarchal subjugation.
D) Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance as a lasting symbol of her desires
Ans. A) Aunt Jennifer's tigers will keep her alive in everyone's memory.

3. What makes the tigers "proud and unafraid"?
A) They embody the grandeur and supremacy of animals in the wild.
B) They symbolize authority and are 'topaz denizens of green'.
C) They represent Aunt's repressed desires for freedom and power.
D) They are a product of Aunt's imagination and colonial experience.
Ans. C) They represent Aunt's repressed desires for freedom and power.

4. Choose the option that DOES NOT reflect the movement implied by 'prancing'.
A) bounding
B) frolicking
C) strutting

D) shuffling
Ans. D) shuffling

C. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.
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 **(Delhi 2010; Modified)**

1. How are Aunt Jennifer's tigers described?
Ans. Aunt Jennifer's tigers have been described as golden yellow in color. They prance fearlessly across a screen in sleek chivalric certainty.
2. Why are they described as denizens of a world of green?
Ans. They have been called denizens of a world of green because they are the natives of dense green forests.
3. Why are they not afraid of the men?
Ans. They are not afraid of men because they are brave, strong, fearless and full of confidence.
4. What are her tigers symbolic of?
Ans. Her tigers are symbolic of Aunt Jennifer's desire for freedom. They are also symbols of strength and self-confidence.

D. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.
"When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie.
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid." **(Delhi 2012,CBSE Sample Paper 2018)**

1. Who is the aunt mentioned here?
Ans. The aunt mentioned here is Aunt Jennifer, the protagonist of Adrienne Rich's poem 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers'. She is a woman going through unpleasant experiences in her married life.
2. Why is she "ringed" with ordeals?
Ans. She is 'ringed' with ordeals because marriage has brought with it a host of family responsibilities by which she is 'ringed' or surrounded. She feels so burdened by her marital constraints that they seem like an ordeal to her.
3. What is the difference between her and the tigers?
Ans. Aunt Jennifer is quite weak and submissive, whereas the tigers are strong, bold and powerful. She is bound by the constraints of her married life, while the tigers are free to move about in the green woods.
4. Why has Aunt Jennifer created the tigers so different from her own character?
Ans. The tigers created by Aunt Jennifer are an expression of her desire to free herself from the constraints of her married life. She wants to be bold and fearless like her tigers.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q1. What is suggested by the phrase, 'massive weight of Uncle's wedding band?
Ans: Her marriage is described by the wedding band. It is 'massive' on her hand because the weight of her marital responsibilities has made her feel subjugated and unable to express herself freely.

Q2. 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?
Ans: Aunt Jennifer is designing tigers, which represent strength, fearlessness, and confidence. These are the characteristics that Aunt Jennifer lacks. Aunt Jennifer's suppressed desires to become bold, fearless and free from oppression are represented by these tigers. The poet wishes to imply that these qualities are required for women to fight their oppressors.

Q3. What will happen to Aunt Jennifer's tigers when she is dead?
Ans: Aunt Jennifer's tigers will continue to prance around even after her death, as she created them on the tapestry. This means that art outlasts human life. It also demonstrates that her desire for freedom from male dominance will last forever, even after she dies.

Q4. How are Aunt Jennifer's tigers different from her? (All India 2014, CBSE Sample Paper 2019)
Ans: Aunt Jennifer designed the tigers on the tapestry. They do, however, stand in stark contrast to their creator. Aunt is weak, meek, and submissive, and she is afraid to express her feelings openly, whereas the tigers are strong, fearless, and confident. They are fearless creatures who fear no one, not even men.

Q5. What are the difficulties that Aunt Jennifer faced in her life? (Delhi 2014)
Ans: Aunt Jennifer faced oppression at the hands of patriarchal society. Her husband had subjugated her, and the wedding band weighed heavily on her hand. Her hands fluttered even when she was carrying something as light as knitting needles and wool.

Q6. How does Aunt Jennifer express her bitterness and anger against male dominance? (Compartment 2014)
Ans: Aunt Jennifer is too afraid to openly oppose the oppression of which she is a victim. She uses her art to express her resentment and rage at male dominance. On her tapestry, she depicts tigers, which are symbols of bravery, fearlessness, and strength. Her tigers are wild and free of any kind of enslavement.

Q7. How do 'denizens' and 'chivalric' add to our understanding of the tigers' attitudes? (All India 2012)
Ans: 'Denizens' refers to inhabitants of a specific location, while 'Chivalric' refers to honor, bravery, and fearlessness. The tigers successfully occupy their territory and are fiercely protective of it. They live on their own terms and have no fear because they consider themselves to be superior in their domain.

Q8. 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? OR
How does the poet use the image of 'fingers fluttering through the wool' to highlight Aunt Jennifer's victimisation? (CBSE Sample Paper 2020)
Ans: Her fingers are fluttering, and she is having difficulty pulling the needle because she is weak and afraid. She is traumatized by her marital ordeals and a male-dominated society which has continuously oppressed her and her thoughts and ideas.

Q9. Why did Aunt Jennifer choose to embroider tigers on the panel?(Delhi 2012, All India 2009)

Ans: Tigers represent power and bravery. Aunt Jennifer is under a lot of pressure. Her marital life has been a source of trauma for her. She has an inner desire to be free of oppression, which she expresses through her art.

Q10. Of what or of whom is Aunt Jennifer terrified with in the third stanza?
Ans: Aunt Jennifer is terrified of her husband, who rules over her in their marriage. She is a victim of exploitation at the hands of male-dominated society, specifically her own husband.

Q11. How can we say that marriage was a compromise for Aunt Jennifer? Support your response with two justifications. (CBSE Sample Paper 2022)
Ans. Aunt Jennifer is said to be unable to escape her marriage, despite her needlework. Despite the constraints of her marriage, the image of her stitching tigers into her tapestry can be interpreted as a symbol of her attempts to assert her independence and individuality. This implies that Aunt Jennifer is trapped in a relationship she did not choose, and that her marriage is a trade-off in terms of her freedom and autonomy. .Also, the description of Aunt Jennifer's husband as a "terrible" man who "weighs" upon her also supports the idea that her marriage is a compromise.

Q12.Adrienne Rich chose to express her silent revolt through her poem, Aunt Jennifer's Tigers, just as Aunt Jennifer did with her embroidery. Explain. (CBSE Sample Paper 2021-22)
Ans. Adrienne Rich's poem criticises the traditional institution of marriage that was prevalent in her times, implying that it oppressed women. Similarly, Aunt Jennifer, who is a victim of an unhappy marriage due to a dominating husband, chooses to embroider fearless, free tigers to express her desire for freedom. Both use their creative outlets to express their dissatisfaction with societal expectations.

Q13. 'It is only when we are fearless that we begin to create.' Does this statement hold true in the case of the poem, Aunt Jennifer's Tigers? Support your stance with evidence from the text. (CBSE Sample Paper 2022)
Ans. No, this statement does not apply to the poem. Even though Aunt Jennifer was afraid of her husband, as evidenced by her 'fluttering hands,' and burdened by her marriage to him, as evidenced by the weight of her wedding band, she channeled her fear into her art.Her fear did not prevent her from creating art.

##########