



## INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

**Class: XII**

**Department: ENGLISH**

**Worksheet No:**

**Topic: Aunt Jennifer's Tigers**

### Theme

The poem deals with the pathetic condition of married women all over the world. Aunt Jennifer is a symbol of all married women, who are suffering at the oppressive hands of a patriarchal society.

### Background

Freedom has always been an important value in the United States that most people are not willing to give it up. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a writer who lived in the 1800s, reminded Americans of their rights of liberty at a time when many people started to conform to established norms. He voiced his opinions about the loss of freedom and invited society to realize that they were relinquishing their rights. Years later, his views still had an impact on citizens. Adrienne Rich, a poet of the mid-1900s, also found her autonomy a necessity in life. She wrote a poem in 1951 called "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers," which exhibited her opinions about living a life of reliance on others.

1. What are the characteristics of the tiger that lend contrast to the Aunt?

Ans. The Tigers are fearless, chivalric and they are confident. They enjoy their freedom. On the other hand, Aunt Jennifer is oppressed and a victim of a male-dominated society. The Tigers are fearless and are not afraid of men.

2. What is the theme of the poem?

Ans. The poet subtly brings out the contrast between the wonderful freedom of the work of art created by Aunt Jennifer and the constraints of her married personal life. The Aunt has been subjected to suppression at the hands of her dominating husband and it is only in the embroidery that she is free and gives expression to her creativity.

3. What does Aunt Jennifer's creation of the tigers symbolize?

Ans. The tigers symbolize Aunt Jennifer's desires. She expresses herself through the creation of her tigers whom she embroiders with a needle for a panel. The Tigers are free and symbolize Jennifer's own longing to be free and powerful.

4. 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. Aunt Jennifer's hands are fluttering because they are a reflection of her dominated and suppressed spirit. She is physically and emotionally drained and finds it hard to pull the needle. Her hands are heavy with the weight of the wedding ring which symbolizes the hardships and difficulties of her life.

5. What do the tigers embroidered by Aunt Jennifer on the panel signify?

Ans. The tigers on the panel signify their free movement, lack of fear and their self-assurance as compared to Aunt Jennifer who is a victim of a male-dominated society. The Tigers are depicted in sharp contrast to Aunt's own predicament.

6. Describe the tigers on the panel.

Ans. The tigers on the embroidered panel are of rich colours, 'bright topaz'. They are

described as the residents of a green world (forest). They are fearless, confident, sure of their movements and do not feel frightened of the men shown beneath the tree. They move freely and are symbolic of 'free spirit'.

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

Ans. The image suggests that not only is Aunt bowed down by the emotional and physical pressures of her married life but she is also suppressed by the weight of the wedding band meaning that male-dominated society has put her under a lot of stress and has curbed her freedom and happiness.

8. 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' that surround Aunt Jennifer are the hardships and the oppression in a male-dominated society. The poet uses the word 'ringed' to signify that after her death also, Aunt Jennifer's hands will still be affected by the dominance of a male, perhaps her husband. While the Tigers will be free, she would never be free; her only hope for freedom is through her artistic creation or the Tigers on the screen. Through them she can depict the courage and confidence that she lacked in her own life.

9. 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 created animals who were free-spirited, fearless, proud and happily prancing about. On the other hand, Aunt Jennifer's life is symbolic of the fear, the suppression and the victimization of a woman in a male-dominated society. The poet suggests that art may be an instrument of release for women like Aunt, who are trapped in an oppressive marriage.

10. What does the poetess suggest by saying that the tigers that she has embroidered will forever go on prancing proudly?

Ans. When Aunt Jennifer is no more, her tigers will continue to live on the panel. A work of art will continue to be an expression of Aunt Jennifer's creativity and the Tigers will forever be seen, prancing about, fearless and free-spirited.

11. What are the examples in the poem that suggest that Aunt Jennifer found her life a great challenge?

Ans. The poem suggests that Aunt's life was full of hardships and difficulties. She was a victim of male oppression and seemed to have suffered a lot at Uncle's hands. Uncle is a symbol of a male-dominated society. The reference to 'fluttering fingers', 'needle hard to pull' massive weight of 'ordeals' suggests her challenges.

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

Ans. Yes, I do sympathize with Aunt Jennifer. The attitude of the speaker towards Aunt Jennifer appears to be pessimistic because it is suggested that Aunt Jennifer, even after her death will continue to be weighed down heavily by the burdens of her life. There will be no respite for her even after her death. Only her tigers will continue to live happily in the form of her artistic creation.

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

Ans. The words 'denizens' and 'chivalric' refer to the fearlessness and confidence tigers. They are manly and enjoy freedom.

14. 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? [Textual]

Ans. Aunt Jennifer's hands are 'fluttering' through her wool while she is embroidering

tigers on the panel. Her needlework is a medium for expressing herself. But she is finding it difficult to make those tigers and expressing those feelings due to oppression and weight of marriage, gender role and a dominating society.

15. What is suggested by the image massive weight of Uncle's wedding band'? [Textual] Or

What is suggested by the phrase, massive weight of Uncle's wedding band? [Delhi 2015]

Ans. The "massive weight of Uncle's wedding band' refers to the male-dominated society in which Aunt Jennifer lives. The weight of this marriage band restricts her to express her feelings and live freely.

16. of what or of who is Aunt Jennifer terrified within the third stanza? [Textual]

Ans. Aunt Jennifer is terrified with the dominance of her husband in the patriarchal society in which she living. She is oppressed and bonded and is denied any freedom in her life.

17. What are the 'ordeals' Aunt Jennifer is surrounded by? Why is it significant that the poet uses the Fringed'? What are the meanings of the word 'ringed' in the poem? [Textual]

Ans. The ordeals refer to the responsibilities and duties that Aunt Jennifer has been doing in a patriarchal society. The poet has used the word 'ringed' so as to emphasize the fact that she has to carry the weight of her marriage band, whether she is dead or alive.

18. 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? [Textual]

Ans. Aunt Jennifer created tigers that are fearless and confident. They are the opposite of what Aunt Jennifer is in reality. In fact, through her creations, she wants to express her longing for being confident and strong. The poet, through this difference, wants to emphasize the impact of the oppression on the women in a male-dominated society.

19. Interpret the symbols found in this poem. [Textual]

Ans. Tiger and ring are two symbols as used in the poem. The tiger is a symbol of power, confidence and masculine world. 'Ring' though represented as 'wedding ring' refers to the band or chain that binds a person to enslave him. The 'tiger' represents the longing of Aunt Jennifer, whereas 'ring' refers to her present position of oppressed and subjugated by the male-dominating world.

20. Do you sympathise with Aunt Jennifer? What is the attitude of the speaker towards Aunt Jennifer? [Textual]

Ans. Yes, I do sympathise with Aunt Jennifer. The speaker also has her sympathies for Aunt Jennifer. In fact, the poem is a 'feminist' poem which criticizes the male dominating world for terrifying and denying the women equal rights.

21. What lies heavily on Aunt Jennifer's hand? How is it associated with her husband?

Ans. The 'wedding ring' lies heavily on Aunt Jennifer's hand. This is associated with her husband because his dominant behaviour has oppressed Aunt Jennifer and has made this 'wedding ring' a heavy burden for her.

22. Why has Aunt Jennifer made 'prancing, proud and unafraid' tigers?

Ans. Aunt Jennifer has tried to express herself through her art. She has created proud, prancing, unafraid tigers on her panel because she wants herself to be like her tigers, confident and have the freedom to live her life in her own way.

23. Do you sympathise with Aunt Jennifer? Why?

Ans. Yes, I do sympathise with Aunt Jennifer because she is in a pathetic condition. She is oppressed and denied any freedom. She is living a life that of a slave. In fact, it is totally inhuman to take away anyone's freedom.

24. What will happen when Aunt Jennifer is dead?

Ans. The tigers that she has made will remain the same even when Aunt Jennifer is dead.

They will still remain on the panel prancing with confidence and chivalry. In fact, it refers to the masculine world which suppressed her will continue to enjoy the freedom which was denied to her.

25. How does Aunt Jennifer express her bitterness and anger against male domination?

Ans. Aunt Jennifer expresses her anger and bitterness against male domination by creating proud, fearless, chivalric tigers on a panel.

26. How are Aunt Jennifer's tigers different from her?

Ans. Aunt Jennifer is a meek and suppressed woman in a male-dominated society. She is denied every kind of freedom and is always oppressed. But the tigers that she has made are free, bold, confident, chivalric, and courageous.

27. What are the difficulties that Aunt Jennifer faced in her life?

Ans. Aunt Jennifer was dominated by her husband. She was denied every kind of freedom and was oppressed. In the male-dominated society, Aunt Jennifer was subjugated to all kinds of oppression and enslaved.

28. How do the words 'denizens' and 'chivalric' add to our understanding of Aunt Jennifer's tigers?

Ans. The Tigers are referred to as 'denizens' and 'chivalric' as they are in their habitats. They are fearless and gallant. These tigers are confident and masters of their domain. They have a respectable position in the world of animals in the forest.

29. Why did Aunt Jennifer choose to embroider tigers on the panel?

Ans. Aunt Jennifer lived an oppressed life. But she wanted to have a life of freedom and wanted to be confident and bold. In order to express his inner feelings and longings of her heart, she embroidered tigers on the panel.

30. Why does Aunt Jennifer create animals that are so different from her own character?

Ans. Aunt Jennifer used her art as a medium to vent out her oppressed feelings. She made the tigers which were confident and majestic. She had been a victim of male chauvinism and was submissive and subdued. But she wanted to be free and liberated like tigers. That's why she created animals that were so different from her own character.

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