

**Class: 12**

**Text book: Flamingo (by NCERT)**

**Lesson: Aunt Jennifer's Tigers**

**Explanation Resource**

Introduction: Adrienne Rich was an American poet, essayist, feminist and civil rights activist. She herself had a troubled marriage and that adds an autobiographical touch to this poem. In this poem, the poet describes the constraints of married life as experienced by a woman by drawing the picture of Aunt Jennifer and her tigers. The tigers are fearless, brave, confident, strong and daring where as the aunt is fearful, nervous, weak, meek and submissive.

1. The first stanza describes the tigers created by the aunt on a screen (on a piece of cloth/wool) by embroidering. The tigers are prancing (moving energetically); they are bright yellow in colour (as the precious stone 'topaz'). The tigers live fearlessly in the forest (a world of green). As opposite to the aunt, the tigers do not fear the men under the tree. Their movement is likened to that of the knights whose chief character is chivalry, which means the tigers are fearless, brave and confident. Look at the use metaphor here – 'bright topaz denizens and 'a world of green'.

2. In the second stanza, we find the aunt embroidering; her fingers are fluttering (because of nervousness due to the fear of her husband) and she finds the ivory needle very hard to pull through the wool. The wedding band that she is wearing on her hand appeared to be of a huge weight. The massive weight is an exaggeration here (Hyperbole) and represents the bitterness of her marriage experiences.

3. In the last stanza, we find the aunt lying dead. But strangely enough, even death failed to liberate the aunt from her fears. When she lay dead, she still looked 'ringed' (surrounded/encircled/caged) by her ordeals. Note the 'pun' (double meaning – 'ringed' shows: 1) married woman and 2) surrounded by ordeals) in the use of the word 'ringed'. Where as the tigers she had created will continue to prance, proud and unafraid. The poet is striking a contrast between the character of Aunt Jennifer and her tigers through out the poem.