

# A Tiger in the Zoo

## About the Poet

George Leslie Norris (1921-2006) was a prize winning Welsh poet and short story writer. He is considered as most important Welsh writers of the post war period and his literary works have won many prizes. His famous works are Finding Gold, The loud winder, phoenix living poets series: Ransoms, etc.

## Theme of A Tiger in the Zoo:

Tiger as a proud creature: In this poem, the poet shows how proud a creature the tiger is, and as a consequence, why it should never be caged on zoo premises. In the wild, the tiger hunts its own food all alone and without any help from others of its kind. The stealthy hunting of deer at the water hole may seem cruel, but it is merely a survival strategy. Tigers hunt only when they need to eat. Moreover, this helps to keep the food chain of the forest balanced and thus it keeps the ecosystem healthy as well.

Even when the tiger occasionally strays into human habitation, it only growls at the inhabitants but does not kill them or harm them in any other way unless it is put under extreme provocation. In the zoo as well, the tiger's pride is noticeable to all. Hundreds of visitors flock to its cage every day, but it ignores them all, roaming about on its own. However, in the reduced space of the cage, it cannot move freely. That is why the poet believes that all tigers should live in the wild and none in the zoo. They are not really a danger to human life, and so they should not be confined.

Conservation of natural habitat: Zoos came up not only as a source of passing entertainment for man, but also because forest lands are now hard to come by. Most of these lands have been cleared for agriculture or industrialisation. As a result, many animals like the tiger have lost their natural habitat and have been forced to live at zoos or travel as part of a circus. However, the poet shows that an animal is always more majestic when seen in its natural habitat rather than in an artificial setting such as a zoo. In doing so, his message to readers is that we should all strive to conserve the natural habitat of the earth's animal life. We should plant trees and stop the activities of hunters and poachers in order to make forests available and safe for the habitation of animals like the tiger.

## Summary of the poem

The poem begins with a description of a tiger that is very beautiful and is walking in his little cage. He has beautiful stripes on his skin and has velvet like soft paws. But the tiger is not happy and is quite angry about being confined in the cage. The poet says that if the tiger was not confined to the zoo cage, he would have been hiding himself behind the long grass near some water body, in order to catch its prey that is the deer. Also, he would have terrorised the residents of the villages around the forest area. But the reality is totally opposite to this. He was confined in a cage which was made up of strong building material and he was helpless there. He could not show his power to the visitors, therefore, never tried to terrorize them. The tiger is described as being powerless and agonized by the poet. He says that during night also he is alone, hearing the voice of the patrolling vehicles of police and looking at the stars. The cage life has totally changed the tiger's personality. The poet is trying to say that the animal which is famous for its fearlessness and freedom is confined and sad due to the human beings who want to derive pleasure by looking at him in the zoo cage.

### Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each.

- a. How does the tiger create terror for the villagers?
- b. Describe the tiger in the cage
- c. Where should the tiger have been according to the poet?
- d. Why should the tiger snarl around houses at the edge of the forest?
- e. Why is the tiger ignoring the visitors?
- f. What does the poet convey through the poem?