

talk  
to  
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

# First Flight

## A Tiger in the Zoo

### 1. Watch and listen to the poem

Click on the link below to watch a video of the poem being read. Note the pronunciations of the words and read along using the subtitles.

[\(80\) Tiger in the Zoo - YouTube](#)

### 2. Background

#### 1. *Cruelty to Captive Wild Animals in Asia*

Animal cruelty in zoos, and safari parks is unfortunately very common. It is not unusual to see captive wild animals in Asia's zoos in small empty cages, with no environmental enrichment, and inappropriate groupings - such as sociable pack animals housed alone.



Many wild animals, including endangered species in captivity, such as elephants, live their lives in chains, unable to display any natural roaming behaviours, or move beyond a few metres.

Captive wild animals also routinely suffer cruel mutilation with their teeth and claws cut back. And in many zoos and safari parks in Asia, terrified cows, donkeys, pigs, and chickens are dropped into the

enclosures of starving lions and tigers as live prey, for the entertainment of crowds.



Some mammals in captivity in zoos in Asia also suffer injury and disease. Many wild animals in captivity even self-harm due to the frustration and boredom of constant confinement. Most receive no medical care and are left to suffer alone.

Many captive wild animals in zoos display stereotypic behaviour, not seen in their wild cousins, such as obsessively pacing or circling, or frantic swaying on the spot.

This is due to the neglect and severe stress suffered by confined wild animals in many of Asia's zoos and safari parks.

## **2. *Wild captive animals forced to perform***

Many zoos in China and Vietnam, also force wildlife in captivity to entertain crowds with unnatural, degrading and stressful circus-style performances.



The training methods used to force the animals to perform are cruel and abusive, using punishment and fear. A number of undercover investigations into zoo performances have uncovered gross abuse of wild animals to force them to perform.

Trainers will do whatever they can to break the animals' spirits. Endangered tigers and lions routinely have their teeth ripped out and are declawed to render them harmless.



A recent video viewed by 10 million people in China showed a trainer kicking and beating a chained and muzzled endangered moon bear.

In 2011, China issued a government directive banning wild animal performances. However, an Animals Asia investigation into animal performance in China's zoos revealed that 39% of zoos and safari parks still regularly force wild captive animals to perform.

### 3. *Suffering for Selfies*



To attract tourists and generate more profits, some zoos and safari parks use wild animals, particularly baby wild animals, as photo props. Many cubs and baby animals are removed from their mothers very young, so they can be hand reared, and held in social isolation, making it easier for the trainers to access them and force them to pose for photo opportunities. Often times, despite their obvious distress and trauma.



Just like human babies, baby monkeys and apes have an extended development period. During this time they need the companionship of older animals of the same species. Removing baby animals from their families robs them of this important development period.

Some animals are chained up and even drugged to keep them subdued for photos and interaction experiences.

#### **4. *Wild Caught Captive Animals***



Most animals in zoos in China and Vietnam are 'wild caught'. This means that they were born in the wild, and captured to be forced into captivity.

Animals such as chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas, elephants, whales, and dolphins are in high demand to supply both zoos/ocean parks and private collections. This demand is leading to unimaginable suffering for many thousands of animals.

To obtain one baby chimpanzee from the wild, for example, it is estimated that an additional ten chimpanzees are likely to be killed.



Many of these adults are likely to be slaughtered as they defend their infants from poachers. The fear and suffering of the kidnapped baby animals is unimaginable. Many are just months old when they are torn from their families.

They are then shipped to a strange land to be placed into a barren enclosure and in many cases beaten into performing tricks as part of an animal circus.

It is time for us all to take a stand on behalf of these animals and demand an end to wild capture.

### 3. Summary

The poem, A Tiger in the Zoo contrasts the plight of a caged tiger in a zoo with that of the fierce animal that roams in the wild. It has been written by Leslie Norris (1921-2006), a prize-winning Welsh poet and a short story writer. It describes the tiger with its prominent stripes walking in a quiet rage in its small cage in the zoo, when it should be passing silently through the long grass of a jungle clearing, hunting deer near a water hole. Nature meant for him to be growling near the houses close to the jungle's edge and scaring the villagers. Instead his strength is caged in concrete and iron bars, and he is stared at by visitors, whom he ignores totally. The only noise that he hears at night is the sound of police cars patrolling the city. This is so different from any sound he would have heard in the jungle. He looks up helplessly at the brilliant stars, with eyes as brilliant as the stars. The stars are his only connection to the world he knew when he was free.

To know more about tigers watch this video by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FK3dav4bA4s>

To see a tigress teaching her cubs how to hunt watch this video by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ThQLGbt8bM>

### 4. Explanation Stanza by Stanza

*He stalks in his vivid stripes  
The few steps of his cage,  
On pads of velvet quiet,  
In his quiet rage.*

The tiger is described beautifully in this stanza. He has striking stripes and soft velvet-like pads on his feet, which would, in the wild, have helped him to stalk his victims silently. In a small cage, he can only pace a few steps up and down, very angry because he is not free.

*He should be lurking in shadow,  
Sliding through long grass  
Near the water hole  
Where plump deer pass.*

In this stanza, the poet describes how different the tiger's life would be if he was free in the jungle. He was born to be free, to move slowly through the shadows of tall grass, to stalk his prey, the plump deer, near a water body.

*He should be snarling around houses  
At the jungle's edge,  
Baring his white fangs, his claws,  
Terrorising the village!*

If he was free in the jungle, he would be growling near the houses of villagers at the edge of the jungle. He would be scaring the villagers with a display of his white sharp teeth and claws.

*But he's locked in a concrete cell,  
His strength behind bars,  
Stalking the length of his cage,  
Ignoring visitors.*

The reality of the tiger's situation is described in this stanza. Instead of roaming freely in the jungle, he is enclosed in a cage made of concrete and iron bars. His ferocity and strength are behind bars. Instead of stalking deer, he can only walk the short length of his cage. Instead of terrorizing villagers, he ignores the people who visit the zoo to see him.

*He hears the last voice at night,  
The patrolling cars,  
And stares with his brilliant eyes  
At the brilliant stars.*

The last sound he hears at night is that of the police cars going around the city. From behind the bars of the cage he looks up at the stars in the night sky, with eyes shining as brightly as them.

## 5. Vocabulary

1. **Stalks** – follows a person or animal, the long and thin parts of the plant from which flowers, leaves grow  
The detective planned to **stalk** the suspect at night.  
A firm and thick **stalk** will not bend easily in the storm.
2. **Vivid** – strong, clear image  
She gave such a **vivid** description of the fight that we could almost see it happening before our eyes.
3. **Lurking** – lying hidden or moving in a secret way so you cannot be seen  
My little sister is convinced there is a ghost **lurking** in her room.
4. **Sliding** – moving smoothly over a surface, or making something move smoothly over a surface  
He went **sliding** on the wet floor and fell down.
5. **Plump** – fat, round  
Everyone enjoyed the **plump**, fresh grapes.
6. **Snarling** – to make an angry sound, growling  
The dog was **snarling** at all passers-by.
7. **Baring** – uncovering, showing  
A large wolf in the zoo was growling and **baring** his teeth at the children.
8. **Fangs** – long, sharp teeth of an animal  
The guard dog growled and bared its **fangs** at all visitors to the house.
9. **Terrorising** – scaring someone by showing that you will hurt or kill them  
The leopard was **terrorising** all the villagers who lived near the forest; he carried away small dogs and goats.

10. **Concrete** – construction material made with cement and sand mixed with water; solid, real  
The walls are solid **concrete** and will not break easily.  
Give me a **concrete** plan to control the riot.
11. **Ignoring** – paying no attention to something or someone  
The boys continued **ignoring** me and went on with their game of cricket.
12. **Patrolling** – doing the rounds for security or observation  
The army is constantly **patrolling** the borders of our country.
13. **Brilliant** – very bright, full of light or colour; very good  
The **brilliant** lights decorating the building almost blinded us.  
We saw a **brilliant** movie, called 'Three Idiots', last evening.

## 6. Questions

### Thinking about the Poem

1. Read the poem again, and work in pairs or groups to do the following tasks.
  - (i) Find the words that describe the movements and actions of the tiger in the cage and in the wild. Arrange them in two columns.
  - (ii) Find the words that describe the two places, and arrange them in two columns.Now try to share ideas about how the poet uses words and images to contrast the two situations.
2. Notice the use of a word repeated in lines such as these:
  - (i) On pads of velvet quiet,  
In his quiet rage.
  - (ii) And stares with his brilliant eyes  
At the brilliant stars.What do you think is the effect of this repetition?

3. Read the following two poems — one about a tiger and the other about a panther. Then discuss:

**Are zoos necessary for the protection or conservation of some species of animals? Are they useful for educating the public? Are there alternative to zoos?**

#### The Tiger

The tiger behind the bars of his cage growls,  
The tiger behind the bars of his cage snarls,  
The tiger behind the bars of his cage roars.  
Then he thinks.  
It would be nice not to be behind bars all  
The time  
Because they spoil my view  
I wish I were wild, not on show.  
But if I were wild, hunters might shoot me,  
But if I were wild, food might poison me,  
But if I were wild, water might drown me.  
Then he stops thinking  
And...  
The tiger behind the bars of his cage growls,  
The tiger behind the bars of his cage snarls,  
The tiger behind the bars of his cage roars.

PETER NIBLETT

## The Panther

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,  
has grown so weary that it cannot hold  
anything else. It seems to him there are  
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

As he **paces** in **cramped** circles, over and over,  
the movement of his powerful soft **strides**  
is like a **ritual** dance around a centre  
in which a mighty will stands **paralysed**.

Only at times, the curtain of the pupils  
lifts, quietly. An image enters in,  
rushes down through the **tensed**, arrested muscles,  
**plunges** into the heart and is gone.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Please read this very sympathetic article about animals in  
zoos:

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-in-entertainment/zoos/>

### Vocabulary

1. **Paces** – to walk up and down, the speed at which you walk  
When my father is angry he **paces** up and down in the garden.
2. **Cramped** – not having enough space  
Ramesh studies in the library as his house is very small and **cramped**.
3. **Strides** – to walk with long steps  
With his long **strides** he will finish the walk very quickly.
4. **Ritual** – an activity or a set of actions that are done always in the same  
way or at the same time, sometimes as part of a religion  
My grandmother performed all the **rituals** while doing Lakshmi Puja  
every Thursday.

5. **Paralysed** – unable to move the body or a part of it, unable to move or act.  
She was **paralysed** from waist down after the accident.
6. **Tensed** – when muscles are tensed they became tight and stiff  
They all **tensed** their muscles and bent down to lift the heavy box.
7. **Plunges** – falls or moves down very quickly and with force  
The river **plunges** like a waterfall down the mountain side into the valley.
4. **Take a point of view for or against zoos, or even consider both points of view and write a couple of paragraphs or speak about this topic for a couple of minutes in class.**

## 7. Literary Devices

1. **Rhyming Scheme:** The rhyming scheme is abcb.

*He stalks in his vivid stripes*      **a**  
*The few steps of his cage,*      **b**  
*On pads of velvet quiet,*      **c**  
*In his quiet rage.*      **b**

2. **Metaphor:** Tiger's paws are compared with velvet (pads of velvet).
3. **Enjambment:** Sentence continues to next line without any punctuation mark.

Examples –

*He stalks in his vivid stripes*  
*The few steps of his cage,*

*Sliding through long grass*  
*Near the water hole*  
*Where plump deer pass.*

4. **Imagery:** The poet tries to create an image about the tiger –

*He stalks in his vivid stripes  
The few steps of his cage,*

*On pads of velvet quiet,  
In his quiet rage.*

*Baring his white fangs, his claws,  
Terrorising the village!*

5. **Alliteration:** The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.

- (i) *'stalks in his vivid stripes'* – the 'st' sound is repeated.  
(ii) *'plump deer pass'* – the 'p' sound is repeated.

6. **Consonance:** The use of 's' sound - stalks, steps, stripes.

7. **Assonance:** use of vowel sound 'i' - in his vivid stripes.

8. **Oxymoron:** use of adjectives opposite in meaning - quiet rage.



### The Greater Cats



The greater cats with golden eyes  
Stare out between the bars.  
Deserts are there, and different skies,  
And night with different stars.



VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST