

The Tiger, by William Blake (1757-1827)

AIM: To stimulate expression and reveal how nature can be inspirational.

OBJECTIVE: To reveal the awe and wonder that the tiger inspired in Blake. To coax the beauty and power of the tiger to bring out the poet in each child.

INTRO: The focus of this lesson on the tiger is not 'just because of our tiger campaign' but because through the eons the animal has actually triggered powerful responses from thinkers, artists and writers.

CONTENT: William Blake was an English poet, artist and mystic. The first of his many works was 'Poetical Sketches' (1783), which included the brilliant poem, 'To the Muses'. He is probably best known for his work, 'Songs of Innocence' (1789), which paints childhood as a most beautiful stage in a human's life. This imagery was contrasted by a poem he wrote five years later called 'Songs of Experience' (1794). Other poems include 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' (1793), 'Visions of the Daughters of Albion' (1793), 'Milton' (1804) and 'Jerusalem' (1804). Extremely talented he also produced engravings for Dante's 'Divine Comedy'. One of the world's finest lyrical poets, his earliest poems were written in a classical style, which changed later to follow the romantic style of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The Tiger, by William Blake

TIGER, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?












And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

METHODOLOGY:



-  Introduce William Blake. Read the poem to the class or get a student with good diction to read it.
-  Ask the class what imagery strikes them most. Why?
-  Does the poem lead to feelings of wanting to do something? Paint? Write? Talk about the tiger? Protect the tiger?
-  Explain how humans have always been fascinated by nature.
-  Now introduce the thought of how the tiger inspired Blake.
-  What incident do the children think may have inspired Blake?
-  Emphasise the words associated with light. (bright, fire, eye, furnace, stars) and with strength (fearful, dare, sinews, chain...) Explain the meanings.
-  Re-read emphasising the awe the poet feels for the animal and its creator, bringing out the symbolism of a blacksmith making an iron figure.
-  Associate the symbol of 'ultimate' power that dared to create the tiger.
-  Have a discussion – is this why man has tried to dominate the tiger?
-  Tie up by emphasising that the presence of the tiger is an indication of the health of our natural heritage.

AIDS: ○ Poster of the Tiger. ○ Art work of tiger with blazing eyes, painted/drawn by kids

BLACKBOARD: ○ William Blake. ○ Inspirations listed under general headings. ○ How has man harmed the tiger and Nature?

EVALUATION: ○ Meanings. ○ Pick the words in the poem that inspire power and strength. ○ How is the tiger a symbol for natural India. ○ Memorise the poem

ACTIVITY:

-  Have the children act out the poem as it is being read.
-  Emphasise the need to do something when inspired... paint, write a simple poem (show examples) or essay. Accordingly ask the children to do one of these on a nature-based theme.