Name _____ Class _____ Date _____



The Tyger

by William Blake

Grades 7–10 · Common Core RL.8.4, RL.8.2, RL.8.5

"The Tyger" appeared in Blake's Songs of Experience (1794), a companion to his Songs of Innocence (1789), where "The Lamb" appears. Blake printed and hand-colored the books himself. The poem has six four-line stanzas in rhyming couplets with a strong, hammering trochaic beat. The last stanza repeats the first, but changes one word.

THE POEM

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 watered 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?

VOCABULARY

immortal — living forever

frame — build or shape

symmetry — balance, matching proportions

aspire — rise up, reach high

sinews — tendons, the cords that connect muscle to bone

anvil — an iron block on which a blacksmith hammers metal

furnace — a very hot oven for melting metal

clasp — hold tightly

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the main question the speaker asks in stanza 1?

2. Stanzas 3 and 4 use the language of a blacksmith's workshop. List four tools or words from that world. What do they suggest about the creator?

3. What question in stanza 5 connects this poem to "The Lamb"?

4. Compare the first and last stanzas. Which word changes, and why might that matter?

5. Does the speaker ever answer his questions? What is the effect of a poem made almost entirely of questions?

WRITING PROMPT

Write a poem of 3–5 stanzas made only of questions, addressed to an animal or part of nature that amazes you.

The Tyger — Answer Key

1. “What immortal hand or eye / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?” Who or what could create such a beautiful, terrifying creature?
2. Any four: “hammer,” “chain,” “furnace,” “anvil,” “fire,” “grasp.” They suggest a powerful, strong and daring maker, a blacksmith of the universe.
3. “Did He who made the lamb make thee?” Could the same creator make both the gentle lamb and the fierce tiger?
4. “Could frame” becomes “Dare frame.” The question moves from whether the creator was able to make the tiger to whether he was bold enough to do it.
5. No. The unanswered questions leave the reader in wonder and awe, mirroring the mystery of creation and of good and evil existing together.

Read the full poem online: poetrycatalog.com/the-tyger-william-blake/