

Semester 4

ENGH-H-CC-T-9

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SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WILLIAM BLAKE : THE TYGER

1. *What is 'burning' brightly in the forest?*

In view of the second stanza, one may argue that the phrase 'burning bright' refers to the two burning eyes of the tiger in the darkness. But, as D. W. Harding observes, with the use of the phrase the whole tiger is also rendered a symbol of the 'burning' qualities, i.e, passion, wrath and fearlessness. The symbolic language evokes a sense of light associated with a certain white heat emanating from the eyes and perhaps also from the whole being of the fierce animal. This is important to note in this context that the word 'burning' introduces the idea of fire and the idea is continued in the second and the fourth stanza as well.

2. *'What the hammer? what the chain,/In what furnace was thy brain? What the anvil? what dread grasp,/Dare its deadly terrors clasp!' What light does it throw on the creator and the created being?*

Though these terms suggest the creation of a living being, there is a strong hint that the created being has also machine-like traits and metallic dimensions. And the God seems to be someone who, by fitting and uniting ('frame') the parts of the skeleton, tries to construct the tiger. The God seems to be busy in a space resembling an engineering workshop which offers the creator opportunities to use objects like hammer and anvil and natural components like fire to break and mould things in a 'symmetrical' form.

### *3. Trace the mythological allusions/references.*

The visual image of a hand seizing the fire might contain an implicit reference to the legend of the Greek hero Prometheus who is said to have stolen fire from the gods. There is a legitimate possibility that the lines 17-18('When the stars threw down their spears,/And water'd heaven with their tears') refer to the surrender of the mournful rebel angels to God. The first question ('Did he smile his work to see?') raised in the penultimate stanza of the poem is perhaps evocative of the act of creation of the world by God, as told in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. It has been told that God was satisfied after creating the beasts on the sixth day of creation. His smile may also point toward his feeling of satisfaction after defeating the rebel angels and subsequently producing a fearful beast like the tiger.

### *4. 'Did he who made the Lamb make thee'? What is the significance of this remark?*

As there seems to be a contrast between what the lamb represents and what the tiger stands for, the question arises whether God has been inconsistent in creating both of them. The tiger's natural instinct is to kill the gentle animals like lamb. The fact that the world accommodates both gentleness and terrifying strength as two contrasting qualities of mind can, at a certain level of thought, offer a challenge to the idea of a benign creator. The reference to the lamb in this poem is therefore suggestive of that paradoxical aspect of creation. Though some argue that in the kingdom of God these contrary qualities can peacefully exist, the manner of their functioning on earth is entirely different. Apart from drawing our attention to the merciful and the prohibitive role of the creator, this part of the text also foregrounds the idea of the duality of the creator and the created beings as the

creator seems to be looking from a distance at these two irreconcilable elements of creation.

(please go through a journal article attached herewith)