

Personification - Theory

REVISE

- ✓ Personification is a figurative device in which inanimate objects or abstract feelings are given human characteristics. It is used to bring life to descriptions. Personification is mostly found in narrative and descriptive writing, although it can be used as a persuasive technique in some texts.

Example 1:

The stream meandered lazily through the dappled forest.

Explanation:

In this example, the stream is being personified through the adverb 'lazily'. It is given the characteristic of sluggish movement to help emphasise the tranquil atmosphere of the forest.

Example 2:

Sitting on the counter, the slice of sticky fudge cake beckoned to me.

Explanation:

The slice of cake has been personified here with the verb 'beckoned'. The cake cannot literally beckon, but the personification has been used to show that the speaker is very tempted to eat it.

Example 3:

A furious storm began to rage overhead.

Explanation:

The storm has been personified here with the use of the adjective 'furious'. Storms are not able to be furious – they are plants and therefore do not experience human emotions – but the use of the human feeling emphasises its strength and power.

Example 4:

The vast iron gates towered above me, exuding a threatening look of menace.

Explanation:

The gates have been personified here through the description of their 'threatening look of menace'. This brings the gates to life by making them appear to be intent on stopping the speaker from entering.

Example 5:

The musician's guitar sang beautifully.

Explanation:

The guitar has been personified here with the verb 'sang'. This emphasises the beauty of the music.

PRACTICE

1 Which of the following is the correct definition of personification?

- A. Direct comparisons between two objects
- B. Repetition of a similar sound or letter at the start of neighbouring words
- C. Attributing human characteristics to inanimate objects
- D. Using two opposite words in the same phrase
- E. Making a comparison using 'like' or 'as'

Mark Scheme

Hints	Consider that the word 'personification' begins with 'person'.
Answer	C - Attributing human characteristics to inanimate objects
Answer Explanation	Personification is a figurative technique that involves giving human behaviours or characteristics to a non-human thing. The other options define other features; Option A defines a metaphor, Option B defines alliteration, Option D defines oxymoron, and Option E defines a simile.



2

Cloze

Please write your paragraph here (not individual sentences) with 5 fill-in-the-blanks. Please label the blanks as i, ii, iii, iv and v.

At night, the village fell into a deep **i)** _____. The streets were empty. In the dark sky, stars **ii)** _____ and the moon **iii)** _____, gazing down like an old friend. A soft wind wound its way through the deserted paths and alleys, **iv)** _____ every nook and cranny. The warm glow from the few streetlamps **v)** _____ the last villagers to their homes.

Please write your paragraph here (not individual sentences) with 5 fill-in-the-blanks. Please label the blanks as i, ii, iii, iv and v.

- A. exploring
- B. kept watch
- C. guided
- D. danced
- E. slumber

Mark Scheme

i)

Hints	Consider what most humans do at night.
Answer	E – slumber
Answer Explanation	The streets have been personified here, as seeming to sleep. This emphasises the quiet of the town after nightfall.



ii)

Hints	Which options refers to lively movement?
Answer	D - danced
Answer Explanation	The stars have been personified as 'dancing' to suggest that they are sparkling brightly.

iii)

Hints	Which option refers to the behaviour of a guardian?
Answer	B - kept watch
Answer Explanation	The moon has been personified here as a reliable and caring person who is watching over the village.

iv)

Hints	Which option refers to curious movement?
Answer	A - exploring
Answer Explanation	The wind has been personified as a nosy person here, showing that it is blowing through every small area of the village.

v)

Hints	Which option refers to a helpful action?
Answer	C - guided
Answer Explanation	The light of the streetlamps have been personified as friendly and kind, using their light to help people find their way back home. This adds warmth to the atmosphere.



3

Match up the examples of personification.

Column 1

- i. The headlights
- ii. The blanket
- iii. The story
- iv. The camera
- v. The last piece of pie

Column 2

- A jumped off the page
- B called Anna's name
- C loves her
- D comforted him
- E winked at me

Mark Scheme

Column 1

- i. The headlights
- ii. The blanket
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i)

Hints	Which option refers to a blinking movement?
Answer	E - winked at me
Answer Explanation	The headlights are personified as ' <i>winking</i> ' to suggest their flashing movement.

ii)

Hints	Which option refers to a loving action?
Answer	D - comforted him
Answer Explanation	The blanket is personified as ' <i>comforting</i> ' the man to suggest that it is providing him with a feeling of safety and security.

iii)

Hints	Which option refers to a dramatic or sudden movement?
Answer	A - jumped off the page
Answer Explanation	The story is personified as ' <i>jumping off the page</i> ' to show that it is a powerful and dramatic story that seemed to almost come to life.



iv)

Hints	Which option refers to affection?
Answer	C - loves her
Answer Explanation	The camera is personified as ' <i>loving</i> ' the woman to suggest that she always looked very attractive in photos and was very photogenic.

v)

Hints	Which option refers to catching someone's attention?
Answer	B - called Anna's name
Answer Explanation	The pie is personified here; it is ' <i>calling Anna's name</i> ' to indicate that she is very tempted to eat it.

4

Scenario-based

Look at the picture below and describe it using three examples of personification. One example has been provided.

i

The leaves shivered restlessly



ii

iii



Mark Scheme

<p>Model Answer</p>	<p>i) → The pale light caresses the golden leaves. → A warm breeze greets the wildlife. → The grass reaches to the sky, trying to grab any sliver of light.</p> <p>ii) → Slender trees sway gracefully. → The sun smiles upon the forest canopy. → The forest floor cowers beneath a deer's trampling feet.</p> <p>iii) → An air of tranquillity soothes the walkers. → Trees wave their long skeletal fingers. → Long fronds of fern unfurl and stretch after their winter sleep.</p>
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5

Rapid Fire

1. **Is the following statement true or false?**

Personification is giving human characteristics to humans.

2. **Complete the example of personification.**

The ancient stairs _____ as we walked on them.

3. **Complete the example of personification.**

Time _____ when you're having fun.

4. **Is the following an example of personification?**

The shallows of the sea sparkled like diamonds.

5. **Is the following statement true or false?**

Personification is effective for descriptions.

6. **Complete the following definition of personification:**

Personification is attributing _____ to _____ .

7. **Is the following sentence an example of personification?**

The fog sat over the city and watched the people.

8. **Complete the example of personification.**

The dish _____ away with the spoon.

9. **Is the following sentence an example of personification?**

A sense of anger swallowed all my other emotions.

10. **Is the following statement true or false?**

Personification can be used for abstract feelings.



Mark Scheme

i)

Hints	Read the definition carefully. To what does personification give human characteristics?
Answer	False
Answer Explanation	This statement is wrong because it says that humans are given human characteristics; this idea is irrelevant, as humans already act in this way. The correct definition would be that personification gives human characteristics to non-human objects or things.

ii)

Hints	How would the old stairs be feeling if they were stepped on? Would it be comfortable for them?
Answer	Any verb that indicates the stairs' discomfort, such as 'groaned', 'moaned' or 'complained'.
Answer Explanation	You can use any verb here that would fit appropriately to demonstrate that the old stairs are creaking with apparent displeasure or pain.

iii)

Hints	This is a common phrase used to show that time moves quickly when people are enjoying themselves.
Answer	Flies
Answer Explanation	The word 'flies' completes the example of personification; this phrase means that time often seems to pass quickly during enjoyable activities.



iv)

Hints	Is an object being given human characteristics?
Answer	No
Answer Explanation	This is not an example of personification; this is a simile, as it uses the word 'like' to compare the shallows to diamonds.

v)

Hints	In what texts would you find personification?
Answer	True
Answer Explanation	This is true; personification is a very effective device for enhancing descriptions and bringing them to life.

vi)

Hints	What are the two key aspects of personification? You may need to use a short phrase for each of these blanks.
Answer	Any answer that correctly identifies the two main elements of personification. For example: 'human characteristics/inanimate objects', 'human behaviour/non-human things' or 'human character/objects or feelings'.
Answer Explanation	The core purpose of personification is to describe non-human entities or objects with human characteristics. Your answer should acknowledge both of these elements.



vii)

Hints	Is the fog being given human characteristics?
Answer	Yes
Answer Explanation	This is an example of personification, shown in the use of the verbs 'sat' and 'watched'. The fog is being given the human characteristic of observation.

viii)

Hints	This is a well-known phrase from a nursery rhyme.
Answer	Ran
Answer Explanation	The word 'ran' completes this example of personification, which comes from a famous nursery rhyme: 'Hey Diddle Diddle'.

ix)

Hints	Pay attention to the word 'swallowed'.
Answer	Yes
Answer Explanation	This is an example of personification; 'anger' is personified as a hungry and predatory human that is capable of devouring other emotions.

x)

Hints	What can personification be used for?
Answer	True
Answer Explanation	This statement is true; personification can be used on inanimate objects or abstract feelings. The example from the previous question - 'A sense of anger swallowed all my other emotions' - demonstrates this.