

Use Personification

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn about using personification.
- Practice using personification in sentences.
- Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.



1. Focus

Explain Using Personification

Say: Writers use figurative language to create vivid, surprising images with their words. When a writer describes something by comparing it to something else, he or she is using figurative language. One type of figurative language is personification. **Personification** means giving human characteristics or abilities to an animal or object. For example, I'm using personification if I say, "My computer hates me." A computer is a machine that doesn't have feelings, but I'm giving it a human emotion to show how frustrating it is—I am suggesting that the computer actively tries to annoy me. Writers use personification to help readers relate to a story and to form rich images in their minds. Today I'm going to show you how to use personification in historical fiction.

Model How Writers Use Personification

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for the example of personification as you read the text aloud.

Hugh disappeared outside the tent, swallowed up by the rapidly falling snowflakes.

Modeling Text

Say: In this example, the writers made it sound as though the snowstorm actively ate the character named Hugh. Of course, snowflakes are just frozen water particles. They don't actually have the ability to swallow things up intentionally like people do. I think the writers have given the snow a human ability in order to make this scene more active and exciting. They could have simply written that the snow fell around Hugh, making it difficult for others to see him. That would have been less interesting, however. The use of personification in this historical fiction scene helps me as a reader because I can visualize what it was like to be out there in the nasty snow of the American wilderness. It's important for writers of historical fiction to be able to paint vivid pictures with words, because they often describe scenes from the past that readers have not experienced.



2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Using Personification

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

The flowers grew.
The moon rose.
The rain fell.
The pot of soup boiled.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to choose one of the sentences and change it to create personification. Remind students that personification requires saying that an object does or feels something that is not actually possible, but is similar to what actually happens. If necessary, use the first sentence as an example and explain that saying flowers grew is not personification, but saying that they “jumped out of the ground” would be. If necessary, work with students to brainstorm a list of human actions they could use when they write their examples of personification. Pairs of students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain their personifications.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain how they changed one of the sentences to create personification. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write or revise their historical fiction stories.



3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we can use personification in our stories to help readers relate to a subject or to create pictures in their minds. Remember, a good historical fiction story takes place in an authentic historical setting. As a writer, you can use personification to help readers visualize this setting.

Ask students to identify a section of their historical fiction stories in which they could add personification to make the writing more lively and interesting. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.



4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their historical fiction story in which they used personification to bring an object to life and make a scene more vivid.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures that show personification. For example, invite them to create an “angry storm.” Then help students write phrases or sentences that describe their drawings.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: **figurative/figurado(a)**; **personification/la personificación**.