Apostrophe

Definition:

- A figure of speech in which the speaker addresses an idea, inanimate object, or a person who is either dead or absent.
- the speaker addresses the person or object as if it were alive and able to reply
- often express intense emotion and create vivid images.
- Apostrophes allow the speaker to address any qualities of an object or person

Examples:

1. This first example is from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

"Oh! Stars and clouds and winds, ye are all about to mock me; if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought; but if not, depart, depart, and leave me in darkness."

Victor Frankenstein addresses the stars, clouds, and winds. This apostrophe allows Victor to speak his emotions and talk to nature. It gives the effect of his loneliness, personifying nature, and creates a dramatic setting.

2. The second example is from Jane Taylor's nursery rhyme, "The Star".

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky."

In this nursery rhyme, the speaker addresses a star, which makes it an apostrophe.

3. The third example is from "O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman

The speaker is addressing his captain (Abraham Lincoln), who is dead in this poem. The apostrophe gives this poem more serious and dramatic effect. By speaking to someone who is dead, the speaker is getting no response or answer. It creates a suffering and urgent atmosphere for the poem, and allows the speaker to say what he feels.

Helpful links:

Definition and examples
http://literarydevices.net/apostrophe/

O Captain! My Captain! by Walt Whitman
http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/o-captain-my-captain/