

Pathetic Fallacy

Pathetic fallacy occurs when a writer attributes human emotions to things that aren't human, such as objects, weather, or animals. It is often used to make the environment reflect the inner experience of a narrator or other characters. For example, if a writer mourning the death of a loved one writes that "the flowers on the grave drooped in sadness," this would be an example of pathetic fallacy, since the flowers do not, in fact, feel sad.

Some additional key details about pathetic fallacy:

- The word "pathetic," in this context, doesn't mean "bad" or "lame." It comes from the Latin pathos, meaning "feeling." The word "fallacy" comes from the Latin fallax, meaning "deceitful" or "false." When they're put together, these words suggest that assigning human feelings to nonhuman things is a falsehood. However, that doesn't mean that pathetic fallacy is always a mistake; it is often used on purpose in order to evoke a certain emotional atmosphere.

- The term "pathetic fallacy" was coined by a British writer named John Ruskin, who defined it as "emotional falseness." Ruskin originally used the term to criticize what he saw as the sentimental attitude of 18th century Romantic poets toward nature. The meaning of the term has shifted over time, and now is often used to simply describe, rather than criticize, the attribution of emotions to non-human things.
- Pathetic fallacy is a specific type of personification, or the attribution of human qualities to nonhuman things.

Any time a writer describes a wave as "angry," the sun as "smiling," or birdsong as "mournful," it's an example of pathetic fallacy, since emotions are being attributed to things that don't actually have them (or at least not in the way humans do). Although the example of a sun "smiling down" on someone technically doesn't refer explicitly to an emotion (e.g., happiness) it's fair to count it as an example of pathetic fallacy because the action being described so clearly suggests a specific emotion.

Pathetic fallacy is a useful tool in literature for setting the tone of a scene, suggesting the emotional state of a character, or creating a vivid image of an environment.

Example:-

Pathetic Fallacy in William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

In Julius Caesar, Shakespeare describes a violent storm that disrupts the Roman capital on the night before Caesar's assassination. The weather reflects the peril of the political moment through several pathetic fallacies, with "scolding winds," "ambitious," enraged oceans, and "threatening clouds." The conspirators go on to interpret these events as proof that nature itself (or the gods they believed ruled over it) is crying out a warning for Caesar's death, projecting their own fears and desires onto the storm.

Are you not moved, when all the sway of earth
Shakes like a thing see? O Cicero,
I have seen the tempests, when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen

The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam,
To be exalted with the threatening clouds:
But never till to-night, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.