

# Personification

## Definition of Personification

Personification is a [figure of speech](#) in which a thing – an idea or an animal – is given human attributes. The non-human objects are portrayed in such a way that we feel they have the ability to act like human beings. For example, when we say, “The sky weeps,” we are giving the sky the ability to cry, which is a human quality. Thus, we can say that the sky has been personified in the given sentence.

## Common Examples of Personification

Look at my car. She is a beauty, isn't she?  
The wind whispered through dry grass.  
The flowers danced in the gentle breeze.  
Time and tide wait for none.  
The fire swallowed the entire forest.

We see from the above examples of personification that this literary device helps us relate actions of inanimate objects to our own emotions.

## Short Examples of Personification in Speech

The shadow of the moon danced on the lake.  
There was a heavy thunderstorm, the wind snorted outside, rattling my windowpanes.  
The flowers were blooming, and the bees kissed them every now and then.  
The flood raged over the entire village.  
The tread of time is so ruthless that it tramples even the kings under its feet.  
It was early morning – I met a cat yawning and stretching in the street.  
The skyscraper was so tall that it seemed to kiss the sky.  
The tree was pulled down, and the birds lamented over its dead body.  
The tall pines in the hilly area fondled the clouds.

The long road to his home was a twisting snake, with no visible end.  
The full moon peeped through partial clouds.  
His car suffered a severe stroke in the middle of the road, and refused to move forward.  
The ship danced over the undulating waves of the ocean.  
When he sat the test, the words and the ideas fled from his mind.  
When he came out of the house of his deceased friend, everything looked to him to be weeping.

## Examples of Personification in Literature

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### Example #1: *The Green Gables Letters* (By L. M. Montgomery)

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“I hied me away to the woods — away back into the sun-washed alleys carpeted with fallen gold and glades where the moss is green and vivid yet. The woods are getting ready to sleep — they are not yet asleep but they are disrobing and are having all sorts of little bed-time conferences and whisperings and good-nights.”

The lack of activity in the forest has been beautifully personified as the forest getting ready to sleep, busy at bed-time chatting and wishing good-nights, all of which are human customs.

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### Example #2: *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Scene II (By William Shakespeare)

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“When well-appareled April on the heel  
Of limping winter treads.”

There are two personification examples here. April cannot put on a dress, and winter does not limp, nor does it have a heel on which a month can walk. Shakespeare personifies the month of April and the winter season by giving them two distinct human qualities.

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### Example #3: *Loveliest of Trees the Cherry Now* (By A. H. Houseman)

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“Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.”

He sees a cherry tree covered with beautiful white flowers in the forest, and says that the cherry tree wears white clothes to celebrate Easter. He gives human attributes to a tree in order to describe it in human terms.

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**Example #4: *Have You Got A Brook In Your Little Heart* (By Emily Elizabeth Dickinson)**

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“Have you got a brook in your little heart,  
Where bashful flowers blow,  
And blushing birds go down to drink,  
And shadows tremble so?”

The bashful flowers, blushing birds, and trembling shadows are examples of personification.

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**Example #5: *How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped* (By William Shakespeare)**

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“Pearl Button swung on the little gate in front of the House of Boxes. It was the early afternoon of a sunshiny day with little winds playing hide-and-seek in it.”

It personifies wind by saying that it is as playful as little children playing hide-and-seek on a sunny day.

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**Example #6: *Two Sunflowers Move in a Yellow Room* (By William Blake)**

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“Two Sunflowers  
Move in the Yellow Room.  
‘Ah, William, we’re weary of weather,’  
said the sunflowers shining with dew

Our traveling habits have tired us.  
Can you give us a room with a view?"

This poem by William Blake contains a lot of examples of personification. The poem starts in a [dialogue](#) form, where a sunflower is directly addressing the poet by calling his name. Again, in the third line the flower says, "our travelling habits have tired us", which is a good personification. The flowers are depicting a human characteristic of weariness caused by the weather. In a human way, they make a request to the poet to put them in a room with a window with plenty of sunshine.

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#### **Example #7: *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (By William Wordsworth)**

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"I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

This poem by William Wordsworth contains artistic examples of personification. The fourth line says, "A host of golden daffodils," and the fifth line has those flowers "Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

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#### **Example #8: *The Waste Land* (By T. S. ELIOT)**

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"April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain."

These are the opening lines of *The Waste Land*, by T. S. Eliot. The very first line contains personification in that it labels April as the 'cruellest month'.

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#### **Example #9: *Because I could not stop for Death* (By Emily Dickinson)**

“Because I could not stop for Death –  
He kindly stopped for me –  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –  
And Immortality.  
We slowly drove – He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For His Civility –”

The whole poem is full of examples of personification. In fact, death has been personified by the poet, saying “He kindly stopped for me.” Again in the second [stanza](#), “He knew no haste,” and so on.

## Function of Personification

Personification is not merely a decorative device, but serves the purpose of giving deeper meanings to literary texts. It adds vividness to expressions, as we always look at the world from a human [perspective](#). Writers and poets rely on personification to bring inanimate things to life, so that their nature and actions are understood in a better way. Because it is easier for us to relate to something that is human, or which possesses human traits, its use encourages us to develop a perspective that is new as well as creative.

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