

5.6 The function of personification

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to explain **personification** 拟人.

You must be able to:

- define personification in the CED's terms
- state what personification does to the object
- explain why it is a type of comparison
- analyse which human trait is assigned

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Definition

Personification is a type of comparison that assigns a human trait or quality to a nonhuman object, entity, or idea, thus characterising that object, entity, or idea.

■ Characterising

The CED's verb is **characterising**: personification does to an object what description does to a person. It gives it a nature.

■ A comparison

Because it is a comparison, the two-subject analysis applies: the nonhuman thing is the main subject and the human quality is what is transferred to it.

■ Which trait

The analysis is in the choice of trait. A sea that is *angry* is threatening; a sea that is *indifferent* is worse, because nothing can be appealed to.

2 Practice

2.1 Define personification in the CED's terms.

[2]

2.2 State the CED’s verb for what it does and explain it. [2]

2.3 The analysis lies in the trait chosen.

(a) Explain why. [2]

(b) State why personification is a comparison. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Personification assigns a human trait to [1]

- **A** a nonhuman object, entity or idea
 - **B** another person
 - **C** the reader
 - **D** the author
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3.2 The CED’s verb for the effect on the object is [1]

- **A** characterising
 - **B** destroying
 - **C** naming
 - **D** counting
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3.3 A poem describes time as ”patient”.

(a) State what has been assigned. [1]

(b) Explain what this makes the reader feel about time. [2]

4 Go further

- work through the **5.6 The function of personification** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Poetry II** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 a type of comparison assigning a human trait or quality to a nonhuman object, entity or idea, thus characterising it.

2.2 characterising; it gives the object a nature, as description gives a person one.

2.3 (a) different traits produce different natures —an angry sea threatens while an indifferent one cannot be appealed to. (b) a human quality is transferred to a nonhuman main subject.

3.1 A. a nonhuman object, entity or idea.

3.2 A. characterising.

3.3 (a) a human quality of patience. (b) time becomes something that waits deliberately, so it is not merely passing but expecting an outcome the speaker cannot avoid.