

7.11 The function of personification

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to explain **reverse personification** 反向拟人.

You must be able to:

- state the CED's claim about assigning nonhuman qualities to a person
- distinguish this from personification proper
- explain what such a comparison communicates
- analyse the attitude conveyed

1 Worked examples

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

■ The claim

By assigning the qualities of a nonhuman object, entity, or idea to a person or character, the narrator, character, or speaker communicates an attitude about that person or character.

■ The reverse of 5.6

5.6 gave human qualities to a nonhuman thing. 7.11 runs the other way: a person is given the qualities of a thing. The direction changes what it does.

■ What it communicates

An **attitude**. Comparing a person to a machine, an animal or a stone says something about how the speaker regards them, and often something they would not say directly.

■ The analysis

Name the quality assigned, then name the attitude it implies. A man described as "a mechanism" is being denied inwardness, which is a judgment about him and about the speaker.

2 Practice

2.1 State the CED's claim about assigning nonhuman qualities to a person. [2]

2.2 Distinguish this from personification. [2]

2.3 The comparison communicates an attitude.

(a) State whose attitude. [1]

(b) Explain the two-step analysis. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Assigning nonhuman qualities to a person communicates [1]

- **A** an attitude about that person
 - **B** the setting
 - **C** the plot
 - **D** the date
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3.2 Personification runs [1]

- **A** in the opposite direction
 - **B** in the same direction
 - **C** in no direction
 - **D** only in prose
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3.3 A narrator describes a colleague as "a filing cabinet".

(a) State the quality assigned. [1]

(b) Explain what attitude this conveys. [2]

4 Go further

- work through the **7.11 The function of personification** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Short Fiction III** section of the AP English Literature handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 the narrator, character or speaker communicates an attitude about that person or character.

2.2 personification gives human qualities to a nonhuman thing; this runs the other way, giving nonhuman qualities to a person.

2.3 (a) the narrator's, character's or speaker's. (b) name the quality assigned, then name the attitude it implies about the person and about the speaker.

3.1 A. an attitude.

3.2 A. the opposite direction.

3.3 (a) storage without judgment or feeling. (b) the colleague is regarded as useful and impersonal, which is a dismissal the speaker has not had to state outright.