

Jump-Start Writing at Home With Personification

When writers use human traits to animate their descriptions of objects and feelings, readers picture more easily what they're trying to communicate. Patience can “take a deep breath” or “run away.” Solitude can “slump in the corner” or “chant ‘ohm’.” In this lesson, students learn to “cozy up” to an emotion or state-of-being word by personifying it. The goals of this lesson are to have students:

- Recognize personification as a technique writers use.
- Use personification in their own writing.
- Gain confidence in drafting, revising, and sharing their work.

Please download and review the following: Personification Lesson, Personification Slideshow, and Personification GO Sheet. Then use the tips below to adapt the lesson in a way that supports your students at home:

If your students have a device of their own:

- Livestream or videotape Steps 1–3 of this lesson. If you livestream, you can interact with students and, therefore, write examples on a shared document as they act out emotion/state-of-being words in Step 3.

If you prerecord, explain and demonstrate Steps 1 and 2 and then model Step 3, perhaps acting out one emotion/state-of-being word silently, much like charades. Pause for students to write a description of your actions and then guess the word. Show students, by typing on screen, how to describe the actions that you acted out (e.g., *She hid behind her hair, fingers touching her lip, and turned away*) and then substitute in an emotion or state-of-being word for the pronoun (e.g., *Shy* for *She*). Close by giving students three words to act out for a caregiver, who will guess the words.

- Livestream or videotape Steps 4, 5, and 6 as the second part of this lesson. If you livestream, follow the lesson and co-construct a Version 1 of a personification poem or paragraph, soliciting ideas from students. Prompt students to take 5–10 minutes to fill in their GO Sheet, and then have them read the GO Sheet aloud so they can hear their own work aloud. (You may want to re-create the GO Sheet as an online word document that students can use on a shared learning platform or download and work on independently.) If possible, have students post their GO Sheets to a shared platform where you can respond to them before the next part of the lesson.

If you prerecord these steps, model write a Version 1 on the same GO Sheet you'll give to students. Then ask students to use their favorite emotion word of the three they acted out to fill in the organizer and create their Version 1. Before they share their GO Sheets with you, encourage them to read their work aloud to a caregiver, sibling, pet, or even stuffed animal.

- Livestream or videotape Step 7 (co-constructing or modeling your Version 2), including prompting for Step 8, which students will do independently. You may want to finish your revision completely on camera, focusing on one or two revision strategies to help students do Step 8 on their own.
- For Step 9, invite students to share their work in the way that works best for your class—in a livestream “class share,” by posting a video of themselves reading their piece, or by reading it aloud to family members. Remind them that it’s important to read with expression to reflect the emotion/state-of-being word they chose.

If your students share a device at home:

Follow the prerecorded options from above for this lesson.

If your students have limited or no online access:

If you are creating packets of materials to send home, consider sending a few simple instructions along with a printout of the slide “Sorry,” and a copy of the GO Sheet (or a graphic organizer sheet you’ve adapted to fit your students’ independent writing abilities):

- Thank the caregiver for taking some time to do an activity to support their child’s writing. Explain that the child will experiment with *personification*, a creative way to describe objects or emotions by giving them human characteristics or actions.
- Invite the caregiver to follow these steps:
 - Read the poem “Sorry” with your child several times to enjoy its rhythm and absorb its meaning.
 - Talk about the actions that describe the feeling of being sorry. Point out that “Sorry” is not a person, but here it’s described like one—that’s called *personification*.
 - Give your child three words to act out, such as *guilty*, *charming*, and *confused*. This can be done with the whole family, like a game of charades.
 - Ask your child to choose his or her favorite word and the actions. Use the word as the title of a poem, writing it at the top of the GO Sheet.
 - Prompt your child to fill in the sheet as much as she or he is able, starting with the actions he or she came up with. For example, you

might ask, “If you were to compare this word to an animal (or color), which would it be?”

- Have your child read the completed responses on the GO Sheet as if they were lines of a poem. Encourage him or her to edit the piece to make it sound smoother or more interesting.
 - Invite the child to perform the piece at a family meal!
- Above all, encourage the caregiver to make the experience enjoyable so the child will be excited to try this new technique and to be invested in his or her writing.