

## LESSON 11: PERSONIFICATION

### MATERIALS

- Student notebooks
- Loose leaf paper
- Teacher’s copy of “Quilts” by Nikki Giovanni (available at <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/quilts>)
- Poetry and Place Partnerships Conversation Sheet from Lesson 5 (copies available in a designated location in the classroom)
- Copies of Sample Word Lists (see lesson 3 resources) available for students who have difficulty generating words



**BIG IDEA**

**Poets use metaphor to connect readers to important ideas through imagery.**  
**Poetry helps readers see the extraordinary in the ordinary.**

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify literary devices, including **personification** and **metaphor**
- Students will identify poetry structures
- Students will develop ideas for writing
- Students will develop an idea within a brief text
- Students will develop skills to participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a literary community



**LANGUAGE**

#### Important Vocabulary:

- Imagery
- Metaphor
- Personification
- Verb

### SEQUENCE



**CLASS**

#### Poetry for Appreciation...

Invite students to find a comfortable place for listening. Remind students to listen to and enjoy the way the poem sounds, and they might also listen for some of the imagery and details used by the poet.

Read “Quilts” by Nikki Giovanni.



Extend this activity by asking students to also describe the details of their own quilts or beds, or family heirlooms that have been passed down (you can include family histories or family stories in this extension.).



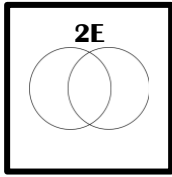

### TEACHER NOTES



**PLACE**

Appalachian students may be especially interested in learning about Nikki Giovanni, who grew up in Appalachian Ohio and spent most of her career in Appalachian Virginia. See <https://poets.org/poet/nikki-giovanni> for a biography of Nikki Giovanni, and

	<p>consider requesting that your school library purchase a copy of one of her poetry anthologies for children.</p>
<p><b>Introducing Personification</b></p> <div data-bbox="207 449 370 632">  <p>CLASS</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask students to listen carefully and try to figure out what all of these metaphors have in common:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The oak is a wise old man.</li> <li>2. Happy flowers dance in the breeze.</li> <li>3. The math test stares up at me, willing me to fail.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>(All of these metaphors imply that the noun is a person or has human characteristics or actions.)</p> <div data-bbox="207 688 370 892">  <p>TOOLS</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explain that personification is a special type of metaphor, in which the noun is likened to a person (note the word “person” in the word personification). First ask what about these sentences suggest that the oak, flowers, and test are like people? Explain that it is not always easy to tell right away when the poet is using personification, since he or she will not come straight out and say “The tree is a person,” for example, but instead the tree is given the characteristics and actions of a person (such as waving its arms or raising its face up to the sun). It is up to the reader to look for clues in the poem and <b>infer</b> that personification is being employed. Some amusing examples of personification can be found at <a href="http://www.funny-poems-for-free.com/personification-poems.html">http://www.funny-poems-for-free.com/personification-poems.html</a></li> <li>▪ Explain that personification and metaphor are used not only in poetry, but in other types of writing and communication as well. To extend this lesson, students could look for examples of personification in newspaper and magazine articles, in advertisements and billboards, or in lyrics to songs they or their families enjoy.</li> <li>▪ Next, review the parts of speech covered so far in this unit (concrete and abstract nouns; adjectives), and make sure students remember how these words function. Ask if any students know what part of speech is an “action” or</li> </ul>	<p>After discussing personification, go back to the “Quilts” poem and ask students to identify how Nikki Giovanni uses personification in this poem.</p>

<p>“doing” word (verb). Tell students that verbs can be written in many ways. Have them look at some of the poems they have read and list verbs. Note that verbs can often be written with the suffix “-ing” (such as running, jumping, thinking). Invite students to generate a list of examples of verbs, and post this list for all to see.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask students: “Why do you think verbs are important in personification?” Discuss that by giving an object a particular <i>action</i> a poet or writer can make that object appear human.</li> </ul>	 <p><i>In order to make the review more engaging, consider turning the review into a game. After writing the words on the board or projecting them, the teacher can call out the definition and students could “smack” or touch the word that fits the definition.</i></p>
<p><b>How to personify a...</b></p>  <p>Explain to students that in this activity, they will write a short description or story using personification. Before beginning this activity, model personification by writing a few sentences that use this kind of imagery. Choose items from the classroom or school to personify (“The school bells say ‘time to begin!’ or the SmartBoard says ‘that tickles!’ in order to demonstrate for the students.</p>	 <p>2E students who struggle with the writing process may use assistive technologies such as laptops for this activity. If you would like to see their revisions, ask students using assistive technologies to save each draft of their poem separately.</p>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To warm up, students should generate a list of at least 10 interesting verbs on a loose sheet of paper labeled “verbs.” Next, they should write a list of 10 common objects (e.g. trees, farm, bus, mountain) on a separate sheet of paper labeled “objects.” Look for objects that have significance for the students and will reinforce a sense of place.</li> <li>Have students give each of their lists to a different student in the class. In return, each student should receive a list of verbs and a list of objects from two other students.</li> <li>Students should now “match” each object on their list with an action on the other list, and write these pairs of words into their workbooks, even if</li> </ul>	

these seem nonsensical (e.g., truck groans; apple jumps; time flies).

- Now ask students to decide which of these word pairs could work well in a story or poem.
- Using this object and action as a starting point, invite students to generate additional ways of personifying the object. This can be done by (a) giving the object additional human-like actions; (b) Asking question such as: Who? What? Why? Where? When? How? For example, *Why* does the truck groan? *Where* does the time fly? (c) Giving the object some personality characteristics. Is the car grumpy? Friendly? Adventurous? You can write some of these prompt questions on the blackboard or whiteboard. It may help to model this process for some or all students by selecting an object and brainstorming aloud its possible human actions and characteristics.
- Once students have generated ideas for their story or poem by giving the object characteristics, action, and some motivation, they should write a short description, poem, or story about the object in which the object is personified.
- Allow students to work on their writing for the remainder of the lesson. They should go through the usual workshop procedure (peer review; teacher conference) as they work towards a final copy.



*One way to display students' finished personification stories could be to cut out colored paper in the shape of the object in each story, and write the stories on these shapes to display around the classroom.*

*Encourage students to use their Pocket Full of Place notepads to personify some of the usual sights on their way to or from school. Who does the old tree on the corner remind you of? What would the traffic light sound like if it could talk? Prompt students to extend these lessons from class into their everyday activities.*