Essential Skill: Personification

A Weekend in the City

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Anne. One time, I got to travel to New York City. It was so much fun! I saw a Broadway show. They performed on a big stage in a theater, like this one. I also went to Madison Square Garden. To my surprise, it wasn't an actual garden. Instead, it's an arena for sports, concerts, and other types of entertainment. I even went on a search for the best cupcake in the city.

My friend Noah is visiting New York City for the first time. Before he went on his trip, he told his Aunt Frida where he was going. She told him he would love it because it's the city that never sleeps. When Noah heard this, he was confused. How could a city be asleep or awake? Check out what Noah saw when he got to New York City.

He saw busy streets, lots of people, and heard lots of different city sounds. After seeing this, Noah started to understand what Aunt Frida meant.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: Why do you think New York City is called the city that never sleeps?

HOOK 2

Maybe you said, "It's called the city that never sleeps because there are so many different noises happening at the same time." Or maybe you said, "It's because it's

always busy in the daytime and at night." You may have said something else, and that's great.

The city isn't actually a person but describing it like this is more fun than just saying, "New York City is always busy." It's also a creative way to describe how there's always something happening—this makes the city sound more exciting! Writers call this creative way to describe things *personification*.

Over the next two days, Noah explored even more of New York City. He saw some really interesting places like Central Park, the Brooklyn Bridge, Times Square, and much more.

He wants to write a postcard to his Aunt Frida describing the city, and he wants to make his description sound creative the way she did, by describing the city like a person. The first thing Noah wanted to write about was this subway. It's a huge underground train that travels to different stations around the city. When a train pulls into a station, crowds of people get on and off the train. Subway stations have a lot going on, and it's not only trains. You might see a few musicians, dancers, animals, and much more.

While Noah was waiting for the subway, he realized that the train takes a long time to come to a stop. At first, Noah wrote, "The train slowed down at the station." But then he had a better idea—he could use personification and imagine what this train is doing as a person, like this. He could say, "It crawled to the station," or "It hobbled its way to the station." Both of these describe this train as moving slowly. Noah could even describe how the train sounded as if it were a person. "When the train came to a stop, it hissed a sigh of relief," or "It groaned." These are all great ways to describe this train as a person and describe it more creatively than just the train slowed down.

What if the train looked and sounded like this?

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: How would you describe this train going fast like a person?

HOOK 3

I'm not sure how you answered, but here's what Noah came up with, "The subway sprinted." He also added that, "The subway screeched." What if Noah added *how* the subway screeched? Maybe it screeched furiously. This sentence makes it sound like there's something upsetting happening on the train or at the station.

Maybe there's too many people on the subway and the doors can't close. Or maybe there's a delay on the subway because a pigeon got inside. What if he changed his sentence to describe it like this: "The subway sang cheerfully." This sentence makes it sound like something exciting is happening. Maybe there's a crowd enjoying a break-dancing performance at the station. Both of these sentences use personification to creatively describe the subway, but both sentences also set two very different moods—upsetting and exciting.

By using personification, we can also make the reader feel a certain way about what's happening at the subway. How awesome is that?

Now it's your turn to help Noah write a postcard filled with personification. That way his descriptions of New York City are creative and match the mood of the days Noah was there.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone knows who their talk partner is, move on to the next step.

STEP 3

Get your Personify the City worksheet. This is where you will help Noah fill in sentences in his postcard to Aunt Frida.

Here's what the first day looked and sounded like when Noah was in New York City. Noah described this day as "gloomy and calm."

Discuss with a partner: What makes this day in the city gloomy and calm?

STEP 4

Find the first sentence of the postcard. Finish the sentence by writing why the city was gloomy and calm.

STEP 5

Noah wants to describe what the city traffic is doing first. But to do that, he needs to imagine and describe it like a person.

Discuss with a partner: Think about how to describe what the traffic is doing like a person. How would you describe it?

STEP 6

Fill in the rest of the sentence with a word that describes what the traffic is doing. You can use this part of your Word Bank to help.

STEP 7

Now look at the trees that Noah wants to describe.

Discuss with a partner: Think about how to describe what the trees are doing like a person, and how. Like this example: "The tree swayed quietly." How would you describe it?

STEP 8

Finish the rest of the sentence by describing what the trees are doing and how. You can use this part of your Word Bank to help.

STEP 9

Watch the city on this day one more time. As you watch, find one more thing doing something you would like to describe like a person. It could be the cars, the streetlights, the rain, the sidewalks, or anything else you see.

Once you have your idea, look at the next sentence that starts with "The." Fill in the rest of the sentence by describing what you chose using personification.

STEP 10

Now take a look at how the city looked on Noah's second day in New York City.

Noah described this day as "cheerful and lively."

Discuss with a partner: What makes this day in the city cheerful and lively?

STEP 11

Find the first sentence on the second half of the postcard.

Finish the sentence by writing why the city was cheerful and lively.

STEP 12

Noah thinks the traffic looks and sounds differently than it did on day one.

Discuss with a partner: Think about how to describe what the traffic is doing like a person. How would you describe it?

STEP 13

Fill in the rest of this sentence with a word that describes what the traffic is doing. You can use this part of your Word Bank to help.

STEP 14

Now look at the trees that Noah wants to describe on this day. Think about how you would describe what these trees are doing and how.

Fill in the rest of the sentence by describing the trees using personification. You can use this part of your Word Bank to help.

STEP 15

Watch the city on this day one more time. As you watch, find one more thing doing something you would like to describe like a person. Remember to look for something that is not a person.

Once you have your idea, look at the next sentence that starts with "The." Fill in the rest of the sentence describing what you chose using personification. You can use this part of your Word Bank to help.

STEP 16

Take turns sharing your postcard with your partner. You can make changes if you want.

WRAP UP

Wow! Great job helping Noah with his postcard! Thanks to you, Noah's letter will be creative and even more fun for his Aunt Frida to read. The pencils are beaming with pride as they marvel at all of the amazing sentences.

The next time you describe a place, try to make your writing even more creative by using personification.

See you next time, writers!