

Personification and the "I" Poem

Personification

Many middle-grade and young adult novels are written in first person. In books like *Shiloh*, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, and *Red Kayak*, the narrator's voice is strong but intimate and draws the reader into the story.

Writing in first person allows students to express their feelings and write in their own voices. One vehicle for this is the "I" poem. The narrator can be a person (the writer or another person) but can also be an object or place such as in *The Barn* by Debby Atwell or *Sierra* and *Mojave* by Diane Siebert. These and other examples are on the **Examples from Literature** page included in this issue.

The "I" or I Am Poem does not have a set format. It can be rhymed (as in *Sierra* and *Mojave*) but it is usually better to encourage students to avoid rhyme and use free verse so they are able to concentrate instead on the thoughts and feelings they want to express.

The I Am Poem

(Not all of the categories need to be used. Students may choose from those given and also add others of their own.)

Examples:

I am the Kansas prairie.
I am rolling and lonely to see
But there is more to me than you think.
Gophers hide under me
Afraid of getting too much sun.
I have no trees to shade me
Only prickly tumbleweed blows through me.
I see killdeer proudly flaunt their tails
And I watch dandelions fight for sun
with the covering clover.
I hear the cows chewing on top of me
Taking almost all day to finish their lunch . . .

I am the once loved piano.
I wonder if I will ever be heard again.
I hear echoes of music from when
I was once played.
I see pain in the eyes of the little girl
who wants to play me.
I want to be played again.
I am the once loved piano.

The I Am Poem Format

I am	(two special characteristics the person or thing has)
I wonder	(something the person or thing could actually be curious about)
I hear	(an imaginary or actual sound)
I see	(an imaginary or actual sight)
I want	(a desire)
I am	(the first line of the poem repeated)
I pretend	(something the person or thing could actually pretend to do)
I feel	(a feeling about the imaginary)
I touch	(an imaginary touch)
I worry	(something that could really bother the person or thing)
I cry	(something that could make the person or thing sad)
I am	(the first line of the poem repeated)
I understand	(something the person or thing knows to be true)
I say	(something the person or thing believes in)
I dream	(something the person or thing could actually dream about)
I try	(something the person or thing could make an effort to do)
I hope	(something the person or thing could hope for)
I am	(the first line of the poem repeated)

The voice of the poem should speak directly to the reader while giving information or expressing emotions.