Metaphors, similes, and personification are similar writing techniques that help a writer describe everyday objects in new ways.

A metaphor is a comparison of two different things. When you use a metaphor, you say that something is the same as something else, even though it really isn’t. The metaphor is not introduced by the terms like or as, but is used to describe something it normally wouldn’t.

**Example:** Alice was drowning in tears.

Alice isn’t really drowning; it is impossible for a person to make enough tears to drown in. The use of metaphor shows us that she was, however, crying very hard and creating a lot of tears.

A simile also compares two unlike things, but a simile is introduced by the words like or as. Sometimes they can even begin with seems. Similes and metaphors are often confused, but if you remember that a simile uses one of those words, it is easy to keep them separated.

**Example:** Kim cried as if it were the end of the world.

We still know that Kim was crying, perhaps just as hard as Alice. But in this case we used a simile to demonstrate instead of a metaphor.

Personification means attributing human thoughts, feelings, and/or actions to things that are not human.

**Example:** The sky wept all night, causing the streets to flood.

Still using the example of tears, we can see that the author has attributed a human action—weeping—to the sky. The sky can’t really cry; it has no eyes or tear ducts. The personification tells us that it was raining very hard.

On the following page, there are some sentences and phrases taken from Ralph Fletcher’s book, Hello, Harvest Moon. Your job is to figure out whether each phrase is a metaphor, a simile, or personification.
Metaphors, Similes, and Personification

Decide if each sentence is a metaphor, a simile, or an example of personification. Write M for metaphor, S for simile, or P for personification in the blank.

1. ______...staining earth and sky with a ghostly glow.

2. ______Outside, the yards and streets seem to be covered by a sparkling tablecloth.

3. ______Birch trees shine as if they have been double-dipped in moonlight.

4. ______...an insect drawn to the great lamp in the sky.

5. ______...it paints the wings of owls and nighthawks with a mixture of silver and shadow.

6. ______...spilling out spores like tiny moonlings floating up to their mother.

7. ______It speaks to the moonflowers...

8. ______Grabbing whole oceans with its arms, it pulls in the hide tide.

9. ______Sprinkling silver coins like a careless millionaire over ponds, lakes, and fields.

10. ______A sleepy head, winking, falling, slow motion, onto its pillow.
Answers

1. ___M___...staining earth and sky with a ghostly glow.

2. ___S___Outside, the yards and streets seem to be covered by a sparkling tablecloth.

3. ___S___Birch trees shine as if they have been double-dipped in moonlight

4. ___M___...an insect drawn to the great lamp in the sky.

5. ___P___It paints the wings of owls and nighthawks with a mixture of silver and shadow.

6. ___S___...spilling out spores like tiny moonlings floating up to their mother

7. ___P___It speaks to the moonflowers...

8. ___P___Grabbing whole oceans with its arms, it pulls in the hide tide.

9. ___S_or ___P___Sprinkling silver coins like a careless millionaire over ponds, lakes, and fields

10. ___P___A sleepy head, winking, falling, slow motion, onto its pillow.