



# Charlotte's Web

*fun activities*

## Animal Instincts: A Lesson in Personification

In E.B. White's novel *Charlotte's Web* we meet a host of characters who are not what they seem. Playful and jolly, curious and talkative, Wilbur hardly seems like a pig at all. On the other hand, Templeton the rat is crafty and cunning while Charlotte the spider can spell and uses words like "salutations".

This figurative language technique of giving human characteristics to animals is called personification. It's something the author does often in books like *Stuart Little* and *Cricket in Times Square*. That's why we see the animals doing things usually reserved for people: Templeton acts selfishly, Charlotte feels sadness and Wilbur learns the value of a true friend. What other examples can you find of how the author applies personification to humanize the characters in *Charlotte's Web*?

Take some time to review these descriptions from the book and identify which character is being personified and what human traits or qualities (like sadness, anger or humor...) he or she is given.

*Good morning! Salutations! Very pleased to meet you.  
What is your name, please?*

Who is being personified? \_\_\_\_\_  
What human traits or qualities are being given? \_\_\_\_\_

*The rat looked disgusted. But he sneaked away to the dump and was back in a while with a strip of cotton cloth. "How's this?" he asked.*

Who is being personified? \_\_\_\_\_  
What human traits or qualities are being given? \_\_\_\_\_

*Friendless, dejected and hungry, he threw himself down in the manure and sobbed.*

Who is being personified? \_\_\_\_\_  
What human traits or qualities are being given? \_\_\_\_\_

*I think it is only fair to tell you that I was devoted to your mother...She was brilliant, beautiful, and loyal to the end. I shall always treasure her memory. To you, her daughters, I pledge my friendship, forever and ever.*

Who is being personified? \_\_\_\_\_  
What human traits or qualities are being given? \_\_\_\_\_

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LAFS.3.RL.1.1 and LAFS.3.RI.1.1.*

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