

---

## Emily Dickinson and Nature: Personifying the Seasons

*Intermediate (3rd - 5th grade)*

Time required: 40 minutes

Specific recommendation: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Language Arts

### Goals/Objectives:

- Define “personification”
- Identify details of personification in “Dear March, Come In!”
- Identify how the music of “Dear March, Come In!” supports the text
- Learn about Emily Dickinson and her era
- Write a poem personifying a chosen month

### Common Core Standards:

- RL.3.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language
- L.3.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings

### Materials:

#### **Song of America Links:**

Basic Musical Elements handout: <https://songofamerica.net/downloads/basic-musical-elements-handout/>

Emily Dickinson printable timeline: <https://songofamerica.net/downloads/emily-dickinson-timeline/>

Song of America online timeline: <http://songofamerica.net/timeline/>

Song of America Emily Dickinson radio program: <https://songofamerica.net/program/emily-dickinson-letter-to-the-world/>

Song of America “Dear March, Come In” song page: <http://songofamerica.net/song/dear-march-come-in>

Song of America Emily Dickinson page: <http://songofamerica.net/writer/dickinson-emily>

### Instruction:

- The teacher introduces the poet Emily Dickinson as well as the importance of nature in the mid-1800s in New England  
<https://songofamerica.net/downloads/emily-dickinson-timeline/>  
<http://songofamerica.net/timeline/>
  - Supporting resources (visual):
    - Hudson River School: <https://songofamerica.net/artists-movements-ideas/hudson-river-school/>  
[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd\\_hurs.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd_hurs.htm)  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/08.228/>
- The teacher introduces or reviews the definition and examples of “personification” and explain how personification is often used in poetry

© Patricia Finn, M.A., Susan Key, Ph.D. & Christie Finn, M.M.

Created for the Hampsong Foundation’s *Song of America* Curriculum Initiative (<http://songofamerica.net/for-educators>)

This lesson plan may be used free of charge for educational purposes.

Please reference the creators of the handout, the Hampsong Foundation and *Song of America* when necessary.

For more information, please visit <http://songofamerica.net/> & <http://hampsongfoundation.org/>

- The teacher reads aloud to the class “Dear March, Come In!” while students follow along with the text [<http://songofamerica.net/song/dear-march-come-in>]
- Students listen to “Dear March, Come In!” with their eyes closed [<https://songofamerica.net/program/emily-dickinson-letter-to-the-world/> at 1:50]
- The teacher begins a discussion by asking, “How does the music affect the way you see the speaker telling the story? How do you see March? April? Do you see them as real people? Does the music change when the speaker talks about April compared to March?” As students are reflecting on the music, the teacher may re-play the song again for emphasis.
  - Refer to the *Song of America* Basic Musical Elements handout for an easy guide to talking about music:  
<https://songofamerica.net/downloads/basic-musical-elements-handout/>
- *Guided Practice*
  - Students highlight or underline with the teacher “How out of Breath you are” and discuss the meaning of the line
  - The teacher asks the class to find another example of personification in the poem [ex.: “Who knocks? That April”] and highlight or underline the example
  - Students share their examples with the class
- *Independent Practice*
  - The teacher presents the assignment: “Write either a paragraph or a poem about a month using at least three examples of personification. Draw or find a picture that reminds you of your chosen month.”
  - Students work independently on the project and share their projects to the class.
  - The teacher could play some season-related classical music in the background (or even have students ‘guess’ which season the music personifies), such as:
    - Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*
    - Beethoven’s Violin Sonata, No. 5, *Spring*
    - Mendelssohn’s Overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*
    - Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 1, *Winter Dreams*

### Going Further

- Explore personification with Emily Dickinson’s poem “Heart, We Will Forget Him” with two musical settings of the same poem  
<https://songofamerica.net/program/emily-dickinson-letter-to-the-world/> at 24:52 & 26:53  
<http://songofamerica.net/song/heart-we-will-forget-him>  
<http://songofamerica.net/song/heart-we-will-forget-him-1>
  - The teacher reads the poem, like with “Dear March, Come In”
  - The class listens to the two musical versions of this poem. How are they the same, and how are they different? What emotions do you hear in the two songs?