

Read the following text carefully and use a pencil to underline or highlight every example of personification you can find. Once you have finished, check the answer sheet to see how many you spotted correctly.

Crimestoppers!

At exactly half past eight, Detective Harris stepped beneath the yellow tape and stared at the little jewellery shop on the corner of Market Street. During the night, somebody had smashed the front window and stolen a collection of valuable watches, leaving nothing behind except scattered glass and a muddy footprint. Outside, the wind whispered through the empty street, while the damaged shop seemed strangely quiet. Harris adjusted his coat, opened his notebook and wondered where the thief had gone.

Inside, the shop was a mess. Broken cabinets lay across the floor, jewellery boxes had been thrown aside and a wooden chair had been knocked onto its back. Harris switched on his torch, and its beam wandered curiously across the walls, searching every dark corner before settling upon something unusual near the counter. A tiny scrap of bright red fabric was trapped beneath a piece of broken glass. "Interesting," Harris murmured, carefully placing it into an evidence bag.

His partner, Officer Patel, arrived moments later and examined the muddy footprint beside the window. It was large, with a peculiar zigzag pattern across the heel, and it appeared to lead towards a narrow alley beside the shop. The two officers followed the trail outside, but after several metres the footprints suddenly disappeared. The rain had greedily swallowed the remaining tracks, washing away what might have been their best clue. Patel sighed. "Looks like our thief had some help from the weather."

At the end of the alley stood an abandoned warehouse which had not been used for years. Several windows were cracked, weeds crowded around its entrance and the enormous building frowned down at the detectives as they approached. Harris pushed the rusty door, which opened with a reluctant creak, and stepped cautiously inside. Somewhere in the darkness, water dripped steadily onto the concrete floor. Then came another noise: a faint scraping sound from upstairs. The silence held its breath. Harris raised one finger, warning Patel not to move.

They climbed the staircase and discovered a small room containing an old desk, several cardboard boxes and a red woollen scarf hanging from a nail. Before Harris could examine it, a sudden noise exploded from behind them. Both officers spun around, only to discover a frightened cat leaping through a broken window. Patel laughed with relief, but Harris was already studying the room again. The dusty floor offered him another clue: across its surface ran the unmistakable zigzag prints of the same muddy shoes they had seen outside the jewellery shop.

By midday, the evidence had led the officers to a house only three streets away, where the stolen watches were eventually recovered. As Harris returned to Market Street, sunlight finally broke through the clouds and danced triumphantly across the shop windows. The mystery that had seemed impossible only a few hours earlier had unravelled one clue at a time, simply because the detectives had paid attention to the smallest details. Harris closed his notebook with a satisfied smile; once again, the clues had told their story.

Answers

Paragraph 1

"the wind whispered through the empty street"

Personification: The wind cannot literally *whisper*. Whispering is a human action. This makes the street seem quiet, secretive and mysterious.

Paragraph 2

"its beam wandered curiously across the walls"

Personification: A beam of light cannot literally *wander* or be *curious*. These are human characteristics. The description makes the torchlight seem like another detective searching for clues.

Paragraph 3

"The rain had greedily swallowed the remaining tracks"

Personification: Rain cannot be *greedy*, nor can it literally *swallow* footprints. The rain is presented almost like a person deliberately destroying the detectives' evidence.

Paragraph 4

"the enormous building frowned down at the detectives"

Personification: A building cannot actually *frown*. Giving it this human expression makes the warehouse seem threatening and unwelcoming.

"The silence held its breath."

Personification: Silence cannot literally hold its breath. This human action creates suspense and suggests that everything has suddenly become completely still.

Paragraph 5

"The dusty floor offered him another clue"

Personification: A floor cannot deliberately *offer* something to somebody. The floor is presented as though it is helping Harris solve the crime.

Paragraph 6

"sunlight finally broke through the clouds and danced triumphantly across the shop windows"

Personification: Sunlight cannot literally *dance* or feel *triumphant*. These human qualities reflect the detectives' success and create a cheerful change in mood.

"the clues had told their story"

Personification: Clues cannot literally *tell* a story. This suggests that, when examined carefully, the evidence reveals what happened.