

Grab and Go Lesson Plan

Things To Do!

The Anchor: [Things to Do](#) - Elaine Magliaro

I have loved this book for a long time so decided it was a perfect opportunity to use it as an anchor for a lesson! **Things to Do** is a deceptively simple poetry book that gives playful “what to do” instructions for elements of nature (and a pair of rain boots!). Each page uses personification and some “how-to” instructions to imagine how an object in nature spends their day.

This book is rich with possibilities, and works beautifully in both Primary and Intermediate classrooms. With younger students, it’s a simple and accessible way to introduce **personification** and invites writers into their imagination pockets. With older students, it opens the door to deeper conversations about **personification**, **word choice**, and **poetic devices**.

In addition, this feels like the perfect “launch into spring” anchor book. As the weather shifts and we begin spending more time outdoors, this book can invite students to notice nature and see the world around them with fresh imagination.

Materials

- Copy of [Things to Do](#) or [YouTube version](#) (Please mute and read it aloud yourself!)
- Simple objects - i.e. a leaf, a flower, a pencil
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- **Things to Do** templates (included)
- Personification Book List (included)

1. Introduction

Set the Context:

Write the word **personification** on the chart paper or whiteboard. Ask students what they think the word means.

Invite students to identify small words inside the word that might give them a clue about the meaning. (it, if, cat, son, etc.) Circle the word **PERSON**.

Explain simply:

*Personification is when a writer is writing about something that is not a person - like a cloud, a tree, a honeybee, a pair of boots - but they describe it **as if** it were a person. Writers use personification to make their writing more imaginative and interesting.*

When you personify something - “turn an object into a person” - you can give the object movement, feelings, and a voice.

Hold up a pencil. This pencil is not alive - it can't move by itself, it can't talk and it doesn't have feelings. But I can personify it like this:

“Stop sharpening me! I'm shrinking!” said the pencil.

Discussion Prompts:

Hold up a leaf. Ask students to go into their imagination pockets and imagine that this leaf could talk, move, and had feelings. Invite students to practice personifying the leaf by adding a voice and feelings.

- How would the leaf feel in fall? In winter? spring?
- What might the leaf say?
- If you could talk to a leaf - what would you say to it?

2. Read Aloud

Tell the students you are going to be reading a poetry picture book today where the writer uses personification. Explain that the poems are written as “how to” instructions and that the writer is telling OBJECTS how to do their jobs. This is very imaginative because you don't normally tell objects what to do because they can't hear you!

Set intention:

- *While I am reading, listen for how the writer makes the objects feel alive. Listen for interesting words and interesting details about each object.*

Begin to read the poems, pausing occasionally to highlight strong word choice and playful phrasing.

Example:

“Flit among flowers... Stay busy. Be buzzy.”

Older students can be listening for alliteration.

Example:

“shut, snip, snap”

“fall to the forest floor”

NOTE: While the book uses rhyme, this lesson keeps the spotlight on personification and language rather than on rhyming.

3. End the Lesson

SAY:

Writers can use personification to bring nature to life. In this book, the author wrote “how to” instructions to different objects in nature. The objects can’t really hear her but the book helps us imagine they can and helps bring the object to life.

Today, you are going to choose an object and personify it - imagine it’s a person - and write your own “Things to Do” list for it. It can be an object in nature like a mountain or a tree, or an everyday like a pencil or a shoe

Things to think about:

What might your object enjoy doing?

How might your object be feeling?

What interesting words would make it sound vivid and alive?

Invite students to share their objects and ideas with a partner.

4. Activity - “Things to Do if You Are a _____”

Students choose an object from nature (or an everyday object) and write a list of instructions, telling it what to do.

Encourage:

- Short lines - like a list
- Start with strong verbs
- Descriptive word choice
- Imagination

Teacher Modelling - Optional

Before students begin, share a simple “Draft Version” of a *Things to Do* poem (see sample below).



Things to Do If You Are a Tree

Stand in the ground.
Move in the wind.
Have leaves on your branches.
Be green in the summer.
Lose your leaves in the fall.
Grow bigger every year.

Explain that this is a good starting point but it feels a bit ordinary.

Begin to revise it together by asking:

- Can we replace “move” with a stronger verb?
- Instead of “have leaves,” what could the tree *do* with them?
- How can we make “be green” more interesting?
- What could we add that shows personality?

Revise one or two lines together as a class to demonstrate how small changes in word choice can bring writing to life. Emphasize that all writers start somewhere — and revision is how writing grows.

What To Do if You Are Tree

Stretch your branches toward the sun.
Dig your roots deep into the earth.
Whisper secrets to the wind.
Let birds rest in your arms.
Drop your leaves when it’s time to let go.
Stand tall through every season.

Differentiation

Primary (K–3)

Focus:

- Understanding personification
- Generating verbs
- “How to” writing
- Oral rehearsal before writing
- Short poetic lines

Teaching Tips:

- Co-create one class example first.
- Provide a shared verb bank (stretch, glow, whisper, drift, sparkle, curl, tumble).
- Encourage drawing first, then writing.
- Allow invented spelling.
- Keep it light and rhythmic

Optional Primary Frame:

Things to do if you are a _____:

_____ in the _____.

_____ like a _____.

Be _____

Be _____

Stay _____.

Intermediate (4–7)

Focus:

- Intentional word choice
- Strong, creative verbs
- Figurative language - alliteration, onomatopoeia

Teaching Moves:

- Discuss how the author avoids extra words.

- Encourage specificity (not “move” but “glide,” “scatter,” “tremble”).

Stretch Option:

- Choose an unusual natural object (lichen, frost, canyon, eclipse).
- Create a “Things NOT to Do” version.
- Challenge students to try rhyming.

Extension Activities (Optional)

Nature Walk Writing

Go outside and observe closely. Students jot notes and draw pictures of different objects they observe, then use the information to write their “Things to Do” lists.

Watercolour Illustrations

Pair poems with soft nature illustrations.

Class Anthology

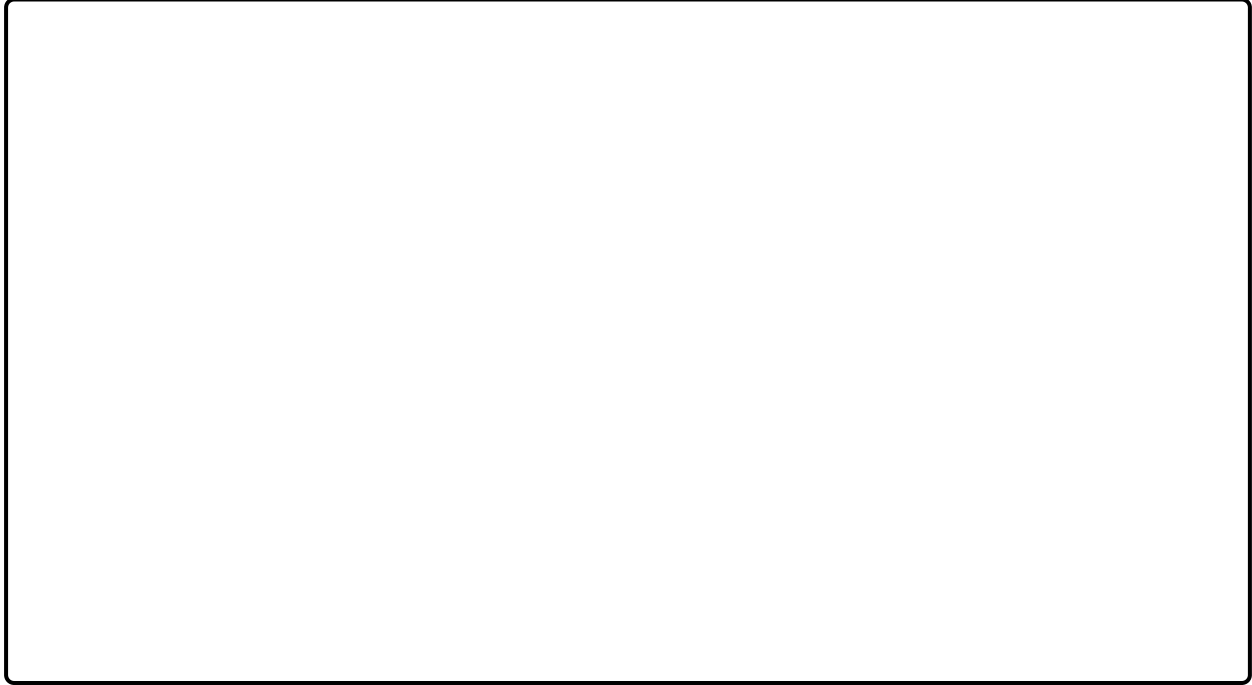
Combine into a class book titled “Things to Do”

Performance Reading

Students read their pieces aloud - focusing on expression.

Things To Do

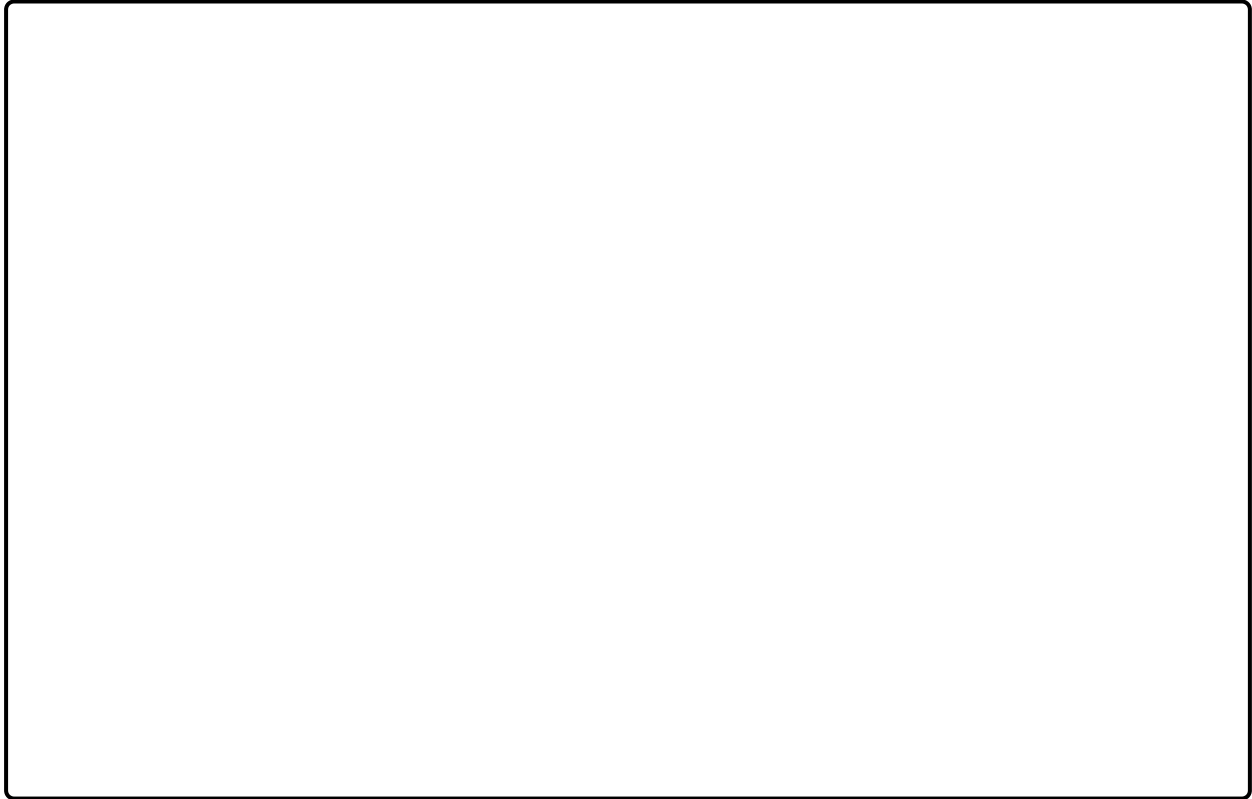
Name: _____



Things to do if you are a _____

Things To Do

Name: _____



_____ in the _____.

_____ like a _____.

Be _____.

Be _____.

Stay _____.

Personification Books

- [*A New Green Day*](#) - Antoinette Portis
- [*Calendar*](#) - Myra Cohn Livingston (out of print but great!)
- [*The Snow Speaks*](#) - Nancy White Carlstrom (oldie but a goodie!)
- [*Red Sings From the Treetops*](#) - Joyce Kilmer
- [*Wind is a Dance*](#) - Debra Kempf Shumaker
- [*The Red Shoes*](#) - Eleri Glass
- [*Lena's Shoes Are Nervous*](#) - Keith Calabrese
- [*The House Without Lights*](#) - Reem Faruqi
- [*My Friend Earth*](#) - Patricia MacLachlan
- [*Hey, Water!*](#) - Antoinette Portis
- [*Outside In*](#) - Deborah Underwood
- [*Picture the Sky*](#) - Barbara Reid
- [*School's First Day of School*](#) - Adam Rex
- [*The Dark*](#) - Lemony Snicket
- [*The Day the Crayons Quit*](#) - Drew Daywalt
- [*I Am the Rain*](#) - John Paterson
- [*The Sun Is Kind of a Big Deal*](#) - Nick Seluk
- [*Linus, the Little Yellow Pencil*](#) - Scott Magoon
- [*The Night Box*](#) - Louise Greig
- [*Old Wood Boat*](#) - Nikki McClure
- [*I Am a Story*](#) - Dan Yaccarino
- [*I'm a Cloud*](#) - Tjitske Kamphuis
- [*Kaboom! A Volcano Erupts*](#) - Jessica Kulekjian
- [*Kersplash! A Cloud Bursts*](#) - Jessica Kulekjian
- [*Eyes That Kiss in the Corners*](#) - Joanna Ho