Definition: Personification is when you describe an inanimate object or a quality as if it were human. Animals cannot be personified because they already do many of the things that humans do.

Here are some examples of personification:
- The sun glared down on us in anger.
- I listened carefully as the waves whispered a song to me.
- The vines clutched and grabbed at his ankles as he ran.
- She felt her new freedom embrace her as she stepped off the train.
- The tornado carelessly tossed aside the cars on the freeway like a child throwing out a toy.  
  (Notice this example of personification is combined with a simile.)

One of the masters of personification was Emily Dickinson. Examine her poem below and answer the adjacent questions.

“In a Library”

A precious, mouldering pleasure ’t is
To meet an antique book,
In just the dress his century wore;
A privilege, I think,

His venerable hand to take,
And warming in our own,
A passage back, or two, to make
To times when he was young.

His quaint opinions to inspect,
His knowledge to unfold
On what concerns our mutual mind,
The literature of old;

What interested scholars most,
What competitions ran
When Plato was a certainty,
And Sophocles a man;

When Sappho was a living girl,
And Beatrice wore
The gown that Dante deified.
Facts, centuries before,

He traverses familiar,
As one should come to town
And tell you all your dreams were true:
He lived where dreams were sown.

His presence is enchantment,
You beg him not to go;
Old volumes shake their vellum heads
And tantalize, just so.

Questions:
1. What object is being personified?
2. How is the object being personified? What kind of person is it being compared to?
3. Define the following words on the BACK of this page: a. venerable, b. mouldering, c. quaint, d. traverse, and e. vellum.
4. Research Sappho and write a brief bio for her.
5. Research Dante and write a brief bio for him. Also, who is Beatrice? (Note: This poem refers to two different Dantes--see if you can find both!)