**Thumbprint** by Eve Merriam

In the heel of my thumb

are whorls, whirls, wheels

in a unique design:

mine alone.

What a treasure to own!

My own flesh, my own feelings.

No other, however grand or base,

can ever contain the same.

My signature,

thumbing the pages of my time.

My universe key,

my singularity.

Impress, implant,

I am myself,

Of all my atom parts I am the sum.

And out of my blood and my brain

I make my own interior weather,

My own sun and rain.

Imprint my mark upon the world,

whatever I shall become.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is the “treasure” of which the speaker is proud?
2. To the speaker, what does her thumbprint represent?
3. Identify two examples of alliteration in this poem.
4. Give an example of a metaphor the poet uses to describe her thumbprint?

**Personification and Hyperboles**

Personification is when you give a human quality to an inanimate object.

Personification is a comparison that treats things as if they were capable of the actions and feelings of people.

Personifications are things we feel but don’t literally see.

Examples of personification:

MC900023317[1] The moon slept in the night sky.

The star is winking at me.

A hyperbole is any extravagant statement or exaggeration for effect.

Hyperbole is used as a figure of speech. For example: I could sleep for a year!

Examples of hyperboles:

He’s so mean he eats snakes for breakfast. MC900203144[1]

I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.

Identify whether the following sentences use a hyperbole (H) or personification (P):

1. The flames called out their names.
2. After shoveling snow I was so tired I couldn’t move.
3. The clock told us it was time to go.
4. She hit the ball hard enough to fly all the way to Pittsburgh.
5. The wind whispered to the trees.
6. It was so cold her car laughed at her when she tried to start it.
7. After the dance my feet were killing me.
8. All day long I worked my fingers to the bone.

**Allusions**

An allusion is a reference to well-known characters or events from literature, history, or another field of knowledge. Writers use allusions to add imagery and emotion into their writing. For example, a writer could say, “He has the Midas touch when picking stocks.” King Midas was a famous character from Greek Mythology whose touch turned items into gold.

Read the sentences below and explain their meaning based on the allusion in each sentence. Research the meaning of any allusions that are unfamiliar to you.

1. Because of the determination of its people, the country rose like a phoenix from the ashes of revolution.

a. What is a phoenix? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. What does this allusion tell us about the country? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. His rise to become head of an international corporation is a real Horatio Alger story.

a. Who was Horatio Alger? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. What does this allusion tell us about the man’s success?

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3. After working out at the gym, I felt like I could battle Hercules.

a. Who was Hercules? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. What does this allusion tell us about the speaker’s work out?

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