

## Mini-Lesson

### I. **Tone Definition**

The **tone** of a literary work is the writer's attitude toward his or her subject, characters, or audience. A writer's tone may be formal or informal, friendly or distant, personal or pompous. For example, William Faulkner's tone in his "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech" is earnest and serious, whereas James Thurber's tone in "The Night the Ghost Got In" is humorous and ironic.

### II. **Tone Vocabulary Words**

Study the list of tone vocabulary words. Thoroughly familiarize yourself with these words. You will need them to complete the exercises in this unit. Tone analysis is also an important element of the literary analysis assignments on the AP English Language and Composition Test.

### III. **Tone Practice Activities**

1. **Activity #1 – Language Categorization**. Use the tone vocabulary list to categorize the language in the passages. One or more "tone" adjective may apply.
2. **Activity #2 – Images and Tone**. Use the tone vocabulary list to evaluate the speaker's attitude based on the images in the passages. One or more "tone" adjective may apply.

### IV. **Tone and Attitude Assessment**

Tone and Attitude Sentences. Having studied and applied the tone vocabulary, students identify the tone and attitude displayed in the passages, without using notes or the vocabulary list. One or more "tone" adjective may apply.

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## Tone Vocabulary Words

1. **allusive** – intimate, suggest, connote
2. **angry** – mad, furious, irate
3. **bantering** – good-natured teasing, ridicule, joking
4. **benevolent** – magnanimous, generous, noble
5. **burlesque** – mockery, sham, spoof, parody
6. **candid** – clear, frank, genuine, sincere
7. **clinical** - direct, detached, scientific, impersonal
8. **colloquial** -common – ordinary, vernacular
9. **compassionate** – kindly, sympathetic, benevolent
10. **complimentary** – flattering, approving, laudatory
11. **concerned** – touched, affected, influenced
12. **condescending** – scornful, contemptuous, disdainful
13. **confident** – positive, certain, assured
14. **contemptuous** – pompous, arrogant, superior, haughty
15. **contentious** – argumentative, quarrelsome, pugnacious
16. **cynical** – adverse, suspicious, opposed, doubtful, dubious
17. **detached** – separated, severed, apathetic
18. **didactic** – pointed, bombastic, pompous, terse
19. **diffident** – retiring, timid, hesitant, bashful
20. **disdainful** – haughty, arrogant, supercilious
21. **dramatic** – exciting, moving, sensational, emotional
22. **effusive** – talkative, verbose, profuse
23. **elegiac** – sad, mournful, plaintive (like an elegy)
24. **factious** – dissident, rebellious, insubordinate
25. **factual** – authentic, genuine, truthful
26. **fanciful** – capricious, extravagant, whimsical
27. **flippant** – offhand, facetious, frivolous
28. **impartial** – equitable, unbiased, dispassionate
29. **incisive** – cutting, biting, penetrating
30. **indignant** – angry, irritated, resentful
31. **inflammatory** – irritate, arouse, resentful
32. **informative** – acquaint, communicate, disclose
33. **insipid** – flat, bland, tedious, banal (commonplace)
34. **insolent** – insulting, brazen, rude, contemptuous
35. **ironic** – contradictory, implausible, incongruous

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36. **irreverent** – profane, impious, blasphemous, ungodly
37. **learned** – skilled, experienced, professional
38. **lugubrious** – gloomy, dismal, melancholy, somber
39. **maudlin** – sentimental, mushy, gushing, insipid
40. **mock-heroic** – mimicking courage (pretend)
41. **mock-serious** – mimicking solemnity (pretend)
42. **moralistic** – virtuous, righteous, blameless
43. **objective** – impartial, detached, impersonal
44. **patronizing** – condescending, scornful, disdainful
45. **pedantic** – academic, bookish, scholastic
46. **petty** – trivial, insignificant, narrow-minded
47. **pretentious** – arrogant, boastful, conceited
48. **restrained** – unwilling, hesitant, reluctant
49. **sardonic** – cutting, biting, penetrating, satirical
50. **satiric** – lampooning, facetious
51. **scornful** – bitter, caustic, acrimonious, mordant
52. **sentimental** – emotional, mushy, maudlin (tearful)
53. **somber** – serious, gloomy, dismal, shadowy
54. **sympathetic** – supportive, favorable, considerate
55. **taunting** – contemptuous, insulting, derisive
56. **terse** – concise, succinct, pithy, pointed
57. **turgid** – pompous, bloated, swollen, distended
58. **urgent** – compelling, demanding, imperative, pressing
59. **vibrant** – resonant, active, resounding
60. **whimsical** – flippant, frivolous, light-hearted, dainty

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## Tone Activity #1 Language Categorization

Use the tone vocabulary list to categorize the language in the passages. One or more “tone” adjective may apply.

1. “When I told Dad how I’d blown the exam, he literally blew his top.”  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. “There was a constable on point duty just where we stopped, and he came over and lifted the bonnet and made ineffectual motions with a spanner. And then – what do you think? We found we were out of petrol!”  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. “We don’t keep nothing like that here, but maybe we could order it for you special. Not in a hurry for it, was you?”  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. “I had him on the ropes in the fourth, and if one of those short rights of mine had connected, he’d have gone down for the count. I was aiming for his glass jaw, but I couldn’t seem to reach it.”  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. “A close examination and correction of the most reliable current economics indexes justifies the conclusion that the next year will witness a continuation of the present, upward market trend, though this may be accomplished by seasonal fluctuations in respect to certain areas of the economy.”  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. “We were loading hay in the west forty when we saw the twister in the distance.”  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. “Both the Oriental romance and the picaresque narrative have been favorite vehicles for the satirist, the romance because it permits a handy and vivid way of contrasting western manners with those of a vary different culture, the picaresque tale because the hero’s adventuresome career, spiced as it is with all sorts of roguery, gives an excellent excuse for pungent comment on the errant ways of mankind.”  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. “The female operatives in this mill seemed well content with their lot, laughing and singing as they emerged at the end of the day.”  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. “The ominous final movement begins with a toccata in the horns, punctuated by glissando effects in the timpani, and then develops, in the middle section, into a lyrical coda.”  
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**Tone Activity #2**  
**Images and Tone**

Evaluate the author or speaker's attitude based on these short images.

1. My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun.  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king.  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. He clasps the crag with crooked hands.  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The holy time is quiet as a Nun, Breathless with adoration.  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. If I should die, think only this of me – That there's a corner of a foreign field that is forever England.  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. If we must die, let it not be like hogs – Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot.  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Love sets you going like a fat golden watch.  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Up vistaed hopes I sped and shot precipitated adown titanic glooms of chasmed fears.  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Smiling, the boy fell dead.  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. You do me wrong to take me out of the grave  
Thou art a soul in bliss  
But I am bound upon a wheel of fire  
That mine own tears do scald like molten lead.  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Know then thyself, presume not God to scan  
The proper study of mankind is Man.  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Here lies one whose name was writ in water.  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Life is just one damned thing after another.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Tone and Attitude Assessment**

Identify the tone and attitude displayed in the passages. One or more "tone" adjective may apply.

1. Roger's house was filled with many breathtaking items including a hand-made wooden stairway stained with gorgeous black lacquer.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The garrulous woman chatted with the man for hours about nothing until he finally left and the woman continued gabbing.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Sara saw them all, deep in discussion, and mourned for them. She knew that they were all beyond redemption and that she was the only one able to achieve it.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Anna couldn't help but look at the magnificent dress Karen had picked for the dance. Its tiny detailed beads glimmered in the light.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you take my car without my permission? Tell me!  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Jimbo received an "F" on his test, for he had not studied, read, or put any sort of effort into preparing for his midterm exam.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Jessica knew she would get the job. She had worked hard and gained respect for her efforts.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. "Here's Johnny!" yelled Jack Nicholson with a disturbed smile, as he madly chopped the door with an ax.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Jack turned quickly toward his accuser with a resentful glare in his eyes and angrily denied the charge.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. After having to waste her Friday night babysitting her little brother, Maria stormed upstairs and slammed her bedroom door.  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. I did not favor one candidate during the presidential election, keeping an open mind and giving each candidate an equal chance at winning my vote.  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. John surveyed his classmates, standing humbly to accept his congratulations for receiving the highest grade on the test.  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. I must be sooo much smarter than these characters here in class. I mean I scored like 2 points higher than them on that ever so difficult exam.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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14. The group of dismal students sat quietly in the principal's office. It was apparent from their gloomy expressions that they were the ones to blame.

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15. I noticed the revenge in Todd's eyes. Tod was going to take this opportunity to humiliate all of his backstabbing "friends."

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16. All the other kids got what they wanted, but there was no gift for Fred on that lonely day.

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17. The middle-aged woman sat upright in her corset, raised a condescending eyebrow, and tilted her nose in the air while she smirked at the girl's obvious lack of knowledge.

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18. The student knew she had failed the important test. Her outlook on her once bright future was spiraling into a deep, dark oblivion and any attempt to revive it was shrouded in a heavy cloak of futility.

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19. The room was draped in black and the mourners filled it with the din of sadness that often accompanies the death of someone. At the front of the room lay the coffin, large and open, looming over the living occupants of the church.

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20. After Bill politely let the old lady waddle ahead of him, he appreciated a good slam in the forehead from the door that she effortlessly ignored to hold.

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21. The rebel orator had whipped the crowd into frenzy and the mob's shouts rose to a crescendo, reverberating against the temple walls and shaking the ground under their feet.

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22. The air was frigid cold. The streets were abandoned as John idled on. A gray deadness filled the air. The only sound was his rhythmic breathing.

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23. Martha paced the floor, wringing her hands as she looked searchingly out the window at the black space, wondering what could have happened.

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24. Pam had not talked to anyone all day, which was unlike her. She walked with her head down and a slight frown. And to release all that was built up inside her, she cried.

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25. She peered out the window with a blank, unblinking stare as she quietly sipped the milk.

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26. The mastery of his hands worked steadily with such professional confidence that the result of his work was nothing less than the highest quality expected.

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27. The mother watched as the scene unfolded before her eyes, which were full of tears. The car door closed and she felt the finality as her daughter turned the key and drove down the road, leaving for college.

\_\_\_\_\_

28. He stood towering over me. He always loved to patronize me. I hate it when he gets that condescending, scornful look in his eyes.

\_\_\_\_\_

29. A group of gray and black clouds overtook the sky and cried their tears of rain forming muddy puddles throughout the lonely park.

\_\_\_\_\_

30. Through Maria's narrow-minded eyes, she repeated the same trivial tasks that clouded her days with insignificance.

\_\_\_\_\_

31. I'm not sure if my idea will work – it seems like it might fall apart if the slightest thing goes wrong – I just don't know!

\_\_\_\_\_

32. As the woman glanced up at her lover, she found him gazing deeply into her dark green eyes.

\_\_\_\_\_

33. The man flew into the room, unable to speak. He began to stutter, only saying a few words. With no success, he ran to the phone and attempted to dial; trembling, he fainted.

\_\_\_\_\_

34. The dispassionate judge remained unaffected by the intense emotion that gripped the courtroom.

\_\_\_\_\_

35. The small boy was helpless to defend himself against the brutal attack of the bullies.

\_\_\_\_\_

36. The party is at my house (by the crossroads of 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Shea). You will be bringing the chips, Susie the drinks, and I'll have the pizza, but don't bring too much since the party is only two hours long.

\_\_\_\_\_

37. As she watched her mother run after her, Amy smiled as she hopped on the back of her boyfriend's motorcycle.

\_\_\_\_\_

38. Your new house is so colorful and modern. Maybe you could decorate my house, too.

\_\_\_\_\_

39. The man's insulting phrases set her temper off; he used vicious and contemptuous words to which she could not help but react.

\_\_\_\_\_

40. Air rushed by his face as he pranced through the meadow without a care in the world.

\_\_\_\_\_



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41. The students' love of the novel was only exceeded by their passion for George Strait.

\_\_\_\_\_

42. Steve could not believe the blunder that his dim-witted coworkers had made and did not let them leave without making sure they knew it.

\_\_\_\_\_

43. The creator is clearly ambidextrous and the project shows great attention to detail.

\_\_\_\_\_

44. "So," my brother laughed as he mischievously stole a glance at my aunt, "just how much money did you put in my Christmas card?"

\_\_\_\_\_

45. By eliminating covalence inhibitors, we may facilitate the bonding of glucose and other simple sugars in the frosting vats, thus creating the so-called "super donut."

\_\_\_\_\_

46. Stephanie's eyes bulged out from her dimpled cheeks as she surveyed the remnants of the greasy pizza box, which moments before had been meant for her whole family.

\_\_\_\_\_

47. He easily opened his heart, truthfully depicting his past torments and present learnings.

\_\_\_\_\_

48. He paced back and forth with madness as he furiously fidgeted with his hands, trying to find a solution to an irritating situation.

\_\_\_\_\_

49. I can't believe that my buddy was flirting with my girlfriend, when he knew she and I had been dating for six months!

\_\_\_\_\_

50. No, you cannot come with us. You're only a kid.

\_\_\_\_\_