

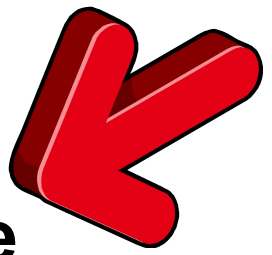
Author's Tone

CCPS / adapted from Jane Henderson

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What is an author's tone?





What is an author's tone?



Tone indicates the writer's attitude. Often an author's tone is described by adjectives, such as: **cynical**, **depressed**, **sympathetic**, **cheerful**, **outraged**, **positive**, **angry**, **sarcastic**, **prayerful**, **ironic**, **solemn**, **vindictive**, **intense**, **excited**.

**Tone is not an action.
It is an attitude.**

Real-life Example

You can say the same phrase in different ways, each showing a different attitude or tone.

Try saying, “Come here, Sally” using the following tones:

- Commanding or bossy
- Secretive
- Loving
- Angry
- Excited
- Playful

Tone is not explained
or expressed directly.

A reader must
“read between the lines”
to feel the author’s attitude
and identify the tone.

Tone is different than “Mood.”

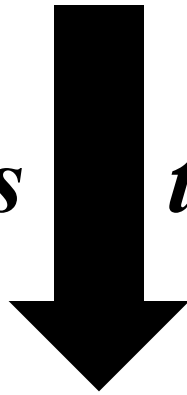
Tone is the **author's** own attitude toward the subject.

Mood is the emotion the author wanted the **readers** to feel while reading about the subject.

An author's tone
influences the text's
message/purpose.

Author's Tone

leads to



Texts's Message & Purpose

Literary Examples of Author's Tones...

Serious / Solemn

“The girl remembered little from the raid at Okeadan in which she had been captured. She knew her parents had been killed. She had no idea what had happened to her brothers and sisters. Much of what she had experienced had been so horrible that she had simply shut it out of her mind. . . .”

At Her Majesty's Request p. 17



Serious / Solemn

“The girl remembered
at C

This author's serious **tone** inspires an atmosphere of tragedy. This leads to a **mood** of sadness, sympathy, and caring in the reader when reading this passage:

... what had
her brothers and sisters.
Much of what she had experienced had been so horrible that she had simply shut it out of her mind. . . .”

At Her Majesty's Request p. 17



Sarcastic

“Just look at the Titanic. The captain said, ‘Even God can’t sink this ship.’ Then, on the first voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, boom, it hit an iceberg and sank. And as soon as a daredevil utters the words ‘piece of cake’ before attempting a stunt, he is doomed. ‘Piece of cake’ becomes his ‘famous last words.’ ...”



Brother's Arm p. 111-2

Sarcastic

“Just look at the Titanic. The captain said,

‘Even God can’t sink me.’

first voyage.

This author’s **sarcastic tone** inspires a slightly humorous atmosphere in spite of tragedy.

This puts the reader in a **cynical mood**.

... as soon as a

attempting a stunt, he is doomed.

‘Piece of cake’ becomes his ‘famous last words.’ ...”



Brother's Arm p. 111-2

Humorous



“When he realized he was still in one piece, he knew that at the very least he must be completely flat, with his face peering out of his own bottom and his brains leaking out of his ears. . . .”

Toad Heaven p. 64

Humorous



“When he

This author’s humorous **tone** inspires a comic atmosphere. This leads to a playful **mood** in the reader. This leads to a playful reader identify with and care about the **characters.** (It also helps the

characters.)

breaking out

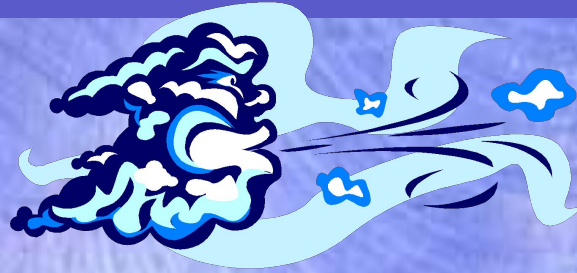
Toad Heaven p. 64

Objective / Impersonal



“By nightfall on Monday, the center of the storm had barely moved, and icy winds of hurricane force swept across an area from Virginia up to Nova Scotia, Canada. The wind was so powerful that in Liberty, New York, the local train station had its roof entirely ripped off ...”

Objective / Impersonal



“By nightfall on Monday, the blizzard had become a snowstorm.

This author’s impersonal **tone** inspires a serious atmosphere, typical of nonfiction (such as news reports). The **mood** for this piece might be considered **studious or academic**.

...so powerful that in ... the local train station had its roof completely ripped off ...”



Enthusiastic



“ . . . the next minute, Winn-Dixie looked like a furry bullet, shooting across the building, chasing that mouse. He was barking and his feet were skidding all over the polished Pick-It-Quick floor, and people were clapping and hollering and pointing. They really went wild when Winn-Dixie actually caught the mouse.”



Enthusiastic



“... the next minute Winn-Dixie
furry ball of joy.”

This author's enthusiastic **tone** inspires an active, lively atmosphere. The author hopes to influence the readers to be in an excited **mood**, anticipating **more action**.

... polished
... and people were clapping
... nollering and pointing. They really went
wild when Winn-Dixie actually caught the
mouse.”



Hostile / Angry

“Dana grinned malevolently. His teeth were nubby and yellow, like an old barn dog’s. Kneeling on Roy’s chest, he hauled back to hit him again.”

Hoot p. 184



Hostile / Angry

This author's angry **tone** inspires a violent atmosphere. The author may be hoping to inspire a tense and uneasy **mood** in the reader, emphasizing the conflicts in the story.

“With a chest, he hauled back and hit him again.”

“We’d gone a quarter mile down the trail when we ran into a man walking the wrong way. He had a pack on his back – a full, towering, overstuffed pack – and he was sweating hard. His breath sounded like a bellows. I stepped aside to let him pass. I stared. I knew that he was one of the ones who hadn’t made it, who’d quit right there at the start.”

Disapproving



“We’d gone a quarter mile down the trail when we ran into a man walking the wrong way. He had a pack on his back – a full one.”

Disapproving

This author’s disapproving **tone** sets up a competitive atmosphere, leading to a judgmental **mood** in the reader. It also helps the reader appreciate the accomplishments of the characters.

...one of the ones who hadn’t made it, who’d quit right there at the start.”





Personal

“I feel alive for the first time in years,” said Faber. “I feel I’m doing what I should’ve done a lifetime ago. For a little while I’m not afraid. Maybe it’s because I’m doing the right thing at last . . .”

Fahrenheit 451 p. 131



Personal

“I feel alive f

This author's personal **tone** leads to an atmosphere of emotional expression and revelation. The author hopes to set a **mood** of confidentiality and sharing in the readers, helping them to understand and care about the characters. **cause I'm doing the right thing at last . . .** said.

Fahrenheit 451 p. 131

Corny

It sounds clichéd
But at times like this,
I miss my dad.
I mean,
I don't remember him –
he died of cancer when I was three.
Pictures
are all that's left.
My favorite one is
us sitting on a bench, eating ice cream.
Our knees are knobby the same way,
we're both grinning like hyenas,
he's pointing at the camera.

I haven't had a dad in twelve years.
Most of the time,
that's okay.
But today,
right now,
I'd like a hug.
From him.

Shark Girl, Kelly Bingham

Grieving



Corny

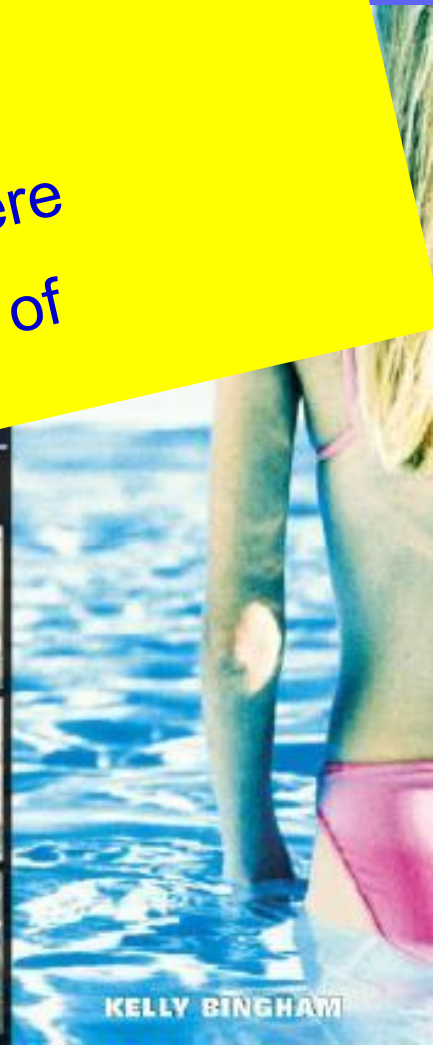
It sounds clichéd
But at times like this,
I miss my dad.
I mean,
I don't remember him –
he died of cancer when I was 11.
Pictures
are all that's left.
My father's face is everywhere.

Grieving

Poets often “bare their souls” in their poems.
This poet's grieving **tone** reveals her deepest
feelings about her father, creating an atmosphere
of sadness and longing. This inspires a **mood** of
sympathy and caring in the readers.

I miss you.
My father died 11 years ago.
But today,
right now,
I'd like a hug.
From him.

Shark Girl, Kelly Bingham



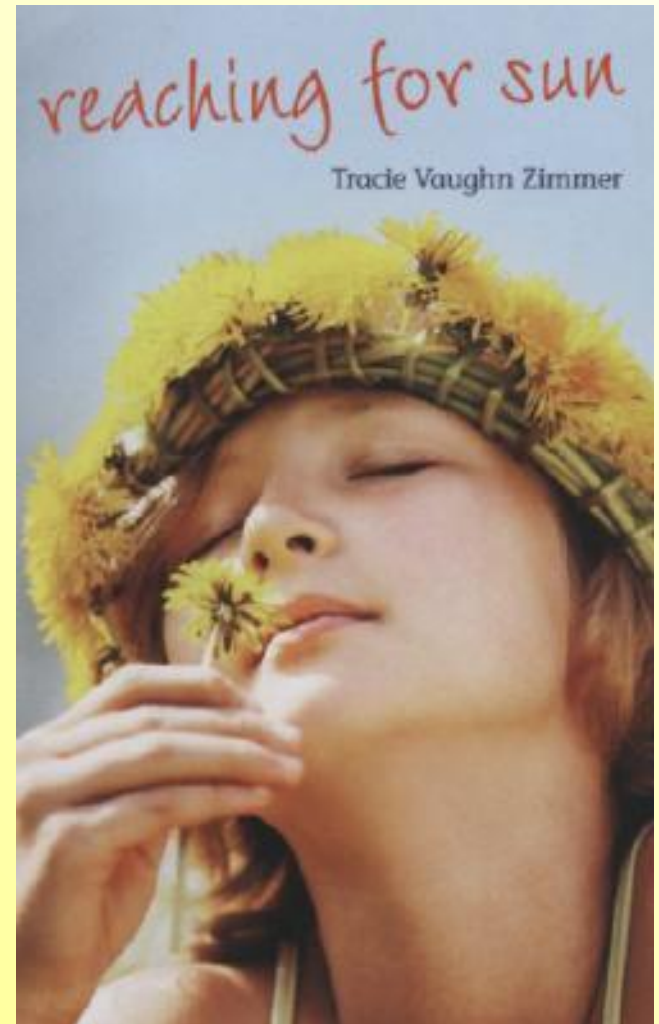
KELLY BINGHAM

Indifferent

Flicker

A maid cleans.
A crew cuts the lawn.
Even the groceries get delivered.
Jordan's dad is home, for once,
but he barely lifts his head
from his laptop to meet me.
His eyes
flicker in surprise,
but he slams
his attention back to the screen
and coughs to dismiss us.

Reaching for Sun,
Tracie Vaughn Zimmer



Indifferent

Flicker

A maid cleans.

A crew cuts the lawn.

Even the

This poet's indifferent **tone** creates an impersonal, possibly uncaring atmosphere. This causes an emotionally empty **mood** in the reader. It allows the reader to understand why the speaker in the

poem may be depressed.
and coughs to dismiss us.

Reaching for Sun, Tracie Vaughn Zimmer



Examples of Tone

- **Cautious**
- **Humorous**
- **Affectionate**
- **Hostile**
- **Critical**
- **Objective**
- **Personal**
- **Violent**
- **Solemn / Serious**
- **Sarcastic**
- **Disapproving**
- **Enthusiastic**
- **Desperate**
- **Pleading**
- **Indifferent**

The next time you read a passage,
try to identify the author's tone.

It will help you
“get the message”
of the text.

ANALYZE THE TONE OF THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE:

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

“There was a steaming mist in all the hollows, and it had roamed in its forlornness up the hill, like an evil spirit, seeking rest and finding none. A clammy and intensely cold mist, it made its slow way through the air in ripples that visibly followed and overspread one another, as the waves of an unwholesome sea might do. It was dense enough to shut out everything from the light of the coach-lamps but these its own workings, and a few yards of road; and the reek of the labouring horses steamed into it, as if they had made it all.”

TONAL SCALE

× Now, place that word on a tonal scale using synonyms and some non-synonyms.

Tone Word:				
Positive		Neutral		Negative

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