

Author's Tone

CCPS /

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**

Examples of Tone

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

**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 story's
mood and atmosphere.

An Author's Tone

leads to



Story's Atmosphere & Mood

Example:

An author writes a horror story using a **serious and sinister** tone.

That **tone** helps create a **scary atmosphere and a nervous, frightened** mood for the readers.

Another Example:

An author writes a satire, making fun of a horror story using a **playful or sarcastic tone**.

That **playful tone** helps create a **humorous mood** for the readers.

Literary Examples of Authors' Tones...

PRACTICE

Fold notebook paper into a modified (holes showing) hotdog

Fold again as a hotdog

Trace vertical folds

Write headings across top of each column

CARD #

Author's TONE

inspires ATMOSPHERE

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 O...

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.

... had
... others and sisters.
... for 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



PRACTICE

1. Fold a piece of notebook paper into a (modified) hotdog
2. Fold original hotdog into a narrower hotdog
3. Draw lines to trace vertical folds creating 4 columns
4. Write following words as headers at top of each column

CARD #

Author's TONE

Creates TYPE of ATMOSPHERE

MOOD inspired in Reader

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.’ ...”

My Brother's Arm p. 111-2



Sarcastic

“Just look at the Titanic. The captain said, ‘Even God can’t sink the Titanic on its 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 a ‘piece of cake’ becomes his ‘famous last words.’ ...”

My 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

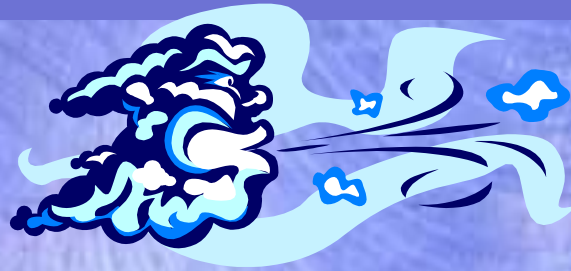
Humorous



“Wh
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.)

Breaking out

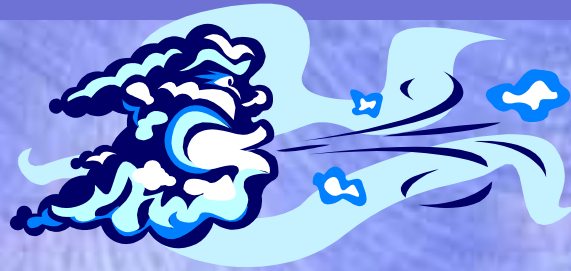
Objective / Impersonal



“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 ...”

Blizzard p . 56

Objective / Impersonal



“By nightfall on Monday
barely a snowflake had

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.

... powerful that in
... local train station had its roof
... off ...”

Blizzard p . 56

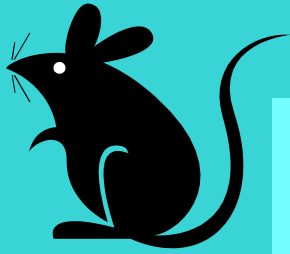


Enthusiastic



“ . . . 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.”

Because of Winn-Dixie p. 36



Enthusiastic



“ . . . the next minute
furry ball”

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.

When Winn-Dixie actually caught the mouse.”

Because of Winn-Dixie p. 36



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.

...dog's.
...nest, he hauled back
...again."

Hoot p. 184

“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.”

Halfway to the Sky p. 32

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, top-heavy pack. He was carrying a pack full of supplies, and he was walking the wrong way. He was walking the wrong way.”

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.

the ones who didn’t make 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...”

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.

...at last...”

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 twelve.

Pictures
are all that
I have left.

I
M
the
But today,
right now,
I'd like a hug.
From him.

Shark Girl, Kelly Bingham

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.



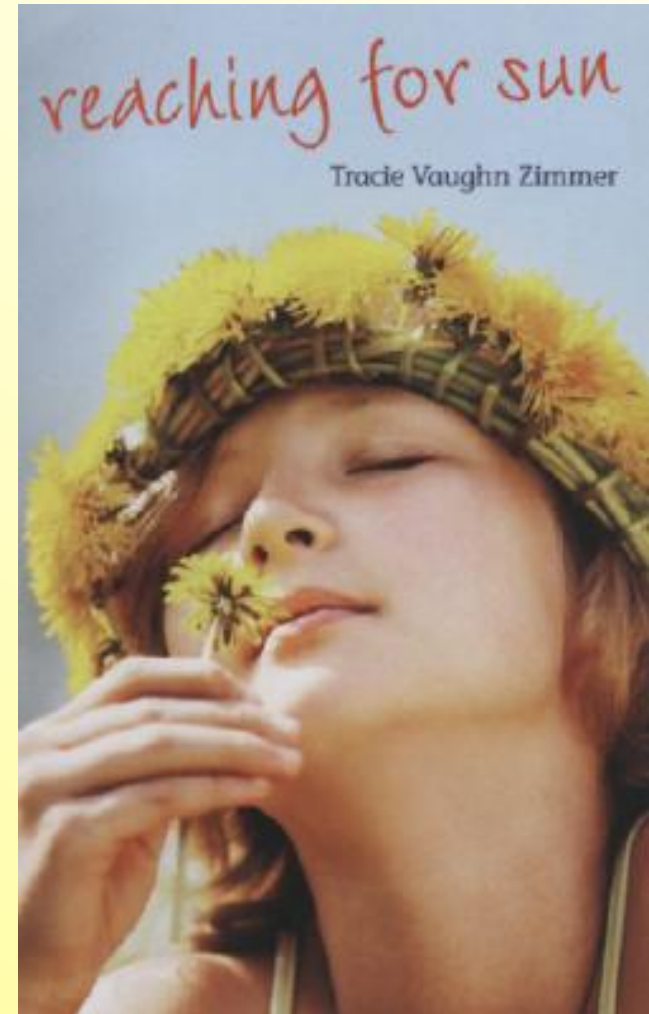
KELLY BINGHAM

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.

Return back to the screen
and coughs to dismiss us.

Reaching for Sun, Tracie Vaughn Zimmer



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

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

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