**Tone**

The analysis of tone evaluates the speaker’s attitude toward 1) the subject and 2) the audience. Often a correct interpretation of tone in written work is the same as being able to interpret the meaning.

Shifts in Tone

As you grow more aware of tone, you will discover that good writers rarely stick with one tone. Sifts in tone are often cued by the following

 • Key words (but, yet, nevertheless, however, although)

 • Punctuation (dashes, periods, colons)

 • Stanza and paragraph divisions

 • Changes in line and stanza or sentence length

 • Sharp contrasts in word choices

Tone Vocabulary

To be effective at analyzing someone else’s writing, use these words to describe the tone of the work:

Acerbic Condescending Enthusiastic Laudatory Resigned

Ambivalent Confident Exultant Mocking Respectful

Angry Confused Facetious Moralistic Restrained

Anxious Contemplative Fanciful Nostalgic Reverent

Apologetic Contemptuous Flippant Objective Sardonic

Apprehensive Conversational Frivolous Ominous Satiric

Argumentative Contentious Giddy Passionate Scornful

Bantering Cynical Guarded Patronizing Sentimental

Benevolent Defamatory Harsh Peaceful Smug

Bitter Despairing Horrific Pedantic Skeptical

Callous Detached Humorous Pejorative Somber

Candid Didactic Indifferent Poignant Strident

Capricious Disappointed Inflammatory Pretentious Sympathetic

Childish Disdainful Ironic Provocative Taunting

Clinical Dramatic Irreverent Reflective Trenchant

Compassionate Effusive Joking Reminiscent Urgent

Concerned Empathetic Joyful Remorseful Vibrant

Conciliatory Resentful Whimsical