

Student Recognizes the Author's Tone

The "author's tone" is the attitude or feeling that the author presents to the reader.

Knowing what the tone is can help you understand the author's purpose.

An author's feelings and attitudes greatly influence their choice of words.

Authors choose words to create an emotion, feeling or attitude which can influence the reader.

Learn the meanings of "tone words" so you can correctly identify the tone of a passage. Check the list below. Look up any unfamiliar words in a dictionary and learn their meaning. Learning the meanings of tone words is the key to choosing the right answer!!!

Common Words Used to Describe Tone

absurd	ambivalent	amused	angry	apathetic	arrogant	bitter	
caustic	cheerful	comic					
compassionate	condemning	condescending	critical	cynical	depressed	detached	
distressed	earnest	excited					
formal	frustrated	ghoulish	grim	hard	impassioned	indignant	
intense	ironic	irreverent					
joyous	loving	malicious	mocking	nostalgic	objective	optimistic	o
utraged	outspoken	pessimistic					
playful	reverent	ridiculous	righteous	satiric	serious	solemn	s
traightforward		sympathetic					
tragic	vindictive						

Examples of tone:

If anyone thinks that legalizing drugs would solve the problem of drug abuse in this country, they are deluding themselves. Giving kids more opportunities to legally use drugs would only cause the problem to become more pervasive and more destructive to our society. (Tone: critical)

My best friend died last week in a car crash. She was the kindest person I have ever known, someone I will never forget. I miss her terribly. (Tone: sorrowful)

Your child can't read? Can't do math? Well, maybe he or she has been spending too much time in school and not enough watching television! Kids in school aren't learning anything anyway, so they might as well be home watching TV. (Tone: sarcastic or ironic)

Practice Questions

Choose the tone for each of the passages:

There are millions of starving people over the world who would gladly do a day's work in order to satisfy their hunger. They would dig holes, pick crops, plant seeds, pull weeds, even climb through sewers if it meant being fed. But where they live there is no work to do, and as a result, there is no money to buy food, and there is no

food to buy. If we are going to solve the problem of world hunger, we must first attack the problem through economics. The most effective way to reduce hunger is to produce a thriving economy, which is based upon the production of goods and services.

1. The author's tone is:

- a. malicious
- b. nostalgic
- c. earnest
- d. caustic

When a bank was robbed recently by a Florida man, the police had no trouble tracking down their devious suspect. Rather than get caught with cash, the robber "cleverly" asked the teller to have the funds made out in the form of a check written to himself. Of course, the bank teller asked to see his driver's license, just to make sure she put the right name on the check. He pulled out his license and gave it to her! She smiled back and wrote the check in the amount he demanded, one hundred thousand dollars. An hour later the police picked him up as he was driving his car. After all, the bank robber had provided all the information they needed!

2. The author's tone is:

- a. irreverent
- b. condescending
- c. indignant
- d. amused

Oh God! What could I do? I foamed-I raved-I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder-louder-louder! (Edgar Allan Poe, *The Tell-Tale Heart*)

3. The author's tone is:

- a. terrified
- b. satiric
- c. reverent
- d. grim

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well-nursed is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout. (Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*)

4. The author's tone is:

- a. detached
- b. outspoken
- c. sarcastic
- d. distressed

Have you all gone completely mad? How can you even think of adding another tax onto the already unbearable burden that so many middle and lower class Americans must endure? This insanity must be stopped! We are not a feudal society living in slavery to support the lord of the manor! We are individuals with unalienable rights to the pursuit of happiness. Even the thought of increasing taxes makes my blood boil!

5. The author's tone is:

- a. condescending
- b. outraged
- c. tragic
- d. optimistic

Answers:

1. Choice c: earnest. The author is sincere in his tone and indicates his concern about world hunger by saying, *"If we are going to solve the problem of world hunger, we must first attack the problem through economics."*

2. Choice d: amused. The author's little anecdote about the stupidity of the robber who showed his driver's license to the teller makes an amusing story.

3. Choice a: terrified. The character's actions indicate a state of panic as indicated by, *"Oh God! What could I do? I foamed-I raved-I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased."*

4. Choice c: sarcastic. The author is ridiculing the idea that a child at one year old is, *"a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food..."*

5. Choice b: outraged. The author's phrases show his attitude about raising taxes, as in, *"Even the thought of increasing taxes makes my blood boil!"*

Remember: Choosing the correct answer in a tone word question requires that you know the meanings of each of the tone words offered. Learn their meanings!