








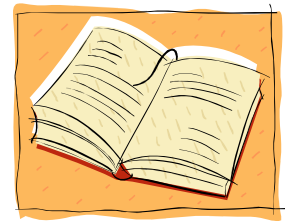


# TONE

-  **Tone** is defined as the writer's or speaker's attitude toward a subject. Identifying a writer's tone is often key to figuring out his or her themes.
-  A reader's ability to identify diction (word choice), details, imagery, language, and sentence structure all contribute to his or her understanding of the **tone**.
-  "**Tone** words" (the words we use to identify an author's attitude) are adjectives. Attached is a list of potential tone words to provide you a basic "**tone** vocabulary." This list is by no means complete, though; these words are merely suggestions to help you think about an author's tone.
-  **Tone** can change throughout a piece of writing. The following are often clues that there has been a shift in the reading:
  -  Transition words such as but, yet, nevertheless, however, although
  -  Unusual punctuation marks like dashes
  -  A noticeable division in the paragraph or stanza
  -  A change in line, sentence, or stanza length
  -  A sharp change in diction



## Basic elements of tone:

There are five elements of a writer's style that you should analyze when attempting to identify tone in writing: diction, imagery, details, language, and sentence structure (DIDLS).

<b><u>Diction:</u></b>	Simply stated, diction is defined as word choice. What words does the writer use? What do those words mean? Most importantly, what is the connotation (the "feeling" associated with the word)? For example, compare "The father was angry with his daughter" to "The father was furious with his daughter." Furious carries a "heavier" connotation and more accurately conveys the level of emotion involved. Consider the school hallways. One person could describe the hallways as a bustling community of students. Another person would say that the hallways are congested routes of frustration. What tone is implied by each?
<b><u>Imagery:</u></b>	Often called sensory imagery, this type of descriptive language appeals to the five senses to paint a vivid "picture" in the reader's mind. That scene usually reveals a lot about the writer's attitude. "The teacher leaned casually against the cool, smooth wall observing the bustling community of students passing before her. She secretly smiled as she watched the boys stride by attempting to look confident and cool so they could impress the girls who were walking behind them, trying not to get caught watching them. Moments later, she sighed wistfully, recalling her own days as a care-free 16-year old, as she watched girls strolling by giggling secrets to one another." Conversely, "The senior scowled as she stomped her way through the hallways in the 400 wing of the building. Trying to get to her English class, she grumbled under her breath, muttering to herself that she'd love to rid her path of freshmen by shoving each and every one of them out of her way."

<p><b>Details:</b></p>	<p>Very simply, details are what the writer chooses to include or omit. Imagine two mothers are talking to their teenage daughters about a trip the daughter is planning with her friends. They want to go downtown. One talks about Millennium Park, Navy Pier, shopping on North Michigan Avenue, the view from the Willis Tower. Another, however, describes homeless people begging for money, the foul alleys, the confusing public transportation system, and the expense of the entire trip. Based on what details each decides to include, what are their attitudes?</p>
<p><b>Language:</b></p>	<p>The overall “type” of language a writer uses can establish tone, particularly toward his or her audience. Colloquial language is usually used in informal writing situations and creates a conversational tone in the writing. Everyday spoken language gives a piece a casual, relaxed effect and is often used by modern writers. It creates a realistic dialog and can even incorporate dialect. Colloquial language is used when a writer is trying to achieve informality. Example: “Man, adults <i>are clueless about</i> what is important to the younger generation.” Formal language can also be used in a piece. This is usually phrased in “proper” English and implies a more serious attitude toward a situation. Example: “Adults may not be aware of what is important to the younger generation.” Language can be many other things. It can be condescending, scientific, clinical, etc.</p>
<p><b>Sentence Structure:</b></p>	<p>The length and order of a sentence can also establish tone. Asking questions of the audience can create either tension or a sense of familiarity. Long, flowing sentences generally convey relaxation and thoughtfulness. Short, abrupt sentences establish tension or anger. “As her alarm clock sounded softly on the nightstand beside him, William reached over, pressing the snooze button as he yawned and began to open his eyes.” Conversely, “Karen woke with a start. Her room was silent but bright with the morning sun. She looked at the clock. 8:00 a.m.! She had to hurry!”</p>

