

# Tone vs. Mood

## Exercises: Review

**Mood** is the emotions that you feel while you are reading. Some literature makes you feel sad, others joyful, still others, angry. The main purpose for some poems is to set a mood.

**Tone** is the attitude that an author takes toward the audience, the subject, or the character. Tone is conveyed through the author's words and details.

"**Tone**" is the author's attitude toward a subject while "**mood**" is the emotion created (and usually experienced by the reader/audience) due to the author's **tone**. For example, a sarcastic **tone** from a child (author) can often create anger in the parent (audience). For example, contempt for the subject and arrogance toward the audience will be revealed in a scathing or sarcastic **tone** which, in turn, creates a **mood** of pain, anger, sadness, revulsion or contempt in the audience. When detecting and discussing **tone**, answers will be similar (except in satire when it is easy to miss the **tone**), but when discussing **mood**, they depend on the reaction of each member of the audience. What makes one angry may make another pity, etc.

**Tone** emanates from an author's attitude toward his subject; the reader needs to recognize how the narrator's emotions toward the subject should color his own response to the text. **Mood** results more from the author/narrator's intention to produce an emotional response in the reader to what is going on in the text; thus the reader needs to recognize how (s)he is supposed to feel as opposed to what the narrator is feeling.

### Examples

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher

**Tone:** melancholic and somber (Atmosphere: oppressive)

**Content** (what) clues: At dusk on a cloudy autumn day, a solitary horseman passes an isolated house.

**Style** (how) clues: diction, (dull, dark oppressive, dreary, melancholy); syntax: highly descriptive, complex sentences; long vowels (reads slowly), alliterative, assonant

**Now, what is the mood???**

A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments, and gray steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

**Tone:**

Content (what) clues:

Style (how) clues:

**More examples...with the class**

1. Bouncing into the room, she lit up the vicinity with a joyous glow on her face as she told about her fiancé and their wedding plans.
2. She huddled in the corner, clutching her tattered blanket and shaking convulsively, as she feverishly searched the room for the unknown dangers that awaited her.
3. She lay on the couch in a white evening dress, whispering softly in the ear of her fiancé, running her fingers through his hair and gently nibbling his earlobe.
4. Bursting through the door, the flustered mother screamed uncontrollably at the innocent teacher who gave her child an F.
5. Drawing the attention of his classmates as well as his teacher, the student dared to experiment with his professor's intelligence by interrogating him about the Bible.
6. He furtively glanced behind him, for fear of his imagined pursuers, then hurriedly walked on, jumping at the slightest sound even of a leaf crackling under his own foot.
7. Gently smiling, her mother tenderly tucked the covers up around the child's neck, and carefully, quietly, let the room making sure to leave a comforting ray of light shining through the opened door should the child awake.
8. The laughing wind skipped through the village, teasing trees until they danced with anger and cajoling the grass into fighting itself, blade slapping blade, as the silly dog with golfball eyes and flopping, slobbery tongue bounded across the lawn.

### **Tone Analysis Passages**

The vacant ice looked through it shouldn't have. They told him it had been put down only ten minutes ago following a basketball game, and ten minutes after the hockey match it would be taken up again to make room for something else.

But it looked not expectant but resigned, like the mirror simulating ice in the Xmas store window, not before the miniature fir trees and reindeer and cozy lamplit cottage were arranged upon it, but after they had been dismantled and cleared away.

#### **Tone:**

Content (what) clues:

Style (how) clues: ice personified

In my young years I took pride in the fact that luck was called a lady. In fact, there were so few public acknowledgments of the female presence that I felt personally honored whenever nature and large ships were referred to as a feminine. But as I matured, I began to resent being considered a sister to a changeling as fickle as luck, as aloof as an ocean, and as frivolous as nature.

#### **Tone:**

Content (what) clues:

Style (how) clues:

Today is very boring, it's a very boring day, there is nothing much to look at, there is nothing much to say. There's a peacock on my sneakers, there's a penguin on my head, there's a dormouse on my doorstep, I am going back to bed.

**Tone:**

Content (what) clues:

Style (how) clues:

Perhaps because bats are nocturnal in habit, a wealth of thoroughly unreliable legend has grown up about them, and men have made of the harmless, even beneficial little beasts a means of expressing their unreasoned fears. Bats were the standard paraphernalia for witches; the female half of humanity stood in terror that bats would become entangled in their hair. Phrases crept into the language expressing man's revulsion or ignorance "Bats in the Belfry," "Batty" "Blind as a Bat."

**Tone:**

Content (what) clues:

Style (how) clues:

**SHORT STORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the following aspects of the story and how they help to support the work as a whole
  - Character
  - Tone
  - Setting
  - Point of View
2. Briefly define what you believe to be the initiating incident, turning point and climax of each story.
3. How might you define the author's style?