

AP English Literature Tone Vocabulary



Name: _____
 Period: _____

Mr. Williams' AP English Literature Class

Like the tone of a speaker's voice, the tone of a work of literature expresses the writer's feelings. To determine the tone of a passage, ask yourself the following questions:

- ⊗ What is the subject of the passage? Who is the intended audience?
- ⊗ What are the most important words in the passage? What connotations do these words have?
- ⊗ What feelings are generated by the images of the passage?
- ⊗ Are there any hints that the speaker or narrator does not really mean everything he/she says? If any jokes are made, are they lighthearted or bitter?
- ⊗ If the narrator were speaking aloud, what would the tone of his/her voice be?

Positive Tone or Attitude Words:

- ___ Amiable - friendly; pleasant
- ___ Amused - pleurably entertained
- ___ Appreciative - showing gratitude; feeling grateful
- ___ Authoritative - dictatorial; exercising dominance or expertise
- ___ **Benevolent - goodwill; kindly feelings**
- ___ **Brave - exhibiting courage**
- ___ Calm - free of excitement or passion
- ___ Cheerful - in good spirits; pleasant
- ___ Cheery - in good spirits; pleasant; happy
- ___ **Compassionate - showing deep sympathy and sorrow**
- ___ Complimentary - politely flattering
- ___ Confident - having no uncertainty; very sure
- ___ Consoling - to lessen in grief or sorrow
- ___ Content - satisfied
- ___ **Dreamy- soothing and restful**
- ___ Ecstatic - rapturous; intense happiness
- ___ Elated - very happy or proud
- ___ Elevated - exalted; noble; lofty
- ___ Encouraging - inspiring in spirit
- ___ **Energetic - lively and vigorous**
- ___ Enthusiastic - full of lively interest; overtly willing
- ___ Excited- overly eager; stirred emotionally
- ___ Exuberant - uninhibitantly enthusiastic
- ___ **Fanciful - imaginary; fancy; whimsical**
- ___ **Friendly- favorably amiable**
- ___ Happy - glad; delighted
- ___ Hopeful - inspired; promising
- ___ **Impassioned - intense feeling or passion; ardent**
- ___ Jovial - merry; light-hearted; joyful
- ___ Joyful- merry; light-hearted; jovial
- ___ Jubilant - showing great joy, satisfaction or triumph
- ___ **Lighthearted - carefree; gay**
- ___ **Loving - warmly affectionate; fond**
- ___ Optimistic - taking the favorable view of events; positive
- ___ **Passionate - being ruled by intense emotion**
- ___ **Peaceful - free of strife or disorder**
- ___ **Playful - full of play; pleasantly humorous or jesting**
- ___ **Pleasant - agreeable; enjoyable**
- ___ **Proud - satisfaction from one's own importance; dignity**
- ___ Relaxed - being free from anxiety and tension
- ___ Revered - to regard with respect; veneration; worshiped in awe
- ___ Romantic - idealistic; impractical; unrealistic
- ___ **Soothing - assuages pain**
- ___ **Surprised - unexpected; feeling of astonishment; wonder**
- ___ **Sweet - lovable; pleasurable; agreeable**
- ___ **Sympathetic - kind; commiserating; with compassion**
- ___ Vibrant -vigor; lively activity; thrilled
- ___ **Whimsical - capricious; erratic; unpredictable; irrational**

Negative Tone or Attitude Words:

- ___ **Accusing - find fault; blame**
- ___ **Aggravated - intensify; make worse; troublesome**
- ___ **Agitated - angered; provoked**
- ___ **Angry - wrathful; strong resentment**
- ___ **Apathetic - showing little or no emotion; not interested**
- ___ **Arrogant - overbearing; insolently proud**
- ___ **Artificial - forced; contrived; lacking spontaneity**
- ___ **Audacious - extremely daring; insolent; defying convention**
- ___ Belligerent - aggressively hostile; warlike
- ___ Bitter - grievous; hard to bear; angry
- ___ Boring - dull, tedious
- ___ Brash- impertinent; tactless; irreverently energetic
- ___ **Childish - silly; innocent; immature; puerile**
- ___ **Choleric - extremely irritable; touchy; easily irritated**
- ___ **Coarse - harsh; grating; caustic**
- ___ **Cold - apathetic; formal; unfriendly; heartless; reserved**
- ___ **Condemnatory - expressing strong disapproval or censure**
- ___ **Condescending - patronizing ; look down upon**
- ___ **Contradictory - asserting the opposite; paradoxical**
- ___ **Critical - finding fault or judge severely**
- ___ Desperate- reckless or dangerous because of despair; urgency
- ___ Disappointed - depressed or discouraged by failure
- ___ Disgruntled - displeased and discontented
- ___ Disgusted - strong dislike; to be offended by
- ___ Disinterested - not interested; indifferent
- ___ **Facetious - not to be taken seriously; amusing; humorous**
- ___ **Furious - violent rage**
- ___ Harsh -grim; unpleasantly cruel
- ___ Haughty - disdainfully proud; snobbish
- ___ Hateful - malevolent; unpleasant
- ___ Hurtful - destructive; pernicious
- ___ **Indignant - offensive; insulting; mad**
- ___ **Inflammatory - arousing hostility, anger; instigating**
- ___ **Insulting - affronting rudeness**
- ___ **Irritated - provoked; annoyed**
- ___ Manipulative- maliciously influencing
- ___ **Obnoxious - annoying; offensive; odious**
- ___ **Outraged - angered**
- ___ Passive - inactive; not reacting visibly
- ___ **Quarrelsome - argumentative; contentious**
- ___ Shameful - disgraceful; scandalous
- ___ Snooty - aloof; snobbish; supercilious
- ___ Superficial - lacking thoroughness; only external evaluation
- ___ Surly- bad-tempered; rude; unfriendly
- ___ **Testy- irritably impatient; touchy**
- ___ **Threatening - menacing; mean;**
- ___ **Tired - hackneyed; weary; bored**
- ___ Uninterested - indifferent; no feeling of interest
- ___ **Wrathful - very angry; ireful**

Humor-Irony-Sarcasm Tone or Attitude Words:

- ___ Amused – pleurably entertained
- ___ **Bantering – an exchange of light, playful remarks**
- ___ **Bitter - grievous; hard to bear; angry**
- ___ Caustic – severely critical or sarcastic
- ___ Comical – amusing; producing laughter
- ___ Condescending - patronizing ; look down upon
- ___ Contemptuous – scornful; expressing disdain
- ___ Critical - finding fault or judge severely
- ___ Cynical – bitterly or sneeringly distrustful
- ___ **Disdainful - scornful**
- ___ **Droll - waggish; humorous in a weird way; awkward humor**
- ___ Facetious - not to be taken seriously; amusing; humorous
- ___ Flippant – frivolously disrespectful
- ___ **Giddy- impulsive; light-hearted**
- ___ Humorous – funny; comical
- ___ **Insolent – boldly rude and disrespectful**
- ___ **Irreverent- deficient in veneration or respect**
- ___ Joking - funny
- ___ **Malicious – spiteful; malevolent**
- ___ **Mock-Heroic- imitation or burlesque of heroic**
- ___ **Mocking – imitating; ridiculing**
- ___ Patronizing - condescending
- ___ Pompous – snotty; lofty
- ___ **Quizzical – odd; questioning; comical**
- ___ Ribald – vulgar mocking
- ___ Ridiculing – making fun of
- ___ **Sad- not joyful**
- ___ **Sarcastic- derisive; bitter; sardonic**
- ___ **Sardonic – scornful; cynical**
- ___ **Satiric – ironic; caustic wit**
- ___ **Scornful- contemptuous; derisive**
- ___ **Sharp – witty**
- ___ **Silly – absurd; irrational**
- ___ Taunting – insulting; jeering; mock
- ___ Teasing – mock; jeering
- ___ **Whimsical- fanciful; unrealistic; flighty**
- ___ **Wry – devious in purpose**

Sorrow-Fear-Worry Tone or Attitude Words:

- ___ Aggravated - **intensify; make worse; troublesome**
- ___ Agitated - **angered; provoked**
- ___ Anxious – mental distress or uneasiness
- ___ Apologetic – defending an idea (apologizing)
- ___ Apprehensive – uneasy or fearful
- ___ **Concerned – interested or affected**
- ___ **Confused – perplexed or bewildered**
- ___ Dejected – disheartened; depressed in spirits
- ___ Depressed- sad and downcast
- ___ Despairing – indicating hopelessness
- ___ Disturbed – agitated; distressed
- ___ Embarrassed – make uncomfortable
- ___ Fearful – lacking confidence;
- ___ **Foreboding – prediction; portend; foreshadowing**
- ___ **Gloomy – sad; morose**
- ___ **Grave – serious and solemn**
- ___ Hollow – cynical and insincere
- ___ Hopeless – desperate; despairing
- ___ Horrific – inspiring horror and terror
- ___ Horror – overwhelming fear or pain caused by something frightful
- ___ **Melancholy – pensive sadness; gloomy state of mind**
- ___ Miserable – wretchedly unhappy or uncomfortable; needy
- ___ **Morose – gloomy ; sulky**
- ___ **Mournful – feeling or expressing sorrow or grief**
- ___ **Nervous – very excitable or sensitive**
- ___ Numb – not feeling emotion or sensation
- ___ Ominous – threatening; foreboding
- ___ Paranoid – showing unfounded suspicion; fear of persecution
- ___ Pessimistic – tendency to expect the worst; cynical
- ___ **Pitiful – pathetic; deserving or evoking contempt**
- ___ **Poignant – intense; sharp; vitally distressing**
- ___ Regretful – apologetic; remorseful
- ___ Remorseful – regretful; apologetic
- ___ **Resigned – submissive; come to terms with; at peace**
- ___ **Sad – not joyful**
- ___ Serious – sincere; showing deep though; being earnest
- ___ Sober – contemplative; quiet and sedate in demeanor
- ___ Solemn – sober; grave; serious
- ___ **Somber – depressing; gloomy**
- ___ **Staid – settled; not flighty or capricious**
- ___ Upset – disturb mentally or emotionally; perturb

Neutral Tone or Attitude Words:

- ___ Admonitory – to reprove firmly; warn
- ___ Allusive – referencing; implied to something familiar
- ___ **Apathetic – having or showing no emotion**
- ___ **Authoritative – commanding; influencing; official**
- ___ Baffled – confused; bewildered; unclear
- ___ Callous – cold and uncaring; apathetic
- ___ Candid – to the point; frank and outspoken
- ___ Ceremonial – formal; conventional; solemn
- ___ **Clinical – cold and uncaring; formal**
- ___ Consoling – give solace and comfort
- ___ Contemplative – thoughtful; reflective; introspective
- ___ Conventional – formal; solemn; official
- ___ **Detached – showing no emotion; distant**
- ___ **Didactic – academic; intended to teach**
- ___ **Disbelieving – to reject; no belief in**
- ___ **Dramatic – highly effective; striking**
- ___ Earnest – sincere; honest
- ___ Expectant – hopeful; anxious
- ___ Factual – realistic; provable
- ___ **Fervent – passionate**
- ___ **Formal – systematic; conventional**
- ___ Forthright – straight to the point; frank; outspoken
- ___ Frivolous – lack of seriousness; carefree
- ___ Haughty – snobbish; arrogant
- ___ Histrionic – overly sentimental or dramatic
- ___ Humble – modest
- ___ Incredulous – skeptical
- ___ **Informative – instructive**
- ___ **Inquisitive – overly curious; prying**
- ___ Instructive – informative
- ___ Intimate – thorough and secretive
- ___ Judgmental – unreasonable
- ___ **Learned – erudite; scholarly**
- ___ Loud – clamorous
- ___ Lyrical – melodious; pleasing; emotional
- ___ Matter-of-Fact – direct or unemotional; unimaginative
- ___ Meditative – contemplative; thoughtful
- ___ Nostalgic – reminiscent
- ___ Objective – unbiased; not swayed to one side or another
- ___ **Obsequious – submissive; flattering**
- ___ **Patriotic – loyal; zealous**
- ___ Persuasive – stimulating; compelling
- ___ Pleading – begging; desirous
- ___ Pretentious – ostentatious; showy
- ___ Provocative – inciting; stimulating; irritating
- ___ **Questioning – needing answers**
- ___ Reflective – contemplative; thoughtful
- ___ **Reminiscent – nostalgic**
- ___ **Resigned – compliant; acquiescent**
- ___ **Restrained – reserved**
- ___ Seductive – enticing; captivating
- ___ Sentimental – affectionate; passionate
- ___ Serious – sincere; significant
- ___ Shocking – astounding; startling
- ___ **Sincere – pure; free of falsehood**
- ___ **Unemotional – detached; sterile**
- ___ Urgent – compelling; insistent
- ___ Vexed – irritated; annoyed
- ___ Wistful – sadly reflective
- ___ **Zealous – fanatical; impassioned**

Language Words:

These words are used to describe the force or quality of the entire piece. Like word choice, the language of a passage has control over tone. Consider language to be the entire body of words in a text, not simply isolated bits of diction, imagery, or detail. For example, an invitation to a graduation might use formal language, whereas a biology text would use scientific and clinical language.

Different from tone, these words describe the force or quality of the diction, images, and details AS A WHOLE. **These words qualify HOW the work is written.**

- ___ Artificial – contrived; fake
- ___ Bombastic – exaggerated
- ___ **Colloquial – down-to-earth; common**
- ___ **Concrete – substantial; unyielding**
- ___ Connotative – implied; undertone
- ___ Cultured – enlightened; refined
- ___ Detached – unemotional; indifferent
- ___ **Emotional – temperamental; overwrought**
- ___ **Esoteric – understood by a few; cryptic**
- ___ Euphemistic – delicate; indirect
- ___ Exact – direct; to the point; methodical
- ___ Figurative – ornamental; florid
- ___ Formal – systematic; conventional
- ___ **Grotesque – outlandish; extravagant**
- ___ **Homespun – plain; unsophisticated**
- ___ **Idiomatic – natural; local**
- ___ Informal – colloquial; local
- ___ Inspid – distasteful; commonplace
- ___ Jargon – bombast; nonsense
- ___ **Learned – erudite; scholarly**
- ___ **Literal – authentic; methodical**
- ___ Moralistic – condescending; pretentious
- ___ **Obscure – inexplicable; incomprehensible**
- ___ Obtuse – unintelligent; insensitive
- ___ Ordinary – plain
- ___ Pedantic – pretentious; ostentatious
- ___ Picturesque – beautiful; striking
- ___ **Plain – ordinary**
- ___ **Poetic – melodious; idyllic; imaginative**
- ___ Precise – particular; restricted
- ___ **Pretentious – ostentatious; florid**
- ___ Provincial – unsophisticated; pastoral; rural
- ___ Scholarly – erudite; technical
- ___ Sensuous – passionate; pleasurable
- ___ Simple – plain
- ___ **Slang – colloquial; vernacular; common**
- ___ **Symbolic – figurative; suggestive; indicative**
- ___ **Trite – ordinary; common**
- ___ Vulgar – unrefined; repulsive