Analyzing Tone/Mood

**TONE** is the author’s attitude toward his subject. You analyze the tone by looking at the words the author uses (this is called diction).

**MOOD** is the reader’s attitude toward the subject. Authors use words to influence how you feel when reading a text.

**The first step in identifying tone is deciding whether it is positive, negative, or neutral. The best way to do this is to look at the author’s word choice (diction) and picture what the author describes.**

Read the following passage:

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.

Think about the girl. Is she in a positive, negative, or neutral situation?

Quickly draw a picture that represents the sentence.

* Based on the author’s diction (the underlined words), we can assume that the author has a NEGATIVE tone. You should be imagining a little girl sitting in the corner of the room, shaking in fear.

**Now you have to take it one step further. What specific emotion/attitude is the girl feeling? This emotion/attitude is the tone of the sentence.**

On the EOI, the question would look like this:

The tone the author uses while describing the girl’s environment is one of

1. Excitement

The correct answer is B. Based on the words the author uses to describe the situation, the girl is filled with fear.

1. Fear
2. Nervousness
3. Nostalgia

Now you try! Let’s do the same thing, except we will be looking at mood. Read the passage.

Gently smiling, the mother tenderly tucked the covers up around the child’s neck, and carefully, quietly, left the room making sure to leave a comforting ray of light shining through the opened door should the child wake.

Draw a picture that shows what happens in the passage:

You need to look at the author’s diction (word choice). Underline the words that you think help create the emotion you feel while reading.

Now decide whether the mood is **POSITIVE**, **NEGATIVE**, OR **NEUTRAL**. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

And answer the EOI question:

What is the mood of the above passage?

1. Loving
2. Impatient
3. Isolated
4. Dreamy

Let’s do one more since third time’s the charm:

The next minute, Winn-Dixie looked like a furry bullet, shooting across the building, chasing that mouse. He was barking and his feet were skidding all over the polished Pick-It-Quick floor, and people were clapping and hollering and pointing. They really went wild when Winn-Dixie actually caught the mouse.

Draw a picture that shows what happens in the passage:

You need to look at the author’s diction (word choice). Underline the diction that you think helps support the tone.

Now decide whether the tone is **POSITIVE**, **NEGATIVE**, OR **NEUTRAL**. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**And answer the EOI question:**

The tone of the passage is one of

1. Fury
2. Timidity
3. Energetic
4. Anger

**PART II. Now, let’s try some EOI practice questions. Remember, there are certain steps you have to following when analyzing the tone or mood. Complete all the steps before answering the multiple choice question.**

Read the following passage and answer the questions:

Sometimes I look back on the experience and feel wistful. But I forgave those kids in my fifth-grade class. Like I told them, they would face the same trouble if they came to my country. It is common in most places for kids to be cruel to those who are different. It’s only when people grow up that they begin to see being different as something special.

1. Explain the lesson that the narrator learns.
2. Underline 5 examples of diction that help develop the tone.
3. The tone the author uses is one of
   1. Anger
   2. Regret
   3. Understanding
   4. Arrogance

Read the poem and answer the accompanying questions:

Grandma’s Garden

She’d lived in cities most her life,

But she learned the art of gardening

From her father, who had loved the soil.

And I was just a little boy.

I see her now, at sixty,

In the summer morning’s heat

Bent lovingly among her collards,

And her carrots and her cabbages.

I see her now, at eighty,

In the humid morning’s heat:

Green cotton house dress, a khaki-colored sun helmet,

Men’s high top work shoes,

Her hoe, her harden gloves.

But that was more than fifty years ago.

The carrots and the cabbages were gone.

The garden’s long since buried under concrete,

My grandma’s gone—

And I’m approaching seventy—

Time cannot dim my memory.

I see her, vivid still,

In the summer morning’s sunlight

Bent lovingly among her snap peas,

And her scallions, and her summer squash.

The following is an example of someone with a nostalgic tone:

I have wonderful memories of growing up, watching my mom baking her famous chocolate chip cookies; I can almost smell the chocolate melting. I wish I could go back in time to her kitchen and eat one!

How would you define nostalgic: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Which sentence best contributes to a nostalgic tone?

1. She’d lived in the cities most her life.
2. In the summer morning’s sunlight
3. But that was more than fifty years ago
4. From her father, who had loved the soil

**Remember, mood is how you as a reader feel.**

3. Which words best describes the general mood of the poem?

1. Regret and grief
2. Bitterness and jealousy
3. Warmth and affection
4. Frustration and confusion

**Sometimes, authors can have more than one tone in the same paragraph. Read the following passage from *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien and answer the accompanying questions.**

I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of Big People, as they call us. They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants which they can hear a mile off. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they get it.

**The author has 2 different tones in this passage, one towards the “Big People” and one towards the Hobbits.**

Read the underlined words: Does the author have a positive or a negative tone toward “Big People?”

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now, read the author’s description of the hobbits. Underline any adjectives he uses to describe them. Does he have a positive or negative tone toward hobbits? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the author’s tone toward “big people”?

1. Mocking
2. Loving
3. Regretful
4. Scared

5. What is the author’s tone toward hobbits?

1. Rude
2. Complimentary
3. Annoyed
4. Anxious

You are going to read a passage from “Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allen Poe

**STOP and MAKE A PREDICTION**: Based on the title, do you think the story will be positive, negative, or neutral? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was; but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul….There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of though which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher?

**Before you can decide on a tone, you must look at the word choice. Underline every example of diction that helps to create an attitude/emotion.**

Now, what do you think the tone of the passage is? Tone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. Which group of words from the selection best reflects the author’s tone?

1. Oppressively, unnerved, desolate
2. Imagination, heavens, sublime
3. Dull, white, iciness
4. Soundless, evening, poetic

Read the following passage:

Quite suddenly the bird raised his head; he drew himself erect and, with a stiff-legged goose step, strutted into the center of the clearing. Then he started to sing. And in an instant all his drabness was sloughed away, for his song was beautiful beyond compare: stream after stream of limpid melodious notes, flowing and mingling, trilling and soaring; bush music, magic as the pipes of Pan. On and on it went, wave after wave of perfect harmony that held the children spell-bound.

Draw a picture that shows what the passage is about: 7. What is the mood the passage?

1. Shocked
2. Fearful
3. Proud
4. Joyful

**PART III. Now, you need to read the following passages and answer the multiple choice questions. The EOI will not remind you to think about a positive or negative tone. It will not ask you to draw a picture. But they are strategies that help you identify tone and mood. Pay attention to diction when answering the questions.**

We’d gone a quarter mile down the trail when we ran into a man walking the wrong way. He had a pack on his back—a full, towering, overstuffed pack—and he was sweating hard. His breath sounded like a bellows. I stepped aside to let him pass. I stared. I knew that he was one of the ones who hadn’t made it, who’d quit right there at the start.

8. What is the tone of the last 2 sentences of the passage?

1. Eager
2. Pleasant
3. Judgmental
4. Furious

Next we slid into the river and had a swim, so as to freshen up and cool off; then we set down on the sandy bottom where the water was about knee deep, and watched the daylight come. Not a sound anywheres—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bullfrogs a-cluttering, maybe. The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line—that was the woods on t’other side; you couldn’t make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky.

9. What is the mood of the passage?

1. Energetic
2. Detached
3. Peaceful
4. Sympathetic

A disembodied brain. An oversized brain, just enough larger than normal to be completely revolting and terrifying. A living brain. A brain that pulsed and quivered, that seized and commanded. No wonder the brain was called IT. IT was the most horrible, the most repellent thing she had ever seen, far more nauseating than anything she had ever imagined with her conscious mind, or that had ever tormented her in her most terrible nightmares.

10. What is the tone of the passage?

1. Zealous
2. Apologetic
3. Disgusted
4. Confused