

## Tone: Connotation, Diction, Figurative Language, Imagery, Irony, and Theme

### What Should I Learn In This Lesson?

- I can explain the relationship of tone, connotation, and diction in a text. (RL/RI 4).
- I can choose an appropriate tone word for a passage and support it with individual diction choices. (RL/RI4)
- I can explain the relationship between imagery and figurative language and describe its impact on the tone of a text. (RL/RI4)
- I can explain why a situational or verbally ironic tone is present when its presence is identified for me. (RL/RI4)
- I can explain how an author uses diction choices and the tone they create to support the development of a theme category or a central idea. (RL/RI 2)

### What Is Tone?

**Tone** is the general character, attitude, or feeling of a piece of art or literature. [What tone does this painting have?](#) How do you know?

### Tone in Our Bodies: Voice and Body Language

**Tone is also communicated through our voice and body language.** Have you ever had an authority figure tell you to “Watch your tone”? What did he or she mean?

[Deliver the line “I thought you would understand.”](#) and give the line a strong tone (or feeling). Record your line on the Flipgrid and say your tone word after your performance. If you aren’t sure which tone to use, try one of these: **Bitter, Loving, Confused, Surprised**

View some of the performances of your colleagues. Then answer the following questions.

How does voice communicate tone? Consider things like volume, pitch, and speed.

How does body language communicate tone? Consider things like eye-contact, head position, and placement of arms and hands.

### Tone on the Page: Diction and Connotation, Imagery and Figurative Language

When it comes to reading and writing, the **connotation** of an author’s **diction** choices primarily create tone. **Connotation** is the collection of feelings or associations you have with a word, while a word’s **denotation** is that word’s dictionary definition. For example, “smell,” “aroma,” and “stench” are all words that technically communicate the existence of an odor in a place. However, they all have different emotional impacts. “Aroma” is certainly positive, while

“stench” is certainly negative. **Connotations** can’t be looked up online; they are made up of your experiences with a word. **Diction** simply means “word choice.” All writers make diction choices as they write, and these choices form patterns that communicate tone.

Read the poem below. Using a [tone word list](#), choose a tone word to describe the poem.

Now, highlight the diction that creates that tone. Do not highlight more than one or two words together. When you talk about diction, talk about individual words.

### Makin' Jump Shots

By Michael S. Harper

He waltzes into the lane  
'cross the free-throw line,  
fakes a drive, pivots,  
floats from the asphalt turf  
in an arc of black light,  
and sinks two into the chains.

One on one he fakes  
down the main, passes  
into the free lane  
and hits the chains.

A sniff in the fallen air—  
he stuffs it through the chains  
riding high:  
“traveling” someone calls—  
and he laughs, stepping  
to a silent beat, gliding  
as he sinks two into the chains.

Sometimes, an author will make diction choices that create **imagery** and/or **figurative language**.

Consider the following poem. Highlight:

- **Imagery** in yellow. (Remember: imagery is intense language that describes what the senses can perceive. How does something look, smell, feel, sound, or taste?)
- **Figurative language** in blue. (Remember: figurative language is a comparison that creates a literal “lie” in order to tell an emotional truth. Metaphors, similes, and personification are common forms of figurative language.)
- When figurative language describes a sense experience, both imagery and figurative language can be happening at one time. **Highlight this phenomenon in green.**

### A Blessing

By James Wright

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,  
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.

And the eyes of those two Indian ponies  
Darken with kindness.  
They have come gladly out of the willows  
To welcome my friend and me.  
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture  
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.  
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness  
That we have come.  
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.  
There is no loneliness like theirs.  
At home once more,  
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.  
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,  
For she has walked over to me  
And nuzzled my left hand.  
She is black and white,  
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,  
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear  
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.  
Suddenly I realize  
That if I stepped out of my body I would break  
Into blossom.

What tone word would you choose to describe this poem? Which specific diction supports your choice? (When you are talking about figurative language as a diction choice, you may use all the words you need to in order to show the comparison. Otherwise, only list single words.)

### Tone That Doesn't Stay The Same: Tone Shift

*Tone doesn't actually often stay the same through a whole poem. It usually shifts in one or more important place. This poem is about the poet's father dying, but he tells the story first through a memory of a family meal together and then through a metaphor about a road going through a snowy forest. Where does the tone shift?*

<u>Eating Together</u> by <u>Li-Young Lee</u>	Tone Words (Highlight the first tone section in one color, and then type a tone word in this column to describe that section. Repeat for the second tone section.)

## **Intro to Ironic Tone — Feeling Two Things At The Same Time**

Irony is when the opposite of what you would expect to happen, happens. An ironic tone occurs when someone feels two things at one time that seem to contradict each other but that also make sense together.

### **Watch a Poetry Out Loud Recitation of This Poem.**

What tone word would you choose for this poem? \_\_\_\_\_

Highlight in yellow diction that seems happy.

Highlight in blue diction that seems lonely.

### **Danse Russe**

By William Carlos Williams

If I when my wife is sleeping  
and the baby and Kathleen  
are sleeping  
and the sun is a flame-white disc  
in silken mists  
above shining trees,—  
if I in my north room  
dance naked, grotesquely  
before my mirror  
waving my shirt round my head  
and singing softly to myself:  
“I am lonely, lonely.  
I was born to be lonely,  
I am best so!”  
If I admire my arms, my face,  
my shoulders, flanks, buttocks  
against the yellow drawn shades,—  
  
Who shall say I am not  
the happy genius of my household?

As Farley recites, watch his hands and face.  
What does he do to change his body  
language and communicate that he is having  
both lonely and “happy” feelings? Make a  
bulleted list.

## **The Most Difficult Tone: Irony**

Sometimes a poem will have a tone that is ironic. **Irony** exists when language begins to hold opposites together in a way that creates truth instead of contradiction. There are three common forms of irony: **verbal** (saying the opposite of what you mean), **dramatic** (when readers or viewers know something a character in a story doesn't know), and **situational** (when the opposite of what you expect to happen, happens.)

You are probably already comfortable with verbal irony, for example, because one very popular form of verbal irony is sarcasm. We will talk more about dramatic irony in a future unit. Most of the time, when we are talking about irony, we are talking about **situational irony**.

Situational irony occurs when the police station gets robbed, or when the firehouse burns down

(*Fahrenheit 451*, anyone? ) When someone says that a piece of literature has an ironic tone, and they don't explain what kind of irony, they usually just mean **situational irony**.

*The following poem has an ironic tone. Can you explain why? What about the tone of this poem is the opposite of what you might expect?*

Famous  
by Naomi Shihab Nye

The river is famous to the fish.

The loud voice is famous to silence,  
which knew it would inherit the earth  
before anybody said so.

The cat sleeping on the fence is famous to the birds  
watching him from the birdhouse.

The tear is famous, briefly, to the cheek.

The idea you carry close to your bosom  
is famous to your bosom.

The boot is famous to the earth,  
more famous than the dress shoe,  
which is famous only to floors.

The bent photograph is famous to the one who carries it  
and not at all famous to the one who is pictured.

I want to be famous to shuffling men  
who smile while crossing streets,  
sticky children in grocery lines,  
famous as the one who smiled back.

I want to be famous in the way a pulley is famous,  
or a buttonhole, not because it did anything spectacular,  
but because it never forgot what it could do.

Why does this poem have an ironic tone?

This poem has an ironic tone because \_\_\_\_\_ is what we usually expect from fame,  
but in this poem, fame becomes \_\_\_\_\_. Nye's new, ironic, definition of  
fame develops when she writes about the “\_\_\_\_\_” because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Tone That Makes Meaning: Theme

Tone expresses the feeling of a poem, but that feeling can inform a reader about the meaning, message or **theme** that the author wants to communicate. Could you match the titles of the poems from this lesson with an appropriate universal theme category?

### **Universal Theme Categories For Copying and Pasting:**

- Finding Joy in Nature
- The Power of Memory When Grieving
- Making a Life Meaningful
- The Value of Individual Expression
- Finding Joy in Sport

Poem	Universal Theme Category (Copy and Paste From The List Above)
<a href="#"><u>Danse Russe</u></a> <a href="#"><u>by William Carlos Williams</u></a>	
<a href="#"><u>Makin' Jump Shots</u></a> <a href="#"><u>by Michael S. Harper</u></a>	
<a href="#"><u>A Blessing</u></a> <a href="#"><u>by James Wright</u></a>	
<a href="#"><u>Eating Together</u></a> <a href="#"><u>by Li-Young Lee</u></a>	
<a href="#"><u>Famous</u></a> <a href="#"><u>by Naomi Shihab Nye</u></a>	

Bonus! Is there any one of the poems above for which you could write a COMPLETE theme statement? Try it!

Example:

In Naomi Shihab Nye's poem "Famous" she writes about making life meaningful by explaining that being famous can be more about being important in a small way. She believes that being reliable and connected is the way to feel like you are needed.

### **Tone Map Assignment**

From the [Poetry Out Loud Website](#), choose a poem and create a tone map of the poem. If you are having trouble choosing a poem, [consider this list of poems that I like](#). When you are done, read your poem according to your tone map into this Flipgrid. There is a model based on Wendell Berry's "[The Peace of Wild Things](#)" below. This model is there to help you understand how to complete the assignment. You may not use this poem for your work.

### Tone Map

**Title and Author:**

Lines from the Poem (Highlight the diction that creates the tone word you choose.)	Tone Word	Plans for Volume and Body Language

### Model Tone Map

**Title and Author: [The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry](#)**

Lines from the Poem with Highlighted Diction	Tone Word	Plans for Volume and Body Language
When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,	Anxious and Depressed	Knit eyebrows, bite cheek, hold hands open and up, speak loudly
I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water.	Relieved	Softens volume, relax face, drop hands to sides comfortably
And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.	Grateful	Look up prayerfully, smile, close eyes briefly

## Tone Words and Definitions

**Tone** is more than merely an author's attitude toward his/her audience and characters; it is the stylistic means by which an author conveys his/her attitude(s) in a work of literature. **Tone** is an integral part of a work's meaning because it controls the reader's response which is essential to fully experiencing literature. To misinterpret tone is to misinterpret meaning.

In order to recognize **tonal shift** and to interpret complexities of tone, the reader must be able to make inferences based on an active reading of the work. The author's tone or voice is revealed by organization, choice of detail, and sentence structure, but word choice, or **diction**, is probably the strongest indicator of tone.

Note: This is by no means a comprehensive list! Also, most of these words can be used as either adjectives or adverbs, and you should practice using both forms. (Example: Tone word as adjective: Leo uses a *mocking* tone when he describes Mrs. Bilse as a literary genius. Tone word as adverb: Leo *mockingly* describes Mrs. Bilse as a literary genius.)

1. **Abashed:** ashamed or embarrassed; disconcerted
2. **Abhorring:** to regard with extreme repugnance or aversion; detest utterly; loathe; abominate
3. **Abstruse:** difficult to understand
4. **Absurd:** ridiculous; silly
5. **Accusing:** to charge with the fault, offense, or crime
6. **Acerbic:** harsh or severe, as of temper or expression
7. **Admiring:** to regard with wonder, pleasure, or approval
8. **Admonishing:** cautioning, advising, or counseling against something; reproofing or scolding, especially in a mild and good-willed manner; reminding
9. **Adoring:** to regard with the utmost esteem, love, and respect; honor.
10. **Affectionate:** showing, indicating, or characterized by affection or love; fondly tender
11. **Afraid**
12. **Ambiguous:** open to or having several possible meanings or interpretations
13. **Ambivalent:** uncertainty or fluctuation, esp. when caused by inability to make a choice or by a simultaneous desire to say or do two opposite or conflicting things
14. **Amused:** pleasurable entertained, occupied, or diverted
15. **Angry**
16. **Annoyed:** To cause slight irritation to (another) by troublesome, often repeated acts
17. **Antagonistic:** acting in opposition; opposing, esp. mutually/ hostile; unfriendly
18. **Anxious:** full of mental distress or uneasiness because of fear of danger or misfortune; greatly worried; solicitous/ earnestly desirous; eager
19. **Apathetic:** having or showing little or no emotion/ not interested or concerned; indifferent or unresponsive
20. **Apologetic:** containing an apology or excuse for a fault, failure, insult, injury
21. **Appreciative:** feeling or expressive of gratitude
22. **Apprehensive:** uneasy or fearful about something that might happen

23. Approving: to speak or think favorably of; pronounce or consider agreeable or good; judge favorably
24. Ardent: characterized by intense feeling; passionate; fervent; intensely devoted, eager, or enthusiastic; zealous; vehement; fierce
25. Arrogant: making claims or pretensions to superior importance or rights; overbearingingly assuming; insolently proud
26. Audacious: extremely bold or daring; recklessly brave; fearless
27. Authoritarian: having an air of authority; accustomed to exercising authority; positive; peremptory; dictatorial
28. Baffled: to confuse, bewilder, or perplex
29. Bantering: Good-humored, playful conversation
30. Belligerent: warlike; given to waging war
31. Bemused: bewildered or confused/ lost in thought; preoccupied
32. Benevolent: characterized by or expressing goodwill or kindly feelings
33. Bewildered: completely puzzled or confused; perplexed
34. Biting: nipping; smarting; keen/ cutting; sarcastic
35. Bitter: having a harsh, disagreeably acrid taste, like that of aspirin, quinine, wormwood, or aloes/ characterized by intense antagonism or hostility/ hard to admit or accept
36. Blithe: joyous, merry, or gay in disposition; glad; cheerful
37. Blunt: abrupt in address or manner/ slow in perception or understanding; obtuse
38. Bold: not hesitating or fearful in the face of danger or rebuff; courageous and daring; not hesitating to break the rules of propriety; forward; impudent
39. Bored
40. Brisk: quick and active; lively/ sharp and stimulating
41. Brusque: abrupt in manner; blunt; rough
42. Burlesque: an artistic composition, esp. literary or dramatic, that, for the sake of laughter, vulgarizes lofty material or treats ordinary material with mock dignity
43. Calm: without rough motion; still or nearly still/ free from excitement or passion; tranquil
44. Candid: frank; outspoken; open and sincere/ free from reservation, disguise, or subterfuge; straightforward
45. Capricious: flighty; led by whims; erratic
46. Casual: without definite or serious intention; careless or offhand; passing/
47. Caustic: making biting, corrosive comments
48. Celebratory: seeming or tending to be indifferent to what is happening; apathetic; unconcerned
49. Censorious: severely critical; faultfinding
50. Ceremonial: of, pertaining to, or characterized by ceremony; formal; ritual
51. Cheerful: characterized by or expressive of good spirits or cheerfulness
52. Cheery: in good spirits
53. Childish: of, like, or befitting a child/ puerile; weak; silly
54. Choleric: extremely irritable or easily angered; irascible
55. Clinical: concerned with or based on actual observation and treatment of disease in patients rather than experimentation or theory/ extremely objective and realistic; dispassionately analytic; unemotionally critical
56. Cold

57. Colloquial: characteristic of or appropriate to ordinary or familiar conversation rather than formal speech or writing; informal.
58. Comforting: To soothe in time of affliction or distress.
59. Comic - funny; humorous
60. Commanding: appreciably superior or imposing; winning; sizable
61. Compassionate: having or showing compassion
62. Complex: characterized by a very complicated or involved arrangement of parts, units, etc.:
63. Complicated: composed of elaborately interconnected parts; complex
64. Complimentary: of the nature of, conveying, or expressing a compliment, often one that is politely flattering
65. Conceited: having an excessively favorable opinion of one's abilities, appearance, etc.
66. Concerned: interested or affected/ troubled or anxious/ having a connection or involvement; participating
67. Conciliatory: To overcome the distrust or animosity of; appease
68. Condemnatory: To express strong disapproval
69. Condescending: showing or implying a usually patronizing descent from dignity or superiority
70. Confident: having strong belief or full assurance; sure/ sure of oneself; having no uncertainty about one's own abilities, correctness, successfulness, etc.; self- confident; bold
71. Confused: to perplex or bewilder/ to make unclear or indistinct
72. Contemptuous: showing or expressing contempt or disdain; scornful
73. Contented: Desiring no more than what one has; satisfied./ Ready to accept or acquiesce; willing
74. Contentious: tending to argument or strife; quarrelsome/ causing, involving, or characterized by argument or controversy
75. Conversational: The spoken exchange of thoughts, opinions, and feelings; talk
76. Critical: inclined to find fault or to judge with severity, often too readily
77. Curt: rudely brief in speech or abrupt in manner/ brief; concise; terse; laconic
78. Cynical: scornful of the motives or virtues of others; bitterly or sneeringly distrustful, contemptuous, or pessimistic
79. Demanding: requiring or claiming more than is generally felt by others to be due/ calling for intensive effort or attention; taxing
80. Depressed: sad and gloomy; dejected; downcast/ pressed down, or situated lower than the general surface
81. Derisive: characterized by or expressing derision; contemptuous; mocking
82. Derogatory: tending to lessen the merit or reputation of a person or thing; disparaging; depreciatory
83. Despairing: To be overcome by a sense of futility or defeat/ To lose all hope
84. Desperate: reckless or dangerous because of despair or urgency/ having an urgent need, desire, etc.:
85. Detached: impartial or objective; disinterested; unbiased/ not involved or concerned; aloof
86. Diabolic: having the qualities of a devil; devilish; fiendish; outrageously wicked
87. Didactic: intended for instruction; instructive
88. Diffident: lacking confidence in one's own ability, worth, or fitness; timid; shy

89. Direct: proceeding in a straight line or by the shortest course; straight; undeviating; not oblique
90. Disappointed: depressed or discouraged by the failure of one's hopes or expectations
91. Disbelieving: to have no belief in; refuse or reject belief in
92. Disdainful: expressing extreme contempt
93. Disgusted: To excite nausea or loathing in; sicken/ To offend the taste or moral sense of; repel
94. Disrespectful: Having or exhibiting a lack of respect; rude and discourteous
95. Disturbed: marked by symptoms of mental illness:/ agitated or distressed; disrupted
96. Dogmatic: asserting opinions in a doctrinaire or arrogant manner; opinionated
97. Domineering: overbearing; tyrannical
98. Doubtful: of uncertain outcome or result
99. Dramatic: of or pertaining to the drama/ Arresting or forceful in appearance or effect
100. Dreary: causing sadness or gloom./ dull; boring
101. Dubious: wavering or hesitating in opinion; inclined to doubt
102. Earnest: serious in intention, purpose, or effort; sincerely zealous
103. Ebullient: overflowing with fervor, enthusiasm, or excitement; high-spirited
104. Ecstatic: subject to or in a state of ecstasy; rapturous
105. Effusive: unduly demonstrative; lacking reserve
106. Egotistical: given to talking about oneself; vain; boastful; opinionated; indifferent to the well-being of others; selfish
107. Elated: very happy or proud; jubilant; in high spirits lamentation or noble; lofty
110. Eloquent: having or exercising the power of fluent, forceful, and appropriate speech
111. Embarrassed: To cause to feel self- conscious or ill at ease; disconcert
112. Emotionless
113. Empathetic: showing empathy or ready
114. Encouraging: to inspire with courage,  
spirit, or confidence/ to stimulate by assistance, approval, etc/ to promote, advance, or foster
108. Elegiac: expressing sorrow or
109. Elevated: exalted or noble; lofty/ exalted comprehension of others' states
115. Energetic
116. Enraged: to make extremely angry; put into a rage; infuriate
117. Enthusiastic: having or showing great excitement and interest
118. Erudite: characterized by great knowledge; learned or scholarly
119. Eulogistic: To praise highly in speech or writing, especially in a formal eulogy
120. Euphoric: a feeling of happiness, confidence, or well-being sometimes exaggerated in pathological states as mania
121. Evasive: deliberately vague or ambiguous/ tending or seeking to evade; characterized by evasion
122. Excited
123. Exhilarated: to enliven; invigorate; stimulate/ to make cheerful or merry
124. Exhortatory: advising, urging, or cautioning earnestly; urgently admonishing
125. Expectant: marked by eager anticipation
126. Exuberant: effusively and almost uninhibitedly enthusiastic; lavishly abundant
127. Facetious: not meant to be taken seriously or literally/ amusing; humorous

128. Factual: of or pertaining to facts; concerning facts
129. Familiar: commonly or generally known or seen/ informal; easygoing; unceremonious; unconstrained
130. Fanciful: characterized by or showing fancy; capricious or whimsical in appearance
131. Farcical: ludicrous; absurd; mocking; humorous and highly improbable
132. Fatalistic: the acceptance of all things and events as inevitable; submission to fate
133. Fearful: feeling fear, dread, apprehension, or solicitude/ full of awe or reverence/ extreme in size, intensity, or badness
134. Fervent: having or showing great warmth or intensity of spirit, feeling, enthusiasm, etc.; ardent
135. Flippant: frivolously disrespectful, shallow, or lacking in seriousness; characterized by levity
136. Forceful: powerful
137. Foreboding: a strong inner feeling or notion of a future misfortune, evil, etc.; presentiment
138. Formal: stiff; using textbook style; following accepted styles, rules or ceremonies
139. Forthright: going straight to the point; frank; direct; outspoken
140. Frantic: desperate or wild with excitement, passion, fear, pain, etc.; frenzied
141. Frightened: To fill with fear; alarm
142. Frivolous: characterized by lack of seriousness or sense/ self-indulgently carefree; unconcerned about or lacking any serious purpose/ of little or no weight, worth, or importance; not worthy of serious notice
143. Frustrated: disappointed; thwarted
144. Furious: full of fury, violent passion, or rage; extremely angry; enraged
145. Gentle: kind; considerate; mild; soft
146. Ghoulish: strangely diabolical or cruel; monstrous; delighting in the revolting or loathsome
147. Giddy: frivolous and lighthearted; impulsive; flighty/ attended with or causing dizziness
148. Gleeful: full of exultant joy; merry; delighted.
149. Gloomy: dark or dim; deeply shaded/ hopeless or despairing; pessimistic
150. Grand: impressive in size, appearance, or general effect/ stately, majestic, or dignified/ of great importance, distinction, or pretension
151. Grave: serious or solemn; sober/ weighty, momentous, or important/ threatening a seriously bad outcome or involving serious issues; critical
152. Grim: stern and admitting of no appeasement or compromise/ having a harsh, surly, forbidding, or morbid air
153. Happy
154. Harsh: ungentle and unpleasant in action or effect/ physically uncomfortable; desolate; stark/ unpleasantly rough, ragged, or coarse to the touch
155. Haughty: disdainfully proud; snobbish; scornfully arrogant; supercilious
156. Hilarious: arousing great merriment; extremely funny
157. Histrionic: Over the top dramatic
158. Holier-than-thou: obnoxiously pious; sanctimonious; self-righteous
159. Hollow:; not solid; empty; without real or significant worth; meaningless; insincere or false
160. Hopeful: full of hope; expressing
161. Hopeless: providing no hope; beyond optimism or hope; desperate
162. Horrified: showing or indicating great shock or horror

163. Hostile: characteristic of an enemy/ opposed in feeling, action, or character; antagonistic/ not friendly, warm, or generous; not hospitable
164. Humorous: characterized by humor; funny; comical
165. Impartial: not partial or biased; fair; just
166. Impassioned: filled with emotion; ardent
167. Impassive: without emotion; apathetic; unmoved; calm; serene
168. Impatient: not patient; not accepting delay, opposition, pain, etc., with calm or patience
169. Impertinent: insolently rude; uncivil
170. Impudent: characterized by impertinence or effrontery
171. Incisive: penetrating; cutting; biting; trenchant/ remarkably clear and direct; sharp; keen; acute
172. Incredulous: not credulous; disinclined or indisposed to believe; skeptical
173. Indifferent: without interest or concern; not caring; apathetic/ having no bias, prejudice, or preference; impartial; disinterested
174. Indignant: feeling, characterized by, or expressing strong displeasure at something considered unjust, offensive, insulting, or base
175. Indirect: not in a direct course or path; deviating from a straight line; roundabout/ not straightforward; devious; deceitful
176. Inflammatory: tending to arouse anger, hostility, passion, etc.:
177. Informal: without formality or ceremony; casual/ suitable to or characteristic of casual and familiar, but educated, speech or writing/ not according to the prescribed, official, or customary way or manner; irregular; unofficial
178. Informative: giving information; instructive/ tending to increase knowledge or dissipate ignorance
179. Insecure: subject to fears, doubts, etc.; not self-confident or assured
180. Insipid: without distinctive, interesting, or stimulating qualities; vapid
181. Insistent: earnest or emphatic in dwelling upon, maintaining, or demanding something; persistent; pertinacious
182. Insolent: boldly rude or disrespectful; contemptuously impertinent; insulting
183. Instructive: serving to instruct or inform; conveying instruction, knowledge, or information; enlightening
184. Interested: having the attention or curiosity engaged/ characterized by a feeling of interest
185. Intimate: associated in close personal relations/ very private; closely personal/ detailed; deep
186. Introspective: given to examining own sensory and perceptual experiences
187. Ironic: containing or exemplifying irony/ coincidental; unexpected
188. Irascible: easily provoked to anger; very irritable
189. Irreverent: showing lack of due respect or veneration
190. Irritated: angered, provoked, or annoyed
191. Jocund: cheerful; merry; gay; blithe; glad
192. Joking
193. Jovial: endowed with or characterized by a hearty, joyous humor or a spirit of good-fellowship
194. Joyful: full of joy, as a person or one's heart; glad; delighted/ causing or bringing joy, as an event, a sight, or news; delightful

195. Joyous: joyful; happy; jubilant
196. Laudatory: containing or expressing praise
197. Learned: having much knowledge; scholarly; erudite/ connected or involved with the pursuit of knowledge, esp. of a scholarly nature
198. Lighthearted: carefree; cheerful; gay
199. Lively: full or suggestive of life or vital energy; active, vigorous, or brisk/ animated, spirited, vivacious, or sprightly
200. Lofty: exalted in rank, dignity, or character; eminent/ elevated in style, tone, or sentiment, as writings or speech
201. Loving: affectionate; showing intense, deep concern for someone or something
202. Ludicrous: causing laughter because of absurdity; provoking or deserving derision; ridiculous; laughable
203. Lugubrious: mournful, dismal, or  
loomy, esp. in an affected, exaggerated, or unrelieved manner
204. Lyrical: Expressing deep personal emotion or observations; Highly enthusiastic; rhapsodic
205. Malicious - desiring to harm others or to see others suffer; ill-willed; spiteful
206. Matter-of-fact -adhering strictly to fact; not imaginative; direct or unemotional;  
straightforward; down-to-earth
207. Meditative: deeply or seriously thoughtful
208. Melancholic: characterized by or causing or expressing sadness
209. Melodramatic: exaggerated and emotional or sentimental; overdramatic
210. Mirthful: joyous; gay; jolly; arousing or provoking laughter
211. Mischievous: maliciously or playfully annoying; causing annoyance, harm, or trouble;  
roguishly or slyly teasing, as a glance; harmful or injurious
212. Mock – serious: pretending to be serious or in earnest
213. Mock-heroic: imitating or burlesquing that which is heroic, as in manner, character, or action
214. Mocking: To treat with ridicule or contempt; deride; To mimic, as in sport or derision
215. Modest: having or showing a moderate or humble estimate of one's merits, importance,  
etc.; free from vanity, egotism, boastfulness, or great pretensions; free from ostentation or  
showy extravagance
216. Moralistic: Characterized by or displaying a concern with morality; narrowly and  
conventionally moral
217. Mournful: feeling or expressing sorrow or grief; sorrowful; sad
218. Mysterious: of obscure nature, meaning, origin, etc.; puzzling; inexplicable
219. Nervous: highly excitable; unnaturally or acutely uneasy or apprehensive
220. Nonchalant: coolly unconcerned, indifferent, or unexcited; casual
221. Nonplussed: totally puzzled, perplexed, or confused
222. Nostalgic: unhappy about being away and longing for familiar things or persons
223. Obdurate: unmoved by persuasion, pity, or tender feelings; stubborn; unyielding;  
stubbornly resistant to moral influence
224. Objective: not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice; based on facts;  
unbiased
225. Obsequious - overly obedient and/or submissive
226. Ominous: portending evil or harm; foreboding; threatening; inauspicious

227. Optimistic: disposed to take a favorable view of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome
228. Oratorical: characteristic of an orator or oratory; given to making speeches
229. Outraged: angered and resentful; furious; extremely angered
230. Outspoken: frank; candid; uttered or expressed with frankness or without reserve
231. Overbearing: domineering; dictatorial; haughtily or rudely arrogant
232. Panicked
233. Paranoid: Exhibiting or characterized by extreme and irrational fear or distrust of others
234. Passionate: having, compelled by, or ruled by intense emotion or strong feeling; easily aroused to or influenced by sexual desire; ardently sensual; easily moved to anger; quick-tempered; irascible
235. Pathetic: causing or evoking pity, sympathetic sadness, sorrow, etc.; pitiful; pitiable
- an offensively condescending manner
236. Patronizing: displaying or indicative of
237. Peaceful: not disturbed by strife or turmoil or war; quiet; calm; without worry or disturbance
238. Pedantic: ostentatious in one's learning; overly concerned with minute details or formalisms, esp. in teaching
239. Penitent: feeling or expressing sorrow for sin or wrongdoing and disposed to atonement and amendment; repentant; contrite
240. Pensive: dreamily or wistfully thoughtful; expressing or revealing thoughtfulness, usually marked by some sadness
241. Pessimistic: expecting the worst possible outcome
242. Petty: of little or no importance or consequence
243. Pitiful
244. Placid: pleasantly calm or peaceful; unruffled; tranquil; serenely quiet or undisturbed
245. Playful: pleasantly humorous or jesting
246. Poignant: keenly distressing to the feelings; keen or strong in mental appeal
247. Pompous: characterized by an ostentatious display of dignity or importance
248. Powerful: having or exerting great power or force; potent; efficacious
249. Pretentious: characterized by assumption of dignity or importance
250. Proud: feeling pleasure or satisfaction over something regarded as highly honorable or creditable to oneself; having or showing self-respect or self-esteem
251. Provocative: serving or tending to provoke, excite, or stimulate; tending or serving to provoke; inciting, stimulating, irritating, or vexing
252. Psychotic: affected by psychosis; characterized by a loss of contact with reality and an inability to think rationally. A psychotic person often behaves inappropriately and is incapable of normal social functioning
253. Quiet
254. Questioning: characterized by or indicating intellectual curiosity; inquiring
255. Reassuring: to restore to assurance or confidence
256. Rebellious
257. Recalcitrant: resisting authority or control; not obedient or compliant; refractory
258. Reflective: given to, marked by, or concerned with meditation or deliberation
259. Relaxed: being free of or relieved from tension or anxiety

260. Reminiscent: awakening memories of something similar; suggestive
261. Resigned: submissive or acquiescent
262. Respectful: full of, characterized by, or showing politeness or deference
263. Restrained: To hold back or keep in check; control
264. Reticent: disposed to be silent or not to speak freely; reserved; restrained
265. Reverent: deeply respectful; showing great esteem
266. Ridiculous: causing or worthy of ridicule or derision; absurd; preposterous; laughable
267. Righteous: believing ones-self to be morally right and just; guiltless
268. Risible: causing or capable of causing laughter; laughable; ludicrous
269. Romantic: characterized by a preoccupation with love or by the idealizing of love or one's beloved; imbued with or dominated by idealism, a desire for adventure, chivalry, etc
270. Sad
271. Sanguine: cheerfully optimistic, hopeful, or confident
272. Sarcastic: expressing or expressive of ridicule that wounds
273. Sardonic: characterized by bitter or scornful derision; mocking; cynical; sneering
274. Satiric (satirical): exposing human folly to ridicule
275. Scholarly: concerned with academic learning and research
276. Scornful: expressing extreme contempt
277. Seductive: tending to entice into a desired action or state
278. Self-assured: Having or showing confidence and poise
279. Self-deprecating: belittling or undervaluing oneself; excessively modest
280. Selfish: devoted to or caring only for oneself; concerned primarily with one's own interests, benefits, welfare, etc., regardless of others
281. Sentimental: weakly emotional; mawkishly susceptible or tender
282. Serene: calm, peaceful, or tranquil; unruffled
283. Serious: not funny; in earnest
284. Severe: harsh; unnecessarily extreme; serious or stern in manner or appearance
285. Sharp: clearly defined; distinct; keen or eager; fierce or violent
286. Shocked: struck with fear, dread, or consternation
287. Shocking: causing intense surprise, disgust, horror, etc
288. Silly
289. Sinister: threatening or portending evil, harm, or trouble; ominous
290. Skeptical: Marked by or given to doubt; questioning
291. Sly: cunning or wily; stealthy, insidious, or secret
292. Solemn: grave, sober, or mirthless, as a person, the face, speech, tone, or mood
293. Somber: gloomy, depressing, or dismal; extremely serious; grave
294. Sophomoric: suggestive of or resembling the traditional sophomore; intellectually pretentious, overconfident, conceited, etc., but immature
295. Speculative: theoretical, rather than practical
296. Sprightly: animated, vivacious, or gay; lively
297. Stable: not likely to fall or give way, as a structure, support, foundation, etc.; firm; steady
298. Stately: majestic; imposing in magnificence, elegance, etc
299. Stern: firm, strict, or uncompromising; hard, harsh, or severe
300. Stolid: not easily stirred or moved mentally; unemotional; impassive

- 301. Straightforward: direct; not roundabout; free from crookedness or deceit; honest
- 302. Strident: making or having a harsh sound; grating; creaking
- 303. Stubborn
- 304. Subdued: quiet; inhibited; repressed;
- 305. Supercilious: haughtily disdainful or contemptuous
- 306. Suspenseful: characterized by or causing suspense
- 307. Suspicious: openly distrustful and unwilling to confide
- 308. Sympathetic: characterized by, proceeding from, exhibiting, or feeling sympathy; sympathizing; compassionate
- 309. Taunting: To reproach in a mocking, insulting, or contemptuous manner
- 310. Tender: soft or delicate in substance; not hard or tough
- 311. Tense: stretched tight, as a cord, fiber, etc.; drawn taut; rigid; characterized by a strain upon the nerves or feelings
- 312. Terrified
- 313. Terse: neatly or effectively concise; brief and pithy, as language
- 314. Thoughtful: showing consideration for others; considerate; occupied with or given to thought; contemplative; meditative; reflective
- 315. Threatening: tending or intended to menace; causing alarm, as by being imminent; ominous; sinister
- 316. Timorous: full of fear; fearful
- 317. Tragic: extremely mournful, melancholy, or pathetic; dreadful, calamitous, disastrous, or fatal
- 318. Tranquil: free from commotion or tumult; peaceful; quiet; calm
- 319. Uncertain: not confident, assured, or free from hesitancy; not clearly or precisely determined; indefinite; unknown
- 320. Unconcerned: not involved or interested; disinterested.; not caring; unworried; free from solicitude or anxiety
- 321. Understated: restrained in design, presentation, etc.; low-key
- 322. Uneasy: not easy in body or mind; uncomfortable; restless; disturbed; perturbed.
- 323. Uninterested
- 324. Upset
- 325. Urgent: compelling or requiring immediate action or attention; imperative; pressing
- 326. Vexed: irritated; annoyed
- 327. Vibrant: moving to and fro rapidly; vibrating
- 328. Vindictive: revengeful; spiteful; bitter; unforgiving
- 329. Violent: acting with or characterized by uncontrolled, strong, rough force; furious in impetuosity, energy, etc.
- 330. Vitriolic: very caustic; scathing
- 331. Whimsical: given to whimsy or fanciful notions; capricious
- 332. Wistful: characterized by melancholy; longing; yearning; pensive
- 333. Worshipful: showing adoration; showing great reverence
- 334. Wrathful: vehemently incensed and condemnatory; very angry; ireful
- 335. Wry: devious in course or purpose; misdirected; distorted or perverted, as in meaning; bitterly or disdainfully ironic or amusing
- 336. Zealous: ardently active, devoted, or diligent



**Some TONE WORDS Grouped with SYNONYMS that have mildly different CONNOTATIONS**

*simple, straightforward, direct, unambiguous, candid	*apologetic, penitent, ignominious
*indirect, understated, evasive, allusive complicated, complex, difficult	*recalcitrant, stubborn, rebellious
*admiring, worshiping, approving	*apprehensive, anxious, pensive
*complimentary, proud, effusive	*thoughtful, dreamy, fanciful
*disliking, abhorring, contemptuous	*vexed, uncertain, confused, ambivalent, nonplussed
*strident, harsh, acerbic, angry, outraged, violent,	*excited, exhilarated, exuberant
*choleric, indignant, irascible	*ardent, fervent, zealous
*forceful, powerful, confident	*happy, contented, ecstatic, joyful, giddy
*energetic, vibrant	*incredulous, questioning, skeptical, dubious
*ironic, sardonic, sarcastic, mocking, sly, wry	*insistent, urgent, pressing
*satirical, critical	*pertinent, pointed, incisive
*sharp, biting	*commanding, demanding
*bitter, grim, cynical	*exhortatory, admonishing, censorious, damning
*interested, sympathetic, pitiful	*condescending, arrogant, haughty
*hollow, detached, cold, obdurate	*elevated, grand, lofty, bombastic, pretentious, pompous
*tired, bored, uninterested	*oratorical, dramatic, melodramatic
*indifferent, unconcerned, disinterested, apathetic, impassive, emotionless, nonchalant	*scornful, disdainful, supercilious, contemptuous
*impartial, objective	*audacious, bold, impudent, insolent
*humorous, playful, joking, frivolous, comical	*alluring, provocative, seductive
*flippant, irreverent, facetious	*shocking, offensive, reprehensible, lurid
*impish, silly, sophomoric, childish	*didactic, instructive
*resigned, calm, tranquil, quiet, peaceful, reticent	*authoritarian, domineering, egotistical, overbearing, dogmatic
*subdued, restrained, low-key	*erudite, learned, scholarly
*sad, upset, depressed, melancholy, despairing	*practical, pragmatic
*afraid, fearful, horrific, terrified, panicked	
*wistful, nostalgic, sentimental, tender, reminiscent	
*solemn, serious, somber	

## Tone Words Organized By Purpose

### Positive Tones

Amiable Consoling Friendly Playful Amused Content Happy Pleasant Appreciative Dreamy  
Hopeful Proud Authoritative Ecstatic Impassioned Relaxed Benevolent Elated Jovial Reverent  
Brave Elevated Joyful Romantic Calm Encouraging Jubilant Soothing Cheerful Energetic  
Lighthearted Surprised Cheery Enthusiastic Loving Sweet Compassionate Excited Optimistic  
Sympathetic Complimentary Exuberant Passionate Vibrant Confident Fanciful Peaceful  
Whimsical

### Negative Tones

Accusing Choleric Furious Quarrelsome Aggravated Coarse Harsh Shameful Agitated Cold  
Haughty Smooth Angry Condemnatory Hateful Snooty Apathetic Condescending Hurtful  
Superficial Arrogant Contradictory Indignant Surly Artificial Critical Inflammatory Testy  
Audacious Desperate Insulting Threatening Belligerent Disappointed Irritated Tired Bitter  
Disgruntled Manipulative Uninterested Boring Disgusted Obnoxious Wrathful Brash  
Disinterested Outraged Childish Passive

### Humor/Satirical Tones

Amused Droll Mock-heroic Sardonic Bantering Facetious Mocking Satiric Bitter Flippant  
Mock-serious Scornful Caustic Giddy Patronizing Sharp Comical Humorous Pompous Silly  
Insolent Quizzical Taunting Contemptuous Ironic Ribald Teasing Critical Irreverent  
Ridiculing Whimsical Cynical Joking Sad Wry Disdainful Malicious Sarcastic Facetious  
Condescending

### Sorrow/Fear/Worry Tones

Aggravated Embarrassed Morose Resigned Agitated Fearful Mournful Sad Anxious  
Foreboding Nervous Serious Apologetic Gloomy Numb Sober Apprehensive Grave Ominous  
Solemn Concerned Hollow Paranoid Somber Confused Hopeless Pessimistic Staid Dejected  
Horrific Pitiful Upset Depressed Horror Poignant Despairing Melancholy Regretful Disturbed  
Miserable Remorseful

### Tones that Characters Often Take Toward Each Other

Admonitory Dramatic Intimate Questioning Allusive Earnest Judgmental Reflective Apathetic  
Expectant Learned Reminiscent Authoritative Factual Loud Resigned Baffled Fervent Lyrical  
Restrained Callous Formal Matter-of-fact Seductive Candid Forthright Meditative  
Sentimental Ceremonial Frivolous Nostalgic Serious Clinical Haughty Objective Shocking  
Consoling Histrionic Obsequious Sincere Contemplative Humble Unemotional Removed  
Conventional Incredulous Persuasive Urgent Detached Informative Pleading Vexed Didactic  
Inquisitive Pretentious Wistful Disbelieving Instructive Provocative Zealous

## Tone Wheel

To use the tone wheel, start in the middle and choose the simplest tone word you know applies, then move toward the outer layers to choose a more precise tone word.

