**Tone**

The analysis of tone evaluates the speaker’s attitude toward (1) the subject and (2) the audience. Anyone can sense a speaker’s attitude in tone of voice; however, understanding tone in written prose is an entire different matter. The reader does not have voice inflection to carry meaning.

To misinterpret tone is to misinterpret meaning. Thus, an understanding of diction, images, details, and syntax all contribute to the understanding of tone in a written work.

**Shifts in Tone**

As you grow more aware of tone, you will discover the good writers rarely stick with one tone. Shifts in tone are often cued by the following:

* Key words (but, yet, nevertheless, however, although)
* Punctuation (dashes, periods, colons)
* Stanza and paragraph divisions
* Changes in line and stanza or in sentence length
* Sharp contracts in diction

**Positive Tone/ Attitude Words**

Amiable

Amused

Appreciative

Authoritative

Benevolent

Brave

Calm

Cheerful

Compassionate

Complimentary

Confident

Consoling

Content

Dreamy

Ecstatic

Elated

Elevated

Encouraging

Enthusiastic

Excited

Exuberant

Fanciful

Friendly

Hopeful

Impassioned

Joyful

Jubilant

Lighthearted

Loving

Optimistic

Passionate

Peaceful

Playful

Proud

Relaxed

Reverent

Romantic

Soothing

Sweet

Sympathetic

Vibrant

Whimsical

**Negative Tone/ Attitude Words**

Accusing

Acerbic

Aggravated

Agitated

Apathetic

Apocalyptic

Arrogant

Audacious

Belligerent

Bitter

Brash

Callous

Childish

Choleric

Coarse

Cold

Condemnatory

Condescending

Contradictory

Critical

Desperate

Diabolical

Disappointed

Disgruntled

Disgusted

Disinterested

Furious

Harsh

Haughty

Hateful

Hurtful

Indignant

Inflammatory

Insulting

Irritated

Lethargic

Manipulative

Malevolent

Morbid

Obnoxious

Outraged

Passive

Quarrelsome

Sadistic

Scathing

Snooty

Superficial

Surly

Testy

Threatening

Wrathful

**Humor-Irony-Sarcasm Tone/Attitude Words**

Amused

Bantering

Bitter

Caustic

Comical

Contemptuous

Cynical

Disdainful

Droll

Facetious

Flippant

Giddy

Humorous

Insolent

Ironic

Irreverent

Joking

Malicious

Mock-heroic

Mocking

Patronizing

Pompous

Quizzical

Ribald

Ridiculing

Sarcastic

Sardonic

Satiric

Scornful

Sharp

Taunting

Teasing

Whimsical

Wry

**Sorrow-Fear-Worry Tone/Attitude Words**

Aggravated

Agitated

Anxious

Apologetic

Apprehensive

Ashamed

Concerned

Confused

Dejected

Depressed

Despairing

Disturbed

Embarrassed

Fearful

Foreboding

Gloomy

Grave

Hollow

Hopeless

Horrified

Melancholy

Miserable

Morose

Mournful

Nervous

Numb

Ominous

Paranoid

Pessimistic

Pitiful

Poignant

Regretful

Remorseful

Resigned

Serious

Sober

Solemn

Somber

Staid

**Neutral Tone/Attitude Words**

Admonitory

Authoritative

Baffled

Candid

Ceremonial

Clinical

Consoling

Contemplative

Detached

Didactic

Disbelieving

Dramatic

Earnest

Elitist

Expectant

Factual

Fervent

Formal

Forthright

Frivolous

Humble

Incredulous

Informative

Inquisitive

Instructive

Intimate

Matter-of-Fact

Meditative

Nostalgic

Objective

Obsequious

Patriotic

Persuasive

Pleading

Pretentious

Provocative

Questioning

Reflective

Reminiscent

Restrained

Sentimental

Sincere

Smug

Surprised

Urgent

Vexed

Wistful

Zealous