ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Identifying tone and mood

Difficulty level: Intermediate

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how you tell how a writer feels and how a passage is meant to make you feel, like knowing whether a review is praising a film or warning you away from it. The same facts can sound warm, angry, sarcastic, or hopeful depending on the words the writer chose. Reading tone and mood helps you judge a review, understand a character in a novel, or write an email that lands the way you meant it to.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Identify the tone: 'What a wonderful day! The sun is shining and the birds are singing.'

SOLUTION

Look at the writer's word choices: wonderful, shining, singing.

Those words show a positive, cheerful attitude.

So the tone is cheerful (and the mood is happy).

EXAMPLE 2

Q Identify the mood: 'The empty house was dark, and the wind howled through broken windows.'

SOLUTION

Look at the images: empty, dark, howled, broken.

Those images are meant to make the reader feel uneasy.

So the mood is eerie (uneasy).

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Practice questions

1

Tone: 'This lazy, careless work is unacceptable.' Positive or negative?

A Positive

B Negative

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2

Mood: 'Soft music played as friends laughed around the fire.' Happy or sad?

A Happy

B Sad

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3 Tone: 'I am delighted to share our wonderful results.' Positive or negative?

- A Positive
- B Negative

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4 Mood: 'Rain hammered the roof as thunder shook the house.' Calm or tense?

- A Calm
- B Tense

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5 Tone: 'The report is clear, accurate, and well organized.' Positive or negative?

- A Positive
- B Negative

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6

Mood: 'The waves whispered against the shore as the sun sank and the beach grew still.' Peaceful or frightening?

A Peaceful

B Frightening

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7

Tone: 'What a silly, pointless idea.' Positive or negative?

A Positive

B Negative

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8

Mood: 'The crowd cheered as confetti fell.' Joyful or gloomy?

A Joyful

B Gloomy

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9

Tone: 'We regret to inform you of the delay.' Formal or casual?

A Formal

B Casual

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10

Mood: 'The dark forest was silent except for snapping twigs.' Calm or eerie?

A Calm

B Eerie

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ANSWER KEY

1. Negative

2. Happy

3. Positive

4. Tense

5. Positive

6. Peaceful

7. Negative

8. Joyful

9. Formal

10. Eerie

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