

Basic Vocabulary for Tone and Style-
For use when writing about effect of diction, structure, author's attitude, and characterization

1. abstract: theoretical, without reference to specifics
2. abstruse- complex, profound
3. affected: assuming a false manner of attitude to impress others
4. allusive- makes use of allusions or references to other works, history, religion, pop culture...
5. ambiguous: having two or more possible meanings
6. ambivalent: of two minds- undecided-
7. analytical: inclined to examine things by studying their contents or parts
8. anecdotal: involving short narratives of interesting events
9. archaic: in the style of an earlier period
10. austere: stern, strict, frugal, unadorned
11. banal: pointless and uninteresting
12. baroque: elaborate, grotesque, and ornamental
13. bombastic: pretentious and pompous- often featured in satiric figures
14. cinematic: having the qualities of a motion picture
15. classical: formal, enduring , and standard, adhering to certain traditional methods
16. colloquial: using everyday language; conversational- not formal
17. concise: using very few words to express a great deal
18. concrete- solid, physical, real
19. confessional: characterized by personal admissions of faults
20. contemptuous: hatred or disdain
21. convoluted: very complicated or involved (as in the case of sentences with many qualifiers, phrases, and clauses)
22. crepuscular: having to do with twilight or shadowy areas (as in the darker and more hidden parts of human experience)
23. cynical: a tendency to believe that all human behavior is selfish and opportunistic
24. decadent: marked by a decay in morals, values and artistic standards
25. detached: disinterested, unbiased, emotionally disconnected
26. discursive: moving pointlessly from one subject to another; lingering
27. earthy: realistic, rustic, coarse, unrefined, instinctive, animalize
28. effeminate: soft, delicate, unmanly -not used for women
29. elegiac: expressing sorrow or lamentation (elegy is a mournful poem)
30. epistolary: involving letters
31. erudite: learned, scholarly
32. euphemistic- using mild or pleasing language to lessen the blow- "passed on" for "dead"
33. esoteric- cryptic, difficult to understand- mysterious
34. eulogistic: involving formal praise in speech or writing, usually in honor of someone dead
35. evocative: having the ability to call forth memories or other responses
36. facetious: amusing, but light, unserious, frivolous; teasing
37. farcical: humorous in a light way, comedy with high exaggeration
38. fatalistic: believing that everything that happens is destined and, therefore , out of the hands of the individual
39. flamboyant: conspicuously bold or visual
40. iconoclastic: inclined to attack cherished beliefs and traditions
41. impressionistic: inclined to use subjective impressions rather than objective reality
42. incongruous: contrary to logic, but sometimes artistically viable
43. insipid- dull, bland, lifeless

44. ironic- characterized by an unexpected turn of events, often the opposite of what was intended
45. irreverent: showing disrespect for things that are usually respected or revered
46. journalistic: characterized by the kind of language used in journalism- reporting not editorializing
47. lyrical: intense, spontaneous, musical
48. melodramatic- emotions, characters, and plot which are exaggerated and characterization is shallow
49. mournful: feeling or expressing grief. (certain literary forms are devoted to the expression of grief , such as elegies)
50. mundane: ordinary or common, as in everyday matters (“his mind was filled with mundane matters”)
51. nostalgic: inclined to long for or dwell on things of the past; sentimental
52. objective: uninfluenced by personal feelings. Seeing things from the outside, not subjectively
53. ominous: indicating or threatening evil or danger as dark clouds indicate that storm is coming,
54. parody: a satirical imitation of something serious, such as comic takeoff of Romeo and Juliet. The parody must have enough elements of the original for it to be recognized.
55. philosophical: interested in the study of basic truths of existence and reality.
56. pious: having or displaying a reverence for god and religion. Sometimes used pejoratively, when the display is excessive and outwardly righteous
57. poignant- touching, emotional, pulls at the heart strings
58. pompous: displaying one’s importance in an exaggerated way. Sometimes the quality is found in comic characters or in satire
59. provocative- challenging, confrontational, can be insulting, but it is always controversial
60. prurient: preoccupied with lewd and lustful thoughts
61. psychological: having to do with the human mind and human behavior
62. puritanical: strict or severe in the matters of morality
63. rhythmic: characterized by certain patterns, beats, or accents (as in dancing music, poetry)
64. Romantic: As with nineteenth century literature, or any such literature it suggests a style that emphasizes freedom of form, imagination, and emotion.
65. sardonic: mocking, taunting, bitter, scornful, sarcastic
66. satirical: using sarcasm and irony, often humorously to expose human folly.
67. sensuous: taking pleasure in things that appeal to the senses. (Sensual suggests a strong preoccupation with such things, especially sexual pleasures.)
68. stark: plain, harsh, completely (as in stark raving mad) simple or bare, when applied to style, sometimes even bleak or grim
69. subjective: relying on ones own inner impressions as opposed to being objective
70. surrealistic: stressing imagery and the subconscious and sometimes distorting ordinary ideas in order to arrive at artistic truths
71. terse: effectively, concise, brief
72. trite: stale, worn out, as in trite expressions
73. urbane: sophisticated, socially polished
74. vexed- annoyed, irritated
75. Victorian: prudish, stuffy, and puritanical (qualities associated with Queen Victoria’s reign)
76. whimsical: inclined to be playful , humorous or fanciful
77. zealous- passionate, often fanatical

Tone – Style – Syntax

Tone is defined as the writer or speaker's attitude toward the subject.

Another List of Words but in Categories

Developing A Tone Vocabulary

angry	sad	sentimental
sharp	cold	fanciful
upset	urgent	complimentary
silly	joking	condescending
boring	poignant	sympathetic
afraid	detached	contemptuous
happy	confused	apologetic
hollow	childish	humorous
joyful	peaceful	horrific
allusive	mocking	sarcastic
sweet	objective	nostalgic
vexed	vibrant	zealous
tired	frivolous	irreverent
bitter	audacious	benevolent
dreamy	shocking	seductive
restrained	somber	candid
proud	giddy	pitiful
dramatic	provocative	didactic

Another list of tone words:

satiric	pedantic	colloquial
whimsical	indignant	compassionate
dramatic	bantering	impartial
learned	flippant	insipid
informative	condescending	pretentious
somber	patronizing	vibrant
urgent	facetious	irreverent
confident	clinical	sentimental
mock-heroic	mock-serious	merallistic
objective	inflammatory	complimentary
diffident	benevolent	contemptuous
ironic	burlesque	sympathetic
petty	detached	taunting
factual	cynical	angry
restrained	incisive	turgid
elegiac	allusive	sardonic
disdainful	scornful	contentious
lugubrious	effusive	insolent
candid	fanciful	concerned

Words That Describe Language

jargon	pedantic	poetic
vulgar	euphemistic	moralistic
scholarly	pretentious	slang
insipid	sensuous	idiomatic
precise	exact	concrete
esoteric	learned	cultured
connotative	symbolic	picturesque
plain	simple	homespun
literal	figurative	provincial
colloquial	bombastic	trite
artificial	abstruse	obscure
detached	grotesque	precise
emotional	concrete	exact

reverence

awe
veneration
solemn

happiness

glad
pleased
merry
glee
delight
cheerful
gay
sanguine
mirth
enjoy
relish
bliss

sadness

somber
melancholy
sorrow
lament
despair
despondent
regret
dismal
funereal
saturnine
dark
gloomy
dejection
grave
grief
morose
sullen
woe
bleak
remorse
forlorn
agony
anguish
depression
misery
barren
empty
pity
lugubrious
distress

ironic tones

biting
smirking
sneering
dense
icy

↓ x → *acetic*

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love

affection
cherish
fondness
admiration
tenderness
sentiment
romantic
Platonic
adoration
narcissism
passion
lust
rapture
ecstasy
infatuated
enamored
compassion

anger

vehement
rage
outrage
antipathy
irritation
indignant
vexation
incensed
petulant
irascible
riled
bitter
acrimony
irate
fury
wrath
rancor
consternation
hostility
miffed
choleric
aggravation
futility
umbrage
gall
bristle
exasperation

ironic tones

biting
playful
witty
humorous
sarcastic
sardonic
flippant
cynical
mocking
dread

joy

exaltation
zeal
fervor
ardor
elation
jubilant
buoyancy

calm

serene
tranquil
placid

hope

expect
anticipate

hate

vengeance
abhorrence
animosity
enmity
malice
pique
rancor
aversion
loathing
despise
scorn
contempt
disdain
jealousy
repugnance
repulsion
resentment
spite
disgust

fear

timidity
apprehension
anxiety
terror
horror
dismay
agitation

sinister

alarm
startle
uneasy
qualms
angst

trepidation

intimidation
appalled

Stevenson/lee