

*155 Words to Describe an Author's **Tone**

Tone refers to an author's use of words and writing style to convey his or her attitude towards a topic. What the author feels about the subject is often defined as the **tone**. What the reader feels is known as the mood.

An author conveys his or her **tone** through diction (choice and use of words and phrases), viewpoint, syntax (grammar; how you put words and phrases together), and level of formality. (Don't confuse **tone** with voice. Voice can be explained as the author's personality expressed in writing.) Keep this in mind when you are analyzing and interpreting literature to determine an author's tone.

Tone	Meaning
Absurd	illogical; ridiculous; silly; implausible; foolish
Accusatory	suggesting someone has done something wrong, complaining

Acerbic	sharp; forthright; biting; hurtful; abrasive; severe
Admiring	approving; think highly of; respectful; praising
Aggressive	hostile; determined; forceful; argumentative
Aggrieved	indignant; annoyed; offended; disgruntled
Ambivalent	having mixed feelings; uncertain; in a dilemma; undecided
Amused	entertained; diverted; pleased
Angry	incensed or enraged; threatening or menacing
Animated	full of life or excitement; lively; spirited; impassioned; vibrant
Apathetic	showing little interest; lacking concern; indifferent; unemotional
Apologetic	full of regret; repentant; remorseful; acknowledging failure
Appreciative	grateful; thankful; showing pleasure; enthusiastic
Ardent	enthusiastic; passionate
Arrogant	pompous; disdainful; overbearing; condescending; vain; scoffing
Assertive	self-confident; strong-willed; authoritative; insistent
Awestruck	amazed, filled with wonder/awe; reverential

Belligerent	hostile; aggressive; combatant
Benevolent	sympathetic; tolerant; generous; caring; well meaning
Bitter	angry; acrimonious; antagonistic; spiteful; nasty
Callous	cruel disregard; unfeeling; uncaring; indifferent; ruthless
Candid	truthful, straightforward; honest; unreserved
Caustic	making biting, corrosive comments; critical
Cautionary	gives warning; raises awareness; reminding
Celebratory	praising; pay tribute to; glorify; honor
Chatty	informal; lively; conversational; familiar
Colloquial	familiar; everyday language; informal; colloquial; casual
Comic	humorous; witty; entertaining; diverting
Compassionate	sympathetic; empathetic; warm-hearted; tolerant; kind
Complex	having many varying characteristics; complicated
Compliant	agree or obey rules; acquiescent; flexible; submissive
Concerned	worried; anxious; apprehensive

Conciliatory	intended to placate or pacify; appeasing
Condescending	stooping to the level of one's inferiors; patronizing
Confused	unable to think clearly; bewildered; vague
Contemptuous	showing contempt; scornful; insolent; mocking
Critical	finding fault; disapproving; scathing; criticizing
Cruel	causing pain and suffering; unkind; spiteful; severe
Curious	wanting to find out more; inquisitive; questioning
Cynical	scornful of motives/virtues of others; mocking; sneering
Defensive	defending a position; shielding; guarding; watchful
Defiant	obstinate; argumentative; defiant; contentious
Demeaning	disrespectful; undignified
Depressing	sad, melancholic; discouraging; pessimistic
Derisive	snide; sarcastic; mocking; dismissive; scornful
Detached	aloof; objective; unfeeling; distant
Dignified	serious; respectful; formal; proper

Diplomatic	tactful; subtle; sensitive; thoughtful
Disapproving	displeased; critical; condemnatory
Disheartening	discouraging; demoralizing; undermining; depressing
Disparaging	dismissive; critical; scornful
Direct	straightforward; honest
Disappointed	discouraged; unhappy because something has gone wrong
Dispassionate	impartial; indifferent; unsentimental; cold; unsympathetic
Distressing	heart-breaking; sad; troubling
Docile	compliant; submissive; deferential; accommodating
Earnest	showing deep sincerity or feeling; serious
Egotistical	self-absorbed; selfish; conceited; boastful
Empathetic	understanding; kind; sensitive
Encouraging	optimistic; supportive
Enthusiastic	excited; energetic
Evasive	ambiguous; cryptic; unclear

Excited	emotionally aroused; stirred
Facetious	inappropriate; flippant
Farcical	ludicrous; absurd; mocking; humorous and highly improbable
Flippant	superficial; glib; shallow; thoughtless; frivolous
Forceful	powerful; energetic; confident; assertive
Formal	respectful; stilted; factual; following accepted styles/rules
Frank	honest; direct; plain; matter-of-fact
Frustrated	annoyed; discouraged
Gentle	kind; considerate; mild; soft
Ghoulish	delighting in the revolting or the loathsome
Grim	serious; gloomy; depressing; lacking humor; macabre
Gullible	naïve; innocent; ignorant
Hard	unfeeling; hard-hearted; unyielding
Humble	deferential; modest
Humorous	amusing; entertaining; playful

Hypercritical	unreasonably critical; hair splitting; nitpicking
Impartial	unbiased; neutral; objective
Impassioned	filled with emotion; ardent
Imploring	pleading; begging
Impressionable	trusting; child-like
Inane	silly; foolish; stupid; nonsensical
Incensed	enraged
Incredulous	disbelieving; unconvinced; questioning; suspicious
Indignant	annoyed; angry; dissatisfied
Informative	instructive; factual; educational
Inspirational	encouraging; reassuring
Intense	earnest; passionate; concentrated; deeply felt
Intimate	familiar; informal; confidential; confessional
Ironic	the opposite of what is meant
Irreverent	lacking respect for things that are generally taken seriously

Jaded	bored; having had too much of the same thing; lack enthusiasm
Joyful	positive; optimistic; cheerful; elated
Judgmental	critical; finding fault; disparaging
Laudatory	praising; recommending
Light-Hearted	carefree; relaxed; chatty; humorous
Loving	affectionate; showing intense, deep concern
Macabre	gruesome; horrifying; frightening
Malicious	desiring to harm others or to see others suffer; ill-willed; spiteful
Mean-Spirited	inconsiderate; unsympathetic
Mocking	scornful; ridiculing; making fun of someone
Mourning	grieving; lamenting; woeful
Naïve	innocent; unsophisticated; immature
Narcissistic	self-admiring; selfish; boastful; self-pitying
Nasty	unpleasant; unkind; disagreeable; abusive
Negative	unhappy, pessimistic

Nostalgic	thinking about the past; wishing for something from the past
Objective	without prejudice; without discrimination; fair; based on fact
Obsequious	overly obedient and/or submissive; fawning; groveling
Optimistic	hopeful; cheerful
Outraged	angered and resentful; furious; extremely angered
Outspoken	frank; candid; spoken without reserve
Pathetic	expressing pity, sympathy, tenderness
Patronizing	condescending; scornful; pompous
Pensive	reflective; introspective; philosophical; contemplative
Persuasive	convincing; eloquent; influential; plausible
Pessimistic	seeing the negative side of things
Philosophical	theoretical; analytical; rational; logical
Playful	full of fun and good spirits; humorous; jesting
Pragmatic	realistic; sensible
Pretentious	affected; artificial; grandiose; rhetorical; flashy

Regretful	apologetic; remorseful
Resentful	aggrieved; offended; displeased; bitter
Resigned	accepting; unhappy
Restrained	controlled; quiet; unemotional
Reverent	showing deep respect and esteem
Righteous	morally right and just; guiltless; pious; god-fearing
Satirical	making fun to show a weakness; ridiculing; derisive
Sarcastic	scornful; mocking; ridiculing
Scathing	critical; stinging; unsparing; harsh
Scornful	expressing contempt or derision; scathing; dismissive
Sensationalistic	provocative; inaccurate; distasteful
Sentimental	thinking about feelings, especially when remembering the past
Sincere	honest; truthful; earnest
Skeptical	disbelieving; unconvinced; doubting
Solemn	not funny; in earnest; serious

Subjective	prejudiced; biased
Submissive	compliant; passive; accommodating; obedient
Sulking	bad-tempered; grumpy; resentful; sullen
Sympathetic	compassionate; understanding of how someone feels
Thoughtful	reflective; serious; absorbed
Tolerant	open-minded; charitable; patient; sympathetic; lenient
Tragic	disastrous; calamitous
Unassuming	modest; self-effacing; restrained
Uneasy	worried; uncomfortable; edgy; nervous
Urgent	insistent; saying something must be done soon
Vindictive	vengeful; spiteful; bitter; unforgiving
Virtuous	lawful; righteous; moral; upstanding
Whimsical	quaint; playful; mischievous; offbeat
Witty	clever; quick-witted; entertaining
Wonder	awe-struck; admiring; fascinating

World-Weary	bored; cynical; tired
Worried	anxious; stressed; fearful
Wretched	miserable; despairing; sorrowful; distressed

Reference: <https://www.writerswrite.co.za/155-words-to-describe-an-authors-tone/>