**TONE***Some words to describe the tone of a work or passage*

accusing

admonitory

affectionate

allusive

ambivalent

amused

angry

annoyed

anxious

apprehensive

audacious

authoritative

baffled

bantering

benevolent

bewildered

bitter

blunt

bossy

brusque

burlesque

candid

caring

casual

ceremonial

cheerful

cheery

choleric

clinical

cold

colloquial

compassionate

complimentary

conceited

concerned

conciliatory

condemnatory

condescending

confident

confused

contemptuous

contentious

critical

cynical

delightful

depraved

depressed

derisive

derogatory

desolate

despairing

desperate

detached

diabolic

didactic

diffident

disappointed

disbelieving

disdainful

disgusted

disinterested

dispassionate

distressed

disturbed

doubtful

dramatic

ebullient

effusive

elated

elegiac

empathetic

encouraging

enraged

enthusiastic

euphoric

excited

expectant

exuberant

facetious

factual

fanciful

fatalistic

fearful

fervent

flippant

foreboding

formal

frantic

frightened

frustrated

furious

gleeful

gloomy

grave

greedy

grim

gushy

haughty

hilarious

holier-than-thou

hopeful

hopeless

horrific

humorous

impartial

impatient

incisive

incredulous

indifferent

indignant

inflammatory

informative

insipid

insolent

instructive

intimate

introspective

ironic

irreverent

irritated

jocund

joyful

laidback

learned

lethargic

lighthearted

loving

lugubrious

matter-of-fact

measured

meditative

melancholic

melancholy

mirthful

miserable

mock-heroic

mocking

mock-serious

moralistic

mournful

mysterious

nervous

nostalgic

objective

ominous

optimistic

outraged

outspoken

paranoid

passionate

pathetic

patronizing

pedantic

pensive

persuasive

pessimistic

petty

pithy

playful

pompous

pretentious

proud

provocative

psychotic

questioning

reflective

regretful

relaxed

reminiscent

remorseful

resigned

restrained

reticent

reverent

romantic

rousing

sanguine

sarcastic

sardonic

satiric

scared

scornful

selfish

sentimental

serene

serious

shocked

silly

simpering

sinister

skeptical

sneering

sober

solemn

somber

staid

stirring

stoic

straightforward

strident

suspenseful

suspicious

sympathetic

taunting

tender

tense

terse

thoughtful

threatening

timorous

turgid

uncaring

unconcerned

uneasy

unhappy

unsympathetic

urgent

vibrant

vitriolic

whimsical

wistful

worried

wrathful

wry

zealous

**Words to Describe Tone**

# Positive

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| lighthearted | confident | amused | complimentary | amiable |
| relaxed | soothing | jubilant | encouraging | reverent |
| hopeful | cheery | elated | passionate | whimsical |
| romantic | calm | enthusiastic | elevated | exuberant |
| optimistic | sympathetic | proud | fanciful | appreciative |
| consoling | ecstatic | jovial | loving | compassionate |
| friendly | pleasant | brave | joyful | energetic |

# Negative

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| angry | wrathful | threatening | agitated | obnoxious |
| insulting | choleric | disgusted | bitter | accusing |
| arrogant | quarrelsome | surly | outraged | irritated |
| condemnatory | belligerent | disgruntled | furious | indignant |
| inflammatory | aggravated | brash | testy |  |

# Humor/Irony/Sarcasm

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| scornful | bantering | disdainful | irreverent | condescending |
| pompous | mocking | ridiculing | wry | sarcastic |
| taunting | cynical | insolent | patronizing | whimsical |
| malicious | droll | critical | ironic | facetious |
| flippant | mock-­‐heroic | teasing | quizzical | comical |
| satiric | amused | sardonic | contemptuous | caustic |
| ribald | irreverent |  |  |  |

# Sorrow/Fear/Worry

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| somber | mournful | concerned | morose | hopeless |
| remorseful | poignant | melancholy | solemn | fearful |
| pessimistic | grave | staid | ominous | sad |
| serious | despairing | sober | solemn | resigned |
| horror | disturbed | apprehensive | gloomy | foreboding |
| regretful |  |  |  |  |

# Neutral

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| formal | objective | questioning | learned | authoritative |
| disbelieving | sentimental | pretentious | apathetic | conventional |
| judgmental | reflective | ceremonial | candid | instructive |
| factual | incredulous | urgent | fervent | histrionic |
| callous | forthright | lyrical | sincere | restrained |
| clinical | matter-­‐of-­‐fact | didactic | shocked | nostalgic |
| earnest | resigned | contemplative | haughty | objective |
| detached | admonitory | informative | baffled | reminiscent |
| patriotic | meditative | intimate | obsequious |  |

**More Help Describing Tone**

## Another set of words to describe tone:

***upset/concerned***

Provocative = Stimulating, exciting

Audacious = Daring, bold, insolent

Persuasive = Written to convince or win over

Condescending = patronizing, arrogant

Disdainful = Arrogant, lordly, superior, unsympathetic

Sarcastic = Snide, mocking, sharp taunting that wounds

Sardonic = Derisively mocking, scornful and cynical

Satiric = Ridiculing, ironic, mocking, farcical, exposing folly

Mock-heroic = Ridiculing a “hero”

Apprehensive = anxious, uneasy, worried

Ominous = Fateful, ill-boding, foreboding, dire

Urgent = imperative, critical, intensely necessary

Threatening = Menacing, intimidating

Horrific = Appalling, shocking, gruesome

Disappointed = Deceived, crestfallen, let down

Regretful = Contrite, apologetic, sorry (spans mere disappointment to a painful sense of dissatisfaction or self-reproach)

Remorseful = Moral anguish, penitent, contrite, rueful over past misdeeds

Somber = Bleak, depressing, dismal

Elegiac = Lamenting, poignant, funereal

***upbeat/neutral***

Amused = Entertaining in a light and playful manner (directing attention away from serious matters in an agreeable & pleasing manner)

Bantering = Teasing, joking, playful

Simpering = Smiley in a silly, self-conscious, often coy way

Whimsical = Capricious, unpredictable

Reverent = Venerating, worshipping

Reflective = Contemplative, meditative, introspective

Intimate = Personal, informal, private

Sympathetic = Compassionate, sensitive, sharing or understanding feelings

Factual = Certain, absolute, irrefutable, unbiased

Detached = Aloof, impartial, disconnected emotionally

Pedantic = Scholarly, making a show of knowledge

Provocative = Stimulating, exciting

*Adapted from materials from Ron Smith, Roby [Texas] HS and Susan VanDruten*

## Using a dictionary of synonyms

***proud, arrogant, haughty, lordly, insolent, overbearing, supercilious, disdainful*** mean showing superiority toward others or scorn for inferiors

***Proud*** may suggest a feeling or attitude of pleased satisfaction in oneself or one’s accomplishments that may or may not be justified and may or may not be demonstrated offensively <a *proud* man, unwilling to admit failure>. ***ant*** humble, ashamed

***Arrogant*** implies a claiming for oneself of more consideration or importance than is warranted and often suggests an aggressive, domineering manner an *arrogant* business executive used to being kowtowed to>. ***ant*** meek, unassuming

***Haughty*** suggests a blatantly displayed consciousness of superior birth or position <a *haughty* manner that barely concealed his scorn>. ***ant*** lowly

***Lordly*** implies pomposity or an arrogant display of power <a *lordly* indifference to the consequences of their carelessness>..

***Insolent*** implies insultingly contemptuous haughtiness <suffered the stares of *insolent* waiters>. ***ant*** deferential

***Overbearing*** suggests a tyrannical manner or an intolerable insolence <wearied by demands from her *overbearing* in-laws>. ***ant*** subservient

***Supercilious*** implies a cool, patronizing haughtiness <*supercilious* parvenus with their disdainful sneers>.

***Disdainful*** suggests a more active and openly scornful superciliousness <*disdainful* of their pathetic attempts>. ***ant***admiring, respectful

*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms*. Merriam-Webster, 1992,. [p. 310]