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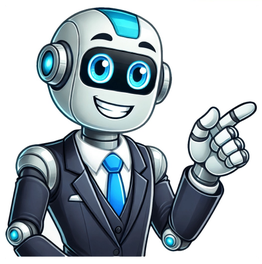

Tone in Poetry: Understanding the Mood and Attitude of a PoemWhat is tone in poetry or poetic tone? Simply simply, tone describes a poem's atmosphere and attitude. It is the manner in which the poet expresses their sentiments and emotions through their words and line structure. The tone of a piece might range from humorous to melancholy and everything in between. It is an essential feature of poetry since it helps to convey the poet's point of view and creates a better understanding and connection to the poem.In this blog post, we will explore the concept of tone in poetry and provide 20 examples of tone in action. But first, let's take a closer look at what tone is and how it is used in poetry.Tone in poetry is similar to tone in everyday conversation. It is the manner in which the poet expresses his or her sentiments and emotions through their words and line structure. It is the overall mood or atmosphere established by a poem, which can be affected by the poet's choice of words, rhythm, and structure.For instance, a poet may employ a light, humorous tone in a poem about the innocence of childhood, whereas a deeper, more sombre tone may be applied in a poem about loss or sadness. Depending on the subject matter and the poet's intended message, the tone of a poem can also alter and change throughout.Identifying the tone of a poem can be difficult, particularly for people who are new to poetry reading and analysis. When attempting to define the tone of a poem, there are a few main characteristics to consider.Word choice: Pay attention to the words that the poet uses. Certain words and phrases can help to convey a particular mood or emotion. For example, words like "laugh," "giggle," and "smile" might suggest a light-hearted or playful tone, while words like "sad," "mourn," and "grieve" might suggest a more sombre tone.Rhythm and structure: The way in which a poem is structured and the rhythm of the lines can also help to convey the tone. A fast-paced, energetic poem might suggest a more upbeat or lively tone, while a slow, measured poem might suggest a more contemplative or melancholy tone.READ ALSO: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock: Summary and QuestionsImagery and symbolism: The images and symbols that the poet uses can also help to convey the tone. For example, the use of light and dark imagery might suggest a contrast between hope and despair, while the use of water imagery might suggest a sense of renewal or cleansing.Now that we have a better understanding of what tone is and how it is used in poetry, let's take a look at some examples of tone in action."The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost: This poem is often interpreted as a contemplation on the choices we make in life and the paths we choose to follow. The tone of the poem is introspective and thoughtful, as the speaker reflects on the choices they have made and the potential outcomes of those choices."Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas: This poem is a plea to the speaker's dying father to fight against death and to hold on to life as long as possible. The tone is urgent and passionate, as the speaker implores their father to "rage, rage against the dying of the light.""The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot: This poem is a monologue in which the speaker, J. Alfred Prufrock, expresses his feelings of inadequacy and insecurity as he contemplates approaching a woman he is attracted to. The tone of the poem is self-deprecating and despairing, as Prufrock laments his own shortcomings and fears rejection."The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot: This long and complex poem is a meditation on the aftermath of World War I and the feelings of despair and disillusionment that many people were experiencing at the time. The tone is fragmented and disjointed, reflecting the speaker's sense of disconnection and loss."The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus: This sonnet is a tribute to the Statue of Liberty and a celebration of the ideals of freedom and opportunity that it represents. The tone is proud and uplifting, as the speaker extols the virtues of the statue and the nation it symbolizes.READ ALSO: The Lady of Shalott by Alfred Tennyson - Summary and Analysis"The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe: This poem is a narrative about a man who is visited by a talking raven, which he interprets as a symbol of his own impending demise. The tone is eerie and foreboding, as the speaker becomes increasingly disturbed by the raven's presence and the ominous messages it seems to be conveying."The Love Song of M. Edna Pontellier" by Kate Chopin: This poem is a parody of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in which the speaker, M. Edna Pontellier, takes on the role of the lovelorn and self-doubting Prufrock. The tone is humorous and satirical, as Pontellier pokes fun at the conventions of traditional love poetry and the insecurities of men."The Road" by Langston Hughes: This poem is a reflection on the struggles and hardships that African Americans have faced throughout history. The tone is melancholic and resigned, as the speaker reflects on the long and difficult journey that they and their people have been on."The Love That Moves the Sun and Other Stars" by Dante Alighieri: This sonnet, taken from Dante's Divine Comedy, is a tribute to the power of love and its ability to guide and inspire us. The tone is loving and reverent, as the speaker celebrates the transformative power of love."The Road" by Robert Frost: This poem is a meditation on the journey of life and the choices we make along the way. The tone is introspective and philosophical, as the speaker reflects on the paths they have taken and the lessons they have learned."Hope is the Thing with Feathers" by Emily Dickinson: This poem is a celebration of the enduring power of hope and its ability to lift us even in the darkest of times. The tone is hopeful and uplifting, as the speaker celebrates the resilience and strength of hope."Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?" by William Shakespeare: This sonnet is a celebration of the speaker's love for their beloved, comparing them to the beauty and warmth of summer. The tone is loving and adoring, as the speaker extols the virtues of their beloved and the depth of their love.READ ALSO: Casey at the Bat Poem - Summary and Analysis"When I Consider How My Light is Spent" by John Milton: This sonnet is a reflection on the speaker's increasing blindness and their fear of losing the ability to see and experience the world around them. The tone is despairing and melancholic, as the speaker laments their loss and the uncertainty of their future."Death, Be Not Proud" by John Donne: This sonnet is a challenge to death, declaring that it has no power over the speaker and that they will not be afraid to face it. The tone is bold and defiant, as the speaker asserts their belief in the power of the human spirit to overcome death."The Sonnet-Ballad" by Gwendolyn Brooks: This sonnet is a reflection on the speaker's relationship with their lover and the complex mix of emotions that it brings. The tone is bittersweet and introspective, as the speaker grapples with the pain and joy of love."The Lobster-Quadrille" by Lewis Carroll: In this poem, which is a nonsense poem, the speaker describes a dance performed by lobsters. The tone of the poem is light-hearted and humorous as Carroll uses absurd and humorous imagery to entertain the reader."How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning: In this sonnet, the speaker describes the depth and intensity of her love for her beloved. The tone of the poem is passionate and romantic as the speaker expresses her strong feelings of love and devotion.ConclusionTone is an essential component of poetry because it helps convey the poet's mood and attitude and allows the reader to connect with the poem on a deeper level. By focusing on the poet's word choice, rhythm and structure, as well as imagery and symbolism, we can obtain a deeper understanding of a poem's tone and a greater respect for poetry as an art form. Hopefully, you now have a better knowledge of tone in poetry and how it is utilised to create mood and atmosphere thanks to the examples offered in this blog post. What is Tone and Mood in Literature? When reading a novel, poem, or other piece of literature, our responses to the text can vary greatly. We might laugh, cry, become upset, or feel anxious, depending on the writing's ability to evoke a sense of atmosphere and attitude. This is where the terms tone and mood come in. Understanding the significance of these literary devices is essential to fully appreciating a work's meaning, tone, and overall emotional resonance. What is Tone in Literature? The tone in a piece of literature is the author's attitude, bias, or perspective as it is conveyed through words and language. It encompasses the writer's emotions, mood, and intentions while composing the text. Tone is distinct from mood, although it can influence the audience's emotional response. Writers may employ various techniques, such as word choice, punctuation, and syntax, to create a specific tone in their work. Tone can be categorized as follows: Tone Type Description Formal Respectful, neutral, and objective; commonly used in academic and technical writing. Informal Casual, relaxed, and conversational; often used in nonacademic writing. Neutral Balanced, fair-minded, and unbiased. Sarcastic Ironic, bitter, or mocking; commonly used to convey humor, cynicism, or sarcasm. Contemptuous Disrespectful, disdainful, or scornful. How Tone is UsedHow Mood is UsedTone vs. Mood How Tone is Used Tone can significantly influence the reader's perspective, creating a sense of tension, irony, or satire. Writers may adopt multiple tones throughout a single text, such as when recounting a traumatic experience: a formal tone at the beginning, gradually becoming informal and emotional as the reader becomes more invested. Successful tone usage can • Create a sense of familiarity or connection with the audience • Establish authority and credibility • Draw the reader into the story, making them more engaged • Convey the writer's emotions and intentions more effectively What is Mood in Literature? Mood, on the other hand, is the feeling or atmosphere that permeates a piece of writing, evoking a psychological and emotional response from the reader. It is subjective, meaning that readers might have different reactions to the same text, depending on their personal experiences and contexts. Mood can be evoked through: Mood-Evoking Devices Description Imagery Vivid and descriptive language that engages the senses. Syntax Sentence structure, tone, and pace can shape mood. Similes and Metaphors Comparisons and poetic descriptions can create a unique mood. TONE The author's perspective and attitude can infuse the text with emotion. How Mood is Used Mood plays a crucial role in guiding the reader's emotions, making them feel apprehensive, nostalgic, or triumphant. Effective use of mood can • Encourage empathy and immersion • Create a sense of tension or suspense • Evoke emotions through a shared experience • Enrich the reader's imagination and understanding Tone vs. Mood Tone and mood, though distinct, are intricately connected. A tonal shift (changing tone) can transform a reader's mood from optimism to despair, creating an emotional rollercoaster effect. Conversely, maintaining a consistent tone can bolster or undermine the mood established earlier in the text. Recognizing the interplay between tone and mood enriches our understanding of literature. Conclusion The nuanced interplay between tone and mood in literature elevates the reader's engagement and emotional response. Comprehending these literary devices and their functions enables you to better appreciate the intricate subtleties of authors and their works. Recognize the ways in which an author's tone sets the stage for the audience's emotional response, allowing themselves to be transported and empathize with the words and characters. Your friends have asked us these questions - Check out the answers! Tone and mood are two different yet similarly intertwined elements of a poem often found intertwined or confused with one another. Tone is the attitude a poet conveys in a poem and is most often used to evoke emotion in the reader. The poem's tone may be positive, serious, playful, romantic, or lighthearted, among others. Mood, on the other hand, is the atmosphere of the poem that speaks to a reader's emotions. Whereas tone is direct and clear, mood is more indirect and ambiguous. In order for readers to understand the overall message of a poem and the emotions being evoked, they must first recognize the difference between the two. At first glance, it may seem that these two elements are merely different words for the same idea – feelings in a poem. However, this is not the case. Generally, tone and mood create a poem's atmosphere, but they are distinct in the way they are conveyed. Tone relates to the author's attitude toward the subject or the reader, while mood is derived from the atmosphere in the writer's construction of the poem. Tone is the author's attitude, and mood is a feeling that readers get when they read the poem. Tone is how the author feels about the subject, while mood is the emotion the poem evokes in its readers. The tone and mood of a poem are often created by the poetic techniques used in its composition. Tone is generated through word choice and the attitude it conveys – for instance, is the writer angry, sad, or content? The use of irony in a poem can be used to convey a sarcastic tone, whereas the use of appositives can emphasize a positive attitude. Similarly, the poem's structure is influential in creating its mood as well. For example, a poem's rhythm might evoke a lively and energetic mood, while wide spacing of words in lines might convey a slower, more relaxed mood. You might likeWhat did emily dickinson write?In addition, poets often employ language and imagery to convey their tone and mood in their work. Imagery – the use of figures of speech, visual motifs, and other evocative devices – is an effective way to explain an emotion or attitude, as it forces the readers to use their imagination and interpret the author's words for themselves. Through careful selection of words, metre, and theme, poets have the power to manipulate their readers' emotions. An author might use precise word choices to highlight an idea and emphasize it to create a feeling of anger, fear, elation, or indecision. The combination of tone and mood allows readers to comprehend a poem without necessarily knowing the author's purpose or the exact words used in a line. With this knowledge, readers can form a better connection to a poet's work and derive a better understanding of the poem's overall meaning. In this way, tone and mood can be seen as two sides of the same coin, both influencing the reader's interpretation of the same work. The Different Levels of Tone and Mood Tone and mood are by no means static concepts; they can span a range of emotions and can take on many different forms. For instance, a poem may have a cheerful and positive tone in its overall narration, yet can also contain sad and melancholic moods throughout its lines. Similarly, a poem can have a somber and serious underlying message, yet the tone of the poem can simultaneously be humorous and lighthearted. The same poem may even express multiple tones across its various verses. This is why it is important to pay attention to the author's attitude when interpreting a poem and understanding its mood. Oftentimes, the poet's underlying message will be clearer when one takes into consideration the tone and mood in addition to the poem's subject. You might likeWhat Is Imagist PoetryThe relationship between a poem's tone and mood can be further examined by looking at how they are layered together. At the most basic level, readers can determine the overall mood of a poem by its dominant tone. For example, a poem may feel happy in its entirety due to its overall cheerful tone, yet the poem may contain occasional hints of sadness due to its underlying mood. In this manner, readers can explore the power of the words that the author used in a poem to create the mood. At a more intricate level, a poem's tone and mood can interact in complex and interesting ways. For example, a poem may be written in a serious tone, yet through its brilliant imagery, the poem can express subtle emotions. This is why it is important to consider both tones and moods in a poem in order to get a better understanding of the message the author is conveying. The Impact of Tone and Mood on Poetry Tone and mood are both essential components of a poem, as they shape the overall atmosphere that a reader experiences when reading a poem. Tone and mood have the power to sway readers' emotional responses, helping them to perceive the ideas being conveyed in the poem. For instance, a poem with a happy tone may make readers more likely to view its message as positive, while a poem with a darker tone can shift readers' attention to the poem's grim subject matter. Poets, too, rely on tone and mood to express their ideas and feelings in writing. Poets use tone and mood to build an emotional connection with their readers and evoke various emotions in them. This is why many poets are so adept at conveying a range of emotions – they are able to tap into the tone and mood of their works to evoke a response in their readers. You might likeWhy Did Maya Angelou Start Writing PoetryTone and mood can also be used to create a certain atmosphere or ambience in poetry. For example, a poem that is full of vivid imagery can evoke a sense of serenity, whereas the use of dark or melancholic language can create a foreboding atmosphere. Through the use of tone and mood, poets are able to give their readers an immersive experience, drawing them into their work and making them feel connected to the poem's message. Sense and Emotion of Tone and Mood In literature, there are five senses to which we can attribute our emotions: taste, touch, sight, smell, and sound. Tone and mood create a sense of these emotions within poetry, whether it is the taste of melancholy, the sound of joy, or the sight of fear. Oftentimes, the reader must rely on their own interpretation of the poem to determine what feelings the author is trying to evoke. This is because tone and mood can be subtle and can often be expressed in an indirect manner. The selection of language, imagery, and poetic techniques is typically how an author conveys the sense and emotion of a poem's tone and mood. Because a poem's language can be subtle, readers need to pay attention to how these elements are used in order to understand the poem's underlying meaning. By looking closely at an author's use of language and imagery, readers can better determine the mood and tone of a poem. In addition, tone and mood may not only be expressed through a poem's words, but also through its overall structure. The length of each line, the spacing of words on the page, and the various pauses in a poem's structure can all have an impact on the poem's mood. By considering these elements, readers can get a better sense of the emotion that the poet intended to convey in their work. The Use of Tone and Mood in Other Forms of Literature You might likeHow To Read Poetry Like A Professor AudiobookTone and mood are not only employed in poetry, but are also important elements in other forms of literature. A good author can subtly enhance the tone and mood of their work in order to intensify certain scenes or evoke certain emotions. For example, a thriller novel may use dark, mysterious imagery and setting to create suspense and tension in a scene, while a romantic novel may use light and airy language to emphasize its love story. Tone and mood can be used in any type of literature, as it is a powerful tool in the author's toolbox. Tone and mood can also be used in different media, such as film and television, in order to create a certain atmosphere or to influence the viewer's reaction to the scene. For example, a horror film may employ low lighting and oppressive music in order to generate an atmosphere of tension, while an emotional drama may use warm colors and soft music to emphasize its tender storyline. By understanding the impact of tone and mood on literature and media, readers can better comprehend an author's message. The Significance of Tone and Mood Tone and mood are fundamental elements in any type of literature and media, as they inform readers' interpretations of the author's message. Through a careful selection of language, imagery, and poetic techniques, authors have the power to evoke a range of emotions in their readers. Whether a poem is written in a happy tone or a serious mood, the poem's message can often be best understood through understanding the feelings the author is trying to convey. At its heart, the impact of tone and mood in literature is rooted in the idea that words have the power to evoke emotions in readers. Through the intentional use of words, poets and authors can stimulate our imaginations and take us on an emotional journey. Thus, it is important for readers to pay attention to the relationship between tone and mood in order to appreciate the full impact of a poem. What is tone? Here's a quick and simple definition: The tone of a piece of writing is its general character or attitude, which might be cheerful or depressive, sarcastic or sincere, comical or mournful, praising or critical, and so on. For instance, an editorial in a newspaper that described its subject as "not even having the guts to do the job himself," has a tone that is both informal and critical. Some additional key details about tone: All pieces of writing, even letters and official documents, have a tone. A neutral, official tone is still a tone. The tone of a piece of writing may change over the course of a text to produce different effects. Tone and mood are not the same. Tone has to do with the attitude of the author or the person speaking, whereas mood is how the work makes the reader feel. The author's intentions, emotions, and personal ideas about the theme or subject matter often reveal themselves in the piece's tone. How to Pronounce Tone Here's how to pronounce tone: tohn Tone Explained It is always possible to describe the way that a writer uses language. Therefore, every piece of writing has a tone. Even when a writer's aim is to use completely neutral language—as is often the case in scientific papers or investigative journalism—the language still sounds a certain way, whether it's "scientific," "journalistic," "formal," "professional," or even "mechanical." The way a writer makes use of tone can tell you a lot about the writer's attitude or relationship toward their subject matter and what they are trying to say about it, as well as the effect they are trying to create for their reader. Here's just a partial list of words that are commonly used to talk about tone, with examples of the types of writing they might be used to describe: Lofty, soaring, elevated A particularly stirring campaign speech The Declaration of Independence Maya Angelou's famous poem, "Still I Rise" Grandiose, flowery, melodramatic A sappy love poem An over-the-top television sermon A wordy letter of apology Smug, pompous, preachy A know-it-all at a cocktail party The comments section of almost any YouTube video A speech made by a boastful or proud character Somber, dark, serious, gloomy A speech at a funeral A murder mystery A novel about someone's struggles with depression Sarcastic, satirical, ironic Humorous, witty, goofy A stand-up comedy routine A play like Shakespeare's As You Like It A TV show like Seinfeld or Friends Lighthearted, cheerful, optimistic A Dr. Seuss Book A wedding speech A friendly joke Intellectual, analytical, critical An essay you'd write for school A dense work of political theory An article analyzing a political event Dry, official, scientific, cold A letter from the IRS A scientific paper Instructions on how to assemble furniture The tone of a piece of writing depends on a confluence of different factors, including: The connotation of the words used: Are they positive or negative? What associations do the words bring to mind? The diction, or word choice: Are there lots of thou's and thine's? Does the writer use slang? Are the words long and technical, or short and childish? The use of figurative language: Is there a lot of metaphor, hyperbole, or alliteration? Does the language sound lofty and poetic? The mood: How does the language make you feel as the reader? This can reveal a lot about the tone of the piece. All of these things work together to determine the tone of a piece of writing. The Difference Between Tone and Mood The words "tone" and "mood" are often used interchangeably, but the two terms actually have different meanings. Tone is the attitude or general character of a piece of writing and is often related to the attitude of the writer or speaker. Mood refers specifically to the effect a piece of writing has on the reader. Mood is how a piece of writing makes you feel. While tone and mood are distinct literary devices, they are often closely related. For example, it wouldn't be unusual for a poem with a somber tone to also have a somber mood—i.e., to make the reader feel somber as well. And as we explained above, a journalist who makes a jab at a politician might be conveying how they feel about their subject (using a critical tone) while also trying to influence their readers to feel similarly—i.e., to create a mood of anger or outrage. Tone Examples Since every text has a tone, there are essentially endless examples of tone. The examples below illustrate different types of tone. Tone in U.A. Fanthorpe's "Not my Best Side" The poem "Not my Best Side" by U.A. Fanthorpe has a lighthearted and ironic tone. The poem concerns the painting Saint George and the Dragon by Paolo Uccello, and pokes fun at the way the various characters are portrayed in the painting—the dragon, the maiden, and the knight who is supposedly rescuing her. Fanthorpe creates a contrast between her modern, colloquial way of speaking and the medieval subject matter of her poem. Using colloquial words like "sexy" and phrases like "if you know what I mean," Fanthorpe creates a lighthearted, conversational tone. But this conversational tone also has the effect of imbuing the poem with a tone of irony because it is used to describe the unlikely scenario of a maiden falling in love with a dragon. It's hard for a girl to be sure if She wants to be rescued. I mean, I quite Took to the dragon. It's nice to be Liked, if you know what I mean. He was So nicely physical, with his claws And lovely green skin, and that sexy tail Tone in Milton's "Lycidas" The poem "Lycidas" by John Milton has a mournful tone. The poem was inspired by the untimely death of Milton's friend, who drowned. To express his grief, and set the sorrowful and mournful tone, Milton uses words and phrases with negative connotations, like, "watery bier" (or "tomb"), "parching wind" and "melodious tear." For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime, Young lycidas, and hath not left his peer. Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme He must not float upon his watery bier Unwept, and welter to the parching wind, Without the meed of some melodious tear. Tone in Flaubert's Madame Bovary In many passages in Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary, Flaubert's own cynicism about romance shines through the third-person narration to imbue the work with a tone of cynicism. Bored by her husband and desperate for a passionate love affair like the sort she reads about in romance novels, Emma Bovary gets involved with a notorious womanizer. Flaubert highlights Emma's foolishness for falling for such an obvious hack, who sees her as no different from any other mistress: Emma was just like any other mistress; and the charm of novelty, falling down slowly like a dress, exposed only the eternal monotony of passion, always the same forms and the same language. He did not distinguish, this man of such great expertise, the differences of sentiment beneath the sameness of their expression. Flaubert sets the cynical tone in part by describing, using figurative language, how the charm of novelty, for Madame Bovary's lover, fell down "slowly like a dress," suggesting that what she experiences as romance, her lover experiences only as an extended prelude to sex. What's the Function of Tone in Literature? First and foremost, tone clues readers into the essence and the purpose of what they're reading. It wouldn't make sense to use a wordy, poetic tone to write a simple set of directions, just like it wouldn't make sense to use a dry, unfeeling tone when writing a love poem. Rather, writers set the tone of their work to match not only the content of their writing, but also to suit the purpose they intend for it to serve, whether that is to convey information clearly, to make people laugh, to lavish praises on someone, or something else. Additionally, tone can serve the following purposes: Writers often make use of tone to demonstrate their attitude toward, or views about, their subject matter. For example, a biography of Bill Clinton might have a critical tone if the author has critical views of the former president and what he stood for, or it might have an admiring tone if the author was a staunch Clinton supporter. Tone is also an important way for writers to shape their readers' experiences. If a writer wants their readers to feel upset, he or she might use words with certain connotations to create a gloomy tone. Likewise, if a writer wants to create an informal tone, he or she might make use of colloquialisms, slang terms, and everyday language to make the reader feel like their familiar or their equal. Simply put, establishing the tone of a work is important because it helps writers show readers what the work is trying to accomplish, and what attitude the work takes toward its own subject matter. Other Helpful Tone Resources Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. There are many different tones of poems, and that is what we will attempt to explore today. We will look at the question: "What is tone in poetry?", and we will examine this question by exploring the way in which tone in poetry is used, the different types of tones in poems, and a few examples of tone in poetry. So, without further ado, let's discuss the different tones in poems and why they are used!A Look at the Tones of PoemsTone is a term that can often be viewed as synonymous with attitude or mood. This is also what makes a term like this quite a difficult thing to examine in general as "attitude" and "mood" can also be defined along very specific lines. So, what is tone in poetry then? It is essentially the feeling that is conveyed by the poet through the use of words, themes, and other poetic elements. With that general understanding in mind, let's explore the use of tone in poetry to see what we can learn about this common poetic element. How Tone Is Presented in PoetryThere are many ways in which tone can be presented in poetry. The different tones of poems can be seen in the presentation of language in a poem. The most basic way in which this can be seen is through the use of word choice. Which words are chosen over other words? For instance, a word that has a far stronger weight to it may be considered preferable to one that is weaker in terms of emotionality.One of the best ways to see this is with the morbid topic of taking a life. The word "kill" has a certain neutral quality to it. It does not present us with all that much emotionality. We can kill things by mistake or out of necessity. However, if we were to instead use the word "murder", we would get a very different kind of feeling that is produced. The feeling behind a murder is significantly different from something being killed.The use of the word "murder" is so much more powerful because it presents us with a very different tone. That word does not relate to something accidental or necessary.You cannot murder by mistake. You can kill by mistake. In terms of the law, the term "manslaughter" is often used if this is the case. This is because "murder" implies intent. There was a plan to do it. It was premeditated. It was callous and cruel. It was purposeful.So, if you wanted to have a poem in which a person is murdered, you may prefer to use terms that are more emotive. This can be far more evocative and aid in the creation of stronger tones of poems. A poem that is particularly dark in its presentation does not usually shy away from emotionality. Show the emotion. Show it through the words that are used. However, word choice is not the only way in which tones of poems can be presented to the reader. Illustration of poem The Nightingale by John Keats (1899) by W. J. Neatby; W. J. Neatby (1860-1910), Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsOne of the most common ways in which we may present the tones of poems is also through the use of figurative language. This can mean the use of metaphorical constructions, such as by using an allegory of nature to comment on the destructive nature of urban environments or something like hyperbole could be used to express feelings in a more exaggerated fashion than they may technically require. However, something like hyperbole can be used to show the way that we feel about something, rather than the way that it truly is, such as using overly inflated language for our love for someone.There are many ways in which the tones of poems can be expressed through the use of language. Not only through the methods that have been discussed but also through the use of passive and active voice, which both present very different general tones in poetry. Furthermore, the use of short or long sentences, the use or lack of rhyme or meter, the use of punctuation, capitalization, enjambment, and other poetic forms, and so on. All of these different and distinct methods can be used to present the different tones of poems. However, it may be best to examine some of the different types of tones in poems to show what can be done with language and why. So, let's examine that.Types of Tones in PoemsThere are many different tones of poems that could be explored, but today, we will only have a look at five of them. These different types of tones in poems are not necessarily the most common, but they should give a good overview of some of the different tones of poems and how they can be used. Arrogant ToneWhen we think of poetry, we often think of tones that are more uplifting or, at the very least, say something about how we may universally feel at times. However, that does not need to be the case because a poem can also make use of a far more arrogant tone. This is a tone that is far more condescending or boastful about certain ideas or accomplishments. These kinds of poems can help us to see the darker and less illustrious side of human nature. A good instance of a more arrogant tone can be found in William Ernest Henley's Invictus, which is about the strength and resilience of the speaker. It can be read in a very arrogant sense, but arrogance of this kind can also be analyzed further to understand why such a seemingly inflated sense of self has been used.Assertive ToneIt can often be very easy for us to hide behind certain feelings. We may not want to make ourselves known, to allow ourselves to be out there where we could face some kind of danger to our self-esteem. However, that is not what this tone in poetry attempts to do. Instead of hiding, it is confident and direct. It wants to confront, often because it wants to assert something that the poet feels has not otherwise been asserted. Maya Angelou reciting her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton's inauguration (1993); Clinton Library, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThis can be seen in poems such as Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou. This poem is an assertive expression of the self. It is an act of confidently and assertively stating her own beauty. It is about self-love and respecting oneself. This is something that we are often trained not to do. We are not meant to act this way because it is arrogant and self-centered, but as a society, we have often pushed people in the opposite direction. We have pushed them away from pride in themselves, and so asserting that is a powerful and important thing.Inspirational ToneThere are many poems that make use of an inspirational tone. The idea behind an inspirational tone in poetry is that it is meant to serve as an optimistic declaration of hope, encouragement, and confidence. It can be easy to become uninspired in life, especially when there is so much happening in our lives, but poems that make use of an inspirational tone may be able to encourage us to try even when the going gets tough.This tone can be found in something like Still I Rise by Maya Angelou.This stunning poem concerns adversity because one cannot be inspired to push through something positive and is instead geared towards perseverance through said adversity. The poem repeatedly calls for the reader to rise above the difficulties they face, and it is presented in the first-person to show that the poet has also attempted to rise above it all. The use of an inspirational tone in poetry can help those who may need some motivation in their lives.Light-Hearted ToneWhen we think of poetry, we often think of dark and serious topics. Well, we either think of that or love poetry. Those are the binaries in which we are often trained to think. It must either be about love or about something miserable, like death. There are no in-betweens! But that is not the case. A poem can also be about fun and enjoyment. A poem can be playful and whimsical. There are many ways that this can be achieved, and there are many reasons that one may want to make use of this kind of tone in poetry. The Jabberwocky (1871) by John Tenniel; John Tenniel, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsA good example of this tone can be found in a poem like Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll. This poem is considered to be one of the most famous examples of nonsense poetry that has ever been written. It uses made-up words, a more playful structure, and odd subject matter to present the reader with a strange and entertaining story about a weird monster.Melancholic ToneA melancholic tone is likely one of the most famous tones of poems and this is because many poems are about sad and mournful topics. In fact, the whole concept of an elegy is that it is often a reflection and contemplation of someone who has died. This often comes along with a more melancholic tone. The reason that we use feelings such as this in poetry is because melancholic feelings can often be seen as universal. We all experience them. We all know what it feels like to be sad.This can be seen in many poems, such as something like Ode to a Nightingale by John Keats. This poem is concerned with the way in which life will inevitably come to an end. The poem is sad and melancholic in its presentation because it is about something serious, something sad, something that should be acknowledged. This shows how the tones of poems can help us to explore topics that may be taboo or difficult for us to otherwise discuss.Examples of Tone in PoetryEvery poem makes use of some kind of a tone, but this is often best shown through actual examples of tone in poetry. We are going to examine two different poems today that can be used to show the way in which tones in poems can be demonstrated. Both of these poems are particularly famous poems, but far more poems than only those that are famous make use of tone. Illustration of the Raven by Edgar Allen Poe (1882) by James William Carling; James William Carling, Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsThe New Colossus (1883) by Emma LazarusThe New Colossus is a poem that is particularly well-known in the United States. The reason is because this poem is engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. This enduring figure of American freedom has been eternally affixed with the poem that has now become one of the best-known in the country, and the poem expresses ideas of opportunity, freedom, and hope. One of the lines of the poem, which concerns the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" has become one of the most famous lines in poetry in history.The tone that this poem is attempting to produce is one that is far more celebratory in nature. It wants to celebrate the kinds of ideas and thoughts on which the country's ideals are based. It wants to express these feelings of freedom, aid, and a welcoming attitude to all who would want to enter the "land of opportunity", and it also does this by directly evoking the image of the Colossus of Rhodes to establish a connection between these two statues and what they represent. The New Colossus (1883) by Emma Lazarus; Emma Lazarus (1883 manuscript), Public domain, via Wikimedia CommonsDaddy (1962) by Sylvia PlathDate Published1962Type of PoemConfessionalRhyme SchemeNoneMeterFree verseToneAngryDaddy is considered to be one of the most famous poems that Sylvia Plath ever wrote, and the poem explores the way in which Plath felt about her father. The poem was written as a way of trying to understand the often-fraught relationship with the man. It does this through the use of vivid imagery that allows the themes of the poem to be explored in a raw and confessional way.The general tone of the poem is emotional, and that emotion is often filtered through anger. It shows the way in which she wanted to push back against the control and power that her father exerted over her, and this shows the way in which a poem can make use of a more confrontational and angry tone to deliver a message that can better relate to others who may be experiencing similar feelings about their own fathers.Since we started this article, we have attempted to answer the basic question: "What is tone in poetry?". We have examined the different types of tones in poems, why tone is used, and a few examples of tone in poetry. This common poetic element is found in all poetry, and so, an understanding of the different tones of poems can be very important if you too want to read, understand, or analyze poetry.Frequently Asked QuestionsWhat Is Tone in Poetry?Tone in poetry is a concept that refers to the feelings that are conveyed through the use of various poetic elements in a poem. A poet will make use of various words, phrases, themes, and so on, to produce a certain tone. A tone could, for instance, be darker or lighter, happier or sadder, but there are many other types of tones in poems. This term can also often be conflated with attitude and mood as these terms can be quite synonymous, but they are sometimes used more specifically.What Are the Types of Tones in Poems?There are numerous and varied types of tones in poems. There is no real set number of different types of tones that can be found, but some of the most common include tones such as cheerful, inspirational, and melancholic tones. However, these are not the only examples of tone in poetry, and there are a great many more that can be found in a wide array of poems. Understanding the type of tone used can be very important when analyzing poetry.Can a Poem Have No Tone?A poem cannot have no tone. The reason that a tone is necessary for any instance of poetry is because tone refers to the kind of feeling that a poem is producing, and every poem produces some kind of a feeling. Even a poem that is written in a very robotic manner could be called a kind of logical tone. So, there is no real way to exclude tone in poetry, as tone is produced through the words a poet uses, and all poetry uses language.What Is the Most Common Tone in Poetry?It is very difficult to answer a question like this, as there is no real definitive way to determine something like this. There tends to be an association between poetry and love, and a lot of love poetry tends to have a happier tone to it. However, love poetry is not the most common type of poetry, it just happens to be the most famous type. So, determining a true answer to this question is likely impossible.Why Is It Important to Analyze Tone in Poetry?The reason it's so important to pay attention to the different tones of a poem is because tone is highly emotive, and understanding the emotion of a poem can go a long way to understanding the poem itself. Without understanding the feeling that a poem is trying to produce, it may be impossible to fully understand or appreciate a poem. Justin van Huyssteen is a freelance writer, novelist, and academic originally from Cape Town, South Africa. At present, he has a bachelor's degree in English and literary theory and an honor's degree in literary theory. He is currently working towards his master's degree in literary theory with a focus on animal studies, critical theory, and semiotics within literature. As a novelist and freelancer, he often writes under the pen name L.C. Lupus.Justin's preferred literary movements include modern and postmodern literature with literary fiction and genre fiction like sci-fi, post-apocalyptic, and horror being of particular interest. His academia extends to his interest in prose and narratology. He enjoys analyzing a variety of mediums through a literary lens, such as graphic novels, film, and video games.Justin is working for artincontext.org as an author and content writer since 2022. He is responsible for all blog posts about architecture, literature and poetry.Learn more about Justin van Huyssteen and the Art in Context Team. The poet's attitude toward the poem's speaker, reader, and subject matter, as interpreted by the reader. Often described as a "mood" that pervades the experience of reading the poem, it is created by the poem's vocabulary, metrical regularity or irregularity, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhyme. Tone is a literary device that conveys the author's attitude toward the subject, speaker, or audience of a poem. Tone is sometimes referred to as the "mood" of the poem, and can be established through figurative language and imagery. All forms of writing have a tone. Tone in poetry can range from formal to informal, aggressive to defensive, sentimental to critical, and more. Tone allows the reader to better understand, and even relate to, the speaker's attitude toward the subject of a poem. In "Elegy for a Gopher," Ellen Bass establishes a tone of reverence and regret for a creature the speaker must kill: "The pads of your paws scrabble as I drag you from the tunnel clamped to the shiny green trap, a baby, hell-bent on saving your twist of life, spun from the same cells as I am" Amid poetry's vast array of renowned elements, there are two terms often thrown around when analyzing a poem: tone and mood. While both are integral to its whole, they are two distinct topics that work together to create the whole poem. Tone can be defined as the narrator's or poet's attitude towards the poem's subject. It kicks in when a poet has the need to project a certain attitude or opinion about the text's subject. It may be happy, sad, humorous, serious, or even angry. Think about it like this, when you decide to share news or a statement, you have a tacit message of how you or someone else feels or think about it. For example, if you are saying something positive about a certain topic, you are communicating gratification towards it. On the other hand, if you are commenting something negative, then you are expressing disapproval. You might likeWhat Is The Meaning Of Narrative PoetryIn poetry, various writers such as E.E Cummings, Maya Angelou, and William Butler Yeats use tone to communicate feelings to their reader. It influences the reader to experience the same emotion that the poet is feeling—to sway them to feel the same way through words. However, there is a stark difference between tone and mood. If tone is the poet's attitude towards the subject, mood is the atmosphere that the poem sets. In other words, mood is the emotion that the whole poem evokes. Unlike its counterpart, mood sets the overall psychological and emotional feeling of the poem. It is not directly expressed by the poet, but it is the reader's perception of the poem itself. Therefore, when the reader tries to interpret the poem, it doesn't take into account the poet's opinion, but the vibes it gives off. Techniques Poets Use to Establish Mood Poets are talented and effective communicators. They understand the power of tone and mood. They are able to coax their reader's emotions simply by using the right words. Here are some of the techniques poets use to invoke mood: Word Choice: Selecting words that convey specific feelings and emotions. Imagery: Utilizing evocative descriptions to give the poem a more striking effect. Rhyme: Employing words that summon associations. If there's an internal rhyme, it is easier to create a stronger mood. You might likeWhat college did emily dickinson go to?The poet can also explore perspective and point of view when creating mood. It helps the audience better understand the poem. How Tone and Mood Affect Reader Response As we have mentioned before, mood and tone come from