Mini-Lesson

I. **Tone Definition**
The tone of a literary work is the writer’s attitude toward his or her subject, characters, or audience. A writer’s tone may be formal or informal, friendly or distant, personal or pompous. For example, William Faulkner’s tone in his “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech” is earnest and serious, whereas James Thurber’s tone in “The Night the Ghost Got In” is humorous and ironic.

II. **Tone Vocabulary Words**
Study the list of tone vocabulary words. Thoroughly familiarize yourself with these words and any other words from the previous worksheets. You will need them to complete the exercises in this unit. Tone analysis is also an important element of the literary analysis assignments on the AP English Language and Composition Test.

III. **Tone Practice Activities**
1. **Activity #1** – Language Categorization. Use the tone vocabulary list to categorize the language in the passages. One or more “tone” adjective may apply.

2. **Activity #2** – Images and Tone. Use the tone vocabulary list to evaluate the speaker’s attitude based on the images in the passages. One or more “tone” adjective may apply.
Tone Vocabulary Words

1. **allusive** – intimate, suggest, connote
2. **angry** – mad, furious, irate
3. **bantering** – good-natured teasing, ridicule, joking
4. **benevolent** – magnanimous, generous, noble
5. **burlesque** – mockery, sham, spoof, parody
6. **candid** – clear, frank, genuine, sincere
7. **clinical** – direct, detached, scientific, impersonal
8. **colloquial** – common – ordinary, vernacular
9. **compassionate** – kindly, sympathetic, benevolent
10. **complimentary** – flattering, approving, laudatory
11. **concerned** – touched, affected, influenced
12. **condescending** – scornful, contemptuous, disdainful
13. **confident** – positive, certain, assured
14. **contemptuous** – pompous, arrogant, superior, haughty
15. **contentious** – argumentative, quarrelsome, pugnacious
16. **cynical** – adverse, suspicious, opposed, doubtful, dubious
17. **detached** – separated, severed, apathetic
18. **didactic** – pointed, bombastic, pompous, terse
19. **diffident** – retiring, timid, hesitant, bashful
20. **disdainful** – haughty, arrogant, supercilious
21. **dramatic** – exciting, moving, sensational, emotional
22. **effusive** – talkative, verbose, profuse
23. **elegiac** – sad, mournful, plaintive (like an elegy)
24. **factious** – dissident, rebellious, insubordinate
25. **factual** – authentic, genuine, truthful
26. **fanciful** – capricious, extravagant, whimsical
27. **flippant** – offhand, facetious, frivolous
28. **impartial** – equitable, unbiased, dispassionate
29. **incisive** – cutting, biting, penetrating
30. **indignant** – angry, irritated, resentful
31. **inflammatory** – irrate, arouse, resentful
32. **informative** – acquaint, communicate, disclose
33. **insipid** – flat, bland, tedious, banal (commonplace)
34. **insolent** – insulting, brazen, rude, contemptuous
35. **ironic** – contradictory, implausible, incongruous
36. **irreverent** – profane, impious, blasphemous, ungodly
37. **learned** – skilled, experienced, professional
38. **lugubrious** – gloomy, dismal, melancholy, somber
39. **maudlin** – sentimental, mushy, gushing, insipid
40. **mock-heroic** – mimicking courage (pretend)
41. **mock-serious** – mimicking solemnity (pretend)
42. **moralistic** – virtuous, righteous, blameless
43. **objective** – impartial, detached, impersonal
44. **patronizing** – condescending, scornful, disdainful
45. **pedantic** – academic, bookish, scholastic
46. **petty** – trivial, insignificant, narrow-minded
47. **pretentious** – arrogant, boastful, conceited
48. **restrained** – unwilling, hesitant, reluctant
49. **sardonic** – cutting, biting, penetrating, satirical
50. **satiric** – lampooning, facetious
51. **scornful** – bitter, caustic, acrimonious, mordant
52. **sentimental** – emotional, mushy, maudlin (tearful)
53. **somber** – serious, gloomy, dismal, shadowy
54. **sympathetic** – supportive, favorable, considerate
55. **taunting** – contemptuous, insulting, derisive
56. **terse** – concise, succinct, pithy, pointed
57. **turgid** – pompous, bloated, swollen, distended
58. **urgent** – compelling, demanding, imperative, pressing
59. **vibrant** – resonant, active, resounding
60. **whimsical** – flippant, frivolous, light-hearted, dainty
**Tone Activity #1**

**Language Categorization**

Use the tone vocabulary list to categorize the language in the passages. One or more “tone” adjective may apply.

1. “When I told Dad how I’d blown the exam, he literally blew his top.”

2. “There was a constable on point duty just where we stopped, and he came over and lifted the bonnet and made ineffectual motions with a spanner. And then – what do you think? We found we were out of petrol!”

3. “We don’t keep nothing like that here, but maybe we could order it for you special. Not in a hurry for it, was you?”

4. “I had him on the ropes in the fourth, and if one of those short rights of mine had connected, he’d have gone down for the count. I was aiming for his glass jaw, but I couldn’t seem to reach it.”

5. “A close examination and correction of the most reliable current economics indexes justifies the conclusion that the next year will witness a continuation of the present, upward market trend, though this may be accomplished by seasonal fluctuations in respect to certain areas of the economy.”

6. “We were loading hay in the west forty when we saw the twister in the distance.”

7. “Both the Oriental romance and the picaresque narrative have been favorite vehicles for the satirist, the romance because it permits a handy and vivid way of contrasting western manners with those of a very different culture, the picaresque tale because the hero’s adventurous career, spiced as it is with all sorts of roguery, gives an excellent excuse for pungent comment on the errant ways of mankind.”

8. “The female operatives in this mill seemed well content with their lot, laughing and singing as they emerged at the end of the day.”

9. “The ominous final movement begins with a toccata in the horns, punctuated by glissando effects in the timpani, and then develops, in the middle section, into a lyrical coda.”
Tone Activity #2
Images and Tone

Evaluate the author or speaker’s attitude based on these short images.

1. My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun.

2. An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king.

3. He clasps the crag with crooked hands.

4. The holy time is quiet as a Nun, Breathless with adoration.

5. If I should die, think only this of me – That there’s a corner of a foreign field that is forever England.

6. If we must die, let it not be like hogs – Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot.

7. Love sets you going like a fat golden watch.

8. Up vistaed hopes I sped and shot precipitated adown titanic glooms of chasmed fears.

9. Smiling, the boy fell dead.

10. You do me wrong to take me out of the grave
    Thou art a soul in bliss
    But I am bound upon a wheel of fire
    That mine own tears do scald like molten lead.

11. Know then thyself, presume not God to scan
    The proper study of mankind is Man.

12. Here lies one whose name was writ in water.

13. Life is just one damned thing after another.