

Tone (literature) Wikipedia

Tone is a literary element of composition, which encompasses the attitudes toward the subject and toward the audience implied in a literary work.[1] Tone may be formal, informal, intimate, solemn, somber, playful, serious, ironic, condescending, or many other possible attitudes. Each piece of literature has at least one theme, or central question about a topic, and *how* the theme is approached within the work is known as the tone.

Contents

- 1 Difference Between Tone And Mood
- 2 Usage
- 3 Setting tone
- 4 References
- 5 See also

Difference Between Tone And Mood

Tone and mood are not the same, although variations of the two words may on occasions be interchangeable terms. The tone of a piece of literature is the speaker's or narrator's attitude towards the subject, rather than what the reader feels, as in mood. Mood is the general feeling or atmosphere that a piece of writing creates within the reader. Mood is produced most effectively through the use of setting, theme, voice and tone.[2]

Usage

All pieces of literature, even official documents and technical documents, have some sort of tone. Authors create tone through the use of various other literary elements, such as *diction* or word choice; *syntax*, the grammatical arrangement of words in a text for effect; *imagery*, or vivid appeals to the senses; *details*, facts that are included or omitted; and *figurative language*, the comparison of seemingly unrelated things for sub-textual purposes.

While now used to discuss literature, the term tone was originally applied solely to music. This appropriated word has come to represent attitudes and feelings a speaker (in poetry), a narrator (in fiction), or an author (in non-literary prose) has towards the subject, situation, and/or the intended audience. It is important to recognize that the speaker, or narrator is not to be confused with the author and that attitudes and feelings of the speaker or narrator should not be confused with those of the author. In general, the tone of a piece only refers to attitude of the author if writing is non-literary in nature.[3]

In many cases, the tone of a work may change and shift as the speaker or narrator's perspective on a particular subject alters throughout the piece.

Official and technical documentation tends to employ a formal tone throughout the piece.

Setting tone

Authors set a tone in literature by conveying emotions/feelings through words. The way a person feels about

an idea/concept, event, or another person can be quickly determined through facial expressions, gestures and in the tone of voice used. In literature an author sets the tone through words. The possible tones are bounded only by the number of possible emotions a human being can have.

Diction and syntax often dictate what the author's (or character's) attitude toward his subject is at the time. An example: "Charlie surveyed the classroom but it was really his mother congratulating himself for snatching the higher test grade, the smug smirk on his face growing brighter and brighter as he confirmed the inferiority of his peers."

The tone here is one of arrogance; the quip "inferiority of his peers" shows Charlie's belief in his own prowess. The words "surveyed" and "congratulating himself" show Charlie as seeing himself better than the rest of his class. The diction, including the word "snatching", gives the reader a mental picture of someone quickly and effortlessly grabbing something, which proves once again Charlie's pride in himself. Characteristically, of course, the "smug smirk" provides a facial imagery of Charlie's pride.

In addition, using imagery in a poem is helpful to develop a poem's tone.

References

1. ^ Rosalie Hutton; Glenn Hutton; Fraser Sampson (2 June 2011). *Passing the National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT)* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=zkwADH1fQ1QC&pg=PA77>). SAGE Publications. p. 77. ISBN 978-0-85725-486-3. Retrieved 9 June 2013.
2. ^ </Glossary of Literary Terms. (<http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/reading-writing/on-line/lit-terms.html>), Hunter College Reading/Writing Center., 1998, retrieved March 22, 2012.
3. ^ Booth, Alison, and Kelly J. Mays, eds. "Theme and Tone." *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, Portable 10th ed. New York: Norton, 2010. 475-6. Print.

See Also

- Grammatical voice
- Writer's voice
- Point of view (literature)
- Sloppy Handwriting (calligraphy)