Tone

Tone is usually defined as the author’s attitude toward audience and subject matter. No written work can be without tone, and it is essential that a reader grasp that tone to fully understand the meaning, effect, and effectiveness of a piece of writing.

The “tone of voice” often determines the way we take what is being said. In the same way, the “tone of a work” inevitably influences or even determines how we react to what is written.

The tone of a piece of writing, just as the tone of our voice, may be:

**Light-hearted, sarcastic, morbid, angry, jovial, condescending, begging, resigned, wistful, earnest, reticent, moral, ironic, playful, tragic, scoffing, bragging, contentious, obsequious, exhorting, pleading, sceptical, pessimistic, optimistic, conversational, critical, noncommittal, sentimental, flat, exuberant, scolding, morose, tentative, flippant, secretive, regretful, forgiving, apologetic, maudlin, intimate, solemn, sombre, forceful, irreverent, reverent, blunt or any other of many possible attitudes.**

The tone should be consistent (unless there is a specific reason that it is not) and should create a DOMINANT IMPRESSION.

Categories of Essays

Essays may be Formal (literary) or informal (also called familiar or personal). Each category has certain characteristics and specific form and structure. There is a third category called Journalistic that is sometimes a combination of both formal and informal.

Characteristic of Essays:

Formal

-Purpose—generally to instruct, inform,

convince

-Usually a long and serious treatment of topic

-Precise and accurate information

-Factual, logical

-Diction is precise, orderly, formal, dignified,

clear, direct

-impersonal, rarely reveals personality of

writer. Issue, not the writer is important

-Carefully prepared plan (i.e. thesis statement,

stated position on topic in question, clear examples,

appeals to authority, provides evidence

Informal

-Purpose—generally to inform, entertain

-Lighter, more relaxed

-Can be whimsical, satirical, ironic, humorous,

thoughtful

-Held together by mood rather than by theme

-Diction is more relaxed/casual, but not sloppy

-more loosely written, usually on lighter topics

-based on topics that interest the author, no matter

how imp. or trivial, therefore much more personal, may reveal personality of author

-Plan is more relaxed; one main idea is developed

at the beginning, but author may digress—although

should always return to main idea

-asks reader to draw his/her own conclusion