

## TONE VOCABULARY

### POSITIVE ATTITUDE WORDS

amused	exuberant	loving	sentimental
boisterous	exultant	merry	sympathetic
cheery	fanciful	mirthful	tickled
compassionate	festive	nostalgic	whimsical
complimentary	flattering	optimistic	wistful
confident	genial	passionate	witty
effusive	hopeful	playful	
elated	jocular	proud	
enthusiastic	lighthearted	sanguine	

### NEGATIVE ATTITUDE WORDS

accusing	condescending	exacerbated	incensed
admonitory	contemptuous	exasperated	indignant
anxious	critical	facetious	inflammatory
apprehensive	cynical	fearful	insolent
arrogant	depressed	flippant	irate
ashamed	derisive	foreboding	irreverent
bantering	despairing	furios	irritated
bitter	disconcerted	gloomy	livid
chagrined	disdainful	hopeless	manipulative
concerned	disgusted	humorless	melancholic
condemnatory	disturbed	incendiary	mock-serious

mournful	pretentious	scornful	teasing
offensive	resentful	sober	threatening
ominous	resigned	solemn	urgent
outraged	sardonic	somber	vexed
patronizing	satiric	staid	wrathful
pompous	scathing	taunting	

### NEUTRAL ATTITUDE WORDS

abrupt	detached	learned	plain-speaking
authoritative	didactic	lyrical	questioning
candid	dramatic	matter-of-fact	reflective
ceremonial	factual	objective	reminiscent
clinical	informative	official	restrained
coolheaded	instructive	placid	scholarly
cultured			

### A WORKING VOCABULARY OF FUNDAMENTAL TERMS

The following is a list of some of the terms that are used in analyzing works of literature. You will no doubt encounter some of these words in the multiple-choice questions.

**ACTIVE VOICE:** Active voice pertains to any sentence with an *active* verb. Active voice expresses more energy than does passive voice. For example: “Robert crushed the tomato with his fist” is in the active voice. “The tomato was crushed by Robert” is in the passive voice.

**ALLEGORY:** An extended narrative (in poetry or prose) in which the characters and actions—and sometimes the setting as well—are contrived to make sense on the literal level and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of characters, concepts, and events. In other words, an allegory carries a second, deeper meaning, as well as its surface story.

**ALLITERATION:** The repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of several words in a sentence or a line of poetry. For example: “Black reapers with the sound of steel on stones / Are sharpening scythes” — Jean Toomer.

**ALLUSION:** A reference to another person, another historical event, another work, and the like. To make allusions, you should be familiar at the very least with Greek and Roman mythology, Judeo-Christian literature, and Shakespeare. Identify the impact of an allusion the same way you would a metaphor. For example, the title “By the Waters of Babylon” by Stephen Vincent Benét is a reference to Psalm 137.

**ANALOGY:** A term that signifies a comparison of or similarity between two objects or ideas. For example, “Nature’s first green is gold” — Robert Frost.

**ANAPHORA:** The deliberate repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of several successive poetic lines, prose sentences, clauses or paragraphs. It is used to emphasize an idea. For example: “**This** royal throne of kings, **this** sceptred isle, / **This** earth of majesty, **this** seat of Mars, / **This** other Eden, demi-paradise, / **This** fortress built by Nature for herself” —William Shakespeare.

**APHORISM:** A brief statement of an opinion or elemental truth. “Vision is the art of seeing the invisible” —Jonathan Swift.

**APOSTROPHE:** This is a direct address to someone who is not present, to a deity or muse, or to some other power. “O eloquent, just, and mighty Death!” —Sir Walter Raleigh.

**ASSONANCE:** Repetition of a vowel sound within a group of words or lines. Notice the recurrent long “I” in the following lines: “Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness, / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time” —John Keats.

**BLANK VERSE:** This term is applied to any verse that doesn’t rhyme. Blank verse consists of lines of *iambic pentameter*, which of all verse forms is closest to the natural rhythms of English speech. Most of Shakespeare’s plays are in blank verse.

**CAESURA:** A pause in a line of poetry in order to make the meaning clear or to follow the natural rhythm of speech. “To err is human, / to forgive divine” —Alexander Pope.

**CARPE DIEM:** Latin for “Seize the day.”

**CONNOTATION:** The associations or moods attached to a word. Words generally are negative, positive, or neutral. An author’s choice of words, especially words with a particularly strong connotation, is usually the key to determining the author’s tone and intention.

**CONSONANCE:** The repetition of a sequence of two or more consonants but with a change in the intervening vowel. For example: “live-love,” “lean-alone,” “pitter-patter.”

**COUPLET:** A pair of rhymed lines. For example, “Into my empty head there come / a cotton beach, a dock wherefrom” —Maxine Kumin.

**DENOTATION:** The dictionary definition of a word.

**DIALECT:** A regional speech pattern. When using a dialect, a writer is relying on language to make a passage feel personal and authentic. For example: “You mean, you mad’ cause she didn’t stop and tell us all her business. . . . The worst thing Ah ever knowed her to do was taking a few years offa her age and dat ain’t never harmed nobody” —Zora Neale Hurston.

**DICTION:** Word choice; the specific words an author uses in his or her writing.

**ELEGY:** A formal meditative poem or lament for the dead. An example is “To an Athlete Dying Young” by A. E. Houseman.

**ELLIPSES:** Three dots that indicate words have been left out of a quotation. Ellipses are also often used to create suspense. For example: “The dark car appeared at the end of the alley and Herman, the handsome hero, was trapped against the wall at the opposite end. The engine revved . . .”

**EPISTROPHE:** The ending of a series of lines, phrases, clauses, or sentences with the same word or words, used to emphasize the word or group of words for emotional impact. “[This] government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth” —Abraham Lincoln.

**EUPHEMISM:** To use an inoffensive or more socially acceptable word for something that could be inappropriate or offensive to some. For example, “she passed away” instead of “she died.”

**FOIL:** A minor character whose situation or actions parallel those of a major character and thus by contrast set off or illuminate the major character. Most often the contrast is complimentary to the main character. For example, Unferth is the foil to Beowulf.

**FOOT:** The combination of stressed and unstressed syllables that make up the metric unit of a line. The most commonly used feet are the iambic foot and the trochaic foot. The iambic foot consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. For example: “When I / con-sid / er how / my light / is spent” —John Milton. The trochaic foot is the reverse—a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. For example: “There they / are, my / fif-ty / men and / wo-men” —Robert Browning.

**FREE VERSE:** Poetry that doesn’t follow a prescribed form but is characterized by irregularity in the length of the lines and a lack of a regular metrical pattern and rhyme. Free verse may use other repetitive patterns including words, phrases, or structures.

**HYPERBOLE:** Exaggeration of an event or feeling—“I nearly died laughing!”

**IMAGERY:** Language that appeals to one or another of the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell). Imagery can be created by using particularly vivid adjectives, similes, and metaphors.

**IRONY:** The use of words to express something other than—and often the opposite of—the literal meaning. There are three types of irony. Verbal irony contrasts what is said and what is meant. For example, in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Antony calls Brutus “an honorable man” when, in fact, he wants the people to think just the opposite. Situational irony contrasts what happens and what was expected to happen. In “The Monkey’s Paw” by W. W. Jacobs, the Whites expect the paw (a talisman) to bring them happiness, but instead it brings them only grief. Dramatic irony contrasts what the character thinks to be true and what the reader knows to be true. In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Lawrence arrives too late to inform Romeo of Juliet’s deception in faking her own death. Romeo takes his own life thinking Juliet is dead, while the audience knows that she is not. You should be familiar with all three types of irony.

**JARGON:** A pattern of speech and vocabulary associated with a particular group of people. Medical doctors, computer analysts, teachers—all have a unique vocabulary or jargon that is used by members of that profession.

**JUXTAPOSITION:** The placement of one idea next to its opposite to make it more dramatic—for example, playing the song “What a Wonderful World” while showing scenes of war and violence.

**LYRIC:** Any poem in which a speaker expresses intensely personal emotion or thoughts. The term was originally applied to poems meant to be sung; now the term is sometimes used to refer to any poem that has a musical quality.

**MALAPROPISM:** A wonderful form of comic word play in which one word is mistakenly substituted for another that sounds similar. The name comes from the character of Mrs. Malaprop in Richard Sheridan’s play *The Rivals*. She said things like “He is the very pineapple of politeness” rather than “He is the very pinnacle of politeness.”

**METAPHOR:** A figure of speech in which an implicit comparison is made between two things that are essentially dissimilar. Metaphors, unlike similes, do not use the words “like” or “as.” “Once I seen a **human ruin** / In a elevator-well. / And his members was bestrewin’ / All the place where he had fell” —Ambrose Bierce. (“Human ruin” is a metaphor referring to a man’s body.)

**METER:** The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables or the units of stress patterns.

**METONYMY:** A figure of speech in which the name of one thing is substituted for another with which it is closely associated. For example: The crown spoke with authority about the growing crisis within the country. “Crown” is not literal, but is meant to represent a king or queen.

**METRIC LINE:** A line named according to the number of feet composing it, starting with *monometer*, a line of one foot, followed by *dimeter*,

*trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, heptameter, and octameter*, a line of eight feet.

**ODE:** A lyric poem that is serious in subject and treatment, elevated in style, and elaborate in its stanzaic structure. An example is “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats.

**ONOMATOPOEIA:** A figure of speech in which a word when spoken imitates the sound associated with the word. For example, “buzz” echoes the sound of bees.

**PARADOX:** A figure of speech that seeks to create mental ambiguity, which then forces the reader to pause and seek clarity. For example: “My **silent** love **grows louder** with each passing moment.”

**PARALLELISM:** A pattern of language that creates a rhythm of repetition often combined with some other language of repetition. Parallel sets of sentences or parallel clauses can exist within a sentence. One type of parallelism is balance—“This is the place where girls become women, boys become men, dreams become reality.” A second is antithesis—for example, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” —Charles Dickens.

**PANEGYRIC:** A literary expression of praise—for example, “O Captain! My Captain!” by Walt Whitman.

**PASSIVE VOICE:** The opposite of active voice. The passive voice is used when something happens to someone. For example, “Samantha was choked by the assailant” rather than “The assailant choked Samantha,” which is in the active form. Use of the passive voice indicates that Samantha is the important character here.

**PASTORAL:** A reference to or a description of simple country life. Older pastoral poems usually include shepherds who live in an idyllic setting. Generally, the word “pastoral” suggests being carefree or a returning to a time of innocence. An example of a pastoral is Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.”

**PERSONIFICATION:** Giving human characteristics to nonhuman things. For example, “Because I could not stop for Death, / He kindly stopped for me” —Emily Dickinson.

**PLOCE:** One of the most commonly used figures of stress, it means repeating a word within the same line or clause. For example: “Make war upon themselves; blood against blood / Self against self” —William Shakespeare.

**POINT OF VIEW:** The perspective from which the writer chooses to tell his or her story. Point of view can be in the first, second, or third person, and limited, omniscient, or objective. Additionally, the reader must determine the state of mind of the narrator or speaker. Remember that the narrator of a story is not necessarily the author and the voice of a poem is not necessarily the poet’s. How is the narrator connected to the story itself? Is the narrator part of the action or an objective bystander? If the narrator is part of the events of the

story, his or her retelling of events may be biased. Is the narrator reliable? In other words, are we sure that what we are being told is what really happened?

**PUN:** A play on words used to create humor or comic relief. “I’ve always regarded archery as an aimless sport,” he said with a quiver.

**REFRAIN:** A line, part of a line, or group of lines repeated in the course of a poem, sometimes with slight changes—for example, the word “nevermore” in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven.”

**REPETITION:** The repeating of a word or phrase for emphasis. Repetition is often used in poetry. Sometimes repetition reinforces or even substitutes for meter (the beat), the other chief controlling factor in poetry.

**RHYME:** The echo or imitation of a sound. A rhyme scheme is a regular pattern of rhyming words in a poem. Rhyme can and often does contribute to the rhythm of a poem. There may be internal rhyme (rhyme within the line), end rhyme (last word of each line rhymes), slant or half rhyme (two words that sound close but not exactly alike, such as “alight/white,” “grace/haste”), and perfect rhyme (“time/lime,” “shot/hot”).

**RHYTHM:** The sense of movement attributable to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. Although rhythm is sometimes used to signify meter, it includes tempo (pacing) and the natural fluctuations of movement.

**SATIRE:** A form of writing in which a subject (usually a human vice) is made fun of or scorned, eliciting amusement, contempt, or indignation. The purpose of satire is to provoke change or reform. Examples of satire are Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.

**SHIFT:** A change in setting (place or time), tone, or speakers. Identifying shifts in poetry is especially important for determining the overall purpose and tone of a poem.

**SIMILE:** A figure of speech in which an explicit comparison is made using “like,” “as,” or “than” between two very different things in order to express an idea that is more familiar or understandable. “My love is like a red, red rose.” —Robert Burns.

**SOLILOQUY:** A speech in which a character in a play, alone on stage, expresses his or her thoughts. A soliloquy may reveal the private emotions, motives, and state of mind of the speaker. Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” speech is a well-known soliloquy. Soliloquy is also known as *dramatic monologue*.

**SONNET:** A fixed form of fourteen lines, normally in iambic pentameter, with a rhyme scheme conforming to or approximating one of two main types. Shakespearean sonnets are divided into three quatrains and a concluding couplet and have the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd efef gg*. Italian or Petrarchan sonnets begin with an octave (eight

lines) with the rhyme scheme *abbaabba*. The octave generally includes the “problem” that the sonnet will develop. It is followed by a sestet (six lines), which has as its rhyme scheme *cdcdcd* (or some variation thereof). The “problem” is resolved in the sestet.

**STANZA:** A group of lines that forms one division of a poem.

**SYMBOL:** An object that signifies something greater than itself. For example, the bald eagle is often used as a symbol of the United States.

**SYNECDOCHE:** A figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole—for example, “All hands on deck.” (We assume the sailors’ bodies will follow.)

**THEME:** An insight into life conveyed by a poem or story. The theme is the main point the author wants to make with the reader, and is often a basic truth, an acknowledgment of our humanity, or a reminder of human beings’ shortcomings. This general insight is usually about life, society, or human nature. Themes often explore timeless and universal ideas. Most themes are implied rather than stated explicitly. Short works of fiction may have only one or two themes; however, a novel may include many themes because of the number and depth of the characters and the numerous events within the plot.

**VERSE:** Lines of poetry or metrical language in general, in contrast to prose.