

Analyzing Tone in Hamlet's Soliloquy

Grade Level: 9-12

Introduction

Tone is a crucial literary element that conveys the attitude and emotion of the writer towards a given literary work or audience. Through text, tone is often dictated by word choice or syntax; however, when adapted into visual or aural formats, tone may also be influenced by pacing, emphasis, expression, movement, and color. When a literary work is adapted into another media format, such as film, certain aspects of the text may be interpreted differently.

This lesson plan, which integrates content from EBSCO's Poetry & Short Story Reference Source database, may serve as part of a stand-alone unit on literary elements. It also can be used in conjunction with a full reading of Shakespeare's Hamlet (full text of which is available on Literary Reference Plus) as an introduction to interpretation. It is best suited for high school students.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, 4, 6, 7, 9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1, 4, 6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, 2, 4, 5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1-5 | NCTE 4, 6, 11, 1

- R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- R.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- SL.5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
- NCTE 6: Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

Essential Questions

1. How does tone influence one's interpretation of a story or scene?
2. What choices in presentation may be made to subtly alter the tone of a piece?

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define tone.
2. Summarize ideas with concise language.
3. Compare different representations of tone.
4. Choose which film best represents the tone of Hamlet's soliloquy.

Materials

- Computer/laptop
- Access to Poetry & Short Story Reference Source
- Access to YouTube
- Access to Canva (via internet)

Procedure

1. Introduce or review the concept of literary tone with students.

The Literary Glossary available on Literary Reference Source Plus has simple definitions of key terms and literary elements including "tone." For a scholarly definition of tone, as well as historical context and development, see the entry for "TONE" in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics, 4th edition*, available on Poetry & Short Story Reference Source.

2. Provide students with one or two examples of tone poetry as preparation. Here are some suggestions with full text available on Poetry & Short Story Reference Source:

- "Sonnet 130: My mistress eyes are nothing like the sun" by William Shakespeare
- "To Nearly Everybody" by Hugh MacDiarmid
- "Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" by William Shakespeare
- "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries" by A. E. Housman

Have students Turn and Talk about the following questions:

- Is the tone consistent or does it shift? If it shifts, how do you know?
- How does language influence our perception of tone?
- How do you convey your own tone when speaking to others?

Discuss findings of the Turn and Talk.

As a class, construct a working definition of tone based on the students' experiences with tone thus far.

3. Provide students with a copy of “Hamlet’s Soliloquy,” either as a stand-alone document or as part of the Hamlet full text. Full text of this poem can be found on Poetry & Short Story Reference Source:
 - Conduct a Think-Aloud with students, working through the literal meaning of the soliloquy. Model margin-note annotations, focusing on difficult vocabulary. Students should look up unfamiliar words and phrases when they are presented.
 - Break students into small groups and ask them to generate three or four words to describe the tone of Hamlet’s soliloquy as a group. Scaffold this process with the list of tone words provided with this plan. ELL-friendly language is highlighted.
4. On YouTube, locate movie clips of Hamlet’s soliloquy by Kenneth Branagh, David Tennant and Mel Gibson. Tell students that their task will be to create a Venn diagram of the three representations in their groups, and to take notes on the clips.
 - Show all three videos, with a brief pause between to let groups jot down their thoughts. Encourage them to choose specific words as they did for the text.
5. Assign students to create a three-ringed digital Venn diagram using Canva (<http://www.canva.com/graphs/venn-diagrams/>). Students should use their notes to create a “snapshot” of what each scene accomplishes in its representation. Each group should select the film that, in their opinion, best represents the tone of the soliloquy, and write a brief justification paragraph to include beside their diagram in Canva.

Assessment

Formative Assessment

Conduct smaller evaluations that track progress towards final unit goal. Have groups briefly present their Canvas to the class. Each group should explain their process and justify their choice about which film best represents the tone of the soliloquy. Evaluate the quality of each group’s presentation and justification using [this rubric](#) or your own.

Summative Assessment

Conduct a measurable evaluation of student achievement in the form of quizzes, discussions, and/or brief written responses depending on unit plan. Suggested essay prompt: Create a scene proposal for how you would choose to present Hamlet’s soliloquy. Address the following aspects: setting, music, color filters, pacing, camera/actor movements, and any other details of your production you find relevant or interesting. Support your directorial decisions by analyzing and citing evidence from the text.

Tone Vocabulary List

Positive

Amiable	Consoling	Friendly	Playful
Amused	Content	Happy	Pleasant
Appreciative	Dreamy	Hopeful	Proud
Authoritative	Ecstatic	Impassioned	Relaxed
Benevolent	Elated	Jovial	Reverent
Brave	Elevated	Joyful	Romantic
Calm	Encouraging	Jubilant	Soothing
Cheerful	Energetic	Lighthearted	Surprised
Cheery	Enthusiastic	Loving	Sweet
Compassionate	Excited	Optimistic	Sympathetic
Complimentary	Exuberant	Passionate	Vibrant
Confident	Fanciful	Peaceful	Whimsical

Negative

Accusing	Choleric	Furious	Quarrelsome
Aggravated	Coarse	Harsh	Shameful
Agitated	Cold	Haughty	Smooth
Angry	Condemnatory	Hateful	Snooty
Apathetic	Condescending	Hurtful	Superficial
Arrogant	Contradictory	Indignant	Surly
Artificial	Critical	Inflammatory	Testy
Audacious	Desperate	Insulting	Threatening
Belligerent	Disappointed	Irritated	Tired
Bitter	Disgruntled	Manipulative	Uninterested
Boring	Disgusted	Obnoxious	Wrathful
Brash	Disinterested	Outraged	
Childish	Facetious	Passive	

Humor / Irony / Sarcasm

Amused	Facetious	Mean	Sassy
Bantering	Flippant	Mocking	Satiric
Bitter	Funny	Mock-serious	Scornful
Caustic	Giddy	Patronizing	Sharp
Comical	Humorous	Pompous	Silly
Condescending	Insolent	Quizzical	Taunting
Contemptuous	Ironic	Ridiculing	Teasing
Critical	Irreverent	Rude	Whimsical
Cynical	Joking	Sarcastic	Wry
Disdainful	Malicious	Sardonic	

Sorrow / Fear / Worry

Aggravated	Embarrassed	Morose	Resigned
Agitated	Fearful	Mournful	Sad
Anxious	Foreboding	Nervous	Serious
Apologetic	Gloomy	Numb	Sober
Apprehensive	Grave	Ominous	Solemn
Concerned	Hollow	Paranoid	Somber
Confused	Hopeless	Pessimistic	Sorry
Dejected	Horrific	Pitiful	Upset
Depressed	Horror	Poignant	
Despairing	Melancholy	Regretful	
Disturbed	Miserable	Remorseful	

Neutral

Admonitory	Dramatic	Intimate	Questioning
Allusive (not illusive)	Earnest	Judgmental	Reflective
Apathetic	Expectant	Learned	Reminiscent
Authoritative	Factual	Loud	Resigned
Baffled	Fervent	Lyrical	Restrained
Callous	Formal	Matter-of-fact	Seductive
Candid	Forthright	Meditative	Sentimental
Ceremonial	Frivolous	Nostalgic	Serious
Clinical	Haughty	Objective	Shocking
Consoling	Histrionic	Obsequious	Sincere
Contemplative	*Humble	Patriotic	Unemotional
Conventional	Incredulous	Persuasive	Urgent
Detached	Informative	Pleading	Vexed
Didactic	Inquisitive	Pretentious	Wistful
Disbelieving	Instructive	Provocative	Zealous

Vocabulary from Hamlet's First Soliloquy

Spanish Support

Consummation (*consumo*): The act of making a marriage complete, often through having sex.

Devoutly (*devotamente*): In a committed and sincere way, often with religious meaning.

Calamity (*calamidad*): An event causing great and sudden damage; a disaster.

Contumely (*contumelia*): Insulting language or treatment.

Pangs (*dolores*): A sudden sharp pain or painful emotion.

Insolence (*insolencia*): Rude and disrespectful behavior.

Spurns (*desprecios*): A harsh or mocking rejection.

Merit (*méritos*): The quality of being good or worthy, usually deserving praise or reward.

Quietus (*golpe de gracia*): Death or something that causes death; a release from life.

Bodkin (*punzón*): A small, pointed instrument used to pierce cloth or leather.

Fardels (*manojos*): Bundles.

Nymph (*Ninfa*): A spirit of nature, usually a beautiful woman living in rivers, woods, or other locations.

Orisons (*oraci6ns*): Prayers.

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Group Canva Scoring Rubric

Student Name(s): _____

Date: _____ Class Period: _____

Possible Points	Category
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____/10	Canva is complete and contains a title, three-ring Venn diagram, and justification paragraph.
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____/5	Detailed comparisons are made between films.
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____/10	Justification paragraph is thoughtful and quotes specific language from the text.
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____/5	Diagram uses proper spelling and grammar.
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____/30	Total points earned
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Comments: