Style and Tone

...to support the author’s purpose

Adapted from: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Y78_ItC-EYpuVXe5kImK0GAMix5BRT-U5QvvnqG33s/embed#slide=id.i0
What is STYLE?

- Every author has his or her own style – that is, each author uses literary devices, tone, and mood in a particular way that makes his or her writing recognizable.
- When you read several books by the same author, you become accustomed to the author’s style of writing and sometimes you look for authors with a similar style.
STYLE

STYLE is the way the author uses words, phrases, and sentences.

The author’s
1) personal word choice/vocabulary,
2) types of sentences,
3) point of view from which the text is told,
4) organization of the text.

These 4 components will reveal his/her style.
So, when analyzing an author’s style, we need to consider:

- point-of-view,
- formal or informal writing,
- organization/structure of text,
- level of complexity in the writing, and
- overall tone.

By using these features in writing, different meanings of the content (what the story/text is about) are shown to the audience.
Style: Which Point of View?

First person: (I, me, my)
I went to the store today. When I was in the cereal aisle, I bumped into an old friend and had a nice conversation.

Second person: (you; instructions/directions)
You should work on getting your room cleaned. First, pick up the clothes on the floor. Then, you need to run a vacuum and dust the tables.

Third person – limited: (he/she/it/they/them told thru 1 character)
He could tell from the expression on her face that what he had said upset her. If only he knew, though, what she was really thinking.

Third-person Omniscient (‘all knowing’): (he/she/it/they/them told by the author; all characters’ feelings/thoughts are revealed)
She refused to look at Jamie again and instead stared at the statue.
“Come on!” exclaimed Jamie impatiently. “It’s time to go.”

Sara ignored Jamie and continued to gaze upon the statue wishing she, too, could be so still and at peace.
Style: Formal vs. Informal

Formal:

Dear Sir,

After examining your job description, I feel I am an excellent candidate. I have many years of experience performing these specific duties. My résumé is attached. Please read it over at your convenience and contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,
Andrew Meyer

Informal:

Hey, Sara! What's going on tonight? Call me before you guys leave, okay?
--Beth
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high-level; business-like</td>
<td>low-level; perhaps slang; dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization of text:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Organization of text:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very structured;</td>
<td>more so narrative or note-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perhaps with subtopics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Audience:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usually 3rd-omnisicient</td>
<td>usually personal (more first or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(except for business letters)</td>
<td>third-limited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentences:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sentences:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure varies</td>
<td>don’t vary as much in structure;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mostly simple or compound sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing is organized in various ways, depending upon the author’s purpose: to inform, to entertain, to express a belief/opinion, to persuade.
STYLE: Organization of Text

Text usually falls within one of these types of organizational patterns:

1. Cause - Effect
2. Problem – Solution
3. Chronological (sequencing the order of events)
4. Compare/Contrast
5. Inductive (specific to general)
6. Deductive (general to specific)
7. Division into categories
8. Ranking (i.e., “most ___” to “least ___”)

Can you predict which would be writing patterns for giving information? For entertaining? For expressing an opinion? For persuading someone to believe as you do?
Style: Level of Complexity

• Does the author use mostly simple sentence structure or varies the sentence structures (simple, compound, complex sentences)?

• Is it simple vocabulary or higher-level word choices?

• What types of writing devices does the author use? Does the author use dialogue? Figurative Language (similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia, personification, symbolism)? Flashbacks? Foreshadowing? Irony?

• What about the level of detail? Is the writing very descriptive (in describing characters, settings, actions/events)? Does it become TOO detailed? TOO ‘wordy?’ Too ‘flowery?’ So many events in the plot that the story becomes TOO confusing or “convoluted?” Or, is the level of detail – as Baby Bear would say, “Just right” -- to visualize the images, to understand the concepts, to build suspense???
When analyzing style, you must look at a piece of writing FROM the overall structure of the text TO the small details and word choices. Be an editor, a critic, to answer the question: How would I describe this author’s writing style?
Donovan and Larry were early for baseball practice. They decided to run up and down the bleachers to exercise before the rest of the team arrived.

Larry was first to the top. He whispered to Donovan, “Look over there.” He pointed to a man sleeping on the highest, narrow bench of the bleachers. His pants and shirt were faded, worn, and too large for his thin frame. One big toe stuck out of a huge hole in his sock. His scraped-up shoes sat a few feet away.

Donovan whispered, “We should help him out. Let’s hide something good in his shoes. Then, when he wakes up, he will have a nice surprise.”
Style: “A Gift in His Shoes”

How would you describe the writing style of this author?

a. Formal
b. Conversational
c. Businesslike

Evidence?

Point of View: 3rd person omniscient
Word choices: “scraped-up,” “one big toe stuck out”
Use of dialogue between characters
About three million people have to look for a place to sleep at night. Some homeless people have jobs but do not earn nearly enough money for both food and shelter. Some become homeless because they have an unfortunate accident or lose their job. They do not have any back-up resources to make it through the hard times.

The homeless face terrible problems. Many become victims of violence. Serious health problems may begin because they are exposed to bad weather and unclean conditions. Homeless children may miss the chance to go to school. Worst of all, some cities pass laws that make it even harder on the homeless.
Style: “Where Can They Stay”

How would you describe the writing style of this author?

a. Formal  
b. Conversational  
c. Businesslike

Evidence?
Point of View: 3rd person omniscient  
Organizational Structure: Cause-Effect  
Word choices: “unfortunate,” “resources”
Style

• There may be as many styles as there are writers. Think about your favorite authors? Why do you like their books? Is it because of their style of writing? . . . And so, how would you describe their style of writing?
**TONE**

TONE is simply the author’s attitude toward the subject.

You can recognize the tone/attitude by the language/word choices the author uses. His language will reveal his perspective/opinion (that is, whether it is positive/negative/neutral) about the subject.

Tone must be inferred through the use of descriptive words.
The girls were playing in the pond, splashing each other and trying to catch fish with their hands. They were having fun, but kept looking over their shoulders at the looming forest. The long grass of the field kept moving and they sort of felt like they were being watched... About a half hour passed and still the girls kept checking the field for movements. It seemed like a pair of dark eyes was on them. They even considered going back inside, but that would mean homework time. So they continued splashing, but with caution now. Their eyes hardly left the field.

The **tone** of this passage is **ominous**, suggesting a little bit of **fear or foreboding**. Words like "caution, dark, and looming“ lead readers to the tone.
Finally, one of the girls pointed to the grass and giggled. “Meow!” A cat sat on the edge of the field and licked its paw. They did indeed have company. The girls ran over to the cat and pet his belly. They laughed and the cat sauntered back to the field.

The tone of this passage is happy/contentment as there was a successful, happy resolution to the problem.
TONE

Identifying the TONE is all about knowing the definitions of many descriptive vocabulary words. Without this large vocabulary, it’s difficult to describe outside of “good” and “bad.”
TONE
So, let’s TONE our brain muscles with descriptive vocabulary exercises!!

• Bitter
• Serious
• Witty
• Playful
• Tender
• Sympathetic
• Haunting
• Mysterious
• Suspenseful
• Tasteful/distasteful
• Nonchalant
• Angry
• Attached/Detached
• Innocent
• Poignant
• Compassionate
• Humorous
• Gore-y
Tone: “A Gift in His Shoes”

Donovan and Larry were early for baseball practice. They decided to run up and down the bleachers to exercise before the rest of the team arrived.

Larry was first to the top. He whispered to Donovan, “Look over there.” He pointed to a man sleeping on the highest, narrow bench of the bleachers. His pants and shirt were faded, worn, and too large for his thin frame. One big toe stuck out of a huge hole in his sock. His scraped-up shoes sat a few feet away.

Donovan whispered, “We should help him out. Let’s hide something good in his shoes. Then, when he wakes up, he will have a nice surprise.”
Tone: “A Gift in His Shoes”

How would you describe the tone [attitude] of this author?

a. Angry
b. Detached
c. Sympathetic

Evidence?
Tone: “Where Can They Stay?”

About three million people have to look for a place to sleep at night. Some homeless people have jobs but do not earn nearly enough money for both food and shelter. Some become homeless because they have an unfortunate accident or lose their job. They do not have any back-up resources to make it through the hard times.

The homeless face terrible problems. Many become victims of violence. Serious health problems may begin because they are exposed to bad weather and unclean conditions. Homeless children may miss the chance to go to school. Worst of all, some cities pass laws that make it even harder on the homeless.
How would you describe the tone [attitude] of this author?

a. Disgruntled  
b. Nonchalant  
c. Serious

Evidence?
It’s Now Time to Read with a Critical Eye

- Directions:
  1. With a partner, choose two texts we have read this semester.
  2. Also, pick up from the table two copies of the Style and Tone chart.
  3. Take turns reading sections of the texts aloud with your partner. Complete the charts to identify style and tone.
  4. Each person then be prepared to present your critique of the texts.