

Name: _____ Date: _____

What's the Tone?

Tone is the author's attitude toward either the subject he or she is writing about or toward the reader.
Words that could describe tone include *doubtful*, *humorous*, *gleeful*, *serious*, and *questioning*.
Tone is conveyed through the author's word choice, the information included, and how the text is organized.

Libby's Letter

Here are some words that could be used to describe the tone of Libby's letter:

desperate

dramatic

panicked

Let's take a look at how Libby's desperate/dramatic/panicked tone is created!

1. Reread the first paragraph of Libby's letter. Choose the statement that does NOT correctly explain what makes Libby sound desperate, dramatic, or panicked.

- Ⓐ Libby calls her project "huge." This makes her sound more worried about the project than if she had called it "big" or not used an adjective at all.
- Ⓑ Libby mentions the name of her teacher, which makes her sound desperate.
- Ⓒ Libby capitalizes "huge," adding emphasis to the word and making her sound like she is raising her voice in a panicked way.
- Ⓓ Libby puts a period after each word in "I haven't even started." This makes her sound like she's speaking slowly to get across how serious her situation is.

2. In the second paragraph, Libby writes, "And that's why I'm asking you to please, please, please do this project for me." Choose the statement that best expresses how Libby's repetition of "please" affects the tone.

- Ⓐ Repeating "please" makes her sound extremely polite.
- Ⓑ Repeating "please" makes her sound like she's joking around.
- Ⓒ Repeating "please" makes her sound like she is not asking, but begging, for help.
- Ⓓ Repeating "please" makes her sound angry.

3. Libby writes, "You might not know this, but missing the championship would put my ENTIRE FUTURE in jeopardy." How does this sentence make her sound desperate, dramatic, or panicked?

4. Libby writes that the championship is "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to catch a scout's eye." How does this sentence make her sound desperate, dramatic, or panicked?

5. Consider the offers Libby makes in the last paragraph of her letter about what she will do if her dad agrees to do her project. What gives this section a desperate tone?

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2. In the second paragraph, Libby writes, "And that's why I'm asking you to please, please, please do this project for me." Choose the statement that BEST expresses how Libby's repetition of *please* affects the tone.

- Ⓐ Repeating *please* makes her sound polite.
- Ⓑ Repeating *please* makes her sound like she's joking.
- Ⓒ Repeating *please* makes her sound like she is begging for help.

3. Libby writes, "You might not know this, but missing the championship would put my ENTIRE FUTURE in jeopardy." Choose the statement that does NOT correctly explain what makes Libby sound desperate, dramatic, or panicked.

- Ⓐ Libby explains to her dad that he might not know what she is about to tell him. This makes her sound panicked.
- Ⓑ Libby makes it sound like the grade she gets on her history project will have a huge impact on her life. One history project probably wouldn't have such a big impact, though. Libby is being dramatic.
- Ⓒ "Entire future" is written in capital letters. This makes you imagine that if Libby were speaking, her voice would be rising and her eyes widening as she explains what a desperate situation she's in.

4. Libby writes that the championship is "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to catch a scout's eye." Finish the sentence started below to explain why this sentence makes Libby sound dramatic.

Libby calls the upcoming championship a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. She makes the game sound like _____

5. At the end of her letter, Libby names three chores she will do if her dad agrees to do her project for her. Choose the statement that BEST explains how these sentences create a desperate tone.

- Ⓐ Libby offers to do three chores in exchange for her dad's help.
- Ⓑ With each task Libby names, she increases the amount of time she is offering to do it: She goes from one time to a year to the rest of her life. This makes her sound desperate—like she'll do anything if her dad will just help her.
- Ⓒ Libby offers to mow the lawn, wash the car, and change the kitty litter. You can tell that she doesn't really mean it though, because she uses a question mark after each chore she names.

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Tone Words

Tone is the author's attitude toward the subject matter or toward the reader or audience. There are *many* different words that you can use to describe an author's tone. Here are some to inspire you.



POSITIVE TONE WORDS

admiring	happy
adoring	hopeful
affectionate	humorous
amused	interested
appreciative	jovial
approving	light
celebratory	lively
cheerful	modest
comforting	nostalgic
comic	optimistic
compassionate	passionate
complimentary	playful
confident	pleasant
contented	proud
earnest	reassuring
elated	respectful
empathetic	romantic
encouraging	sentimental
excited	silly
facetious	sympathetic
forthright	tender
friendly	whimsical
funny	wistful
gleeful	worshipful
gushing	zealous



NEUTRAL TONE WORDS

ambiguous
ambivalent
casual
commanding
conversational
detached
direct
indifferent
introspective
neutral
pensive
questioning
reflective
scholarly
serious
solemn
straightforward
speculative
uncertain
unconcerned



NEGATIVE TONE WORDS

angry	furious
annoyed	gloomy
biting	grave
bitter	grim
blunt	harsh
cold	haughty
conceited	hostile
condescending	impatient
confused	melancholy
curt	mocking
cynical	mournful
depressed	offended
derogatory	ominous
despairing	outraged
desperate	pessimistic
disappointed	sarcastic
disliking	scornful
disrespectful	selfish
doubtful	skeptical
enraged	sly
fearful	somber
flippant	stern
forceful	suspicious
foreboding	uneasy
frustrated	worried

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Scavenger Hunt

Directions: Fill in the boxes below to explore how the authors of the letters in "Should Libby's Dad Do Her School Project?" develop their arguments. We filled in some information for you.

	Libby	Libby's Dad
line(s) that express the central idea, or central claim		"So as tempting as it is to bail you out, I am not going to do this assignment for you. Instead, I am going to let you fail." (p. 27)
two pieces of evidence that support the central idea, or central claim		
line(s) that express the counterargument	"I know you might think I got myself into this mess, and I should get myself out of it. But there is no way I can do a good job on this project in one night." (p. 26)	
line(s) that contain the rebuttal to the counterargument		

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Write an Argument Essay

Directions: Read "Should Libby's Dad Do Her School Project?" Complete the scavenger hunt on page 27. Then follow the steps below.

STEP 1: DECIDE WHAT YOU THINK

Should Libby's dad do Libby's project?

Consider what you read in the two letters, as well as your own viewpoints.
Check the box next to the point of view you will argue in your essay.
Or write your own opinion in the space provided.

Yes! Libby needs help!

No! Libby will learn more if she does it herself.

STEP 2: GATHER SUPPORT FOR YOUR OPINION

Which details from the letters support your opinion? What other information supports your opinion? List at least three supporting details on the lines below.

Here's an example: If you think Libby's dad should help Libby, one of your supporting details might be that Libby doesn't get in trouble often.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STEP 3: ACKNOWLEDGE THE OTHER SIDE

If you think Libby's dad SHOULD do her project, summarize the strongest arguments that Libby's dad presents in his letter. If you think Libby's dad SHOULD NOT do Libby's project, summarize the strongest arguments that Libby presents in her letter.

STEP 4: CRAFT YOUR THESIS (CENTRAL CLAIM)

The thesis is where you tell readers what your essay is going to be about. The thesis should be a clear, strong statement of the opinion you gave in Step 1. The rest of your essay will support this thesis.

Your thesis: _____

STEP 5: WRITE YOUR HOOK

The very beginning of your essay is called the hook because it "hooks" your readers' attention. The hook should relate to the topic of your essay, but it can take many forms. It can be:

- 1. An anecdote** (a very short story): Describe a time where you felt overwhelmed by your schoolwork. Did a family member help you? If not, did you want someone's help?
- 2. A surprising fact:** Find a fact that will raise your readers' eyebrows. Several surprising facts are included in the article. You can also do some research to find one that is not included in the article.
- 3. A rhetorical question** (a question to which you don't expect an answer): Ask your readers a question that reflects your point of view about parents helping their kids with homework. Here's one way you could structure your question: "*When a parent does a child's homework, is that parent _____?*"
- 4. A quote:** Find a thought-provoking quote that relates to the topic of your essay.

Choose one of the ideas above, or use your own idea, and write a hook on the lines provided.

Your hook: _____

Argument Essay Outline

Directions: Use the outline below to write your essay. You will use what you wrote on the first three pages of this activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Open with your hook from Step 5.



Write a transition sentence that relates your hook to the question of whether Libby's dad should do her school project.



(See *Scope's* handout "Great Transitions" for some ways to link your ideas.)



Write your summary of the issue from Step 6.

2 BODY PARAGRAPH(S)

**Now write your supporting points from Step 2.
For each one, write 1-3 sentences that
provide additional details.**

You can put your supporting points and detail sentences together in one paragraph or you can split them into several paragraphs. It depends on how much you want to write about each point.

Hint! Order your supporting points from weakest to strongest. Readers will remember details that are presented last.

3 ACKNOWLEDGE THE OTHER SIDE

Now it's time to recognize the other side of the argument.

Use what you wrote in Step 3.
Then explain why you think the opposing point of view is wrong.

4 CONCLUSION

**Write 2-3 sentences to remind your readers
of your main points.**

Finish with a strong final sentence.

*Need an idea?
Refer to your hook,
find a quote, or give
a call to action.*

5 READ AND REVISE

Use *Scope's* "Argument-Essay Checklist" to evaluate and edit what you have written.

SKILL: Essay Writing

Argument-Essay Checklist

Directions: Use this guide to check your own essay, or exchange papers with a classmate and use the list to check each other's essays. In the margins of the essay you are checking, make notes about anything that needs to be revised.

Introduction

- ✓ Does the first sentence grab readers' attention?
- ✓ Does the first paragraph provide a general overview of the essay's topic?
- ✓ Does the first paragraph include a thesis statement that strongly and clearly states your point of view? Does the thesis clue readers in as to what the essay is going to be about?

Body Paragraphs

- ✓ Do they contain a total of at least three points that support the thesis?
- ✓ Do they provide details to further explain each of the supporting points?
- ✓ Are the supporting points presented in order from weakest to strongest?
- ✓ Do you acknowledge an opposing point of view and then explain why you think it isn't strong enough to change your point of view?

Conclusion

- ✓ Does the last paragraph remind readers of the main points of the essay, without going into *too* much detail and repeating everything readers just read?
- ✓ Is the conclusion free of new information (such as another supporting point)?
- ✓ Does the last sentence leave readers with a strong final impression?

General

- ✓ Does one idea flow smoothly into the next?
- ✓ Do the sentence structures and lengths vary?
- ✓ Does every sentence relate to the thesis?
- ✓ Does everything make sense?
- ✓ Is the essay convincing?
- ✓ Are the grammar, punctuation, and spelling correct?

SKILL: Essay Writing

Great Transitions

Transitions are like bridges between your ideas—they help your readers move from one idea to the next. Here are some transition words and phrases you may wish to use in your essay. Keep in mind that they can be used at the beginning of a sentence or within a sentence.

If you are adding information or showing similarity between ideas:

- additionally
- besides
- so too
- first of all/secondly/thirdly
- in addition
- also
- likewise
- to begin with
- as well as
- another
- furthermore
- finally

If you are showing that one idea is different from another:

- however
- even though
- in contrast
- on the one hand/on the other hand
- yet
- despite
- still
- some people say/other people say
- but
- although
- in spite of
- regardless

If you are showing that something is an example of what you just stated:

- for example
- to illustrate
- this can be seen
- for instance
- namely
- specifically

If you want to show cause and effect:

- as a result
- consequently
- so
- it follows that
- therefore
- eventually

If you want to add emphasis:

- in fact
- of course
- truly
- even
- indeed