

## Determining Tone Through Music Foundation Lesson

### About this Lesson

This lesson introduces students to the concepts of mood and tone through the vehicle of music. Mood is the feeling or the atmosphere created by the text, while tone is the writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward the subject, the audience, or a character. Sometimes students struggle to determine the difference between mood and tone or to identify the *attitude* of a literary piece. Having them consider tone in a musical selection provides a student-friendly means for demonstrating how a device—in this case elements of music such as dynamics, pitch, rhythm, or timbre—creates a larger meaning or effect.

During the lesson, students listen to a brief sound clip of an instrumental piece. While they listen, students should imagine the music as background to a narrative that has a setting, characters, and plot. Students then determine the tone of the musical piece and write narratives that are inspired by this specific tone. In pairs, students discuss how their intended tone is actually perceived by their audience. As part of the general discussion, teachers should pass out the **Tone Words** handout and ask students to identify other tone words that fit what they have written. After discussion, students revise their drafts for imagery, specific diction, figurative language, and sound devices. As they revise and extend their writing samples, students consider how the tone of the music works to create meaning, both in the original musical sample and in their own writing. Teachers should have students share their drafts with the class and discuss their intended tone with each sample.

This lesson is included in Module 7: Determining Tone.

### Objective

Students will manipulate word choice in their own writing to create a specific tone, inspired by a musical selection played for the class.

### Level

Grades Six through Ten

### Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts

LTF Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

Code	Standard	Level of Thinking	Depth of Knowledge
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.	Analyze	III

W.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.	Create	IV
W.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.	Evaluate	III
L.3	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.	Understand	II
L.5	Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.	Understand	II
SL.2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	Evaluate	III

Implicitly addressed in this lesson

Code	CCSS Standard	Level of Thinking	Depth of Knowledge
W.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Create	III
L.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	Understand	I
L.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	Understand	I
SL.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	Understand	II

**LTF Skill Focus**

The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

Levels of Thinking				
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Create
<b>Close Reading</b> <i>written, spoken, and visual texts</i>		<b>Grammar</b> <i>purposeful use of language for effect</i>		<b>Composition</b> <i>written, spoken, and visual products</i>
<b>Literary Elements</b> Detail Diction connotation Imagery Tone tone determined through diction, imagery, detail vocabulary associated with tone				<b>Types (modes)</b> Descriptive Narrative <b>The Process of Composition</b> Revision of Multiple Drafts precise diction Editing choosing vivid verbs <b>Style/Voice</b> Selection of Detail Selection of Vocabulary Use of Literary Elements

**Connections to AP\***

Analysis of tone and the literary and rhetorical devices that create tone is a task that is required of students in both the free response and multiple choice sections of AP English Literature and AP English Language exams.

*\*Advanced Placement and AP are registered trademarks of the College Entrance Examination Board. The College Board was not involved in the production of this material.*

**Materials and Resources**

- copies of Student Activity
- Teachers should provide a two-to-three minute sound clip of instrumental music. The resources below are suggestions, but any instrumental music can be effective. The following titles may be downloaded from iTunes or Amazon.com:
  - Johannes Sebastian Bach’s “Little Fugue in G Minor”
  - John Barry’s “The Buffalo Hunt” from *Dances with Wolves*
  - Ray Charles’ “Rock Horse”
  - Tan Dun’s “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*
  - Michael Giacchino’s “Ellie’s Theme” from *Up*
  - Edvard Grieg’s “In the Hall of the Mountain King” from *Peer Gynt*, Op 46
  - Herbie Hancock’s “Rocket”
  - James Horner’s “The Legend Spreads “ from *Braveheart*
  - Clint Maxwell’s “Lux Aeterna” from *Requiem For a Dream*
  - Alan Menken’s “Enchanted Suite” from *Enchanted*
  - Ennio Morricone’s “Rabbia E Tarantella” from *Inglorious Basterds*
  - Modest Mussorgsky’s “Night on Bald Mountain”
  - Brad Paisley’s “Throttleneck”

- Brad Paisley’s “Throttleneck”
- Jorge Quintero’s “300 Violin Orchestra”
- Trevor Rabin’s “Titans Spirit” from *Remember the Titans*
- Stevie Ray Vaughan’s “Riviera Paradise”
- Antonio Vivaldi’s “Summer, III.Presto” from *The Four Seasons*
- Handout: “Tone and Mood”

### Assessments

The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:

- guided questions
- graphic organizers
- brief writing assignments
- revision activities

### Teaching Suggestions

This assignment could be paired with “The Best Word for the Job” lesson, in which students discuss the importance of choosing words to create specific effects.

### Activity One: Listening

Prior to the lesson, teachers should choose an instrumental musical selection that inspires a story idea. A list of suggested titles has been provided in the Materials and Resources section of this teacher overview, all of which may be downloaded from commercial music sites such as iTunes or Amazon.com. As students will listen only to a short section of the piece, teachers will want to prepare their clip judiciously and not feel limited to using only the first thirty seconds of the piece.

Before students listen to the music, teachers should tell them to imagine the music as background to a narrative that has a setting, characters, and plot. For example, a song that sounds mysterious or eerie might inspire a story in which a detective searches for clues in a dark and forbidding house. During the first listening period, students should not take notes, and teachers should limit distractions so students can concentrate on the effect of the music. After listening to the selection, students may begin completing the questions.

Before students complete the graphic organizer, teachers should point out the formal names and definitions for musical devices such as rhythm, dynamics, pitch, and sound. Teachers of younger students may wish to model how the specific device creates an effect; for example, a fast tempo and cacophonous sound could suggest a sense of stress and tension to the listener, while a slower and softer selection could suggest tranquility and peace. As students complete the graphic organizer, teachers may consider having the musical selection play softly in the background.

### Activity Two: Writing

The graphic organizer is designed to help students envision different components of their scene. Teachers should advise students to be as descriptive as possible when completing the graphic organizer, using vivid verbs, details and images to describe their scene. When students begin writing their paragraphs, teachers should advise them to use the present tense, as if a “movie” is playing with the music in the background. Students will not include dialogue as part of their descriptions.

### **Activity Three: Determining Tone**

After students complete their paragraphs, they each will exchange their drafts with a partner. Students may need teacher guidance as they complete the graphic organizer, which asks them first to find verbs and adjectives that convey the paragraph’s tone, and then to determine “replacement” words that have similar meanings but have either positive or negative connotations. Partners should discuss whether the attitude they originally perceived is the same as the attitude the writer intended.

### **Activity Four: Revising**

After drafts have been returned to their authors, students will revise their own drafts by working through the instructions in Activity Four. Teachers should have on hand a Tone Words list, such as the one found on the LTF website, so students can consider other words that fit their story’s tone and decide whether their tone is positive, negative, or neutral.

### **Activity Five: Consciously changing your tone**

This activity asks students to manipulate their paragraph’s tone by choosing verbs, adjectives, and figures of speech that convey the opposite tone of the original. Teachers may need to model this exercise for students, or they may choose to have students work in pairs to complete the activity with peer support.

After completing their graphic organizer, students should rewrite their original paragraph using the alternate tone words. Teachers should ask students to evaluate which paragraph seems most effective and to share their favorite with the class. Teachers should end the lesson by having students reflect upon the process of manipulating tone in their writing and to think about what kinds of writing tasks call for them to consider tone as they write. Teachers also may extend the lesson by discussing with students how tone is determined in other kinds of art, such as music, painting, or film.

### **Answers**

Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses.

## Determining Tone Through Music

When composers create musical pieces, they have to consider how the types of musical instruments, the speed or loudness of the music, and the arrangement of their notes create certain effects on their listeners. For example, the same musical selection might sound either “scary” or “exciting,” depending on what kinds of instruments the composer decides to use. Similarly, writers use various devices like images, colorful verbs, and figures of speech to create specific effects in their writing. When discussing the emotional effects of devices in literature and music, you are considering the piece’s MOOD or TONE.

**Tone:** The Writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward the subject, the audience, or a character.

**Mood:** The feeling created in the reader; the atmosphere of a piece.

### Activity One: Listening

1. Listen to the musical selection. While the music is playing, don’t worry about writing or taking notes—just concentrate on the music.
2. Listen to the music again. When the music stops, write down four words that describe any feelings that you have that are inspired by the piece. These words help target the MOOD of the music.

This music makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_.

3. What aspects or elements of the music helped you determine the piece’s mood? Complete the following chart where you note what effect each musical device has on your emotions

Musical Device	How does this device help you determine the piece’s emotional effect?
<b>Rhythm/Tempo</b> How fast or slow is the music played? Is the beat regular or irregular?	
<b>Dynamics/Pitch</b> How loud or soft is the music played? Are the notes high or low?	
<b>Instrument Choices</b> What types of instruments does the composer choose to use? (Trumpet or flute? Piano or organ?)	
<b>Sound</b> Does the music sound pretty (euphonious), or is it harsh and ugly (cacophonous)?	



**Activity Three: Determining Tone**

1. Exchange what you have written with a partner. Read your partner’s work silently, and using your **Tone Words** handout, write at the top of the page one word that describes the tone of the story. Underline any words or phrases that help you determine the author’s tone.
2. Look closely at your partner’s word choice. In the left column, choose verbs and adjectives from your partner’s paragraph and write them in the blanks. In the middle column, write a replacement for the original word that has a positive connotation. In the right column, write a replacement for the original word that has a negative connotation.

For example:

Original verb: *shone*

Positive: *gleamed*

Negative: *glared*

**Verbs**

**Positive Connotation**

**Negative Connotation**

A. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Adjectives**

**Positive Connotation**

**Negative Connotation**

A. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. After compiling your chart, explain how your replacement words might strengthen, change, or weaken the tone of the author’s paragraph.

---



---



---

4. Pass back the story to its author. Discuss with the author whether the tone you perceived is the same as the tone your partner intended.

**Activity Four: Revising**

1. Using your **Tone Words** handout, consider other words that best fit your story’s tone. Identify one of those words at the top of your paper, and note whether that word is positive, neutral, or negative.
2. Add two sentences to your draft that definitely establish the attitude you hope to convey without using the word itself.
3. Choose one of your sentences and add a detail about sound, taste, touch, smell, or sight (imagery) that also captures the tone you are trying to convey.
4. Add a detail or image using two types of figurative language, such as similes, metaphors, or personification. Again, consider your tone when adding your figures of speech.
5. Revise one sentence so it includes a sound device (assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia) that helps support your tone.
6. Replace two linking verbs with vivid action verbs that help convey your tone.

**Activity Five: Consciously changing your tone**

1. Look closely at your word choice. In the left column, choose verbs, adjectives, and figures of speech from your paragraph and write them in the blanks. In the right column, write a replacement for the original word/phrase that conveys the opposite tone.

**For example:**

Original verb: *snuggled*

Opposite tone: *smothered*

Original figure of speech: *floats like a butterfly*

Opposite tone: *stings like a bee*

**Verbs**

**Opposite tone**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Adjectives**

**Opposite tone**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Figures of Speech**

**Opposite tone**

---

---

---

---

2. Rewrite your original paragraph, using alternative choices to change the tone of your paragraph.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- A. Which paragraph do you like best? Why?

---

---

- B. Share your favorite paragraph with the class and have your classmates determine your tone.