

TONE

For each of the following pieces, identify the tone. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country. At length I found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher...I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled luster by the dwelling...(with) vacant and eye-like windows.

Edgar A. Poe
"The Fall of the House of Usher"

TONE: _____

EVIDENCE:

Al lived next door; he loomed next door, rather. He seemed immense, a great wallowing fatso stuffed with possessions...He seemed to have a beer belly—solid, portentous, proud...

John Updike
"Three Boys"

TONE: _____

EVIDENCE:

It has been called the House of God. It has been called the High One. The Cold One. The White One. On close acquaintance by climbers, it has been called a variety of names rather less printable. But to the world at large it is Kilimanjaro, the apex of Africa and one of the great mountains of the earth.

James Ramsey Ullman
Kilimanjaro

tone: _____

evidence:

Those Winter Sundays

Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

⁹ chronic: lasting or recurring for a long time

speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
Of love's austere and lonely offices?

¹⁴ austere: stern; severe
offices: duties; ceremonies

tone: _____

evidence:

PET DIARIES

Excerpts from a Dog's Daily Diary

8:00 a.m.	Oh Boy! Dog food! My favorite!
9:30 a.m.	Oh Boy! A car ride! My favorite!
9:40 a.m.	Oh Boy! A walk! My favorite!
10:30 a.m.	Oh Boy! A car ride! My favorite!
11:30 a.m.	Oh Boy! Dog food! My favorite!
12:00 noon	Oh Boy! The kids! My favorite!
1:00 p.m.	Oh Boy! The yard! My favorite!
4:00 p.m.	Oh Boy! The kids! My favorite!
5:00 p.m.	Oh Boy! Dog food! My favorite!
5:30 p.m.	Oh Boy! Mom! My favorite!
6:00 p.m.	Oh Boy! Dad! My favorite!
6:30 p.m.	Oh Boy! Playing ball! My favorite!
10:30 p.m.	Oh Boy! Sleeping in master's bed! My favorite!

TONE: _____

EVIDENCE:

Excerpts from a Cat's Daily Diary

Day 183 of My Captivity:

My captors continue to taunt me with bizarre little dangling objects
They dine lavishly on fresh meat, while I am forced to eat dry cereal.

The only thing that keeps me going is the hope of escape and the mild satisfaction I get from ruining
the occasional piece of furniture.

Tomorrow, I may eat another houseplant. Today, my attempt to kill my captors by weaving around their
feet while they were walking almost succeeded. *Must try this at the top of the stairs.*

In an attempt to disgust and repulse these vile oppressors, I once again induced myself to vomit on their
favorite chair. *Must try this on their bed.*

Decapitated a mouse and brought them the headless body in an attempt to make them aware of what I am
capable of and to try to strike fear into their hearts. They only cooed and condescended about
what a good little cat I was. *Hmmm, no working according to plan.*

There was some sort of gathering of their accomplices. I was placed in solitary confinement throughout
the event. However, I could hear the noise and smell the food. More importantly, I overheard that
my confinement was due to MY power of "allergies." *Must learn what this is and how to use it
to my advantage.*

I am convinced the other captives are flunkies and maybe snitches. The dog is routinely released and
seems more than happy to return. He is obviously a half-wit. The bird, on the other hand, has got
to be an informant, and speaks with them regularly. I am certain he reports my every move. Due
to his current placement in his metal room, his safety is assured. But I can wait; it is only a
matter of time...

TONE: _____

EVIDENCE:

Memories of Dating

Dave Barry

As a mature adult, I feel an obligation to help the younger generation, just as the mother fish guards her unhatched eggs, keeping her lonely vigil day after day, never leaving her post, not even to go to the bathroom, until her tiny babies emerge and she is able, at last, to eat them. "She may be your mom, but she's still a fish" is a wisdom nugget that I would pass along to any fish eggs reading this column.

But today I want to talk about dating. This subject was raised in a letter to me from a young person named Eric Knott, who writes: "I have got a big problem. There's this girl in my English class who is really good looking. However, I don't think she knows I exist. I want to ask her out, but I'm afraid she will say no, and I will be the freak of the week. What should I do?"

Eric, you have sent your question to the right mature adult, because as a young person, I spent a lot of time thinking about this very problem. Starting in about eighth grade, my time was divided as follows:

Academic Pursuits: 2 percent

Zits: 16 percent

Trying to Figure Out How to Ask Girls

Out: 82 percent

The most sensible way to ask a girl out is to walk directly up to her on foot and say, "So you

want to go out or what?" I never did this. I knew, as Eric Knott knows, that there was always the possibility that the girl would say no, thereby leaving me with no viable option but to leave Harold C. Crittenden Junior High School forever and go into the woods and become a bark-eating hermit whose only companions would be the gentle and understanding woodland creatures.

"Hey, Zitface!" the woodland creatures would shriek in their cute little Chip 'n Dale voices while raining acorns down upon my head. "You wanna date? Hahahahahaha."

So the first rule of dating is, Never risk direct contact with the girl in question. Your role model should be the nuclear submarine, gliding silently beneath the ocean surface, tracking an enemy target that does not even begin to suspect that the submarine would like to date it. I spent the vast majority of 1960 keeping a girl named Judy under surveillance, maintaining a minimum distance of fifty lockers to avoid the danger that I might somehow get into a conversation with her, which would have led to disaster.

Judy: Hi.

Me: Hi.

Judy: Just in case you have ever thought about having a date with me, the answer is no.

Woodland Creatures: Hahahahahaha.

TONE: _____

EVIDENCE:

Piano

D.H. Lawrence

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who
smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cozy parlour, the tinkling piano
our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child
for the past.

² *vista*: a passage affording a distant view

⁴ *insidious*: working subtly and gradually, treacherous

⁹ *vain*: useless

¹⁰ *appassionato*: an Italian word meaning "with deep emotion," used as a musical direction

tone: _____

evidence:

CONNOTATION—the ideas, attitudes, or emotions associated with a word in the mind of speaker or listener, writer or reader. It is contrasted with the **DENOTATION**, the thing the word stands for, the dictionary definition, an objective concept without emotional coloring. The denotation of the word *cat* is either a specific animal or a general definition. The connotation is the feeling aroused by the word, which may be quite different for people fond of cats and others who are afraid of them or allergic to them. Broadly speaking, connotations are favorable, neutral, or unfavorable, but the range within these categories is as wide as the range of human emotion and thought. **CONCRETE** words have readily defined denotations, and, frequently, little or no connotative value, as, for instance, the word *chair* arouses no emotion in most circumstances. **ABSTRACT** words like *liberty* and *justice* have denotations more difficult to define and are frequently highly connotative. Words like *liberal* and *conservative* are notorious for their shifting connotations, ranging widely from favorable to unfavorable depending on user, hearer, and circumstances.

Denotative language is important to scientific and scholarly discourse, or to any writing requiring accurate, objective description of the external world. Connotative language is important wherever a large part of the communication is emotionally—in politics and advertising as well as in all forms of imaginative literature.

See **SIGNIFIED**, **SIGNIFIER**, related concepts placing the emphasis on word and user.

TONE: _____

EVIDENCE:

I Remember Papa

When I was a kid, a father was like the light in a refrigerator. Every house had one, but nobody knew what either of them did once the door was shut.

My dad left the house every morning and always seemed glad to see everyone at night.

He opened the jar of pickles when nobody else could. He was the only one in the house who wasn't afraid to go to the basement by himself.

He cut himself shaving, but no one kissed it or got excited about it.

It was understood whenever it rained, he got the car and brought it around to the door.

When anyone was sick, he got the prescription filled.

He set mousetraps, cut back the roses so the thorns, wouldn't clip you when you came to the front door.

When I got a bike, he ran alongside me for at least a thousand miles until I got the hang of it.

I was afraid of everyone else's father, but not my own. Once I made him tea. It was only sugar water, but he sat on a small chair and said it was delicious.

Whenever I played house, the mother doll had a lot to do. I never knew what to do with the daddy doll, so I had him say, "I'm going off to work now," and threw him under the bed.

When I was nine years old, my father didn't get up one morning and go to work.

He went to the hospital and died the next day.

I went to my room and felt under my bed for the daddy doll. When I found him, I dusted him off and put him on my bed.

He never did anything - I didn't know his leaving would hurt so much. I still don't know why.

Erma Bombeck

TONE: _____

EVIDENCE:
