**Literary Elements Resource Sheet**

***Mood and Tone***

Watch out! Tone and mood are similar!!

**Tone** is the author’s attitude toward the writing (his characters, the situation) and the readers. A work of writing can have more than one tone. Tone is established through the setting, choice of vocabulary, and other details.

Consider the following examples of tone:

* “I want to ask the authorities what is the big deal? Why do not they control the epidemic? It is eating up lives like a monster.”
* “I want to draw the attention of the concerned authorities toward damage caused by an epidemic. If steps were not taken to curb it, it will further injure our community”

The theme of both examples is the same. The only way we can differentiate between them is their separate tone. The tone in the first example is casual or informal while in the second the tone is more formal.

**Examples of Words That Describe Tone:** amused, humorous, pessimistic, angry, informal, playful, cheerful, ironic, arrogant, light, sad, clear, matter-of-fact, serious, formal, resigned, suspicious, gloomy, optimistic, witty, etc.

**Mood** is the general atmosphere created by the author’s words. It is the feeling **the reader gets** from reading those words. MOOD IS ALL ABOUT YOU! The mood may be the same, or it may change from situation to situation throughout a text.

**“It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents….”** The mood established in this quote could be mysterious, dark, dreary, etc. The author is using the setting to evoke certain feelings in the reader.

**Examples of Words That Describe Mood:**  fanciful, melancholy, frightened, mysterious, frustrating, romantic, gloomy, sentimental, happy, sorrowful, joyful, suspenseful, etc.

***Theme***

The theme of a book is a universal idea or message that stretches through an entire story. It is often a lesson that we learn about life or people – **something that the author is trying to TEACH us about life.** A theme cannot usually be expressed in one word. The following list contains some examples of subjects that appear in popular literature. If you find that one of the subjects below relates to your book, ask yourself what message the author is sending about that subject. This message the author is sending is a [theme](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/writingabookreport/a/theme.htm). If you have trouble [understanding themes](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/writingabookreport/a/theme.htm) or discerning the theme of a book you are reading, you may find it useful to consider the following idea: What is the author trying to teach me about the subject of the text?

For example, love and sacrifice might be subjects of your novel, but the THEME is what the author is trying to TEACH you about love and sacrifice. *Sometimes you have to sacrifice what you want when you truly love someone* could be an example of a THEME for the subject of love and sacrifice.

**Examples of subjects that can be used to determine theme:**

 Beauty of simplicity

 Change versus tradition

 Chaos and order

 Circle of life

 Coming of age

 Companionship as salvation

 Dangers of ignorance

 Darkness and light

 Death – inevitable or tragedy

 Desire to escape

 Destruction of beauty

 Everlasting love

 Facing reality

 Family – blessing or curse

 Fate and free will

 Greed as downfall

 Growing up – pain or pleasure

 Heartbreak of betrayal

 Inner versus outer strength

 Injustice

 Isolation

 Love and sacrifice

 Power and corruption

 Power of words

 Pride and downfall

 Self-preservation

 Will to survive

 Wisdom of experience

 Youth and beauty

***Foreshadowing***

This literary device is used to build suspense and prepare the reader's subconscious for the conflict coming later. It also helps the reader believe extraordinary events when they happen because clues have already been given. Foreshadowing can be subtle, such as rain in the beginning of a story to suggest something bad is going to happen, or more obvious such as in the prologue of "[Romeo and Juliet](http://www.foreshadowing.org/romeo-and-juliet.html)": "A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life." Foreshadowing drops hints of what may happen in the future. Sometimes foreshadowing is much more obvious the second time you read a text. Since you already know the outcome, the clues stand out even more.

**Types of Foreshadowing:** Sounds (music, nature, etc.); Statements (dialogue); Behaviors (facial expressions, actions, movements, etc.); visuals (use of figurative language, symbols, pictures, etc.)

**Example (from Disney’s The Lion King)**

“Simba, let me tell you something my father told me. Look at the stars. The great kings of the past look down on us from those stars. So whenever you feel alone, just remember that those kings will always be there to guide you. And so will I.” (Meaning: In the film, The Lion King, Mufasa foretells his own fate. That one day he too will die and live among the stars alongside the great kings before him. )

***Flashback***

Flashback is an interjected scene that takes the narrative back in time from the current point the story has reached. Flashbacks are often used to recount events that happened before the story’s primary sequence of events or to fill in crucial backstory.

Each story has a time frame—the amount of time the author has decided to cover in a particular narrative—and anything that happens before this time frame begins is called *backstory*. Writers use *flashback* to tell the backstory and show character motivation.

Example: If the main character won't enter a hospital, a quick trip back in time to when he sat at the bedside of his dying mother will increase reader understanding and empathy.

**Techniques**

1. *Recollection*: The most common technique for using backstory in fiction is to weave bits and pieces of what a character remembers throughout the narrative as they become relevant to the character's motivation. This adds texture to the story, provided you keep these pieces as short as possible; often only a sentence or two is enough.
2. *Full scenes*: These are extended memories that use both action and dialogue. If there is a significant amount of material that takes place in the past, authors might write long scenes and alternate chapters in the past or present, or create a separate section for the past.
3. *Italicized Inserts*: Stories might also include short italicized passages that dramatize the past. For example, a son contemplating his father's death might address his father in short passages that separate scenes: *You met mother on a ridge high on Mt. Temple in Banff National Park...*
4. *Letters or Journals*: A character might either write or read a letter or journal to impart historical information to the reader. Sometimes these are also placed in italics.
5. *Frames*: this is the "story within a story," and it often makes use of a prologue and an epilogue, with the entire story told in flashback between the two "bookends."