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Tone and Mood

2.A.5.b 3.A.3.c, j 3.A.7.b, c

Tone is the way *the author* feels about what she writes about. Every detail in the text helps to express the tone. An author who loves the setting will focus on the things that make it beautiful. On the other hand, an author might point out the details that make a villain unpleasant.

Mood is the way a text makes *its readers* feel. The same elements that express the tone—characters, settings, plots, and language—create the mood. Remember this difference: Tone is how *the author* feels when she writes the story. Mood is how *you* feel when you read it.

Example

In “The Cabin,” what is the author’s tone toward Brenda? What is the mood of the story? Use details from the story to support your answer.

Maya’s Answer

The author doesn’t like how Brenda is acting. He uses details to show how upset she is. The cabin is “definitely not cool” and Brenda won’t be rescued. The mood is sarcastic and funny. The tone is serious when Brenda starts helping with Robbie. Her smile makes the mood happy, too.

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Maya describes things that relate to tone and mood. She also uses strong, specific, feeling words. But she connects the details to her ideas weakly, and she doesn’t show how or why the tone and mood both change. For example, she might explain how the author shows his disapproval, and say that the tone becomes approving when Brenda decides to help. The mood lightens after the crisis passes.



Improving Maya’s Answer

Maya’s answer jumps from thought to thought. It would be stronger if she used words and phrases to connect and develop her ideas and details, like “these details show,” “in this part of the story,” “when Brenda acts differently,” and “at the end.”



Connections Settings help create the mood of stories. Think about the moods places have, and identify a setting that would create each of the moods below.

Comfortable: _____

Frustrated: _____

Scary: _____

Theme

3.A.6.a, b

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Literature has meanings or messages called **themes**. Often, themes are not stated directly. Look for clues in the elements of literature—characters, setting, plot, and language.

A theme can be a simple lesson or moral. Themes can also be more complex insights into important parts of life. Some themes deal with common experiences that people in every time and culture share, like growing up, making friends, or falling in love. Because they are so common, they are called **universal themes**.

Ask You may be asked how different texts express similar themes. Ask yourself: *How does this author feel about it? How is her message the same or different from the other author's?*

Example

What insight about growing up does “The Cabin” express? Use details from the story to support your answer.

Gerry's Answer

One of the themes of “The Cabin” is that respect must be earned. Brenda

feels that Jonathan is condescending, but she acts like a little kid sulking and

storming off. When she finally pitches in to help with Robbie when he nearly melts

down, Jonathan treats her with respect, speaking to her like a grown-up. She has

earned respect by acting like an adult.

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Gerry realized that asking about an “insight” or “lesson” is another way of asking about theme. He then identifies an important theme that has to do with growing up. He also includes details that show how the story develops the theme.



Connections A work of literature can have more than one theme. Can you find any other themes in “The Cabin”? Write one or more additional themes here.