

## LESSON 2



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# TONE IN TOLSTOY

## Question: What is tone in literature?

The attitude or character of a piece of writing is its tone. An author uses tone to give writing flavor and additional meaning. Sometimes tone simply makes the writing more entertaining; for example, who wants a ghost story without a little fog and cobwebs? But tone can also help communicate the substance of a story; for example, a battle scene will be less intense without vivid details and a sense of fear and anticipation.

## Question: How does an author create tone?

An author uses various tools to express tone. These tools are listed in the acronym DIDLS and include the following:

<b>Diction</b>	the words an author chooses to use
<b>Imagery</b>	the images an author creates for the reader
<b>Details</b>	bits of information that help describe setting, action, or characters
<b>Language</b>	the style an author chooses, such as formal, informal, and dialectical
<b>Syntax</b>	how words and sentences are structured

## LEO TOLSTOY THE MAN AND THE WRITER

Knowing about an author's background and beliefs might help you identify and understand a certain tone in a story. Leo Tolstoy, for example, was a famously opinionated and principled man. He believed the conventions of society were superficial and sought to rise above them. Refusing to join intellectual or artistic trends might have made him unpopular, at times, but his firm beliefs were part of his personality. Many of these positions made their way into Tolstoy's writing.

Tolstoy began writing in the 1850s. His early works drew on his participation in the Crimean War. Tolstoy quickly established an ability to focus on the human details of war and on a realistic depiction of a soldier's thought process. His most famous novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, were written in the 1860s and 1870s. These works further explored everyday experience and one's search for meaning in the universe.

## WAR AND PEACE THE EPIC NOVEL

Knowing about a novel's subject and time period might help you identify tone as well. An author might use tone to communicate an idea about the plot or theme of the book. For example, if an author is writing about tragedy, the reader might look for a somber or pensive tone.

*War and Peace* begins in 1805, as Napoléon's army is marching across Europe, conquering one land after another. Tolstoy's aristocratic Russian characters get swept up into the fight, even when it is outside of Russia's borders. For example, Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, one of the main characters of the novel, is wounded in the Battle of Austerlitz. In 1812, Napoléon invades Russia, and Tolstoy's characters' lives are turned upside down. Tolstoy paints a portrait of everyday life in these extreme circumstances and raises questions about morality, patriotism, and other issues.

Read the passages from *War and Peace* in Activity 2. Identify the tone in the passages by digging into the words and imagery. Consider how the subject of the passage is related to the tone.



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WAR & PEACE

# ANALYZING WAR AND PEACE

Read the following passages from *War and Peace* and determine the tone of each. Use the DIDLS system to record as much information about the passages as you can. Fill in as many of the blank lines as possible.

## PASSAGE 1

*Prince Vassily always spoke lazily, the way an actor speaks a role in an old play. Anna Pavlovna Scherer, on the contrary, despite her forty years, was brimming with animation and impulses.*

*Being an enthusiast had become her social position, and she sometimes became enthusiastic even when she had no wish to, so as not to deceive the expectations of people who knew her. The restrained smile that constantly played on Anna Pavlovna's face, though it did not suit her outworn features, expressed, as it does in spoiled children, a constant awareness of her dear shortcoming, which she did not wish, could not, and found no need to correct.*

*In the midst of a conversation about political doings, Anna Pavlovna waxed vehement.*

D(iction): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I(magery): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D(etails): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

L(anguage): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

S(yntax): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*SOURCE: In the novel—pg. 4*

*Tolstoy, Leo. War and Peace. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage—Random House, 2007. Print.*

*In the television series—look for this scene in Episode 1.*

## PASSAGE 2

[The Russian diplomat Bilibin speaks to his friend Prince Andrei Bolkonsky about his performance in the war.]

*“How, then? With all your mass you fell upon the unfortunate Mortier with his one division, and this Mortier slips between your fingers? Where’s the victory?”*

*“All the same, seriously speaking,” replied Prince Andrei, “we can still say without boasting that this is a bit better than Ulm...”*

*“Why didn’t you capture us at least one, at least one marshal?”*

*“Because not everything goes as it’s supposed to, and with such regularity as on parade. We planned, as I told you, to attack their rear by seven in the morning, but we didn’t even get there by five in the afternoon.”*

*“But why didn’t you get there at seven in the morning? You had to get there at seven in the morning,” Bilibin said, smiling, “you had to get there at seven in the morning.”*

D(iction): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I(magery): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D(etails): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

L(anguage): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

S(yntax): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*SOURCE: In the novel—pg. 155*

*Tolstoy, Leo. War and Peace. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage—Random House, 2007. Print.*

*In the television series—look for this scene in Episode 2.*

**Bonus Activity:** Match each of these passages with its corresponding scene in the *War & Peace* television series. Discuss how the television adaptation of each scene can help you understand the tone in the novel.