

# SOAPSTone Step for Analyzing Texts

Speaker

Occasion

Audience

Purpose

Subject

Tone

# SOAPSTone

## Speaker

**The voice that tells the story.**

Before authors begin to write, they must decide whose voice is going to be heard.

Whether this voice belongs to a fictional character or to the writers themselves, effective writers determine how to insert and develop those attributes of the speaker that will influence the perceived meaning of the piece.

# SOAPSTone

## Occasion

**The time and the place of the piece; the context that prompted the writing.**

Writing does not occur in a vacuum.

All writers are influenced by the *larger occasion*: an environment of ideas, attitudes, and emotions that swirl around a broad issue. Then there is the *immediate occasion*: an event or situation that catches the writer's attention and triggers a response.

# SOAPSTone

## Audience

**The group of readers to whom this piece is directed.**

Before authors begin to write, they must determine who the audience is that they intend to address.

It may be one person or a specific group.

This choice of audience will affect how and why authors write a particular text.

# SOAPSTone

## Purpose

### **The reason behind the text.**

Writers need to consider the purpose of the text in order to develop the thesis or the argument and its logic.

They ask themselves, "What do I want my audience to think or do as a result of reading my text?"

# SOAPSTone

## Subject

**The central topic.**

Before authors begin to write, they must decide whose voice is going to be heard.

Whether this voice belongs to a fictional character or to the writers themselves, effective writers determine how to insert and develop those attributes of the speaker that will influence the perceived meaning of the piece.

# SOAPSTone

## Tone

### The attitude of the author.

The spoken word can convey the speaker's attitude and thus help to impart meaning through tone of voice.

With the written word, it is **tone** that extends meaning beyond the literal, and authors must convey this tone in their

- diction (choice of words)
- syntax (sentence construction)
- imagery (metaphors, similes, and other types of figurative language).

The ability to manage tone is one of the best indicators of a sophisticated writer.

# SOAPSTone

More about

## Tone

Tone is the author's/narrator's attitude toward the subject.

Tone is different from *mood*, which is *the emotional feeling produced by the passage*.

The tone and the mood of a passage may indeed be the same, but on Language exams, you will have to explain how an author develops a certain tone using the devices of language, such as FIDDS—figurative language, imagery, diction, details, and syntax.



TONE IS LARGELY CREATED THROUGH THE USE OF

# FIDDS

Figurative language

Imagery

Diction

Details

Syntax

# FIDDS

## Figurative Language

### Tropes & Schemes, Rhetorical Devices

Figurative Language is a huge umbrella term. It's far easier to list examples of *Literal* Language than try to explain the vastness that is figurative. Literal language says exactly what it means. Directions and instructions are literal.

So is analysis, including the rhetorical variety.

Pretty much everything else is figurative.

Yikes.

# FIDDS

## Imagery

Language that appeals to the senses.

### -EXAMPLES-

He fell down like an old tree falling down in a storm.

The taste of that first defeat was bitter indeed.

He felt like the flowers were waving him a hello.

The eery silence was shattered by her scream.

After that first sale, his cash register never stopped ringing.

The sky looked like the untouched canvas of an artist.

He could hear his world crashing down when he heard the news about her.

The F-16 swooped down like an eagle after its prey.

The word spread like leaves in a storm.

# FIDDS

## Diction

The writer's word choices, especially with regard to their correctness, clarity, or effectiveness.

You should be able to describe an author's diction (for example, formal or informal, ornate or plain) and understand the ways in which diction can complement the author's purpose.

Diction, combined with syntax, figurative language, literary devices, etc., creates an author's style.

# FIDDS

## Details

Specifically described items placed in a work for effect and meaning.

The details often define the tone of a text.

# FIDDS

## Syntax

The grammatical relationship of words to each other.

Sentence Patterns & Variations, Schemes... the way an author puts things together.

In terms of coding, the syntax is of utmost importance –

`http://englishscholar.com` takes you to this site.

`http//:` gets you the dreaded 404 Error message.

The placement & arrangement of words has great impact on the tone. Fragments, run-ons and other problematic sentence structures distract from the substance of the text. Relying too heavily on overly-simplistic (single subject/predicate) sentences is usually uninteresting and lacks style.

# FIDDS

## Syntax

The grammatical relationship of words to each other.

The stage of syntactic analysis is the best understood stage of natural language processing. Syntax helps us understand how words are grouped together to make complex sentences, and gives us a starting point for working out the meaning of the whole sentence. For example, consider the following two sentences:

- (1) The dog ate the bone.
- (2) The bone was eaten by the dog.

(2)

The rules of syntax help us work out that it's the bone that gets eaten and not the dog. A simple rule like "its the second noun that gets eaten" just won't work.

Syntactic analysis allows us to determine possible groupings of words in a sentence. Sometimes there will only be one possible grouping, and we will be well on the way to working out the meaning. For example, in the following sentence:

- (3) The rabbit with long ears enjoyed a large green lettuce.

We can work out from the rules of syntax that "the rabbit with long ears" forms one group (a noun phrase), and "a large green lettuce" forms another noun phrase group. When we get to work on working out the meaning of the sentence we can start off by working out the meaning of these word groups, before combining them together to get the meaning of the whole sentence.

# FIDDS Syntax

The grammatical relationship of words to each other.

In other cases there may be many possible groupings of words. For example, the sentence

“John saw Mary with a telescope”

there are two different readings based on the following groupings:

John saw (Mary with a telescope). ie, Mary has the telescope.

John (saw Mary with a telescope). ie, John saw her with the telescope.

When there are many possible groupings then the sentence is syntactically ambiguous. Sometimes we will be able to use general knowledge to work out which is the intended grouping - for example, consider the following sentence:

I saw the Wilson bridge flying into Washington.

We can probably guess that the Wilson bridge isn't flying! So, this sentence is syntactically ambiguous, but unambiguous if we bring to bear general knowledge about bridges. The “John saw Mary ..” example is more seriously ambiguous, though we may be able to work out the right reading if we know something about John and Mary (is John in the habit of looking at girls through a telescope?).