

Name _____

Date _____

Author's Craft: Tone

Tone refers to the author's attitude toward the subject or audience. In *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck's tone is often melancholic and reflective, emphasizing the struggles of marginalized individuals during the Great Depression. Through his tone, Steinbeck evokes empathy and a sense of loss for the characters' unfulfilled dreams and isolation.

Read the excerpt from *Of Mice and Men* and answer the questions about how tone shapes the reader's experience.

Excerpt:

"A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. A path runs through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten even harder by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. The place was quiet now, except for the faint rustling of leaves and the occasional splash of a fish in the pool. The stillness of the scene felt like it was waiting—waiting for something to happen."

Meet the Author:

John Steinbeck (1902–1968) was an American author whose works often focus on social justice, human struggles, and the plight of the working class. *Of Mice and Men* reflects his experiences during the Great Depression and examines themes of friendship, isolation, and dreams.

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1. How does Steinbeck's tone in the excerpt create a sense of calm and foreboding?

2. What descriptive language contributes to the melancholic and reflective tone of the passage?

3. How does Steinbeck's background and experiences during the Great Depression influence his portrayal of tone and setting?

Write a short paragraph using tone to create both a peaceful and foreboding mood in your writing.

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Author's Craft: Tone – Answer Key

1. How does Steinbeck's tone in the excerpt create a sense of calm and foreboding?

The tone creates calm through phrases like "twinkling over the yellow sands" and "quiet now," but the mention of "waiting for something to happen" introduces a sense of foreboding.

2. What descriptive language contributes to the melancholic and reflective tone of the passage?

Words like "weary tramps," "stillness," and "waiting" contribute to the melancholic tone, reflecting the characters' struggles and the inevitability of change.

3. How does Steinbeck's background and experiences during the Great Depression influence his portrayal of tone and setting?

Steinbeck's observations of the working class during the Great Depression influenced his tone, as he often witnessed the quiet desperation of individuals hoping for better lives.

Write a short paragraph using tone to create both a peaceful and foreboding mood in your writing.
