

Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge

Mood and Tone

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Grade Level	11th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	150 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	2-3 class periods
Course	American Literature		

Essential Question

How do mood and tone contribute to the reader's experience of a piece of literature?

Summary

In this lesson, students explore the essential question, "How do mood and tone contribute to the reader's experience of a piece of literature?" through reading and analyzing the short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" by Ambrose Bierce.

Snapshot

Engage

Students examine the differences between mood and tone by viewing two versions of the same movie trailer. Students take notes on their reactions to the two movie trailers to inform a class discussion and establish definitions for mood and tone.

Explore

While reading “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce, students reflect on the story and consider its mood and tone. Using the Why-Lighting strategy, students locate and identify elements of mood and tone throughout the short story.

Explain

After reading the short story, students respond to a short-answer question. To apply new learning about mood and tone, students rewrite a passage from the short story using new words and phrases to convey a new mood and tone for the text.

Extend

Students create filmed versions of both the original and rewritten passages. Students act out the scenes by incorporating actions and facial expressions appropriate to the mood and tone of each passage. Then, students set their films to appropriate music and record a narrative voiceover if needed.

Evaluate

Students’ completed handouts can be evaluated as a formative assessment.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 11)

11.3.W.2: Compose informative essays, reports, or technical writing that:

- objectively introduce and develop topics
- include a defensible thesis
- incorporate evidence (e.g., specific facts, details, charts and graphs, data)
- maintain an organized structure
- use sentence variety and word choice to create clarity and concision
- establish and maintain a formal style
- emulate literary devices from mentor texts

11.7.R: Analyze and evaluate the techniques used in a variety of multimodal content and how they contribute to meaning.

Attachments

- Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge Handout - Spanish.docx
- Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge Handout - Spanish.pdf
- Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge Handout.docx
- Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge Handout.pdf

Materials

- Copies of the short story “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce (linked in narrative below)
- Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge handout (attached)
- A list of mood and tone words
- Writing materials

Engage

Students will be introduced to mood and tone by evaluating the differences between the two terms through viewing two versions of the same movie trailer. First, show students the original 1964 trailer for the movie Mary Poppins here.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=nOfH7uEojKk

After viewing this trailer, use the Think-Pair-Share strategy and ask students to talk with their partners about the following:

1. How did the trailer make you feel? What specific words would you use to describe how you felt and the atmosphere created by the trailer?
2. What was the attitude of the maker of this trailer toward the film and content of Mary Poppins?

Next, show students a modified trailer for the movie here.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=2T5_0AGdFic

After viewing this modified trailer, use the Think-Pair-Share strategy again and ask students to discuss and share answers to the same questions.

Teacher's Note

While students are discussing answers to the questions concerning both movie trailers, record their reactions on two different sheets (one for each trailer) in two different columns (a column for the answers to each question).

After students have viewed and discussed both movie trailers, examine the answers recorded in both columns. This is the time to establish the terms mood and tone. Refer first to the column that holds the words and phrases that answered the question "How did the trailer make you feel? What specific words would you use to describe how you felt and the atmosphere created by the trailer?" Establish that these answers can be used to define the term *mood*.

Definition

Mood is the feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates for the reader.

Next, refer to the second column that holds the words and phrases that answered the question "What was the attitude of the maker of this trailer toward the film and content of Mary Poppins?" Establish that these answers can be used to define the term *tone*.

Definition

Tone is a writer's attitude toward their subject.

Teacher's Note: Mood and Tone Words

There are many online sources that provide lists of mood and tone words. One that may be useful can be found on this blog post from the "Our English Class with Mr. Scott" website. Copies of this list, or one like it, can be shrunken down and copied to give to students. If shrunken down, a list of mood and tone words like this one can be pasted into students' composition books. Let students know that, while reading the focus text, they will be looking for words and phrases like these.

Explore

Teacher's Note: Links to Short Story

Before beginning this portion of the lesson, print out a copy of "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" for each student. You may access the text using the following links:

- "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (English)
- "El incidente del Puente del Búho" (Spanish)

Begin reading "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" by Ambrose Bierce. Consider beginning the story by reading out loud, stopping at strategic points when elements of mood and tone appear.

Optional Modification

If students need scaffolded access to the story, consider using CommonLit. Accessing this resource requires an account to be set up, but the site is free. Students can highlight the text online in CommonLit or take notes on paper as they read. CommonLit also offers the option of playing the story aloud.

While reading the short story, students will respond to the **Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge** handout. Using the Why-Lighting strategy, students will locate and identify elements of mood and tone throughout the short story.

Teacher's Note

When implementing the Why-Lighting strategy while students read the short story, consider encouraging students to highlight mood and tone words in different colors or use different-colored sticky notes (cut down to smaller sizes) to flag elements of mood and tone throughout the story. Consider modeling this approach for students throughout the beginning of the text in order to scaffold for students.

As students read, each should have either a hard or electronic copy of the Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge handout. On this handout, the short story is broken down into three sections. For each section, students will use the handout as a reading guide to record:

1. a summary of the events that occurred,
2. where and when these events occurred,
3. elements (words and phrases) of mood, and
4. elements (words and phrases) of tone.

Recording these notes as a way to track how mood and tone are shown throughout the text, as well as keeping track of plot elements, will be aided by the Why-Lighting strategy. Like with the Why-Lighting strategy, begin the handout with students as a way to scaffold them through completing it independently for the rest of the text.

Explain

After reading the short story and working with the Mood and Tone at Owl Creek Bridge handout, students will reflect on and answer the short answer question on the same handout. This question is: How do mood and tone contribute to the reader's experience of a piece of literature? Begin this question analysis by asking students to find this question on their handout or posting the question on the board at the front of the room. Students can brainstorm answers to this question by engaging in the Think Pair Share strategy with a partner.

Teacher's Note

The answer to this question can be composed in a few different ways. Consider allowing students to write their answers together using the notes taken on their handouts throughout the reading of the text. Alternatively, you may wish to complete this as a whole-class exercise. The answer to this question can be used as a formative assessment, either turned in with the handout at the end of the reading process or used as an exit ticket.

Now that students have established what the terms mood and tone are, practiced actively finding elements of mood and tone in a piece of literature, and analyzed how mood and tone contribute to the reader's experience, they will engage in an exercise where they are in control of the mood and tone of the existing text. To apply new learning about mood and tone, students will rewrite a passage from the short story using new words and phrases to convey a new mood and tone for the text.

On the "Retelling Using Mood and Tone" portion of the handout, allow students to read the first sample from An Occurrence at Owl Creek aloud as a class, stopping periodically to examine the underlined words and phrases. At the end of this reading, work with students to establish how those underlined words contribute to a specific mood and tone. In the blanks provided, students will record their thoughts.

Next, ask students to work with a partner to "rewrite" the same passage, this time filling in the underlined blanks with new words and phrases. The catch here is that students must create a new mood and tone for the passage. Before beginning, ask students to get out the list of mood and tone words provided at the beginning of this lesson; this will help serve as inspiration for the various mood. This would be a great time to refer back to the two versions of the Mary Poppins trailer shown during the Engage stage to show what the inspiration for this process is.

This portion of the process should take a good deal of a class period, but allow enough time at the end of class for student pairs to share and dramatically read their rewritten passages. After pairs have read, let other students guess what the new mood and tone of the passage is. As additional practice or as additional formative assessments, there are blank spaces provided where students can rewrite additional passages.

Extend

As an extension activity, open the option to students to film their rewritten passages. Students can use any video recording available (phone recording is often available and students are comfortable with the process). This would be a good option for students who would like to explore their rewritten passage on a deeper level, or it could be used as an extra credit opportunity.

For this extension activity, students will use the original and rewritten passages as scripts, then act out the scenes by either speaking or providing a narrative voiceover. Since these will be played for the class (ideally), students should also set their recordings to appropriate music and incorporate actions and facial expressions appropriate to both the original and the new mood and tone of the text.

To guide students as they work on their films, let them know they may refer back to the movie trailers shown at the beginning of the lesson if needed.

Evaluate

Use the Mood and Tone at Owl Creek handout as an assessment tool by collecting exit tickets and assessing the responses on the handout. You may collect these responses periodically or at the end of the full lesson.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). CommonLit. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/2170
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-Pair-Share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- Moviemker. (2006, October 9). The original scary 'Mary Poppins' recut trailer [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T5_0AGdFic
- The World of Trailers. (2010, March 9). Mary Poppins (1964): Trailer HQ [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOfH7uEojKk