

5 Style: the choices that carry an attitude – Part 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English

Write it 3 times (English)

Diction

Syntax

Tone

Recall

- You have noticed that a short sentence lands harder than a long one.
- You know two words can mean the same thing and feel different.
- You have read something polite that was clearly angry.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 Diction

Diction is word choice. Words with the same denotation can carry opposite attitudes, and the choice is where a writer's position often shows before it is stated.

Worked example. "Thrifty" and "stingy" describe the same behaviour and judge it oppositely.

■ 2 Syntax

Syntax is sentence construction. A long sentence accumulates; a short one stops. Placing the important idea last gives it weight; burying it in a subordinate clause takes weight away.

Worked example. “Although the plan failed, the costs were recovered” weights the recovery; reversing the clauses weights the failure.

■ 3 Tone

Tone is the attitude conveyed toward the subject or audience. It is produced by diction and syntax together, not chosen separately from them.

Worked example. A writer who calls a proposal “ambitious” and uses short flat sentences conveys scepticism without stating it.

Watch out: Naming a device earns nothing. “The writer uses diction” is true of every text ever written; what matters is which words, and what they do.

Practice

2.1 Define diction and syntax. [2]

2.2 “Thrifty” and “stingy” describe the same behaviour. Explain what the choice reveals. [2]

2.3 State what placing an idea in a subordinate clause does to it. [2]

2.4 Define tone and state what produces it. [2]

2.5 Explain why “the writer uses diction” earns nothing. [2]
