

8 Tone and the audience it assumes

– Part 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English

Write it 3 times (English)

Irony

Recall

- You have read something that assumed you already agreed.
- You know sarcasm can persuade one reader and lose another.
- You have noticed a writer being careful not to sound angry.

New ideas

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

■ 1 Tone reveals the assumed audience

A text's tone tells you who the writer thinks they are speaking to. Contempt for opponents assumes an audience that shares it; patient explanation assumes one that does not yet agree.

Worked example. An article that mocks the other side is written for people already on this side.

■ 2 Irony

Irony says one thing and means another, relying on the audience to see the gap. It is efficient with a knowing audience and completely fails with an audience that takes it literally.

Worked example. "A brilliant plan, if the goal was to empty the town" depends on the reader seeing that no praise is intended.

■ 3 Adjusting tone

Tone should be chosen from the rhetorical situation, not from how the writer feels. A justified anger expressed as anger may lose exactly the readers who could be persuaded.

Worked example. The same complaint written coldly and factually reaches an official who would dismiss an angry letter.

Watch out: Irony is a risk, not a decoration. If any part of the intended audience might take it literally, it does the opposite of what was meant.

Practice

2.1 State what a text's tone reveals about its audience. [2]

2.2 Define irony. [1]

2.3 Explain why irony fails with some audiences. [2]

2.4 State what tone should be chosen from. [2]

2.5 Explain why justified anger may be the wrong tone. [2]

2.6 State the risk of using irony. [1]
