

Adjectives that describe Tone - Part 1 - Vocab 5

Tone is the manner in which an author expresses his or her **attitude**; it is the intonation of voice which expresses meaning. Tone may shift from paragraph to paragraph, or even from line to line; it is the result of allusion, diction, figurative language, imagery, irony, motif, symbolism, syntax and style. A **speaker's tone** is evident to all, but understanding **written tone** is an entirely different matter. The reader must appreciate word choice, details, imagery, and language to understand.

1. Threatening - having a hostile or deliberately frightening quality or manner - menacing, intimidating

"I shall throw you on a black ship and send you to the mainland, To King Echetos, destroyer of all mortal men, Who will cut off your nostrils and ears with a sharp bronze sword; He will tear off your private parts and give them to the dogs to eat raw." -*The Odyssey, Homer*

In this excerpt, one of Homer's characters makes dire threats against another. Admittedly, this isn't a terrifically difficult piece to analyze, but "threatening" fit so well that we had to include it. The key to classifying a tone as "threatening" is the possibility or promise of negative action against the subject. Our particular subject has achieved quite a severe set of consequences for himself and thus more than merits the designation.

2. Provocative - causing annoyance, anger, or another strong reaction, especially deliberately - stimulating, exciting

Freedom calls you! Quick, be ready -

Rouse ye in the name of God, -Onward, onward, strong and steady, -Dash to earth the oppressor's rod. Freedom calls, ye brave! Rise and spurn the name of slave. -*"Polish War Song," Percival*

"Freedom calls you!" Yes, freedom is calling, "in the name of God," and all shall rise. The exclamation marks and calls to action are forceful in this passage. The excitement is evident in the way the author wants all to "rise" and fight. It is extremely provocative in this sense, to "spurn the name of slave."

3. Persuasive - to move by argument, entreaty, or expostulation to a belief, position, or course of action - ritten to convince or win over

...there is no occupation concerned with the management of social affairs which belongs either to woman or to man, as such. Natural gifts are to be found here and there in both creatures alike; and every occupation is open to both, so far as their natures are concerned, though woman is for all purposes the weaker.

Certainly. Is that a reason for making over all occupations to men only? Of course not. No, because one woman may have a natural gift for medicine or for music, another may not. Surely. Is it not also true that a woman may, or may not, be warlike or athletic? I think so. ...So for the purpose of keeping watch over the commonwealth, woman has the same nature as man, save in so far as she is weaker. -*"Equality of Women" from The Republic of Plato*

In this passage, Plato argues for the equality of the women in the process of selection for governmental posts. His persuasive tone is evident in the nature of his composition; he writes a dialogue between the master and the student, in which the student is won over to and subsequently supports the master's point of view. Plato is making a point; he is arguing to an end; he is persuading his audience to share his personal opinion.

4. Sarcastic - marked by or given to using irony in order to mock or convey contempt - snide, mocking

You will send your child, will you, into a room where the table is loaded with sweet wine and fruit - some poisoned, some not? - you will say to him, "Choose freely, my little child! It is so good for you to have freedom of choice; it forms your character - your individuality! If you take the wrong cup or the wrong berry, you will die before the day is over, but you will have acquired the dignity of a Free child."

-*"Freedom," Ruskin*

Ruskin does not mean for us to go and send our children into rooms with poisoned fruits. He means exactly the opposite, and he is snidely mocking those who would encourage a child to make his own choices. Using the extreme example of a "table...loaded with sweet wine and fruit - some poisoned, some not," he is showing how the reasoning of letting children acquire "the dignity of a Free child" can go horribly askew. Meaning the opposite of what his literal words say, Ruskin has an extremely sarcastic approach to his subject.

5. Sardonic— derisively mocking or cynical - disdainfully or skeptically humorous

Once upon a time there was a lion that lived in Africa with all the other lions. The other lions were all bad lions and every day they ate zebras and wildebeests and every kind of antelope. Sometimes the bad lions ate people too. They ate Swahilis, Umbulus and Wandorobos and they especially liked to eat Hindu traders.

But this lion, that we love because he was so good, had wings on his back. Because he had wings on his back the other lions all made fun of him.

-“The Good Lion,” Hemingway

Although known for simplicity, in this passage Hemingway uses simple words such as “good” and “bad” very obviously. Taken literally, these words are like a children’s book, yet in reality they carry more meaning. The “bad lions” eat zebras and Hindu traders, but our lion would never stoop so low. No, he has “wings on his back” – quite literally – and he is a good lion. But he is so good that one simply has to believe he is not as good as he seems. Our “good lion” is being mocked, in a sardonic tone, for he is “so good.”

6. Satiric – a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn, trenchant wit, irony, or sarcasm used to expose and discredit vice or folly - satirizing, ironic, mocking, farcical -

At the house of sticks, the wolf again banged on the door and shouted, “Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!” The pigs shouted back, “Go to hell, you carnivorous, imperialistic oppressor!” At this, the wolf chuckled condescendingly. He thought to himself: “They are so childlike in their ways. It will be a shame to see them go, but progress cannot be stopped.” So the wolf huffed and puffed and blew down the house of sticks. The pigs ran to the house of bricks, with the wolf close at their heels. Where the house of sticks had stood, other wolves built a time-share condo resort complex for vacationing wolves, with a fiberglass reconstruction of the house of sticks, as well as native curio shops, snorkeling, and dolphin shows. At the house of bricks, the wolf again banged on the door and shouted, “Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!” This time in response, the pigs sang songs of solidarity and wrote letters of protest to the United Nations. By now the wolf was getting angry at the pigs refusal to see the situation from the carnivore’s point of view. So he huffed and he puffed, and huffed and puffed, then grabbed his chest and fell over dead from a massive heart attack brought on from eating too many fatty foods. -“The Three Little Pigs,” Politically Correct Bedtime Stories, James Finn Garner

In this passage, Garner satirizes both the political correctness of the era and the American development of third-world countries while parodying a classic children’s tale. This story helps us to realize how flawed some practices of our society are; when humor makes us consider such things, we call it satire.

7. Disdainful— showing contempt or lack of respect - arrogant, lordly, superior, unsympathetic

You can dislocate your jaw and wrench your wrists out of joint and they still have not understood you, nor will they ever understand. They often grimace, then flash the whites of their eyes and foam at the mouth, but they don’t actually mean anything by it; it’s not even a threat, they just do it because that’s their nature. They take whatever it is they need. You can’t say that they employ force; when they grab at something, you simply stand aside and leave them to it.

-“An Old Leaf,” Kafka

“Nor will they ever understand.” The narrator has given up all hope at communication with these people. He is superior to them, he will not even fight them, “simply stand aside.” Simply put, it’s “their nature,” so it seems they can’t help their behavior, and the narrator is left to look down upon these people and give up on talking to them. The message the narrator conveys is that this not worthwhile anymore, and his tone amounts to great disdain.

8. Condescending – having or showing a feeling of patronizing superiority - arrogant

So all of a sudden, I sort of leaned over and said, “would any of you girls care to dance?” I didn’t ask them crudely or anything. Very suave, in fact. But damn it, they thought that was a panic, too. They started giggling some more. I’m not kidding, they were three real morons.

-Catching in the Rye, Salinger

The key element of condescension is the feeling that one is above one’s surroundings or fellows. In this passage, Holden contrasts his “suavity” with the girls’ stupidity. He thinks he is better than they are, and maybe he is; but “would any of you girls care to dance?” is an affected mannerism, especially for Holden. He is trying to make himself more than he is, and failing in some measure.

9. Horrific – to shock and fill with distaste - appalling, shocking, gruesome

Out a way, rolling in the sea, was a Landing Craft Infantry, and as we came alongside of her I saw a ragged shell hole through the steel plates forward of her pilothouse where an 88-mm. German shell had punched through. Blood was dripping from the shiny edges of the hole into the sea with each roll of the LCI. Her rails and hull had been befouled by sea-sick men, and her dead were laid forward of her pilothouse.

-By-Line: Ernest Hemingway, Hemingway

Hemingway's tone is often difficult to discern, as he habitually writes with a very detached, journalistic style. This excerpt is actually from a newspaper article that he wrote about the invasion of Normandy. However, he lends more detail to his subject than a journalist should; he emphasizes the harshness of the scene, the gut-wrenching power of the experience. Blood does not drip from shiny, ragged steel edges purely to convey fact. Hemingway expects to horrify you, to make you think, "Dear God," and pause a moment over your morning coffee, to realize for a moment the brutality and the ugliness of war.

10. Bantering — to speak to or address in a witty and teasing manner - teasing, joking

You never found out why these men spend so much time shaking hands [in beer commercials]. Maybe shaking hands is just their simple straightforward burly masculine American patriotic way of saying to each other: "Floyd, I am truly sorry I drank all that beer last night and went to the bathroom in your glove compartment."

-Dave Barry's Greatest Hits, Barry

Dave Barry is famous for his humorous, bantering style. He speaks straight to the reader in a bold second-person style — "You never found out..." and talks to us as if we are good friends of his. A long string of adjectives describing the way these men talk as "simple straightforward burly..." adds to the casual style; this is not formal to use six adjectives in a row. Barry in a whole writes as if he's telling a joke to a good friend.

11. Amused — a playful nature, pleasantly entertained

Henri the painter was not French and his name was not Henri. Henri had so steeped himself in stories of the Left Bank in Paris that he lived there although he had never been there. Feverishly he followed in periodicals the Dadaist movements and schisms, the strangely feminine jealousies and religiousness, the obscurantisms of the forming and breaking schools. Regularly he revolted against outworn techniques and materials. One season he threw out perspective. Another year he abandoned red, even as the mother of purple. Finally he gave up paint entirely. It was not known whether Henri was a good painter or not for he threw himself so violently into movements that he had little time left for painting of any kind.

-Cannery Row, Steinbeck

Henri amuses the author of this passage. "He lived there although he had never been there." Simply the way Henri hurls himself into these movements Steinbeck laughs at — he finds Henri's eagerness highly entertaining. Throwing himself "violently" into movements, Henri follows each idea that comes his way, eventually giving up paint entirely. This is silly, and Steinbeck sees this, conveying the humor to us.

12. Mock-heroic – imitating the style of heroic literature in order to satirize an unheroic subject - ridiculing a "hero" [Don Quixote has just liberated a group of dangerous criminals]

"That is all very well," answered Don Quixote, "but I know what we should do now." Then he called all the galley slaves, who were now running hither and thither in a riotous mood and had stripped the commissary to the skin, and when they had gathered around him in a circle, he addressed them as follows: "It is the duty of well-bred people to be grateful for benefits received, and ingratitude is one of the most hateful sins in the eyes of God. I say this sirs, because you know what favor you have received from me, and the only return I wish and demand is that you all go from here, laden with the chains from which I have just freed your necks, to the city of El Toboso. There you are to present yourselves before Lady Dulcinea of El Toboso and tell her that her Knight of the Rueful Figure sent you there to commend his service to her. You are to tell her, point by point, the details of this famous adventure, and when you have done this, you may then go whichever way you please and good luck be with you."

-Don Quixote, Cervantes - Don Quixote's actions are suitable preposterous in this passage to make very little analysis necessary. He suggests that the convicts should present themselves to Lady Dulcinea in the name of the "Knight of the Rueful Figure;" he expects others to share his misplaced idealism; in short, he is clearly demented. What he would label heroism Cervantes calls folly; the tone is therefore mock-heroic.

13. Elegiac – lamenting, poignant - mournful, sorrowful, melancholy

Six Delaware girls, with their long, dark, flowing tresses falling loosely across their bosoms, stood apart, and only gave proofs of their existence as they occasionally strewed sweet-scented herbs and forest flowers on a litter of fragrant plants, that, under a pall of Indian robes, supported all that now remained of the ardent, high-souled, and generous Cora. Her form was concealed in many wrappers of the same simple manufacture, and her face was shut forever from the gaze of men.

-Last of the Mohicans, James Fenimore Cooper

Cooper's diction clearly indicates his elegiac tone. He calls Cora "ardent, high-souled, and generous;" such praise is typical of an elegy. In addition, his words convey a sense of regret, of loss – again, typical of elegiac writing. This passage is a remembrance and a farewell, a last praise and a poignant song of mourning.

14. Disappointed — sad or displeased because someone or something has failed to fulfill one's hopes or expectations - deceived, crestfallen, let down

But I felt after the novelty had worn off the Americans didn't really understand our music or our culture. Coming from a country where having central heating was considered posh and a refrigerator a luxury, Americans seemed to me to be strangely spoiled and 'old-fashioned.' They seemed to be lost in the forties and fifties. I expected to find Americans more forward and progressive but I was surprised to find many very set in their ways, just like their English counterparts.

-Kink, Davies

Ray Davies was hoping for magic in America, yet he found "strangely spoiled" people who were "old-fashioned." What he expected — "forward and progressive" — Davies did not find; the experience of America ended up extremely disillusioning. The depressingness of finding these people "just like their English counterparts" made him extremely let down, and the disappointed tone shows it.

15. Somber – dark or dull in color or tone; gloomy - bleak, depressing, dismal

No crowd of serfs ran out onto the steps to meet the masters; a little girl of twelve years made her appearance alone. After her there came out of the house a young lad, very like Piotr, dressed in a coat of gray livery, with white armorial buttons, the servant of Pavel Petrovitch Kirsanov. Without speaking, he opened the door of the carriage, and unbuttoned the apron of the coach. Nikolai Petrovitch, with his son and Bazarov, walked through a dark and empty hall...

-Fathers and Sons, Turgenev

Turgenev's tone in this piece can be determined by examining the detail he provides. He emphasizes the absence of people; first noting that no "crowd of serfs" appeared, and later notes that Petrovitch, his son, and Bazarov walked through a "dark and empty hall." Next, observe the silence; no one speaks, and no noise is mentioned. Finally, note the use of color and light – gray, white, and dark. Turgenev's paints a bleak, silent picture for us to observe – specifically, a bleak, silent, "somber" picture.

Adjectives that describe Tone - Part 2 - Vocab 6

Tone is the manner in which an author expresses his or her **attitude**; it is the intonation of voice which expresses meaning. Tone may shift from paragraph to paragraph, or even from line to line; it is the result of allusion, diction, figurative language, imagery, irony, motif, symbolism, syntax and style. A **speaker's tone** is evident to all, but understanding **written tone** is an entirely different matter. The reader must appreciate word choice, details, imagery, and language to understand.

1. Ominous – giving the impression that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen - foreboding, dire, inauspicious

He still thought it had all been set up too fast. Clemenza had given him copies of the police mug shots of the two punks, the dope on where the punks went drinking every night to pick up bar girls. Paulie had recruited two of the strong-arms in the family and fingered the punks for them. He had also given them their instructions. No blows on the top or the back of the head, there was to be no accidental fatality. Other than that they could go as far as they liked.

-The Godfather, Mario Puzo

The first sentence of this paragraph is ominous in the extreme. It expresses misgivings about an illegal venture; consequences could be severe if done improperly. In addition, the mention of “accidental fatality” indicates that this is a serious matter. This paragraph is written to convey to the reader the idea that something may go wrong.

2. Urgent – requiring immediate action or attention - earnest and persistent in response to a pressing situation - imperative, critical, intensely necessary

“I must see the Lieutenant-Colonel,” Gomez said.

“He is asleep,” the officer said. “I could see the lights of that bicycle of thine for a mile coming down the road. Dost wish to bring on a shelling?” “Call the Lieutenant-Colonel,” Gomez said. “this is a matter of the utmost gravity.”

“He is asleep, I tell thee,” the officer said. “What sort of a bandit is that with thee?” he nodded toward Andrés. “He is a guerillero from the other side of the lines with a dispatch of the utmost importance for the General Golz who commands the attack that is to be made at dawn beyond Navacerrada,” Gomez said excitedly and earnestly. “Rouse the Teniente-Coronel for the love of God.”

The officer looked at him with his droopy eyes shaded by the green celluloid. “All of you are crazy,” he said. “I know of no General Golz nor of no attack. Take this sportsman and get back to your battalion.”

“Rouse the Teniente-Coronel, I say,” Gomez said and Andrés saw his mouth tightening. “Go obscenity yourself,” the officer said to him lazily and turned away. Gomez took his heavy 9 mm. Star pistol out of its holster and shoved it against the officer’s shoulder. “Rouse him, you fascist bastard,” he said. “Rouse him or I’ll kill you.”

-For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway

In this excerpt, Hemingway uses terse, strained dialog to communicate urgency. Small details – the tightening of Gomez’ mouth, for example – show us the tension inherent in this confrontation. This is an incredibly intense passage, and the dialog ripples with the force of the conflict. Hemingway uses the urgency in this piece to draw the reader in, to produce a gut-level emotional reaction that exemplifies his work.

3. Apprehensive – anxious or fearful that something bad will happen - uneasy, worried

Time passed.

Susan waited.

The more Susan waited, the more the doorbell didn’t ring. Or the phone. She looked at her watch. She felt that now was about the time that she could legitimately begin to feel cross. She was cross already, of course, but that had been in her own time, so to speak. They were well and truly into his time now, and even allowing for traffic, mishaps, and general vagueness and dilatoriness, it was now well over half an hour past the time that he had insisted was the latest time they could possibly afford to leave, so she’d better be ready.

-Dirk Gently’s Holistic Detective Agency, Douglas Adams

Douglas' tone in this piece is reflected by his syntax. He begins with short, choppy sentences, like the ticking of a clock. He continues to use medium/short sentences and then concludes the paragraph in a long, rushing sentence emphasizing the wrongness of the situation. One immediately gets the feeling that something has gone very wrong.

4. Audacious — showing a willingness to take a surprising risk or showing an impudent lack of respect - daring, bold, insolent

...he tells them right back in a loud, brassy voice that he's already plenty damn clean, thank you.

"They showered me this morning at the courthouse and last night at the jail. And I swear I believe they'd of washed my ears for me on the taxi over if they coulda found the vacilities. Hoo boy, seems like every time they ship me someplace I gotta get scrubbed down before, after, and during the operation...and get back away from me with that thermometer, Sam."

-One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest, Kesey

The speaker — McMurphy — is blatantly insolent in this quote. The people in charge are simple trying to take his temperature and give him a shower, yet he tells them to "get back away from me." He is speaking in a "brassy" voice; this clues the reader into his boldness immediately. Emphasis ("I swear...") in his speech patterns also forms this audacious tone.

5. Intimate — closely acquainted or familiar - affectionate, devoted, fond

"Afterwards we will be as one animal of the forest and be so close that neither one can tell that one of us is one and not the other. Can you not feel my heart be your heart?"

-For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway

"My heart be your heart..." this excerpt is intimate, as these two people involved are extremely devoted to each other. Little is needed to explain the blatantly intimate tone in this short passage.

6. Whimsical — playfully quaint or fanciful, especially in an appealing or amusing way - capricious, fantastic, droll, playful

They stood so still that she quite forgot they were alive, and she was just going round to see if 'TWEEDLE' was written at the back of each collar, when she was startled by a voice coming from the one marked 'DUM.'

"If you think we're wax-works," he said, "you ought to pay, you know. Wax-works weren't made to be looked at for nothing."

-Through the Looking-Glass, Carroll

"She quite forgot they were alive," pertains to Alice as she looks at the wax-like characters of Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee. This is a fantastic world of humor. These characters carry their name on their stomachs, and spout out absurd lines in absolute seriousness. Whimsy is ever-present in the world through the looking-glass, and shines in Lewis Carroll's tone.

7. Reflective — relating or characterized by deep thought and reflection - contemplative, meditative, introspective

"There were always children there, and I spent all my time with the children, only with the children. They were the children of the village where I lived, a whole gang of them, who went to the local school...I was simply with them mostly, and I spent all my four years like that. I did not want anything else."

-The Idiot, Dostoevsky

The character speaking in this quote, Myshkin, is missing his European home. "I did not want anything else," he says of the children's company in this town. He was "simply with them mostly," and longs for this simplicity, spending all his time with children. In retrospect, he sees how much he misses this past life, and this contemplation gives Myshkin a decidedly reflective tone.

8. Regretful— feeling sad, repentant, or disappointed over something that has happened or been done - remorseful, contrite, apologetic, sorry

*Just when I'd stopped opening doors,
Finally knowing the one that I wanted was yours,
Making my entrance again with my usual flair,
Sure of my lines, No one is there.
Don't you love farce? My fault, I fear.
I thought that you'd want what I want.
Sorry, my dear. But where are the clowns?
Quick, send in the clowns.
Don't bother, they're here. –
"Send in the Clowns," Sonheim*

“Sorry, my dear,” is spoken in this song excerpt. They were “finally knowing” what they wanted, and could not achieve it. “No one is there.” It is a song about trying too late, and missed chances. “Where are the clowns?” the author asks; where is the frivolity lacking in this melancholy life. The speaker is very sorrowful, as they say “I thought you’d want what I want.” This conveys their tone of great regret.

9. Remorseful – feeling regret or guilt for a wrong committed - regretful, penitent, contrite, rueful

*“I am not made,” I cried energetically, “the sun and the heavens, who have viewed my operations, can bear witness of my truth. I am the assassin of those most innocent victims; they died by my machinations. A thousand times would I have shed my own blood, drop by drop, to have saved their lives; but I could not, my father, indeed I could not sacrifice the whole human race.”
-Frankenstein, Mary Shelley*

In this passage, Dr. Frankenstein is remorseful to the point of self-loathing. Note the use of the words “assassin” and “machinations.” He paints a picture of himself as a wretched, vile creature, who would yet die “a thousand times” to save the innocents he destroyed. He bathes in remorse.

10. Factual– concerned with what is actually the case rather than interpretations or reactions to it - certain, absolute, irrefutable, unbiased

*The kind of nuclear reaction that happens inside a nuclear reactor is called nuclear fission. The fuel is uranium or plutonium, two very heavy elements which have many protons and neutrons in their nuclei. Fission starts when a fast-moving neutron strikes a nucleus. The nucleus cannot take in the extra neutron, and the whole nucleus breaks apart into two smaller nuclei.
-The Way Things Work, David Macaulay*

A factual tone is often more apparent from lack of opinion than presence of any particular type of diction or syntax. If the purpose of the passage is solely to convey information, the tone is factual. In this case, Macaulay explains the facts very simply and in a straightforward manner, without the pontificating that would cause us to label this excerpt “scholarly” or “pedantic.”

11. Detached – disconnected or aloof; impartial and objective

*He had not a minute more to lose. He pulled the axe quite out, swung it with both arms, scarcely conscious of himself, and almost without effort, almost mechanically, brought the blunt side down on her head. He seemed not to use his own strength in this. But as soon as he had once brought the axe down, his strength returned to him.
-Crime And Punishment, Dostoyevsky*

Dostoyevsky does not care that his character is axe-murdering anybody in this passage. The subject (Raskolnikov) himself is acting “without effort...mechanically.” Dostoyevsky expresses no concern or opinion over the “scarcely conscious” killing of an old lady. The detachment, within the character himself and towards him by the author, is evident.

12. Simpering – to act affectedly ingratiating; overly happy, gushy

*The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings. –
(Happy Thought, Robert Louis Stevenson)*

This poem is mindlessly, unreasoningly happy. There are many things in the world; for this we should be happy? When an author gushes happiness without cause or thought, we call him simpering.

13. Reverent – venerating, worshipping

*God is love; his mercy brightens All the path in which we rove;
Bliss he wakes and woe he lightens;
God is wisdom, God is love.
(“God is love,” Bowring)*

Bowring’s great respect for God emanates from this poetic verse. “His mercy brightens/All the path;” Bowring’s details are simplistic in their veneration of God. As he concludes the stanza with “God is love,” the reverent tone is sealed.

14. Pedantic – emphasizing minutiae in a presentation of knowledge in order to gain approval or superiority - scholarly, making a show of knowledge

*“My attention was speedily drawn, as I have already remarked to you, to this ventilator, and to the bell-rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that this was a dummy, and that the bed was clamped to the floor, instantly gave rise to the suspicion that the rope was there as a bridge for something passing through the hole, and coming to the bed. The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training.”
-The Adventure of the Speckled Band, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

Sherlock Holmes exemplifies the pedantic personality. Smoking a pipe, striding about the room, expounding on his latest brilliant discovery – Sherlock should come to mind almost immediately when one considers the term “pedantic.” In this passage, he reveals to Dr. Watson his careful unraveling of a complicated mystery. Moreover, he strategically augments his topic to reveal his vast knowledge of diverse subjects and his incredible powers of reason.

15. Sympathetic — expressing sympathy - compassionate, sensitive.

*The hunger artist sometimes remarked to himself that perhaps things might look a little brighter if he were not located quite so near the stables...But he did not dare complain to the management; after all he had the animals to thank for the numerous visitors who did pass his cage, among whom there always might be the one who was there just to see him, and lord knew where they might tuck him away if he called attention to his existence and thereby to the fact that, strictly speaking, he was no more than an obstacle in the path to the animals.
-“A Hunger Artist,” Kafka*

Kafka pities the hunger artist. “Numerous visitors...pass his cage.” The hunger artist is an “obstacle”, to be tucked away. This is sad, and Kafka shows us the hunger artist’s point of view through his sympathy for the man. Things “might look a little brighter,” always hopeful and optimistic even as the world looks bleaker. Although the people passing by neglect this old man, Kafka has great sympathy for him and his feeling of nonexistence.