A What are Style and Tone?

The following definitions are taken from the Viewfinder Reference Library, which can be downloaded for free from this URL:

http://www.langenscheidt-unterrichtsportal.de/viewfinder_reference_library_1740.html

(Please copy and paste this hyperlink into your browser.)

Style

The term style has a variety of different meanings but in general one can say that it refers to the kind of language the author employs. In order to analyze the style of a text, look at the following aspects:

- **Register:** Is the language formal, familiar, colloquial (the style of everyday speech) or neutral? For example, does the author refer to a character as “gentleman”, “man” or “guy”?
- **Syntax:** What is the sentence structure like? Are simple sentences or complex sentences (with main clauses and sub-clauses) used? Does the author use predominantly active or passive sentences? To what effect? To suggest objectivity or neutrality perhaps?
- **Rhetorical Devices:** See special worksheet “Rhetorical Devices”.

**Vocabulary: Style and Tone**

**Tone**

*Tone* refers to the apparent attitude of an author, poet, narrator or character towards the information or message that he/she is conveying to the reader. Typical tones are: ironic, serious, humorous, witty, pompous or sentimental. The tone of a work is sometimes difficult to detect, but can usually be discovered by looking at the language the author uses and the rhetorical devices that he/she employs. Particularly hyperbole, understatement and irony are important in this connection.

**B Tasks**

1. Sum up the content of the excerpt from Richard Nixon’s second Inaugural Address (20 January 1973).
2. Analyze the style and tone of this excerpt.

*(Peter Ringeisen)*