

7 Worksheet on Vocabulary: Style and Tone

Text: “The ‘American Dream’ in Political Rhetoric”, from: Peter Freese, *The American Dream*, Viewfinder Topics (München: Langenscheidt, 2011), pp.

A WHAT ARE STYLE AND TONE?



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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”?
- **Diction:** What kind of words are used? Are they taken from any particular word field – e.g. religion (like ‘sermon’, ‘awe’, ‘devotion’, ‘pious’) or business (like ‘credit’, ‘investment’, ‘deal’, ‘contract’, ‘firm’, ‘partner’, ‘profit’)? Does the author use a lot of descriptive adjectives and adverbs (like ‘sweet’, ‘glowing’, ‘humid’, ‘tightly’, ‘shyly’) or verbs of motion (like ‘jump’, ‘hobble’, ‘hop’, ‘rush’)?
- **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”.

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)