



English II: Reading: Module 4: Lesson 2: Section 5

Evaluate Tone in Various Media for Different Audiences and Purposes

Formality, Tone, Purpose, and Audience

Instructions: In this lesson, you have seen several different types of literature that vary in formality, tone, purpose, and audience. Read the following excerpts and write down the words that best express what you think the **level of formality**, **tone**, **purpose**, and **audience** are for each passage. When you are finished, mouse over the checkbox to see sample responses.

This passage is by John Steinbeck from a letter to a friend, Elizabeth Otis. It shows how Steinbeck felt about the social and economic situation of the country at the time.

From “A Letter to Elizabeth Otis” (1938), in *Conversations with John Steinbeck* (edited by Thomas Fensch, 1988)

“I must go over into the interior valleys. . . . There are five thousand families starving to death over there, not just hungry but actually starving. The government is trying to feed them and get medical attention to them, with the Fascist group of utilities and banks and huge growers sabotaging the thing all along the line, and yelling for a balanced budget. In one tent there were twenty people quarantined for small pox and two of the women are to have babies in that tent this week. I’ve tied into the thing from the first and I must get down there and see it and see if I can’t do something to knock these murderers on the heads.”

Do you know what they’re afraid of? They think that if these people are allowed to live in camps with proper sanitary facilities they will organize, and that is the bugbear of the large landowner and the corporate farmer. The states and counties will give them nothing because they are outsiders. But the crops of any part of this state could not be harvested without them. . . . The death of children by starvation in our valleys is simply staggering. . . . I’ll do what I can. . . . Funny how mean and little books become in the face of such tragedies.”

Steinbeck’s tone:

Level of Formality:

Purpose:

Audience:



This article is from a 1934 newspaper editorial article concerning the death of the well-known gangsters Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. The story of Bonnie and Clyde typified how people romanticized the lives of dangerous people and their exploits.

Editorial, “The Trail’s End: Thursday, May 24, 1934,” *The Dallas Dispatch*

The tale is ended. The story is told.

The sordid and blood-flecked romance of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker is finished by the bullets of an ambushed posse.

The prophecy that was penned by Bonnie as finis to her limping ballad on the life of the notorious pair comes true—

Some day they will go down together,
And they will bury them side by side,
To a few it means grief,
To the law it’s relief,
But it’s death to Bonnie and Clyde.

To the law it’s relief to know that the couple which has been responsible for the most daring depredations, the most heartless murders in the southwest will roam recklessly no more.

To a public which has come to fear their presence in any neighborhood, their death is a relief.

Long ago, Clyde and Bonnie abandoned and forfeited the hope of facing a court, of trading surrender for life in confinement. A price was on their heads, and officers knew that the one way to take them without further shedding of blood of the law’s representatives was to shoot them down. “Shoot first!” was the order.

Just a few years ago, Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker were West Dallas kids. Bad environment, bad company, petty thieving on Barrow’s part, a strange infatuation for him on the part of Bonnie, and they were on their way to their dizzy career of slaughter and robbery, of perpetual hide-and-seek with the law.

If the career of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker is of any use at all, it is as a warning to other youth who are beginning to flaunt the rights of society, to live by preying upon others.

There is not romance in living a hand-to-mouth existence, always ago in a dirty car, always hiding, fearing to stop among decent people, fearing to sleep for fear of awakening in manacles. There is not joy in such an existence. And there is no glory in dying, body riddled by the bullets of society’s protectors and avengers.

To the sheriff’s men who ended this bloody chapter of southwestern history goes all the acclaim that attends the final battle of Bonnie and Clyde.

The one lesson in their sorry lives is that crime doesn’t pay.



Author's tone:

Level of Formality:

Purpose:

Audience: