**Tone**

1. Microphone feedback kept blaring out the speaker's words, but I got the outline. Withdrawal of our troops from Vietnam. Recognition of Cuba. Immediate commutation of student loans. Until all these demands were met, the speaker said he considered himself in a state of unconditional war with the United States government.

I laughed out loud.

--Tobias Wolff, "Civilian"

1. What is the attitude of the narrator toward the political speaker in this passage? How do you know?
2. How does the use of a short, direct sentence at the end of the passage (*I laughed out loud*) contribute to the tone?

Task: Substitute a new sentence for *I laughed out loud*. Your new sentence should express support for the political speaker. Read the passage -- with your new sentence -- to a partner and explain how your sentence changes the tone of the passage.

1. I perceived, as I read, how the collective white man had been actually nothing but a piratical opportunist who used Faustian machinations to make his own Christianity his initial wedge in criminal conquests. First, always "religiously," he branded "heathen" and "pagan" labels upon ancient non-white cultures and civilizations. The stage thus set, he then turned upon his non-white victims his weapons of war.

--Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

* 1. What is the author's attitude toward *the collective white man*?
  2. What is the tone of the passage? Circle and discuss the words that reveal the tone of this passage.

Task: Rewrite the first sentence of the Malcolm X passage to read like positive propaganda for "the collective white man". Your sentence should have the same basic meaning as Malcolm X's sentence, but the tone should be positive and noncritical.

1. There is no drop of water in the ocean, not even in the deepest parts of the abyss, that does not know and respond to the mysterious forces that create the tide. No other force that affects the sea is so strong. Compared with the tide the wind-created waves are surface movements felt, at most, no more than hundred fathoms below the surface.

--Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us*

* 1. What is Carson's attitude toward the tide?
  2. Carson uses negative constructions several times in this paragraph ("There is **no**…, **not** even in the…, that does **not** know…**N**o other force…"). Yet her tone is uniformly positive and reverential. How does the use of negatives create such a positive tone?

Task: Rewrite the first sentence of the passage, changing all the negative constructions to positive ones. What effect does it have on the tone?

1. JACK (slowly and hesitantly): Gwendolen -- Cecily -- it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

--Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

* 1. What is Wilde's attitude toward Jack? What specific diction and detail reveal this attitude?
  2. What is Wilde's attitude toward the reader? How do you know?

Task: Rewrite Jack's lines to reflect the attitude that lying is terribly wrong. Adopt a disdainful attitude toward your audience and a scornful attitude toward Jack.