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Stop! Before you read on, have you completed the Author's Tone Worksheet 1, first? If not, go back, answer the questions and then head back here and find out what you've gotten right and what you may have missed. If you're curious about what author's tone really is and wondering how to figure it out, here are three of the tricks you can use to determine the author's tone when you don't have a clue. Feel free to use these free printable pdf files for your own educational use, too: Author's Tone Worksheet 1 | Author's Tone Worksheet 1 Answer Key 1. What does the author most likely want to convey through the use of the phrase "ready consent to terms and a couple of coins flung upon the table"? A. The stranger's lack of manners and thoughtfulness. B. The stranger's desire to quickly get to his room. C. The stranger's greediness in bartering. D. The stranger's discomfort. The correct answer is B. The stranger is desperate for warmth. We know that because he's covered in snow and asks for human charity, which we can only assume is because he's cold. So even though we know he is uncomfortable, the correct answer is NOT D. The author uses the words "ready consent," which means "eager or quickly willing" consent and coins "flung" upon the table to indicate a hurried pace. Yes, we know it's because he's uncomfortable, but the phrases indicate speed. 2. The author's attitude toward mothers trying to arrange marriages for their daughters could best be described as: A. accepting of the notion B. irritated with the notion C. astonished by the notion D. amused by the notion The correct answer is D. Even if we read nothing beyond the first line, we'd get the sense that the author was slightly amused by the subject matter. The author further makes the scene amusing by pitting a complacent husband against his busybody wife. Austen depicts the mother as meddling, gossiping, and impatient. If Austen were irritated by the idea, she'd make the mother more unlikable. If she were astonished by the idea, then she'd make the husband act aghast when Mrs. Bennet brings it up. If she were accepting of the idea, then she probably wouldn't have written about it in a witty way. Hence, Choice D is the best bet. 3. What tone is the author most likely trying to convey with the sentence, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." A. satiric B. scornful C. reproachful D. weary The correct answer is A. This speaks to the tone of the excerpt as a whole. She's sarcastic about society's notion of marrying young women off to wealthy men. Her overreaching statement, "a truth universally acknowledged" is an example of hyperbole, which is an exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally." And although she may personally be reproachful or scornful of the idea, her tone does not convey it in this satire. 4. Which of the following choices provides the best answer to the author's final question posed in the text, while maintaining the tone of the article? A. It could be that I'd fallen into a nightmare without knowing it. B. It had to be the dreariness of the day. Nothing about the house itself was particularly depressing. C. The solution defied me. I couldn't get at the heart of my displeasure. D. It was a mystery I couldn't solve; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. The correct choice is D. Here, the answer must closely mirror the language in the text. The words used by Poe are complicated, as is his sentence structure. Choice B and D's sentence structure is too simple and Choice B's answer is incorrect based on the text. Choice A seems logical until you place it up against Choice D, which uses a complex structure and language similar to that already in the text. 5. Which emotion is the author most likely trying to rouse from his reader after reading this text? A. hatred B. terror C. apprehension D. depression The correct choice is C. Although the character feels depression upon viewing the house, Poe is trying to make the reader feel apprehension in the scene. What's going to come up? If he were trying to make the reader feel depressed, he would have spoken to something more personal. And he wasn't trying to terrify the reader in this scene, either. He would've used scarier content instead of relying on the dark, depressing words and phrases he does. And Choice A is completely off! Hence, Choice C is the best answer. In an intense workplace where everyone is "faking it 'til they make it," there's pressure to always have the right answer to any given question. I get it. I too love being right and having the most helpful advice for people. Maybe it's a carryover from school? Maybe it's a firstborn thing? Maybe it's simply being a hardcore people pleaser at heart?Whatever my reason and whatever yours, our quest to correctly answer every question can actually hold us back at work. You really don't know everything. It's hard to hear. I know, and I'm sorry, but it's true.You have to say, "I don't know" regularly, and here's why.Responding to questions under pressure or out of habit typically doesn't result in the most well thought-out answers. In the worst-case scenarios, a confidently-delivered wrong answer is dangerous and expensive. Most of the time, though, it's just a colossal waste of time. I love not wasting time even more than I love having the right answer. Most other people feel the same.By always having an answer, you inadvertently undermine your credibility. This is because everyone else knows you don't know everything, and you start to look silly by always giving a confident answer, even when it's obviously wrong. Your team would much rather you admit to not knowing something than fake it just for the sake of looking competent."But what if I actually do always know the answer to all the questions I'm asked at work?", you ask. If you really feel that you have the answer for every issue that comes up at work, then I'd argue you've stayed too long in your current role. If you've literally mastered every angle of the job, it's time to go. You're no longer challenging yourself. Move vertically to gain greater perspective and visibility, or move laterally to a different industry to up the challenge that way. Either strategy works to break out of stagnation.Instead of always providing an answer, I propose a simple strategy: Say "I don't know" when you don't know. Then, follow that statement with, "...and I'm going to find out" or "...I'll get back to you" or "...what do you think?"Now, this isn't an excuse not to prepare like crazy for questions you anticipate getting during your next big presentation. I recently saw an episode of Shark Tank where the contestant was turned down by Mark Cuban. During the question and answer portion after her pitch, she left no room for reflection or opening to take Cuban's advice. She came off as arrogant because she had an answer for everything. He clearly wasn't interested in working with someone like her--and, based on what I saw, I wouldn't be either.The alternative is to think about your knowledge and ability to answer questions in three tiers: basic, stretch, and growth.You absolutely should have the basic, foundational knowledge needed to fulfill the role you're paid to play. You should stretch yourself and seek answers to all the questions up and around the edges of your expertise, the questions that you're able to anticipate but don't yet know the answer to. And, you should intentionally put yourself in situations that will challenge your thinking by exposing you to questions you couldn't possibly expect. These are the most fascinating, growth-sparking questions you'll get. They're the most memorable. They stick with you and have the potential to change the course of your most important work.Seeking out the questions that will push you at work will not only make you grow as a person, it will also show your team that you're humble and willing to learn, two underrated but excellent qualities in a leader. Remember that saying "I don't know" every once in a while doesn't make you look incompetent--it will actually increase your team's trust that you're always giving the truest answer you can.If you liked this column, subscribe to email alerts in the Work Life Lab and you'll never miss a post.





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