Reading Comprehension: author's tone and attitude

A tone-and-attitude question asks how the author feels about the subject — not. . .

Lesson grev.rc.R6

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The idea

A tone-and-attitude question asks how the author feels about the subject — not what the passage says, but the stance behind the saying. Read for evaluative words and their intensity: does the author praise, endorse, admire, concede, doubt, deplore, or hold two feelings at once?

What does the AUTHOR feel about the subject — favorable, unfavorable, or mixed — and how strongly?

Fix the charge from the evaluative words, then fix the intensity. Keep the attitude anchored to the author's voice, not to a view the author only reports.

Watch every step

Enthusiasts promise that the newest productivity apps will finally free us from busywork. I have heard the promise before — from the day planner, the email filter, the to-do list that syncs across seven devices. Each tool does shave minutes from some task, and each invents new tasks of its own, chief among them the task of managing the tool. I do not doubt that the apps work as advertised. I doubt that working as advertised is the same as helping.

The author's attitude toward the productivity apps is best described as

- **A.** measured skepticism.
- **B.** scornful hostility. ✗ *too-strong*
- **C.** eager endorsement. ✗ *wrong-charge*
- **D.** nostalgic longing for older tools. ✗ *unsupported-mood*
- **E.** genuine admiration for the apps' cleverness. ✗ *mixes/misplaces-attitude*

Why **A** — "measured skepticism.." Choose the option whose charge AND strength match the author's own stance.

Now a harder one

Whatever else one says of the financier, he built institutions that outlasted him by a century. That the same institutions were financed by schemes he knew to be fraudulent is not a detail to be waved away, and his biographers do him no favors when they treat his ruthlessness as mere vigor. He was neither the villain his enemies drew nor the visionary his admirers embalm. He was something harder to file: a builder who could not build honestly.

The author's attitude toward the financier is best described as

A. unmitigated condemnation. ✗ *too-strong*

B. admiring vindication. ✗ *wrong-charge*

C. amused detachment. ✗ *unsupported-mood*

D. the reverence his admirers express. ✗ *mixes/misplaces-attitude*

✓ **E.** clear-eyed ambivalence that resists a single verdict.

Why E — "clear-eyed ambivalence that resists a single verdict.." Choose the option whose charge AND strength match the author's own stance.

The method, in one line

Reading Comprehension: author's tone and attitude

Fix the charge from the evaluative words, then fix the intensity. Keep the attitude anchored to the author's voice, not to a view the author only reports.

Is the charge right (not reversed)? Is the intensity matched (not inflated to contempt or celebration)? Is this the author's attitude, not a conceded or cited party's?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ wrong-charge

Reverses the polarity of the author's attitude — reads approval as disapproval or the reverse — ignoring the direction of the evaluative language.

⚠ too-strong

Gets the charge right but inflates the intensity beyond the measured text — turning mild reservation into contempt, or qualified approval into unreserved celebration.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through