

Answer Key: Tone, Diction & Rhetorical Devices

Course: English IV (Grades 9–12) **Subject:** English Language Arts & Reading **For teacher use only** RLA

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct reasoning and cites the passage, even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer is defensible and list common misconceptions to watch for. Paragraph numbers below refer to the bracketed markers [1]–[6] in the passage "The Long Shift." Estimated grading time: ~6–8 min per packet.

Start Predict & Warm Up grade for effort · ~2 min

1 Predict the writer's attitude from the title and first line.

The tone is clearly going to be **warm / admiring / tender / respectful**. Full credit for any prediction that names a positive, affectionate attitude and points to wording that signals it — "a map I read every summer" suggests something the writer treasured and studied closely; "without knowing it" hints at love that was so constant it went unnoticed. Reject only predictions of coldness or anger with no textual support.

2 Craft-term warm-up (match the term).

Choosing "weathered" instead of "old" → **B (diction)** — a specific word choice.

The overall feeling of quiet respect that runs through the writing → **A (tone)**.

"The kitchen smelled of scorched coffee and lemon soap." → **C (imagery)** — sensory language.

All three correct = full credit; grade for reasonable effort on this warm-up.

Build Read Closely ~1 min

3 Detail showing the steady, uncomplaining routine (paragraph [2]).

From **paragraph [2]**, accept any of: "She did not complain," "She did not sigh," "She hung her coat on the same nail," "set the kettle on the same burner," or "asked me, every single night, what I had learned that day." Any exact detail from [2] that conveys the calm, repeated routine earns full credit.

Apply Analyze the Craft ~3 min

4 Name the tone.

Accept any accurate label for a **warm, admiring, tender, reverent, grateful, respectful** attitude toward the grandmother. Also accept nuanced answers such as "loving but wistful" or "quietly reverent." Reject answers that name a *mood/feeling in the reader* ("sad," "nostalgic") without tying it to the writer's attitude — but use these as a teaching moment (see misconceptions: tone vs. mood).

5 Two diction examples that create the tone, with connotation.

Accept any two words/phrases whose connotation supports a warm/admiring tone, each with a correct paragraph and a reasonable feeling. Strong examples:

"**patient curve**" / "**permanent, patient**" (¶[1]) — connotes gentleness, endurance, devotion.

"**dignity**" (¶[4]) — connotes honor and self-respect.

"**steady**" / "**certain**" / "**warm and dry**" **hands** (¶[5]) — connote reliability and trust.

"**unhurried courage**" / "**richest thing I own**" (¶[6]) — connote deep admiration and value.

Full credit requires (a) a genuine word choice from the passage, (b) a correct paragraph, and (c) a feeling/connotation that actually matches the warm tone. Merely copying a neutral fact (e.g., "hospital laundry") without a connotation is partial credit.

6 Analyze one rhetorical device and its effect.

Accept a correct analysis of any **one** device with a quote, paragraph, and a real effect (not just a definition). Best examples:

Metaphor (¶[1], also [6]): the grandmother's hands as "a map I read every summer." Effect: it frames her as something the writer studied and treasured, turning her physical labor and aging into a text of love and history — deepening the reverent tone. The metaphor returns in [6] ("the map of her hands... I have learned it by heart"), giving the piece unity.

Imagery (¶[2]): "bleach and steam and... the faint sweetness of the peppermints." Effect: the sensory detail makes the grandmother vivid and physically present, and the tender peppermint detail warms the tone.

Parallelism (¶[6]): "the same nail, the same kettle, the same steady question." Effect: the repeated structure mirrors the steady, dependable routine it describes, reinforcing the tone of quiet, enduring devotion.

Key distinction: full credit requires *analyzing the effect*, not merely naming/locating the device (see misconceptions).

7 Track the shift in tone.

The first paragraphs **remember and describe** the grandmother in a tender, retrospective way; by **paragraph [6]** the tone shifts toward the **present, and toward resolve and inheritance** — grief ("She is gone now") gives way to gratitude and a quiet vow to carry on ("I set my own shoulders and go on"). Accept any answer that names a movement from *remembering* to *applying/resolving*, or from tender description to determined gratitude.

Signal words/phrases from [6]: "She is gone now," "But I find that I have learned it by heart," "I set my own shoulders and go on," "the richest thing I own." Any of these earns credit.

8 Which word choice best signals the tone?

8a — B. "the quiet, unhurried courage of the long shift, and it is the richest thing I own." The words *courage*, *quiet*, and *richest* directly name admiration and value, making the reverent tone explicit.

Why the others are weaker: **A** and **D** are largely *neutral/factual* (a schedule, a bill) and carry little attitude on their own; **C** shows the routine but its admiration is implied, not stated. **B** loads the most positive connotation.

8b: Accept any sentence explaining that B openly uses admiring, value-laden words ("courage," "richest"), while A, C, and D are more neutral or only imply the attitude.

Explain Close-Reading Response (Q9) ~2–3 min

9 Close-reading response — state tone/meaning, analyze diction + one device.

This is **craft analysis, not summary**. A strong response states the tone and defends it by examining **specific diction** and **one device**, explaining *how* each builds the tone. **Model response:**

"The tone of 'The Long Shift' is one of quiet, reverent admiration, and the passage suggests that the grandmother's uncomplaining labor was itself a gift the writer inherited. The writer's word choices build this tone: calling her curved hands 'permanent, patient' (¶[1]) and her bearing a 'dignity' (¶[4]) attaches feelings of endurance and honor rather than pity. The extended **metaphor** of her hands as 'a map I read every summer' (¶[1]) treats her aging, working body as something precious and worth studying, and when the map returns in ¶[6] — 'I

have learned it by heart' — it turns her example into a lasting inheritance. Together, the tender diction and the map metaphor create an attitude of grateful reverence, not sorrow."

Full credit for: (a) a clear **Claim** naming the tone (and gesturing at meaning), (b) **specific diction AND one device** as Evidence, each with a paragraph number, and (c) **Reasoning** that explains *how* each choice creates the tone — not just naming it. A response that only retells what happens has *summarized, not analyzed*; score it low on reasoning.

10 (**Block period only**) How syntax and structure reinforce the tone.

The response should connect **sentence construction and overall structure** to the tone. **Model:**

"The clipped, parallel sentences in ¶[2] — 'She did not complain. She did not sigh.' — are as plain and steady as the routine they describe; their restraint mirrors the grandmother's own refusal to dramatize her tiredness, reinforcing the tone of quiet dignity. By contrast, the single long, image-filled sentence that opens ¶[1] flows like a loving, unhurried gaze. Structurally, the essay moves from the remembered past to the present in ¶[6], so the admiring tone matures into gratitude and resolve — the calm form enacts the calm attitude."

Full credit for (a) a specific **syntax** observation (sentence length/repetition) tied to tone, and (b) a note on **structure** (past-to-present movement) tied to tone, with at least one quoted example and paragraph.

Close-reading response rubric (3 points, Q9)

Score	Claim (tone / meaning)	Evidence (diction + device)	Reasoning (how craft creates tone)
3	Names the tone accurately and gestures at what the passage means.	Cites specific diction <i>and</i> one device, each tied to the correct paragraph.	Explains <i>how</i> each word choice and the device create/deepen the tone — true analysis.
2	Tone named but vague, or slips toward reader-mood.	Diction or a device, but only one, or with a vague/missing location.	Some analysis, but partly slips into summary or restates the definition.
1	No clear tone; mostly restates the story.	Evidence vague, off-topic, or not from the passage.	Summary only; names devices without explaining effect.
0	No claim / off-task.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Articulate / Connect / Extend.

Articulate: accept any accurate one-sentence statement of a warm/admiring/reverent tone toward the grandmother.

Connect: accept any valid word choice or device with a paragraph — most will name the "map" metaphor (¶[1]/[6]), "dignity"/"unhurried courage," or the parallel routine (¶[6]). What matters is that the choice genuinely creates the tone.

Extend: accept any plausible swap that would turn the tone bitter — e.g., replace "patient curve" with "clawed," "dignity" with "grim endurance," or "richest thing I own" with "the debt she never let me repay." The point is recognizing that a single diction change carries tone.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Tone vs. mood.** Students often answer Q4 with a *reader feeling* — "sad," "nostalgic," "emotional" — which is **mood**. **Tone is the writer's attitude toward the subject** (here, admiring/reverent). Anchor them: *mood* = what the reader feels; *tone* = how the writer feels about the topic, shown by word choice.
- **Naming a device vs. analyzing it.** On Q6 and Q9, students frequently *label* "metaphor" or "imagery" and stop. Full credit requires explaining the **effect** — what the device makes the reader see or feel and how it supports the tone. Push past the label to "so what?"
- **Diction vs. plot detail.** On Q5, students sometimes copy a neutral fact ("hospital laundry") rather than a *connotative* word choice. Redirect them to words that *carry a feeling* ("patient," "dignity," "richest").

- **Missing the shift.** On Q7, some describe the tone as unchanging. Point them to ¶[6], where remembering turns into resolve ("I set my own shoulders and go on") — tone can evolve within one piece.
- **Confusing connotation with definition.** "Thrifty" and "cheap" mean similar things but feel opposite. On Q5, credit the *feeling* a word carries, not its dictionary sense.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students confuse tone with mood on Q4, run a 5-minute mini-lesson contrasting a mood word ("the passage made me feel sad") with a tone word ("the writer sounds admiring"). If students name devices on Q6 without analyzing them, model the "name it → quote it → explain its effect" move with one sentence from the passage. The Q5, Q6, and Q8 items quickly reveal who can connect specific word choices to tone; the Q9 response — and, on block days, the Q10 syntax/structure analysis — show who can explain *how* craft creates tone rather than simply spotting it.

HS_ENG4_ToneDiction_01 — Tone, Diction & Rhetorical Devices Teacher Answer Key