

Substitute Guide: Tone, Diction & Rhetorical Devices

Course: English IV (Grades 9–12) **Subject:** English Language Arts & Reading **Time:** ~50-min period or ~90-min block RLA

5-minute guide (plain language)

Students read an original reflective essay, "The Long Shift," about a writer's memory of a hardworking grandmother. They practice **close reading**: they name the writer's **tone** (the attitude toward the subject), find the **diction** — the specific word choices — that creates that tone, analyze one **rhetorical device** (imagery, metaphor, or parallelism) and its effect, track a **shift in tone**, and then write a short **close-reading response** explaining how the craft builds the tone. On a block period, they also analyze how **syntax and structure** reinforce the tone. **You do not need an English background to run this.** Everything students need — the whole passage and the definition of every term — is printed in their packet, and every question can be answered directly from that passage. Hand out the packet, read the opening script, let students work independently in pencil, help by reading aloud and pointing to paragraph numbers (never by giving answers), and collect every packet at the end. The answer key is a separate file for the teacher only.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §110.39 (English IV).

- **Author's craft — tone & diction:** analyze how an author's diction (word choice), connotation, and detail create tone and convey the author's attitude and message.
- **Rhetorical devices:** analyze how rhetorical devices (such as imagery, metaphor, and parallelism) and syntax shape meaning and reinforce tone in nonfiction.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted. Please confirm codes and wording against your official source.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Count and hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Confirm each student has a **pencil**. No devices or other materials are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.
- Check the plan: is this a **standard ~50-minute period** or a **~90-minute block**? (Pacing for both is below.)

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet (5–6 pages) per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no calculator, no special materials.

Timing Standard period vs. block

On a ~50-minute period, do Q1–Q9 and ACE (skip Q10). On a ~90-minute block, add Q10 (analyze how syntax/structure reinforce tone) and allow deeper work on Q5–Q9.

Segment	~50-min period	~90-min block	What students do
Start — Predict & warm up	5 min	7 min	Q1–Q2 (predict attitude + craft-term match)
Build — Read closely	12 min	15 min	Read the passage, word bank; Q3
Apply — Analyze the craft	18 min	28 min	Q4–Q8 (name tone, diction, device + effect, tone shift, best-word-choice)
Explain — Close-reading response	10 min	18 min	Q9 close-reading response (C-E-R)
Explain (block) — Syntax & structure	—	10 min	Q10 how syntax/structure reinforce tone
Close — ACE	5 min	7 min	Articulate / Connect / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional	optional	Rewrite a paragraph in a new tone

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's assignment is a close-reading activity called *Tone, Diction & Rhetorical Devices*. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers. First read the short reflective essay called *The Long Shift*, in which a writer remembers a hardworking grandmother. Your job is to figure out the writer's **tone** — how the writer feels about her — and to notice exactly which **words** and which **techniques** (like picture-making language, comparisons, and repetition) create that feeling. Every question can be answered from the passage, so if you're unsure, go back and reread. Answer the questions in order; if one is tricky, skip it and come back. Write in complete sentences where it asks you to explain, and always name the paragraph you're using. You may quietly read the passage aloud to yourself — you'll often hear the tone before you can name it. Put your name, class period, and date at the top now. [On a block: You'll also look at how the sentence style itself matches the tone in Question 10.] Raise your hand if you need a word read to you or explained."

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** — the passage or any question — to a student or the class.
- If they are stuck, point them to the **paragraph numbers** [1]–[6]; every answer is in the passage.
- Remind them: **tone** = the writer's attitude toward the subject; **diction** = the specific words chosen; **connotation** = the feeling a word carries (all defined in the packet word bank).
- For "name the tone," prompt: "How does the writer seem to *feel* about the grandmother — warm, cold, angry, proud?" and "Which word made you feel that?"
- For Q9, remind them to **analyze, not summarize** — explain how the word choices create the tone, don't just retell the story. Encourage the printed **sentence stems**.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "Which paragraph shows that?" or "What feeling does that word carry?"
- It is fine if a student cannot finish the optional early-finisher task, or Q10 on a short period.

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of the passage or any question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence stems** and the **word bank** (definitions provided for all five terms).
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q9 if time runs short.

- Students may answer in phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear and cites a paragraph.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed:** phones, computers, outside sources (everything is in the passage).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got, whether it was a period or a block, and any questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for two common patterns: students *confusing tone with mood* on Q4 (giving a reader feeling like "sad" instead of the writer's attitude, "admiring") and *naming a device without analyzing it* on Q6/Q9 (labeling "metaphor" but not explaining its effect). A quick next-day mini-lesson contrasting a mood sentence with a tone sentence, and modeling the "name it → quote it → explain the effect" move, would reinforce this well. Q5 and Q6 show who can tie specific word choices to tone; Q7 shows who can track a shift; the Q9 response — and the Q10 syntax/structure analysis on block days — show who can explain *how* craft creates tone.

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