

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.

HS_ENG4_ToneDiction_01 — Tone, Diction & Rhetorical Devices Substitute Guide

Tone, Diction & Rhetorical Devices

Course: English IV (Grades 9–12) **Subject:** English Language Arts & Reading **Time:** ~50-min period, or a ~90-min block (adds deeper analysis of syntax) **Work mode:** Independent · pencil only RLA

Start Here

This is a **close-reading task**. You will read an original reflective nonfiction passage, then analyze **how the writer's word choices create a tone** — the writer's attitude toward the subject — and how **rhetorical devices** (such as imagery, parallelism, and metaphor) shape the reader's experience. You will work with a pencil only; you do **not** need a computer or any device. Every question can be answered **from the passage itself** — the evidence is on the page. When you are asked to explain, write in complete sentences, and always name the **paragraph** you are drawing from. If a question is hard, skip it, keep going, and come back. Reading the passage quietly aloud to yourself is allowed and encouraged — you will often *hear* the tone before you can name it.

Start Predict & Warm Up 5 min

Look only at the title and the first sentence of the passage before you read the rest.

1The passage is titled "**The Long Shift**." Its first sentence is: "**My grandmother's hands were a map I read every summer without knowing it.**" From the title and this first line alone, **predict the writer's attitude** toward the grandmother — is it likely to be cold, admiring, angry, indifferent? What in the wording makes you say so?

2**Craft-term warm-up.** Match each craft term to what it describes. Write the letter (A, B, or C) on each blank.

A. tone — the writer's attitude toward the subject, shown through word choice · **B. diction** — the specific words a writer chooses · **C. imagery** — language that appeals to the five senses

___ Choosing "weathered" instead of "old" to describe a pair of hands.

___ The overall feeling of quiet respect that runs through a piece of writing.

___ "The kitchen smelled of scorched coffee and lemon soap."

Build Read Closely 12 min

Words to know (for close reading of craft)

tone

the writer's attitude toward the subject or audience, revealed through word choice and detail.

diction

the writer's specific choice of words (formal or casual, harsh or gentle, plain or ornate).

connotation

the feelings or associations a word carries beyond its dictionary meaning (e.g., "thrifty" vs. "cheap").

imagery

descriptive language that appeals to the senses — sight, sound, smell, taste, touch.

syntax

the way words and phrases are arranged into sentences (short and clipped, or long and flowing).

"The Long Shift" — an original reflective essay

[1] My grandmother's hands were a map I read every summer without knowing it. The knuckles rose like worn hills; thin rivers of vein ran beneath skin gone soft and pale as old paper. She had pressed dough, wrung mops, and buttoned forty years of other people's coats with those hands, and by the time I was old enough to notice, they had settled into a permanent, patient curve, as if still holding something I could not see.

[2] She worked the long shift at the hospital laundry, from four in the afternoon until midnight. I remember the smell of her when she came home: bleach and steam and, under it, the faint sweetness of the peppermints she kept in her coat pocket for the walk. She did not complain. She did not sigh. She hung her coat on the same nail, set the kettle on the same burner, and asked me, every single night, what I had learned that day.

[3] I did not understand then what those hours cost her. I understood only that the light in the kitchen was warm, that the tea was strong, and that she listened to my small reports of fractions and spelling words as though they were the news of the world. She made my ordinary day feel important. She made me feel important. That, I see now, was its own kind of work — quieter than the laundry, and harder.

[4] There was a dignity in how she moved through her tiredness. She did not perform her exhaustion for sympathy, and she did not hide it to seem strong. She simply carried it, the way she carried the heavy laundry carts, the way she carried me when I was small: without announcement, without asking whether the load was fair. To carry a thing without complaint is not the same as not feeling its weight. I know that now.

[5] On the last night before I left for school, she pressed a folded twenty-dollar bill into my palm and closed my fingers over it with both of her hands. "For books," she said, though we both knew it was for far more than books. Her hands were warm and dry and certain. I have spent years trying to earn the confidence she placed in that small, deliberate gesture — the trust that I would go, and learn, and become someone worth the long shift.

[6] She is gone now, and the map of her hands is gone with her. But I find that I have learned it by heart. When I am tired, when the work is dull and the hour is late, I think of the same nail, the same kettle, the same steady question about what I have learned. And I set my own shoulders and go on. Some inheritances are not money; they are a way of standing in the world. Hers was the quiet, unhurried courage of the long shift, and it is the richest thing I own.

3In paragraph [2], the writer lists three things the grandmother did each night ("She hung her coat... set the kettle... and asked me... what I had learned"). Copy one specific detail from that paragraph that shows her steady, uncomplaining routine.

Apply Analyze the Craft 20 min

Every answer in this section is in the passage. Point to the paragraph in your head before you write.

4**Name the tone.** In one word or a short phrase, name the writer's overall **tone** — the attitude toward the grandmother. (Think: how does the writer seem to *feel* about her?)

5**Find the diction that creates it.** Copy **two** specific words or short phrases from the passage whose **word choice** helps create the tone you named in #4. For each, name the paragraph and, in a few words, explain the feeling it carries (its connotation).

Word/phrase #1 — paragraph # — feeling it carries

Word/phrase #2 — paragraph # — feeling it carries

6**Analyze one rhetorical device.** The passage uses several devices, including **imagery** ("bleach and steam"), an extended **metaphor** (the grandmother's hands as "a map"), and **parallelism** ("the same nail, the same kettle, the

same steady question"). Choose **one** device, name it, quote where it appears (with the paragraph #), and explain its **effect** — what it makes the reader see or feel, and how it supports the tone.

Device + quotation + paragraph #

Effect (what it makes the reader see/feel + how it supports the tone)

7Track a shift in tone. The tone does not stay exactly the same from start to finish. Paragraphs [1]–[4] mostly **remember and describe**; paragraph [6] turns toward the present and the writer's own life. Describe how the tone **shifts** by the final paragraph, and quote one word or phrase from [6] that signals the change.

How the tone shifts by paragraph [6]

Word/phrase from [6] that signals the shift

8Which word choice best signals the tone? The tone toward the grandmother is one of quiet admiration and respect. Which of the following word choices from the passage **best signals** that tone? Fill in the circle for ONE choice.

- "the long shift at the hospital laundry, from four in the afternoon until midnight"
- "the quiet, unhurried courage of the long shift, and it is the richest thing I own"
- "She hung her coat on the same nail, set the kettle on the same burner"
- "a folded twenty-dollar bill into my palm"

8b. In one sentence, explain why the word choice you chose signals the tone more strongly than the others.

Explain Close-Reading Response 10–15 min

Question 9. Write a **close-reading response** that explains **how the writer creates the tone** of "The Long Shift." Do not summarize the story — **analyze the craft**. State the tone (and what the passage ultimately means), then support your claim by discussing **specific diction** and **one rhetorical device**, explaining *how each one* builds the tone. Use the C-E-R frame below and name the paragraph for each piece you cite.

Sentence stems you may use: "The tone of the passage is ____, and it suggests that..." · "The writer's word choice — for example, ____ in paragraph ____ — creates this tone because it carries a feeling of..." · "The writer also uses ____ (a device) in paragraph ____; its effect is to ____, which deepens the ____ tone." · "Together, these choices show the writer's attitude of..."

Claim (the tone and what the passage means)

Evidence (specific diction + one rhetorical device, each with paragraph #)

Reasoning (how each word choice and the device create/deepen the tone)

Block period only (~90-min class): Analyze how syntax and structure reinforce the tone.

Question 10. Look at how the sentences themselves are built. Paragraph [2] uses short, plain, repeated sentence openings ("She did not complain. She did not sigh."); paragraph [1] uses one long, flowing sentence full of images. **Explain how the syntax — the length and arrangement of the sentences — and the overall structure (moving from the remembered past to the present in [6]) reinforce the passage's tone.** Quote at least one example and name the paragraph. Write your analysis on the lines below.

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Articulate

Name the passage's **tone** in your own words, in one sentence, as if telling a friend how the writer feels about the grandmother.

Connect

Name the **one word choice or device** you think does the **most** to create that tone, and point to the paragraph.

Extend

If the writer changed the tone to **bitter or resentful**, name **one word** in the passage they would have to swap out, and what they might replace it with.

Continue Early Finisher optional

If you finish early (no new materials needed):

Rewrite a paragraph in a new tone. On the back of this page, take paragraph [2] and rewrite it so that the tone becomes **cold and resentful** instead of warm and admiring. Change only the **word choices** (diction) — keep the same events. Then underline the three words you changed that did the most work to shift the tone.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class period, and date filled in. Make sure questions 1–9 and the ACE box are answered. Question 10 (syntax/structure) is for block periods; the early-finisher rewrite is optional — turn either in if you did it.

HS_ENG4_ToneDiction_01 — Tone, Diction & Rhetorical Devices Student Packet



TEACHER ANSWER KEY FOLLOWS

Do not copy the pages after this divider for students.

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