

Act One

Standards Focus: Setting, Tone, and Mood

Setting is the time, place, and atmosphere in which the action of a story takes place. Setting can include time of day, weather, season, era, location, and social or political atmosphere; for example: *It is night; an old barn outside of Greenbow, Alabama; Spring, 1932; Depression Era*. **Tone** is the author's feeling toward his subject; a clever writer can use a sympathetic tone to make the reader feel sorry for a character, for example. Conversely, writers can use a distant, detached tone to keep the reader from relating to or feeling sentiment for a character. **Mood** is the general emotional response that a reader feels when reading. Writers use figurative language, details, dialogue, and foreshadowing to help set the mood in a piece of literature. Mood is often expressed in adjectives which describe how the writer intends to make you feel, like: *tense, serene, somber, optimistic, dark, and depressed*.

In Act One, Shakespeare creates a mood of tension and unrest from the very first moment the characters appear onstage. Although the men are engaged in humorous wordplay, it is clear that Caesar's rise to power has created tension in Rome.

Directions: For each of the quotes from the text, underline the words that reveal the setting, including clues about time, place, and atmosphere. Then explain how these particular words indicate specifics about the setting. Next, explain the tone Shakespeare uses to create mood. Include comments on the use of figurative language, imagery, etc., if apparent. Finally, describe the mood of the excerpt using as many details and appropriate adjectives as possible. An example has been done for you.

Ex. "Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home? / What tributaries follow him to Rome / To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels? / You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things! / O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome, / Knew you not Pompey?" (scene i, lines 31-36)

a. Setting: Rome is the city in which the story takes place; captive bonds refers to slaves and slavery, which was legal at the time; chariot wheels indicate they used chariots, which were used for transportation and in sport; Pompey was the ruler of Rome until Caesar took power.

b. Tone: defiant, ironic, condescending, bitter, "preachy"

c. Mood: anxious, hostile, tense, offensive

1. "And when you saw his chariot but appear, / Have you not made an universal shout, / That Tiber trembled underneath her banks / To hear the replication of your sounds / Made in her concave shores? / And do you now put on your best attire? / And do you now cull out a holiday? / And do you now strew flowers in his way / That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood? / Be gone!" (scene 1, lines 42-51)

a. Setting: _____

b. Tone: _____

c. Mood: _____

2. CASCA: "Bid every noise be still. Peace yet again." / CAESAR: "Who is it in the press that calls on me? I hear a tongue shriller than all the music / Cry 'Caesar!' Speak; Caesar is turned to hear." / SOOTHSAYER: "Beware the ides of March." (scene ii, lines 14-17)

a. Setting: _____

b. Tone: _____

c. Mood: _____

3. BRUTUS: "Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius, / That you would have me seek into myself / For that which is not in me? / CASSIUS: "Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear. / And since you know you cannot see yourself / So well as by reflection, I, your glass, / Will modestly discover to yourself / That of yourself which you yet know not of." (scene ii, lines 63-70)

a. Setting: _____

b. Tone: _____

c. Mood: _____

4. "Are you not moved, when all the sway of earth / Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero / I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds / Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen / Th' ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam, / To be exalted with the threat'ning clouds; / But never till tonight, never till now, / Did I go through a tempest dropping fire. / Either there is a civil strife in heaven, / Or else the world, too saucy with the gods, / Incenses them to send destruction." (scene iii, lines 3-13)

a. Setting: _____

b. Tone: _____

c. Mood: _____

5. "But if you would consider the true cause— / Why all these fires; why all these gliding ghosts; Why birds and beasts, from quality and kind; / Why old men, fools, and children calculate; / Why all these things change from their ordinance / Their natures, and performed faculties, / To monstrous quality—why you shall find / That heaven hath infused them with these spirits / To make them instruments of fear and warning / Unto some monstrous state." (scene iii, lines 64-73)

a. Setting: _____

b. Tone: _____

c. Mood: _____