

Discerning Attitude and Tone

There can be questions in the GP comprehension paper that require you to identify and explain the writer's attitude – his or her thoughts and feelings towards an issue, situation or argument. Alternatively, you can be tasked with evaluating his or her tone from the choice of words or manner and style of writing used by the writer in a particular paragraph. In addition, you might need to provide evidence to back up your interpretation. Note that the words 'attitude' and 'tone' might not appear in the questions. Sometimes when there are questions on attitude or tone, it might be helpful to decide if it is positive or negative first before using a specific word to express it.

👉 Some terms to describe Tone and Attitude

Words to describe tone Words to describe attitude

sardonic	cautionary confident
caustic	sombre
reassuring mocking	reconciliatory
sarcastic	defeatist deferential pessimistic modest
blunt	capricious assertive disapproving stately
patronising arrogant	cynical open biased trusting sceptical
	hostile critical belligerent judgemental
	whimsical condescending realistic
	encouraging empathetic optimistic
aggrieved	hopeful
inspiring	passionate
placating	

(17) What is the difference between the attitudes expressed in the two questions Furedi poses at the end of the paragraph? [1]

Instead of being preoccupied with 'what will happen to us', we should search for answers to the question: 'What needs to be done to humanise the future?'

Answer: Firstly, he is judgemental of the idea of "what will happen to us", then he shifts his tone to being more open-minded

(18) Identify the writer's attitude towards parents who use the infant cramming approach. [2]

Today's children are the target of more adult intervention and anxiety than any time in history, with many of them keeping a frenetic schedule that will exhaust a jet-setting CEO. Even infants are being shuttled from baby yoga to baby aerobics to baby sign language lessons despite research concluding that infant cramming is pointless because force-fed skills have to be relearned later in life.

Answer: The writer is very condescending towards parents who infant cram

(19) What does the phrase 'poses as a prophet-scientist' reveal about Furedi's attitude towards Lovelock? [2]

Answer: Furedi's attitude towards Lovelock is that of judgemental

(20) What is the writer's tone when he describes the Texas cattle ranchers and Detroit assembly line workers? Justify your answer. [2]

There is probably widespread agreement that it is a wonderful thing that most of us own cars. Is there anyone who believes that the reason we have cars is because Detroit assembly-line workers care about us? It is also wonderful that Texas cattle ranchers make the sacrifices of time and effort caring for steer so that New Yorkers can enjoy a steak now and then. Again, is there anyone who believes that ranchers who make these sacrifices do so out of a concern for and feeling the pain of New Yorkers?

Answer: His tone is sarcastic. He is making fun of the idea that Texas cattle ranchers and Detroit assembly line workers care for us rather than working to make money.

