

# Attitude

## Definition of Attitude

Generally, attitude is a behavior a person adopts toward other people, things, incidents, or happenings. In literature, the term “attitude” can be referred as [perspective](#) or tone of the writer he adopts in a certain work.

It is the way a writer develops his characters, describes his stories and designs his narratives. His attitude explains the real nature of the characters and the story. He makes use of an appropriate attitude to provide an in-depth insight into a [character](#)'s personality. The attitude of a writer can be serious as well as humorous. In certain cases, the attitude can be critical or witty. It is through the attitude readers come to know the feelings of a writer regarding his topic, subject or belief.

As written works have a central idea or [theme](#) for the audiences, different writers approach themes with different attitudes and tone, which are developed by the choice of words and [style](#). The two examples given below discuss the same subject matter; however, the first demonstrates an informal and casual attitude, while the second example discusses the same theme in a highly formal attitude.

“I want to [ask](#) the authorities what is the big deal? Why do they not control the epidemic? It is eating up lives like a monster.”

“I want to draw the attention of the concerned authorities toward damage caused by the epidemic. If steps are not taken to curb it, it will further injure our [community](#).”

## Examples of Attitude in Literature

Attitude plays a significant role in literature, because it bridges the gap between the reader and the writer.

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**Example #1: *The Catcher in the Rye* (By J. D. Salinger)**

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“All morons hate it when you call them a moron.”

“If a girl looks swell when she meets you, who gives a damn if she’s late? Nobody.”

“Goddamn money. It always ends up making you blue as hell.”

“Catholics are always trying to find out if you’re Catholic.”

This is a selection of dialogues from J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, all of which are uttered by Holden Caulfield. It is easy to understand the nature and real personality of the character through these statements. Most of the remarks are quite sarcastic, as Holden talks about real things in criticizing manner. It is not only a way to know the personality of the character, but it opens a window to the writer’s viewpoint of real life objects. In fact, the characters are the mouthpieces of the writer’s attitude and thinking. That is why this shows the attitude of D. J. Salinger too.

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#### **Example #2: *The School* (By Donald Barthelme)**

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“And the trees all died. They were orange trees. I don’t know why they died, they just died. Something wrong with the soil possibly or maybe the stuff we got from the nursery wasn’t the best. We complained about it. So we’ve got thirty kids there, each kid had his or her own little tree to plant and we’ve got these thirty dead trees. All these kids looking at these little brown sticks, it was depressing.”

A fine example of attitude is presented in this passage. This passage is from Donald Barthelme’s short story *The School*. The author uses certain adjectives like “dead” and “depressing,” which develop a gloomy attitude toward the story. Trees symbolize life in these lines, and their death, which has been unexpected, colors the passage with gloomy and negative shades. This is the attitude of the writer as well.

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#### **Example #3: *The Road Not Taken* (By Arthur Miller)**

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“I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

The influence of attitude can easily be perceived in the last [stanza](#) of *The Road Not Taken*, a poem composed by Robert Frost. When the poet, Robert Frost, talks about his past, he mentions it with a “sigh.” The use of the sigh draws a picture of [nostalgia](#) for the past. The poet’s attitude reveals that the [speaker](#) was compelled to make a choice that was very difficult for him, but now he is nostalgic about it.

### **Function of Attitude**

The function of attitude is to give a certain shape and form to a piece of writing. While reading it, the attitude helps the reader to treat it in a specific way. The attitude makes the readers feel in a particular way about the topic the author wants him to feel. It is attitude, which stimulates the feelings of seriousness, [comedy](#) or distress while going through a piece of literature. Not only does it give tongue to characters to speak, but also highlights the personality and nature of the characters for readers’ full understanding of the given perspective.