

SOAPSTone

Reading and Writing Strategy

SOAPSTone stands for **Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, and Tone**. It is a series of questions that you must ask and answer as you read material and plan any written responses:

Who is the Speaker?

- **The voice that tells the story.** Before you begin to read, you must decide whose “voice” is being heard (who is telling the story?). Whether this voice belongs to a fictional character or to the actual writer, you must determine how to discern those attributes of the speaker that will influence the perceived meaning of the piece.
- **Your goal in this section is to determine the speaker** and all that you know about him/her. It is not enough to simply name the speaker – you must understand the speaker based on references either in the text or through historical research.

What is the Occasion?

- **The time and the place of the piece;** the context that prompted the writing. Writing does not occur in a vacuum. All writers are influenced by the larger occasion: an environment of ideas, attitudes, and emotions that swirl around a broad issue. For example, something written during the Civil War will be influenced by that historical timeframe. Likewise, there is the immediate occasion: an event or situation that catches the writer's attention and triggers a response. For example, something written by a

New Yorker the day after 911 will be influenced by the event.

- **Your goal in this section is to determine what prompted the writer to create this work.** Try to address both the larger and the immediate occasions.

Who is the Audience?

- **The group of readers to whom this piece is directed.** As you begin to read, you must determine whom the audience is that the author intends to reach. It may be one person or a specific group. This choice of audience will affect how and why you read a particular text.
- **Your goal in this section is to identify the audience** by describing some of its characteristics described either in the text or through historical research.

What is the Purpose?

- **The reason behind the text.** You need to consider the purpose of the text in order to develop the thesis or the argument and its logic. You should ask yourself, "What did the author want his/her audience to think as they read his/her writing?"
- **Your goal in this section is to determine the author's purpose for writing:** is it to persuade, entertain, attack, condemn, support, etc.?

What is the Subject?

- **You should be able to state the subject in a few words or phrases.** This step helps you to focus on the intended reading or writing throughout the process.

- **Your goal in this section is to determine the subject of the text.** From that subject, you should also try to identify additional themes of the text – where do you see evidence of these themes within the text, and what impact do these have on the meaning of the text as a whole?

What is the Tone?

- **The attitude of the author.** The spoken word can convey the speaker's attitude and thus help to impart meaning through tone of voice. With the written word, it is tone that extends meaning beyond the literal, and you must learn to discern this tone in the diction (choice of words), syntax (sentence construction), and imagery (metaphors, similes, and other types of figurative language). The ability to discern (or manage, in the case of your own writings) tone is one of the best indicators of a sophisticated reader or writer.
- **Your goal in this section is to find words or phrases that describe the tone of the piece as a whole.**

SOURCE: AP Central (http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/preap/teachers_corner/45200.html)