Tone and Mood

- Identifying the tone or mood in a text is often an important clue to help the reader discover literary themes.
- Considering how a writer creates a certain tone or mood helps the reader appreciate the author's style.
- Tone and mood can – and usually do – overlap; the words that evoke tone and mood are usually the same.

**Tone** is an expression of an author's attitude toward a subject and contributes to the mood: “the author's tone.”

Some adjectives to describe TONE: adoring, compassionate, reassuring, humorous, friendly, preachy, proud, euphoric, impartial, neutral, serious, arrogant, hostile, sarcastic, disrespectful, confused, melancholy

“...Tone is thus a critical concept which implies that literature is like speech, requiring a speaker and a listener, tone being the attitude adopted by the speaker to the listener---the author's attitude toward the work, events, characters, or the reader/audience --, gathered and understood from the kind of syntax and vocabulary used.”

_The Dictionary of Literary Terms by Martin Gray_

**Mood** is the effect of the author's words and tone on the reader. It is the feeling that an author sets or creates for the reader using carefully chosen words and phrases, as well as other devices such as repetition, rhyme, and hyperbole: “the reader's mood.”

Poets try to create an overall feeling by introducing mood to their poems. Certain words create or set the mood because words carry emotional meaning. The mood may be dark and mysterious for a poem about death or cheerful and peaceful for a poem about a spring day. Whatever the mood, it colors the whole poem and creates a feeling inside the reader.

Some adjectives to describe MOOD: playful, sentimental, suspenseful, somber, melancholy, joyous, depressed, mysterious, solemn, vulnerable, haunting, hopeful, lonely, relaxed, cranky, restless

“'Mood’ is a term used synonymously with ‘atmosphere’ to indicate in a literary work the prevailing feeling or frame of mind, especially at the start of a play, poem, or novel, creating a sense of expectation about what is to follow.”

_The Dictionary of Literary Terms by Martin Gray_
Let’s practice identifying words that help create MOOD:

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door-
Only this, and nothing more."

What feeling do you get from the words in bold? mysterious
What feeling do you get from the underlined words? tired, sleepy
The mood in this stanza is mysterious, tired, and sleepy.

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.

What feeling do you get from the words in bold? ________________________________
What feeling do you get from the underlined words? ________________________________
The mood in this stanza is ____________________________________________________

Identify words in the next two stanzas that create mood. Below each stanza, describe the mood those words create.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;
This it is, and nothing more."

The mood in this stanza is ____________________________________________________

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there, and nothing more.

The mood in this stanza is ____________________________________________________