

## CLASS 07

# Tone — The Sombre Family Four Cousins of Sadness

*Continuation of the Tones series · Part 5*

**SB** Sombre *grim reality*

**EL** Elegiac *mourned loss*

**PL** Plaintive *voiced lament*

**ML** Melancholic *quiet nostalgia*

## WHAT THIS CLASS DOES

- 1 Lock the difference between sad ≠ mourning ≠ lament ≠ nostalgia
- 2 Drill the 4-cue ladder for sombre family disambiguation
- 3 Walk through 8 CLAT-style three-liners on the board
- 4 Trap busters — SB↔ML, EL↔PL, ML↔EL most-confused pairs
- 5 50-Q in-class practice + answer key

## RECAP & TODAY

# From mockery to mourning

*Last class: three cousins of INDIRECT criticism. Today: four cousins of SADNESS.*

### LAST CLASS

#### **Ironic Family**

Three cousins. INDIRECT criticism — contradiction, ridicule, contempt.

*IR · SA · SD*

### TODAY

#### **Sombre Family**

Four cousins of sadness — every passage is sad. The question is what KIND of sad.

*SB · EL · PL · ML*

## THE FAMILY · ESTABLISHING QUOTE

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"All four convey sadness — yet each has a distinct emotional quality. Students confuse them because they read mood, not mechanism."

— Anurag Sir · Tones Series · Part 5

### GRIM

the world is

*tragic*

### MOURNED

what we had is

*gone*

### LAMENTED

this is wrong;

*stop it*

### REFLECTED

I quietly recall

*a softer time*

S



## Sombre

*Grim reality, third-person, no mourned object.*

## SOMBRE · DEFINITION

# SB — Sombre

A *SOMBRE* tone presents a grim reality. Serious, grave, dark — the writer is describing, not grieving.

### KEY EMOTION

**Seriousness and gravity**

### SIGNAL WORDS

*crisis · grave · tragic · devastation · grim · severe · dire · alarming · uncertain*

### EXAMPLE PASSAGE

"The village stood silent after the flood. Broken homes lined the streets, and families searched through the debris for remnants of their former lives."

#### Why Sombre?

Third-person, factual description of a tragic situation; no personal mourning, no lament, no nostalgia. Default flavour when nothing more specific applies.

## SOMBRE · COMMON STUDENT MISTAKE

# Don't confuse Sombre with...

### X STUDENT MARKS

## Melancholic

### WHY WRONG

Students assume any sad passage about a disaster is melancholic because they hear 'sad'. But the writer here is not feeling — she is reporting.

### ✓ CORRECT ANSWER

## Sombre

### DECISIVE RULE

SB is a description of a public grim reality; ML needs a single person quietly reflecting on a private memory.

E



## Elegiac

*Mourning. Something specific is gone.*

## ELEGIAC · DEFINITION

# EL — Elegiac

*An ELEGIAC tone mourns or remembers something lost, dead, or vanished forever. From 'elegy' — a poem of mourning.*

### KEY EMOTION

**Mourning and remembrance**

### SIGNAL WORDS

*mourns · honours · once · vanished · end of an era · tribute · farewell · remembers*

### EXAMPLE PASSAGE

"The old library, once filled with eager readers and animated discussions, now stands abandoned. Its empty halls seem to mourn the passing of a cherished era."

#### Why Elegiac?

Names what has been lost (the library, an era of reading). Uses commemorative verbs ('mourn', 'pay tribute', 'remember').  
Tense pattern: once → now → remember.

## ELEGIAC · COMMON STUDENT MISTAKE

# Don't confuse Elegiac with...

### X STUDENT MARKS

## Melancholic

### WHY WRONG

If students see 'sad' + 'old days' they jump to ML. The decisive cue is the NAMED OBJECT being mourned (a library, a craft, a river, an age).

### ✓ CORRECT ANSWER

## Elegiac

### DECISIVE RULE

EL mourns a SPECIFIC vanished thing; ML is a quiet personal feeling with no named loss.

P



## Plaintive

*Lament. The writer voices the sorrow.*

## PLAINTIVE · DEFINITION

# PL — Plaintive

A *PLAINTIVE* tone sounds mournful, complaining, or yearning — almost like a plea or a lament directed outward.

### KEY EMOTION

**Lamentation or yearning**

### SIGNAL WORDS

*why must · how long · how many · must we · disheartening · heartbreaking · plea*

### EXAMPLE PASSAGE

"Why must these ancient forests disappear? How many warnings must be ignored before we act?"

#### Why Plaintive?

Interrogative grammar: 'why must', 'how long', 'how many', 'must we'. Combines sorrow with appeal or protest. The writer is not just sad — she is voicing the sadness.

## PLAINTIVE · COMMON STUDENT MISTAKE

# Don't confuse Plaintive with...

### X STUDENT MARKS

## Elegiac

### WHY WRONG

Both are sad, both name a problem. But EL is past-tense remembrance ('we mourn what is gone'); PL is present-tense protest ('why must this be?').

### ✓ CORRECT ANSWER

## Plaintive

### DECISIVE RULE

PL voices sorrow as a question or appeal; EL commemorates a named loss in declarative grammar.

M

# Melancholic

*Quiet personal sadness. A small private feeling.*

## MELANCHOLIC · DEFINITION

# ML — Melancholic

A *MELANCHOLIC* tone expresses quiet, reflective sadness. Less intense than grief; does not necessarily mourn a specific loss.

### KEY EMOTION

**Gentle, lingering sadness**

### SIGNAL WORDS

*quiet sadness · gentle · memories · wistful · childhood · nostalgic  
· long ago*

### EXAMPLE PASSAGE

"As the train moved away, she watched the fading landscape and wondered how quickly time had passed."

**Why Melancholic?** Single person ('she'); sensory trigger ('the fading landscape'); soft adjective ('gently sad', 'quiet ache'). The mood is private, reflective, and inward.

## MELANCHOLIC · COMMON STUDENT MISTAKE

# Don't confuse Melancholic with...

### X STUDENT MARKS

## Sombre

### WHY WRONG

If the passage has 'he/she + a small trigger + a quiet adjective', it is ML. If the scope opens out to a population or society, escalate to SB or EL.

### ✓ CORRECT ANSWER

## Melancholic

### DECISIVE RULE

ML always has a PERSON feeling something; SB is third-person reporting with no individual feeler.

## PAUSE

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"Every passage in this family is sad.  
The question is not whether the writer is sad — it is  
what KIND of sad the writer wants you to feel."

— a one-line discipline for the next 50 questions

## THE LADDER

# All four side-by-side

TONE	CORE EMOTION	WHAT IT FOCUSES ON	SIGNAL CUES
<b>SB · Sombre</b>	Seriousness, gravity	A grim reality (war, famine, crisis)	<i>crisis · grave · severe · dire · alarming</i>
<b>EL · Elegiac</b>	Mourning, remembrance	Loss being commemorated	<i>mourns · once · vanished · tribute · end of era</i>
<b>PL · Plaintive</b>	Lament, yearning	Complaint, plea or cry of sorrow	<i>why must · how long · disheartening · plea</i>
<b>ML · Melancholic</b>	Quiet reflective sadness	Personal nostalgic experience	<i>memories · wistful · gentle sadness · long ago</i>

## MOST-CONFUSED PAIR

# Elegiac vs. Melancholic

*Same sadness — different scope. Pin the trigger.*

### ELEGIAC · EL

"The author MOURNS something that vanished."

- Scope: COLLECTIVE / cultural / institutional
- Object: NAMED (a station, a craft, a river, an age)
- Verb: mourns / honours / commemorates / pays tribute
- Tense: once X existed → X is gone forever → remember X

Q34: "tribute to a river that once sustained... its decline is lamented"

### MELANCHOLIC · ML

"A person QUIETLY reflects, sadly, on something personal."

- Scope: PRIVATE / one individual / sensory
- Object: UNNAMED feeling triggered by a small object
- Verb: thought / remembered / wondered / felt quietly
- Tense: he/she + sensory trigger + soft adjective (quiet/gentle)

Q32: "diary from decades ago... a soft sadness accompanied each page"

## THE 4-STEP TEST

# Decide the cousin in 8 seconds

Passage is SAD

Q1. Is a SPECIFIC LOSS being remembered?

YES → EL · Elegiac

NO → Q2. Is the writer ASKING / LAMENTING with 'why' or 'how long'?

YES → PL · Plaintive

NO → Q3. Does a SINGLE PERSON quietly REFLECT on a memory?

YES → ML · Melancholic

NO → SB · Sombre (default)

## Q1 · WORKED PASSAGE

"The report documents the destruction caused by years of civil conflict. Entire communities have been displaced, and rebuilding efforts remain slow. Many families continue to live in uncertainty."

### OPTIONS

SB · Sombre

EL · Elegiac

PL · Plaintive

ML · Melancholic

### STUDENT TRAP

Students see 'civil conflict' + 'families' and reach for ML or PL because the subject is upsetting.

### WORKING

Third-person reporting verb ('documents'). No mourned object. No interrogative. No private feeler. → defaults to SB.

### ANSWER

**SB · Sombre**

### TAKEAWAY →

*Grim ≠ mourning. A report on a disaster is sombre, not elegiac.*

## Q34 · WORKED PASSAGE

"The writer pays tribute to a river that once sustained the region's culture and economy. Pollution has altered it beyond recognition. Its decline is lamented throughout the essay."

### OPTIONS

SB · Sombre

**EL · Elegiac**

PL · Plaintive

ML · Melancholic

### STUDENT TRAP

The word 'lamented' tempts students to mark PL.

### WORKING

'Pays tribute' + 'once sustained' + 'beyond recognition' = a named loss being mourned. 'Lament' here is descriptive of the essay, not the writer asking a question. → EL.

### ANSWER

**EL · Elegiac**

### TAKEAWAY →

*Mourning verbs ('honour', 'tribute', 'commemorate') beat a single appearance of 'lament'.*

### Q3 · WORKED PASSAGE

"How many warnings about climate change must be ignored before meaningful action is taken? Scientists have sounded the alarm for decades. The continued inaction is deeply frustrating."

#### OPTIONS

SB · Sombre

EL · Elegiac

**PL · Plaintive**

ML · Melancholic

#### STUDENT TRAP

Students mark SB because the subject ('climate change') feels heavy and factual.

#### WORKING

Opens with 'How many... must' — the textbook plaintive interrogative. 'Deeply frustrating' adds the protest emotion. → PL.

#### ANSWER

**PL · Plaintive**

#### TAKEAWAY →

*Punctuation tells the truth: a question + a complaint = PL, regardless of topic.*

**Q32 · WORKED PASSAGE**

"The worn-out diary contained entries from decades ago. Reading them transported her back to another chapter of life. A soft sadness accompanied each page."

**OPTIONS**

SB · Sombre

EL · Elegiac

PL · Plaintive

**ML · Melancholic**

**STUDENT TRAP**

Students see 'decades ago' and reach for EL.

**WORKING**

Single person ('her') + small private trigger ('worn-out diary') + soft adjective ('soft sadness'). No named cultural loss. → ML.

**ANSWER**

**ML · Melancholic**

**TAKEAWAY →**

*ML signature: he/she + small object + soft word. Nothing public is being mourned.*

## SIGNAL WORDS

# What to underline on first read

<b>SB</b> Sombre	crisis	grave	tragic	devastation	grim	severe	dire
	alarming	uncertain	disaster	famine	ruin	painfully slow	
	troubling						
<b>EL</b> Elegiac	mourns	honours	once	vanished	tribute	farewell	
	commemorates	end of an era		no longer	disappearance	irreversible	
	remembers	legacy	lost forever				
<b>PL</b> Plaintive	why must	how long	how many	must we	heartbreaking	disheartening	
	frustrating	appeal	plea	cry	lament	demand	ignored
	indifference						
<b>ML</b> Melancholic	memories	wistful	quiet sadness	gentle sadness		childhood	
	nostalgic	long ago	reflected	wondered	silently	quietly	
	faded	slipped away		frozen in time			

## TRAP BUSTERS

# The three pairs that lose marks

**SB ↔ ML**

**ASK**

Is there a single person feeling sad?

**RULE**

If YES → ML. If passage is third-person and societal → SB.

**EL ↔ PL**

**ASK**

Is the writer naming a vanished object... or asking "why"?

**RULE**

Named loss → EL. Question/plea → PL. An elegy commemorates; a plaint protests.

**ML ↔ EL**

**ASK**

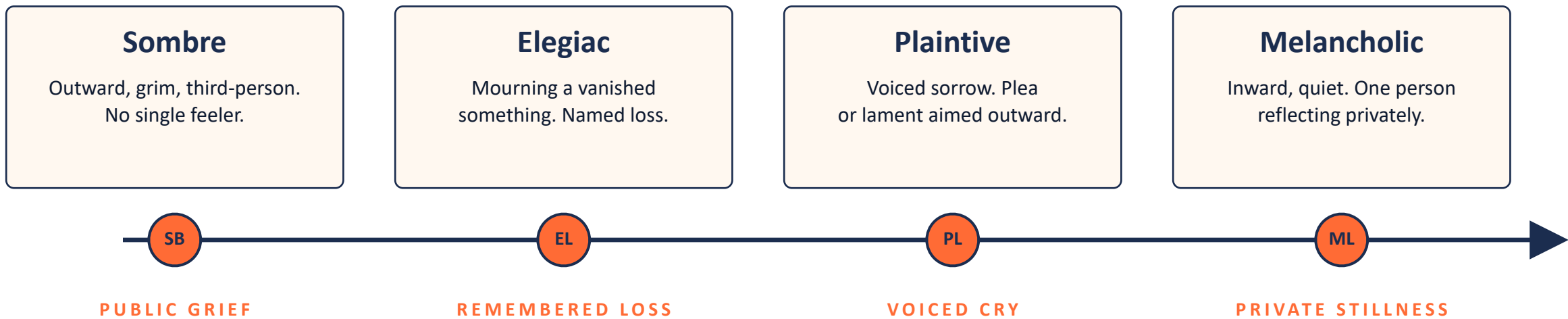
Is the trigger private (a diary, a photo) or social (a craft, an era)?

**RULE**

Private → ML. Social → EL. Scope decides.

## INTENSITY LADDER

# From outward grimness to inward stillness



*Read left-to-right: as scope narrows from world → vanished object → addressed grievance → single self, the sadness gets quieter — and the cue words change.*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

# Six rules to walk out with

1

Sad ≠ Melancholic. Default a sad passage to SOMBRE first; promote to one of the other three only if you find evidence.

2

Elegiac always names what is gone. If no specific lost object → not EL.

3

Plaintive lives in punctuation. "Why must / How long" + complaint or appeal → PL.

4

Melancholic needs ONE PERSON + a small private trigger + soft adjective ("quiet/gentle").

5

Scope decides the EL ↔ ML choice. Social loss = EL. Personal nostalgia = ML.

6

Decide flavour, not topic. The same war can be SB (reported) or EL (mourned) or PL (lamented).

## CLASS 07 CLOSE

# Now: 50-question practice

3-liners · 30 minutes · +1/-0 · target  $\geq 42$

## NEXT CLASS · 08

## Miscellaneous Tones

*Polemical · Argumentative · Accusative · Persuasive · Exhortative*

PO · AR · AC · PE · EX

→ *five flavours of advocacy*

DOUBT? CALL US.

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