The Tone Of Jazz Essay, Research Paper

The Tone of Jazz The tone of a literary work can be described as the writer’s attitude toward his or her subject. In Jazz, Toni Morrison seems to portray her characters in a serious and even at time’s depressing manner. She is able to describe these morose characters through her poignant use of style. Jazz is written in an unformal manner, i.e., lacking correct grammatical structure in many cases. Many sentances are left in a stream of conciousness prose, which does wonders to bring forth her reflective style of writing. She writes as the poorly educated people of her story would most likely speak or write themselves. Her stylizaed manner of writing gives the novel an atmosphere that could not be achieved otherwise. Morrison uses many abstract descriptions in her writing such as the instance when Felicia describes Joe Trace on page 206: ” Mr. Trace looks at you. He has double eyes. Each one a different color. A sad one lets you look inside him, and a clear one that looks inside you. I like when he looks at me. I feel, I don’t know, interesting. He looks at me and I feel deep-as though things I feel and think are important and fifferent and . . . interesting. ” The description confers to us the girls’ personal feelings towards Joe and yet we are given more through Morrison’s literary style. We are not merely given a black and white picture of Joe Trace, conversly we are able to meet Mr. Trace for a brief moment. We understand the pain he bears and feel his apparent ability to perceive the pain of others. Morrison also gives us her own personal observations about the nature of people in many of her stylized descriptions. One example can be seen through the mind of Alice Manfred on page 74 :

” All over the country, black women were armed. That, thought Alice, that, at least, they had learned. Didn’t everything on God’s earth have a defense? Speed, some poison in the leaf, the tounge, the tail?….Natural prey? Easy pickins? ” I don’t thinks so. ” Aloud she said it. ” I don’t think so. ” Morrison has an excellent ability to express her characters fear of the future based on the grim fact that many black women go armed. We can feel the underlying apprehension and dismay below her stonefaced appearance. Morrison gives us many vivid descriptions of urban life in the early twentith century. In particular on page 7 she gives us the following excellent description: ” I’m crazy about this City. Daylight slants like a razor cutting the building in half. In the top half I see looking faces and it’s not easy to tell which are people, which the work of stonemasons. Below is shadow where any balse thing takes place: clarinets and lovemaking, fists and the voices of sorrowful women. A city like this one makes me dream tall and feel in on things. Hep. ” Wht is brilliant about this description is that it says virtually nothing about what most people think they would need to hear in order to know the city. The description is personal and uses many seemingly strange allusions yet it begins to give us her feel of the grit and excitement of her urban environment. There is little comedy in Jazz and much like the novel’s namesake, the blues can often break your heart. But like a good song the novel Jazz can show you redemption at its purest form, forgiveness.