

2. He strikes us as having a good agenda: He seems to believe that the United States regularly needs to assess its political leaders' character traits and goals, and he apparently sees Franklin as a good role model for our leaders today.
3. He seems to share with us common sentiments about what makes a person a good person: hard work, humility, a sense of humor.

In short, Isaacson seems credible because he shows his intelligence, his good character, and his good will. Coincidentally, in his classic *Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.E. noted these same three sources of an appeal to *ethos*: In his native Greek he called them *phronesis*, or practical intelligence; *arête*, or good character; and *eunoia*, or good will.

## Hypothesizing about the Emotional Effect of the Text

Texts do more than convey a take-home idea, achieve purposes, convey tone, and establish credibility. They make readers *feel*, and having a hypothesis about what we think is the central emotion appeal of a text is as vital as having a hypothesis about its main idea, purpose, tone, and credibility. A text's establishment of emotional effect is clearly related to the author's tone, his or her attitude toward the subject matter. As we hinted above, Isaacson's tone might be characterized as *amused by* and *loyant about* about Franklin's profile and its relevance for twenty-first-century America. Do you think Isaacson wants us to feel *uplifted* and *optimistic*? We do!

### ACTIVITY

#### Trying Your Hand at the Big Central Question and the Four Related Ones

Return to Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. Reread it, if necessary. Then, with a classmate or in a group, discuss your hypothetical questions, and their answers, about Lincoln's take-home idea, his purpose, his tone, his credibility, and the emotional effect of his address.

## "Going Deep" with One of the Elements: Analyzing Tone

Once you have learned to hypothesize about a text's take-home idea, purpose, tone, author's credibility, and the text's emotional effect, you can then choose in an analysis to "go deep" on any one of these features. Let's take a look at Louise Erdrich's poem, "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways," to learn how to delve more deeply into tone.

You may be asking, "Rhetorical analysis of a poem? We've considered a contemporary piece about Ben Franklin and an inaugural address by Abraham Lincoln, and we've studied how these texts craft their central idea, but does a poem have a central idea that we can analyze?" Most poems do: In an artistic way, they forward a central idea that you can discern and analyze; they have a purpose and tone; they ask you to construct (and perhaps question) the narrator's

credibility; they have an emotional effect on readers. In other words, we could do a full-fledged rhetorical analysis of many poems. In this case, however, let's just focus on tone.

In the first two chapters, we talk about how as a reader you make predictions and speculations about the tone of what you're reading. Understanding tone helps you *hear* the voice speaking and that helps you make decisions about the argument the writer might be making and about how the writer might want you to respond.

After you read Erdrich's poem, look back to see where you speculated about the tone—the narrator's attitude toward the subject matter—and write down three or four adjectives that you think describe that tone. Then take those adjectives and find places in the poem that directly illustrate the adjective you've chosen.

Here's an example: We might choose the adjective *tense* to describe the tone in the first nine lines of the poem. Then we might argue that the images in that section—boxcars that don't wait for the runaways, young children running to get into the boxcars in order to escape from the boarding school, a guard striking a match that pierces the darkness—have been deliberately crafted by Erdrich to convey her tone. Now, how would you follow this model with the adjective *pained* or the adjective *bitter*?

In completing this activity, you see how the general idea (what are adjectives that describe the tone of Erdrich's poem?) derives from particular moments in the text (what lines show how that adjective fits?). There might be tone shifts—a change in language that signals a change in attitude—or it might be that the tone you hypothesize at the beginning might get amplified as the writer moves through the lines of the poem. In any case, analyzing how tone works to establish aim and make connections to readers is a primary strategy for you to use when you are interpreting and analyzing what you read.

## Taking the Next Step: Moving from the Starting Points to the Component Parts

Hypothesizing about what you think is the take-home idea, as well as the purpose, tone, credibility, and the emotional effect of a text, gives you a menu of possible *starting points* for reading and writing analytically. As the activities above suggest, you need to examine the moments or components of the text, see what its components are, and determine *how* those component parts work together to grasp the take-home idea, the purpose, and the emotional impact of the piece. Think about it this way: Every analysis *begins* with an argument: *You*, the analyst, *argue* that A is the take-home idea, B is the purpose, C is the tone, D is the credibility, and E is the emotional effect. You might discuss all or some of these factors. But whichever ones you include, you will look at the component parts of a text for evidence to support your arguments.