Everyone feels happy, sad, excited, angry, silly, or serious at one time or another. When people talk, their tone of voice matches how they are feeling — their mood. When someone is excited, you expect that person to speak quickly and loudly. When people are thoughtful, they speak quietly and more slowly than usual. All these words express a feeling:

Phooey! Hurrah! Rats! Wow! Boo! Great!

A story can have a mood too. It can make you feel a certain way. Authors help you feel a particular mood by the words they use to describe the characters, events, or the place where the story occurs.

Read the following passage. Think about how it makes you feel.

Sue Ellis could hear the sound of girls laughing as she walked down the hall. Sue did not even turn her head. Why should she?

“Let them all laugh and have fun,” thought Sue. “I don’t care.” But Sue did care....more than she was willing to admit even to herself.

She would have given anything to be standing there with them, talking with them, laughing with them. But they never once asked Sue to join them. So she walked by with her head down. Maybe that way she would not hear them or feel so alone and left out.

Did you find that you feel sorry for Sue and sad that the girls did not include her? You can tell that the mood of this passage is sadness because everything in the passage leads to the last thought: Sue feels “alone and left out.”

Now read the following paragraph. What mood does the author want you to feel?

The next week I got a call from a mysterious woman. She refused to tell me anything about the job over the telephone, but asked me to come to her agency’s office, promising to tell me more in person. The next day I went for an interview.

This paragraph probably makes you feel curious. Something is being kept secret, and the author makes you want to find out what that secret is. The author does this by using words that express the mood of mystery. What words in the paragraph make you feel this mood?

The key word are: mysterious woman refused to tell promised to tell

They make you curious about why the woman cannot or will not tell the secret over the phone.

By sensing the mood of a story, you will enjoy reading more. If you feel as though you are part of the story, it will be more interesting to you.
Read the following paragraphs and then circle the word that best describes the mood of the paragraph.

1. The pilot was an older man with gray hair. He wore dark glasses and had a black cigar in his mouth. He was smiling.
   “You people want to come with me?” he said, still smiling.
   Austin looked at the pilot. He felt as if he were looking at death itself.
   “No!” Austin said. “We’re not going with you. You shouldn’t go either. Your plane’s going to crash!”
   “Have you gone mad?” said Lauren. “If you won’t get into the plane, I will!”
   She started to board the plane. Austin grabbed her by the arm.
   “No!” he said. “Don’t go! It’s the pilot from my dream! It’s him! And it’s the very same plane!”
   Lauren stopped. She looked. She remembered what Austin had told her about his dream.
   hope  joy  worry  calm

2. The fans yelled when the crazy looking dragster took off! It went up the strip, but it ran only a little way before it stopped dead. Then it actually seemed to shudder and sigh. Steam rose from the engine. By this time, the fans were falling down laughing. When the next race was held, the crazy car made it all the way to the end, but only barely! It stopped cold just over the line. The fans yelled with joy. They thought it had been a great show. “Maybe it’s tired, again!” someone yelled.
   excitement  fright  anger  humor

3. Mary and Ben had just moved into the house they had rented from the Burtons, a kindly old couple who had lived there for many years.
   Before the Burtons had left, Mrs. Burton had said to Mary, “We know you will be happy here. This is a good house, even if we have had much sadness in it.”
   “What do you mean?” Mary asked.
   But Mrs. Burton had only replied, “When we rented you the house, we said that you were free to use all of it, but not the room with the oak door.”
   Ben did not think there was anything strange about the door, but Mary did. The Burtons’ words had gotten to her.
   “What do we really know about the Burtons anyway?” she asked Ben. “We’ve rented a house from them. That’s all. How do we know there isn’t something bad behind the oak door?”
   Mary felt a chill. “Let’s get a fire going,” she said.
   happiness  sadness  mystery  excitement