

Tone

Consider:

What a thrill –
My thumb instead of an onion.
The top quite gone
Except for a sort of a hinge

Of skin,
A flap like a hat,
dead white.
Then a red plush.

— Sylvia Plath, “Cut: For Susan O’Neill Roe”

Discuss:

1. What is the poet’s attitude toward the cut? What words, images and details create the tone?
2. In the second stanza, Plath uses colors to intensify the tone. The flap of skin is *dead white*, the blood is *a red plush*. What attitude toward the cut and, by implication, toward life itself, does this reveal?

Apply:

Write a short description of an automobile accident. Create a tone of complete objectivity – as if you were from another planet and had absolutely no emotional reaction to the accident. Read your description to a partner and discuss the details, images, and diction that create your tone.