

Tone

Consider:

The dry brown coughing beneath their feet,
(Only a while, for the handyman is on his way)
These people walk their golden gardens.
We say ourselves fortunate to be driving by today.

That we may look at them, in their gardens where
The summer ripeness rots. But not raggedly.
Even the leaves fall down in lovelier patterns here.
And the refuse, the refuse is a neat brilliancy.

— Gwendolyn Brooks, “Beverly Hills, Chicago”

Discuss:

1. Who is the *we* (line 4) of the poem? Who are *these people* (line 3)? What is the poem’s attitude toward *these people*?
2. Examine lines 6-8. Even *rot* and *refuse* is *neat* and *brilliant*, and *leaves fall down in lovelier patterns here*. What image does the diction create? How does that image contribute to the tone?

Apply:

Write two or three sentences which reveal a tone of disdain in describing a clique at school. Use imagery or concrete detail to create the tone. Do not directly state your disdain; the images and detail should carry the tone. Work with a partner. Share your sentences with the class.