Step In! Step Out!

A READING LESSON

for DEEP thinking about text

created by
Michael Friermood

"Step in' to the story to look at character choices."

"Step out' from the story to look for choices."
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Step In! Step Out! {A Reading Lesson for DEEP Thinking}

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Step In! Step Out!
Get students thinking deeply about their reading!

Here's a reading strategy lesson to try: I call it “Step In – Step Out.” It's one of my go-to ways to get kids deep into a text, analyzing it from different perspectives and discussing it with each other. It's my take on thinking within, beyond, and about the text.

Step In!
Asking students to “step in” to the story means that students enter the world of the story to analyze the choices the CHARACTERS make. Use some of the anchor questions below to get students stepping into the story.

- Why did this character make this choice?
- What do you think of the choice this character makes? Would you have done the same?
- What might have been a different choice? Was there an alternative?
- What happened because of this choice?
- What advice would you give this character?

Getting students to think about the choices characters make, the causes of those choices, as well as their implications, grounds students’ comprehension. It helps to guide readers through a text and build their understanding.

Step Out!
Asking students to “step out” of the story means that students look at the story as a piece of writing, and analyze the choices the AUTHOR makes. Use some of the anchor questions below to get students stepping out of the story.

- Why did the author decide to write this part? Did it make the story better?
- Why was this part of the story needed?
- What do you like about how the author wrote this part? How would you have written it differently?
- What do you think the author is trying to do here? Keep us interested? Mislead us? Feel sorry for the character?
- Is the author trying to tell us something important here?

Getting students thinking about what the author was thinking can have far-reaching effects. Not only do students get to engage in higher-level, text-based discussions, it can be empowering to have the freedom to critique an author’s decisions, and often can translate into how students make their own writing decisions.

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Using Step In – Step Out Questions

My favorite time to use “Step In – Step Out” is during a guided reading group lesson because having a small group of students helps to foster a rich discussion. But since I use it so often in all my groups, I usually set up an anchor chart with my whole class, so we all have a common understanding and vocabulary of the strategy.

★ Check out my blog post about this lesson for more of my thoughts and sample modeling:

Use the foldable “mini-charts” on your guided reading group table as reference aids for both you and your students. The Step In and Step Out pictures are what the students see, and the prompting questions are what you see, to help guide the discussion you have with your group. After the discussion about character choices and author choices, use one of the notebook response sheets for students to record their thinking (3 differentiated versions included).

What you’ll find in the rest of the document:

- Half-Sheets “Step In – Step Out” posters to use on anchor charts or to paste into reader’s notebooks.
- Foldable “mini-chart’ stands to use as reference on your guided reading table during guided reading lessons.
- 3 differentiated versions of response pages for Step In questions and Step Out questions.

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"STEP IN"

'Step in' to the story to look at character choices.

"STEP OUT"

'Step out' of the story to look at author choices.
Directions

to make the mini-charts

1. Print it!
2. "STEP IN"
   - "Step in" to the story to look at character choices.
3. Cut it!
4. Fold each one!
5. Tape each one!

Students' view at guided reading table
Teachers' view at guided reading table

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**Step In**

- What advice would you give this character?
- Why did this character make this choice?
- What happened because of this choice?
- What might have been a different choice? Was there an alternative?
- What did you think of the choice this character made? Would you have done the same?

**Step-Out Questions**

- Why did the author decide to write this part? Did it make the story better?
- Why was this part of the story needed? What was the author trying to do here? Keep us interested?
- Why do you think the author is trying to do this part? Did it make the story better?
- What do you think the author is trying to do here? Mislead us? Feel sorry for the character?
- Is the author trying to tell us something important here?
Describe a choice a main character makes:

Why did the character make this choice?

Do you agree with the character’s choice? Why or why not?

What did you like about how the author wrote this part?

What would you have changed?
“STEP IN”

‘Step in’ to the story to look at character choices.

What choice does the main character make?

Why did the character make this choice?

Do you agree with the character’s choice?

YES  NO

“STEP OUT”

‘Step out’ of the story to look at author choices.

What did you like about how the author wrote this part?

What would you have changed?

Text Title: ____________________________
“STEP IN”

‘Step in’ to the story to look at character choices.

Describe a choice a main character makes:

Why did the character make this choice?

What advice would you give the character?

Do you agree with the character’s choice? Why or why not?

“STEP OUT”

‘Step out’ of the story to look at author choices.

What did you like about how the author wrote this part?

Why did the author write this part?

What would you have changed about this part of the story?
If you like the notebook response pages within this product, you might want to check out some of my other products that use them.

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