Artful Thinking: Step Inside

The Artful Thinking approach encourages active looking and learning through the practice of short, simple thinking routines. These routines help students focus on specific aspects of an artwork and organize their observations and ideas. The repetition of thinking routines across subjects and disciplines supports students in developing not only the skills for inquiry, but also the habits of an inquiring mind.

Recognizing that different people have different viewpoints based on their experiences, beliefs, and attitudes is essential to learning. From the social-emotional development of empathy to the importance of perspective in historical thinking, students need a framework for understanding the experiences of others. The Step Inside routine (called Perceive/Know/Care About in Artful Thinking) is a powerful way to help students wonder about, imagine, and explore a viewpoint different from their own.

Grade Level
Adaptable for all grades

Common Core Academic State Standards
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3

National Visual Arts Standards
• Responding: understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning
• Connecting: relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

Suggested Art Images
Click on the titles below to view high-resolution photographs on the museum’s website:
• Bicycle Race, 1938, by Antonio Ruíz
• Breaking Home Ties, 1890, by Thomas Hovenden
• Children in Auditorium, 1964, by Jill Krementz
• Spring Sale at Bendel’s, 1921, by Florine Stettheimer
• Sugar Cane, 1931, by Diego Rivera
• The Mante Family, around 1884, by Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas
• The Passing Scene (Elevated Streetcar Scene), 1945, by John Woodrow Wilson
• Untitled, New Orleans (Kim, Justin and Seth), 1993 (negative); 2002 (print), by Gerald Cyrus
Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Notice and describe characters with different points of view in a work of art.
- Provide visual evidence for a character’s perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.
- Write in the first person from a character’s unique point of view.

Materials Needed

- Screen for projecting Suggested Art Images
- Step Inside worksheets (optional) or three-column chart on a whiteboard or chart paper
- Color copies of selected images (optional)

Lesson Process

Step Inside can be used with any of the artworks suggested in this lesson, or with other images you have available. The routine works best with images depicting characters who display relatable emotions and attitudes in recognizable social settings. Choose an image that will be engaging and accessible for your students. Copies of Suggested Art Images that are not downloadable from the museum website are provided at the end of this lesson.

1. Introduce Step Inside by projecting Children in Auditorium. Ask students to focus on the main character, the child in the foreground. Can they tell what this child is feeling or thinking? Call on a few volunteers to describe his emotions or thoughts.

2. Now ask students what they see that helps them understand the child’s point of view. Can they describe his facial expression and body language? What is the setting of the photograph? Can they imagine what the child is experiencing? If they could read his mind, what would he be saying?

3. Have students turn their attention to the other children in the photograph. Can they find characters who might have a point of view different from that of the boy in the foreground? What are the clues that some children feel and think differently from that character?

4. Explain to students that they are going to practice using clues in artwork, like facial expressions, body language, actions, and interactions, to help them “step inside” a character’s point of view and imagine the character’s experience.

5. If your students are independent writers, introduce the Step Inside worksheet and pass out copies. Alternatively, you can continue the routine with the whole group using a large three-column chart.

6. Project a new artwork that is relatively simple. The Mante Family or Untitled, New Orleans (Kim, Justin and Seth) would be good choices. Ask students how many different points of view they think are shown in the image. Ask them to choose one character to focus on, and give them a minute to notice what the character might be feeling and thinking. What do they see that helps them understand the character’s point of view?

7. Invite students to briefly share out. What do they notice about the descriptions of each character’s thoughts and feelings? How and why are they different?

8. Take a minute to discuss how different perceptions, or experiences and understandings of the situation, might contribute to the characters having different thoughts and feelings. For example, the two girls in The Mante Family are in the same scene but are having different experiences. One is interacting with the mother, experiencing inclusion and appearing to feel contentment. The other is left out of the interaction, experiencing exclusion and appearing to feel sadness. How do facial expressions, body language, actions, and interactions help us see this?
9. When they are ready to work independently, have students fill in their worksheets with details about their chosen character. After analyzing their character’s point of view, students will write a few sentences in the first person about the character’s experience. Prompt them to imagine they can read the character’s mind. If you think students need some scaffolding for this, pause before writing to share a few examples of what an inner monologue might sound like.

10. Step 9 can be modified in a number of ways to meet students’ needs:
   - The routine can be practiced verbally, whole-class or in a small group, as the teacher makes student thinking visible.
   - Students may work in pairs or small groups, writing or speaking about one character and developing their inner monologue.
   - Students may work in pairs or small groups with each student writing or speaking about a different character and developing inner monologues from their individual points of view. They could also develop dialogue between characters.

11. Once students have developed a few written or spoken sentences from their character’s point of view, provide an opportunity to share. Individual students might deliver their monologue and have others try to guess which character they are. Or you might have students recreate the scene, acting out each character’s perspective.

12. Take time to reflect on the experience of “stepping inside” a character’s point of view. What makes a character easier or more challenging to understand? Which characters have points of view similar to your own? Which characters have points of view different from your own? What can you learn by taking someone else’s perspective?

Extensions
- Once students have the hang of this routine, provide a more complex image for them to practice with. Bicycle Race, Breaking Home Ties, and Spring Sale at Bendel’s are all good options with plenty of different points of view to choose from. All three images include animal characters as well as people, expanding the universe of experiences students might step inside.

- The Step Inside routine relies on inferencing and imagination. For more of a focus on questioning and investigating, Step Inside can be extended to Step In, Step Out, Step Back (another Project Zero thinking routine). This version of the routine challenges students’ assumptions by asking:
  - What do you think this person might feel, believe, know, or experience?
  - What would you want or need to learn in order to understand their point of view better?
  - What do you notice about your own perspective and what it takes to take someone else’s?

*Step In, Step Out, Step Back* is a good choice for images like Sugar Cane and The Passing Scene (Elevated Streetcar Scene) that bring up issues like oppression and racism. It’s also a good choice any time you ask students to step into a point of view that diverges significantly from their own experiences.

- Step Inside and Step In, Step Out, Step Back can also be used to explore the point of view of a character in a story or play or the creator of a primary source document.
**Worksheet: Step Inside**  
Take a few minutes to look closely at a work of art. Choose a character and step inside that character’s point of view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does the character feel and care about in this setting?</th>
<th>What does the character think and know about their experience?</th>
<th>What does the character perceive? What are they experiencing and understanding?</th>
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What do you see that helps you understand the character’s point of view?

If you could read this character’s mind, what would they be saying? Write a few sentences in the first person.
Untitled, New Orleans (Kim, Justin and Seth), from the series Kinship, 1993 (negative); 2002 (print), by Gerald Cyrus (Gift of the artist, 2002-52-1)
Sugar Cane, 1931, by Diego Rivera (Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris, 1943-46-2) © Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
The Passing Scene (Elevated Street Car Scene), 1945, by John Woodrow Wilson (Purchased with the Lola Downin Peck Fund, 1999-120-1)