



Ugly History: Japanese American Incarceration Camps
Instructions for Classroom Activity 1
Step In, Step Out, Step Back

Purpose: To give students practice in reflecting on their own perspective and thinking about someone else's perspective on an experience or event.

Step In, Step Out, Step Back is a thinking routine adapted from [Harvard Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox](#).

Thinking routines are simple strategies that teachers can use to cultivate thinking and deepen learning for students.

Step In, Step Out, Step Back is a routine that helps students gain experience in the challenging cognitive and emotional task of taking someone else's perspective. "Standing in someone else's shoes" helps students avoid making stereotypes and projecting their own values and beliefs onto others and gain appreciation for the value of multiple perspectives.

1. After watching the oral history of Aki Kurose, [distribute copies of the transcript](#) to students.
2. Instruct students to divide a sheet of paper (in "landscape" position) into 3 columns
3. In the first column, have students write "Step In."
4. Ask students to read the transcript, underlining or highlighting 3-5 words, phrases, or sentences that reveal what Aki might be thinking, feeling, believing, or experiencing. Then write, in their own words, what they think Aki might be thinking, feeling, believing, or experiencing in the first column.
5. Point out that they only have limited information about Aki, so the challenge is to use their reasoning skills and empathy to imagine what it would be like to stand in Aki's shoes.
6. Ask a few students to share their responses and answer the question: What makes you think Aki thinks/feels that way? (If possible, divide students into breakout rooms to discuss these questions with each other.)

7. In the second column, have students write “Step Out” and answer the question: “What else would you like or need to learn to understand Aki’s perspective better?”
8. Point out that there is more to understanding a person than their first impression of that person. Encourage students to think about stereotypes in their initial thinking about Aki and what information they would need to gain a broader perspective.
9. Ask a few students to share their responses.
10. In the third column, have students write “Step Back” and answer the question: “What is your own perspective on what happened to Aki? How do you feel about what happened to Aki? Has anything similar ever happened to you?”
11. Ask a few students to share their responses.
12. As closing questions, ask students, “What things shape our perspectives about an event?” and “What can we do to better understand other people’s perspectives?”