

Teacher Background Information

FUNDAMENTAL STEPS provides daily lesson plans for four basic writing styles. The students spend the first three days of each style analyzing, organizing, and prewriting. Before students can write successful, organized essays, they need exposure to model essays with good structure. The following four-page Sample Activity provides an overview of the basic principles and a preview of one Introductory lesson in which students identify the key elements to any good STEPS essay.

“Fundamental” Principles

Three basic principles of writing guide the entire STEPS writing program. Essentially, these principles state that every well-organized essay has:

1. A **Preview Thesis** (also known in later STEPS units as the EGS: Enumerative General Statement) that introduces the purpose of the essay and acts as an organizing sentence.
2. **General Statements** (*idea statements*) supported by **specific details** (*concrete statements*). For example, students learn the difference between: “The car is beautiful” and “The car is bright red.”
3. A **Summary**, restating the Thesis and wrapping up the essay in an engaging, summative manner

In FUNDAMENTAL STEPS, the organizational principles are represented by the following mnemonics:

- **The Prelude** represents the musical introduction, or the **Preview Thesis**. The first paragraph introduces the subject and catches the reader’s interest.
 - **Bing, Bang, and Bongo** are the three **General Statements** that require Specific Details for support. These are listed as part of the Preview Thesis. Bing is the musical triangle, Bang is the cymbals, and Bongo is the drum!
 - **The Finale** represents the **Summary**; now that the students have clearly identified all their points and proven their thesis, the reader can enjoy the beautiful music of the writer’s words!
 - **Bandman Bob** helps students through the lessons in their Student Guides and on many of the reproducible pages.
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Materials

- Tremendous Travels essay and outline — *class set + transparency*
- Overhead projector; overhead markers (black, green, blue, red) — *one of each*
- Coloring pencils, crayons, or markers (green, blue, and red) — *class set*

Procedure

1. Project the transparency of TREMENDOUS TRAVELS and distribute to students.
2. Carefully read the essay with your students as a shared read. Verbalize your own thinking as you identify the components of the essay, written in the margins. This model narrative essay demonstrates the three organizational principles of the STEPS writing program.
3. After reading TREMENDOUS TRAVELS with your students, go back and carefully note the three fundamental organizational principles:
 - **The Preview Thesis**—This introduces the topic of the essay and lists Bing, Bang, and Bongo.
 - **General Statements** (Bing, Bang, and Bongo) or opinions introduced in the thesis must be supported by concrete **Specific Details**. Students expand on these in the three body paragraphs and add concrete details (facts) to support their statements.
 - **Summary**—the final paragraph restating the thesis and reviewing Bing, Bang, and Bongo

“Dissect” the essay’s parts while thinking aloud. Read and note the first sentence (a question) which catches the interest of the audience. Underline the **Preview Thesis** with a black overhead marker; direct students to underline the thesis in their Student Guides (in pen or pencil). The **musical prelude** represents the **thesis**. *The preview thesis is “I love traveling, and my favorite places I have visited are Washington D.C., Italy, and the Columbia Gorge.”*

4. Now use the green, blue, and red overhead markers to identify the **Bing** (green), **Bang** (blue), and **Bongo** (red) of the essay. Students can share their colored markers with each other, but they should use the same colors you use for continuity's sake. In both the intro paragraph AND in the individual body paragraphs, draw a green triangle around the Bing (*Washington D.C.*); draw a blue circle around the Bang (*Italy*); and draw a red square around the Bongo (*Columbia Gorge*). Use these colors throughout the entire prewriting and perhaps even into the drafting phase every time students write in STEPS style.
5. In the summary paragraph, once again identify Bing, Bang, and Bongo with the colored markers. This “musical finale” restates the three main points. The finale invites the reader to personalize the narrative with the concluding question, “What are your favorite places in the world?”
6. After students have used the coloring materials to clearly identify the **Preview Thesis**, the **Bing, Bang, and Bongo**, and the **Summary** of the essay, encourage them to re-read the first body paragraph—the Bing paragraph—to identify the reasons the author gives for Washington D.C. as a favorite travel destination.
7. Help students complete the outline of Bing, Bang, Bongo, and the supporting details. This solidifies the importance of the **second fundamental organizational principle**, that the **General Statements** listed in the preview thesis are supported by **Specific Details**.
 - I. Washington D.C.
 - a. White House (*This is really commentary; not a concrete detail! Use this as an example of how to enhance with abstract in addition to concrete.*)
 - b. Capitol
 - c. Crisp January air
 - II. Italy
 - a. The Sistine Chapel
 - b. Delicious pasta and gelato
 - c. The Forum, old historical place
 - III. Columbia Gorge
 - a. Hiking on green trails
 - b. Visiting many waterfalls
 - c. Reading by the fireplace
8. Now review the **third fundamental organizational principle** with your students, the Summary restates the thesis and wraps up the essay in an engaging, summative manner. Ask students to write the summary statement on the final lines of Tremendous Travels outline: *For many reasons I loved Washington D.C., Italy, and the Columbia Gorge*. This musical finale reminds the reader of the main points the author included in the body of the essay.
9. Conclude the lesson with any student comments or questions about the three fundamental organizational principles. If you are using a particular piece of music to signal the end of writing workshop, play it now!



There are a few “right” ways to outline/list the Specific Details. Accept a variety of correct answers as long as they resemble those presented here!



The first paragraph is the musical prelude with the Preview Thesis. The thesis statement introduces the topic of the essay: the author's favorite places she has visited. In the essay, the author has to explain why Washington D.C. (BING), Italy (BANG), and the Columbia Gorge (BONGO) are her favorite places.



The second paragraph is the BING. The author supports BING with specific details (concrete statements). "This second sentence is the author's opinion, which directly supports the General Statement and makes the paragraph more personal!"



The third paragraph is the BANG. The author restates that Italy is another favorite place she has visited. The rest of the paragraph uses specific details and comments to tell why she loved Italy.

The fourth paragraph is the BONGO. The first sentence is followed by concrete details and comments describing the BONGO point.



The fifth paragraph is the conclusion—the musical finale! The musical finale represents the ending and a reminder of all the author's three points. The author includes the reader with the last sentence, a question.



Structure and Content Rubric Score: 4

"Your five paragraph essays will be clear and easy for any audience to follow when you use Bing, Bang, and Bongo!"

TREMENDOUS TRAVELS

Do you like to travel? I love traveling, and my favorite places I have visited are Washington D.C., Italy, and the Columbia Gorge.

Washington D.C. was my favorite place to visit. *I loved seeing the White House. When I walked into the Capitol building, I heard all of the senators debating loudly. The crisp January air turned my nose into an ice cube!

My second favorite place was Italy. I saw the amazing Sistine Chapel with the ceiling painted by Michelangelo. I ate a lot of delicious food like pasta and gelato (like ice cream, but better!). I loved the Forum, a place where Italians worked and lived 2000 years ago.

My third favorite place to visit was the Columbia Gorge. I loved hiking on the many green and peaceful trails. I visited many waterfalls including the spectacular Multnomah Falls. When it rained, I enjoyed reading a book by the warm fireplace.

For many reasons I loved Washington D.C., Italy, and the Columbia Gorge. What are your favorite places in the world?

- The **purpose** of this essay is to **inform** the reader.
- The **audience** could be your teacher, your friends, other students your age, or anyone else!

Use the **TREMENDOUS TRAVELS** essay as a model. Identify the following three principles of organization:

1. Preview Thesis ("The Prelude")
2. Bing (triangle), Bang (cymbals), and Bongo (drums)—General Statements to prove your thesis point. These must have concrete Specific Details!
3. Summary in the final paragraph ("The Finale")

1. What is the **Preview Thesis**? (Remember: this is the preview for your readers. The thesis tells them what is coming up!) *This is The Musical Prelude!*

2. What are the **Bing, Bang and Bongo** and their Supporting Details?



Bing? _____

Detail _____

Detail _____

Detail _____



Bang? _____

Detail _____

Detail _____

Detail _____



Bongo? _____

Detail _____

Detail _____

Detail _____



3. What is the **Summary**? *The Musical Finale!*
