



## Close Reading with Notice & Note

We invite you to **Notice** how Kylene Beers's and Bob Probst's Signposts help your students read with a deeper understanding. Jot us a **Note** on our website [hmhco.com/intoliterature](http://hmhco.com/intoliterature) and we'll share your thoughts with teachers across the state.

### What are Notice & Note Signposts?

Kylene and Bob identified specific features for students to watch for and identify, encouraging them to read more closely and to gain better understanding of the author's intent. They named these features Notice & Note Signposts. Signposts appear in all young adult text, demanding that students pause and think about the text—make connections, predict events, analyze characters and theme, ask questions, explore language, and discover meaning. Below are the six Notice & Note Signposts for fiction.

Memory Moment

Words of the Wiser

Contrast & Contradictions

Tough Questions

Aha Moments

Again and Again

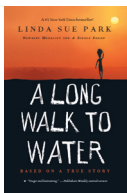
For each of the six signposts, Kylene and Bob share an **Anchor Question** to spark students' thinking and conversation about the text.

### How do Notice & Note Signposts help my students read with deeper understanding?

ELA teachers strive to teach students to read closely and annotate text with greater insight and comprehension. The strongest readers do these things naturally, but most students need concrete strategies to delve more deeply into text. Notice & Note Signposts invite students not only into the text but also into the conversation, enabling every student to have a dialogue with the text.

As students identify the Notice & Note Signposts and answer the Anchor Questions, they are using the important comprehension skills of visualizing, predicting, summarizing, clarifying, questioning, inferring, and making connections.

### Can I use Notice & Note Signposts and Anchor Questions with any piece of fictional text? Absolutely!



Let's try using the **Tough Questions Signpost** with an excerpt from *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park.

## Discuss Tough Questions

### To students:

Everyone asks questions like "Can I go to the movies?" or "Do I have to clean my room?" that usually have easy answers. Tough Questions are those people ask themselves or a trusted friend that don't have an immediate, obvious answer. For example, "How will I ever get over this?" when a loved one dies or "Am I strong enough to walk away?" when friends are doing something obviously wrong.

When a character asks himself or someone else a tough question, he's sharing something that bothers or upsets him. In literature, authors use tough questions to alert the reader to the character's internal conflicts. Sometimes a tough question might be a statement that begins with "I wonder why ..." or "I wonder if ...".

When you come to a Tough Question Signpost, pause and ask yourself the Anchor Question, *What does this question make me wonder about?* The answer will tell you something about the character's internal conflict and may give you a glimpse of what will happen later in the story.

## Practice Using the Tough Questions Signpost in Text

Briefly introduce the excerpt from *A Long Walk to Water* before giving each student the activity handout. Students should have something to write with and a few sticky notes.

### To students:

*A Long Walk to Water* is about what happens to an eleven-year-old boy named Salva who lives in the Sudan during a time in which rebels are raiding and destroying villages. Early in the story after the rebels have attacked Salva's small Sudan village, he becomes separated from his family. Salva is now running, scared and alone.

Read the excerpt below aloud to students as they follow along on their handout.

*Salva lowered his head and ran.*

*He ran until he could not run anymore. Then he walked. For hours, until the sun was nearly gone from the sky.*

*Other people were walking, too. There were so many of them that they couldn't all be from the school village; they must have come from the whole area.*

*As Salva walked, the same thoughts kept going through his head in rhythm with his steps. Where are we going? Where is my family? When will I see them again?*

Stop here and ask students to underline the Tough Questions.

(Where are we going? Where is my family? When will I see them again?)

## To students:

When we meet Tough Questions in a text, we need to pause and ask ourselves the Anchor Question:  
*What does the question make me wonder about?*

### Possible Responses:

- What would I do if I were separated from my family?
- Could I survive not knowing if my family was alive?
- How did the other people walking next to Salva treat him?
- Will he survive this horrible ordeal?

Read the second passage aloud.

## To students:

This passage is further along in the novel. After Salva has been on his own for a while, he finds a small group of people who are also trying to survive.

*Sure enough, there were three women giving water to the men on the ground.*

*Like a miracle, the small amounts of water revived them. They were able to stagger to their feet and join the group as the walking continued.*

*But their five dead companions were left behind. There were no tools with which to dig and besides, burying the dead men would have taken too much time.*

*Salva tried not to look as he walked past the bodies, but his eyes were drawn in their direction. He knew what would happen. Vultures would find the bodies and strip them of their rotting flesh until only the bones remained. He felt sick at the thought of those men – first dying in such a horrible way, and then having even their corpses ravaged.*

*If he were older and stronger, would he have given water to those men? Or would he, like most of the group, have kept his water for himself?*

*It was the group's third day in the desert. By sunset, they would be out of the desert, and after that, it would not be far to the Itang refugee camp in Ethiopia.*

Ask the students to underline the Tough Questions. You may want to have students discuss the Anchor question (*What does the question make me wonder about?*) in small groups or with a partner and then share with the whole class.

Read the third passage aloud as students follow along.

*I am alone now.*

*I am all that is left of my family.*

*His father, who had sent Salva to school... brought him treats, like mangoes...trusted him to take care of the herd.... His mother, always ready with food and milk and a soft hand to stroke Salva's head. His brothers and sisters, whom he had laughed with and played with and looked after ... He would never see them again.*

*How can I go on without them?*

*But how can I not go on? They would want me to survive... to grow up and make something of my life... to honor their memories.*

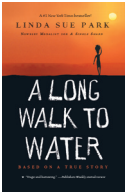
Ask students to think about the Tough Questions in the passage (How can I go on without them? But how can I not go on?) and ask themselves the Anchor Question for each one (*What does the question make me wonder about?*). Have students jot down their responses on sticky notes.

Point out that the second Tough Question (But how can I not go on?) addresses his first Tough Question (How can I go on without them?). Let students put their sticky notes on the wall or white board to share with classmates. Students can discuss the Tough Questions in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.

## Wrap Up and Review:

### To students:

There were several Tough Questions in the three passages from *A Long Walk to Water*, which gave us insight into Salva's struggles. It's easy to read right past Tough Questions, but now that you know how important they can be, please notice them, think about the Anchor Question, and make a note about your thoughts. This small change in your reading habits will make you a more thoughtful and engaged reader.



## Passages from *A Long Walk to Water*

by Linda Sue Park

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*How can I go on without them?*

*But how can I not go on? They would want me to survive... to grow up and make something of my life... to honor their memories.*



# Tough Questions

When you're reading and the character asks  
himself a really difficult question,  
You should stop and ask yourself:

**“What does this question  
make me wonder about?”**

The answers will tell you about the conflict and might give you ideas  
about what will happen later in the story.