

Step by wicked step

Family



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STEP BY WICKED STEP Themes ~ Step By Wicked Step Family relationships
Coping with new family members for example Pixie understands that her new stepmother is having as much trouble 'adjusting' as she is. Family unity
The nucleus of moral values, "the family unit," is being invaded by outsiders ('step' or 'steps') and this causes disharmony. Dealing with adversities Young children and adults may find difficulties dealing with frustrations, fears and sadness. Being happy 'Life has dealt us one hard blow, there is no reason for us to be unhappy for ever'. For example, Claudia realises it is not fair to hate her new stepmother, Stella. Think long enough before making a decision Richard Harwick made a rash decision to run away and that had changed the lives of his stepfather, mother and sister. Sibling rivalry Resentful step-siblings cause burden and hostility in a home. Coping with change All pain eventually heals and that we have the power to change things for the better. Being brave Characters like Claudia and Pixie are brave as they confess to their own rotten behaviour. Dealing with Separation and Divorce It deals with a social phenomenon that many people are experiencing, the idea of a divorce as somehow horrible. Separation and divorce, and the events leading up to them, interrupts the stability and predictability that children need. STEP BY WICKED STEP Synopsis By Chapter ~ Step By Wicked Step Chapter 1- Chapter 7 Step By Wicked Step - Chapter 1 It is raining. Mr. Plumley and five pupil from Stagfire School are going to a haunted house in a minibus. Ralpa, Claudia, Robbo, Collin and Pixie have been picked out by Miss O'Dell and herded into the minibus with Mr. Plumley. When they reach Creepsville, they think it is haunted. The last group tells tales of strange shadows and footsteps and eerie figures in white gown melting through the walls. There are no lights and Mr. Plumley is

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horrified to settle the pupils in pitch dark. They go upstairs as they pass by oil painted portraits of Harwicks of all ages staring at them. As it is a rainy night, Pixie preferred safety in numbers. They have a rule “ each bedroom is for either girls or boys. ” Mr. Plumley does not know the rule. He tells the pupils to settle in while he goes to look for the housekeeper. Robbo decides to explore two or three more stairs. He finds two more beds and a bathroom. The boys take the present room meanwhile Claudia and Pixie take the other. Colin points at the wall. He insists there is a door on the wall. When there is lightning, all of them see the wall papered door meeting the wall papered wall. As they enter the room, cobwebs indicate no one has been there. A tower off a tower. The shelf, desk and chair are filled with dust. Claudia sees a wooden cow balancing on three legs. She strokes its nose. Suddenly, she hears a soft sound behind her. Robbo sets a globe of the world to spin on its axis. By looking around, they came to a conclusion that the last child who slept in it came from a rich family. They find out it is a boy’s room. Claudia notices a dusty green album in spidery writing on the cover. Richard Clayton Harwick — My Story. Read and Weep. They hear the faint rumble of the bus. The other children have arrived. The 5 children rush to their rooms and pretend to be fast asleep. They do not want to miss the chance to read the album. Not many get a chance to peep into someone else’s life and not many people are brave enough to tell you their story. By the time Miss O’Dell and Mr. Plumley come to the first tower room, they think that the children are fast asleep due to tiredness. Miss O’Dell continues to say that the five children have something in common. Mr. Plumley is puzzled as nothing seemed to be common in the five. Pixie is a trouble maker. Claudia is sensible. Ralph is quick-witted and hardworking unlike Colin who likes to

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daydream. Robbo is soccer-mad. As Miss O'Dell goes down, the lights come again. She shuts the tower door leaving the five children who have been listening to their conversation. Step By Wicked Step - Chapter 2 The five children are waiting in an old house for the rest of their school group to arrive. They come across an old manuscript written by a boy who ran away when his mother remarried after his father's death. Richard's Story- Master Richard's father had a fever. His mother tried her best to coax his father to eat something- but it was of no use. Richard asked George the gardener about his father. Richard calls him Mr Digby. Mr Digby did not answer him but hugged him hard instead. Lucy the maid sat by Richard's bedside. When Richard asked if it was going to be today, she placed her finger on his lips and said " Hush! Don't even speak of it. Little Charlotte called out to Richard and told him that Papa wanted to see him. He dashed as fast as he could. He came across Reverend Coldstone but did not stop although he was asked to. The reverend was angry. His mother was waiting at the doorway and reminded him not to cry. His father asked him to be good to his mother and sister. His last words were —" Obey your mother's wishes to the letter. At the chapel, Mr. Coldstone consoled his mother. Richard heard him say -" When you are mine...". Richard studied at Mordanger school. He hated it there. Now he was home. Charlotte realized that Richard hated his stepfather. Richard accuses that Charlotte had forgotten about their father. Charlotte denied it and advised him not to accuse Mr Coldstone as the murderer when their father died of fever. Nevertheless, Richard had decided to leave the three of them. Richard wrote in his diary that he worked in a ship. Whenever he wrote about Mr Coldstone, he referred to him as the ' black bat'. Twice his ship stopped at his hometown and he visited his home only to stand like a

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trespasser. It had been a long time since Richard had been home. Suddenly, he saw a note on the Captain's table. He found out that his mother and stepfather had died. Charlotte wrote him a letter. In the letter, Charlotte wrote that things had been difficult as their mother spent a lot of money looking for him and they all suffered Mr Coldstone's anger. Charlotte married Charles Devere although she did not love him because he had money and was willing to spend it to look for Richard. This would be the only letter from her.

Step By Wicked Step - Chapter 3 Claudia's Story: Green Pyjamas

Claudia's Mum and Dad quarreled a lot. One day, her Dad was gone to Granny's house. However, he dropped by for tea. Claudia overheard the name "Stella". Her Mum and even Granny had a row with Dad. Dad usually met Claudia at Granny's. She missed her Dad so much. The times spent with her Dad kept flooding back. She wanted things back the way they used to be. For the first time, Claudia had a separate Christmas. Later, she was introduced to Stella who was just plain and mousy. Claudia thought her mum was a whole lot better-looking than Stella. Claudia was rude when they went for a walk. Once back, they quarreled and the next day, Dad moved out of Granny's house straight into with Stella. Claudia met her Dad off and on. Stella stayed out of it. She only made some light conversation with Claudia like asking about her friends and school. Those moments she would be thinking of her mum doing the house chores. After talking to her friend, Shreela, Claudia stopped blaming Stella. Dad and Stella arranged a party for their friends. Claudia was sent there for the day. Politely, she excused herself from the party and stayed in her room. Stella was relieved. Out of curiosity, Claudia decided to eavesdrop. She wore the green pyjamas given by Stella as it was the exact shade of green of the giant fern.

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and listen to everything the adults downstairs were talking. The guests spoke about everything except about Mum, Dad, Stella or Claudia. Nobody praised Stella for the food nor even spoke to her. Claudia found that very rude as her Mum was not there. Claudia, unable to stand the treatment Stella was getting, made a grand appearance at the party and thanked Stella for the beautiful pyjamas she had brought for her. Finally, everyone started noticing Stella. As for Claudia and Stella, this was the starting point. Stella would teach Claudia how to quilt, read maps, change electric plugs and how to skate. Step By Wicked Step - Chapter 4 Colin describes his stepfather whom he calls dad. He has thought of him as his biological father all the while. His dad looks like him. His dad has dark hair with some grey patches around his ears. His dad used to roll his own cigarettes out of tobacco in a tin. His dad calls him by many nick names- Col, Collie, Sonny-boy, Buster, Mr Bluebird. Colin's mum works in a shop. His dad walks him to school and back. His dad got him his tea and took him to the park. At the park, he used to swing as high as the bar, he swings back in such a way that his dad would call him — The Bluebird of Happiness. Then, Colin's mum took him and moved away. It happened when Colin's father had gone to spend a day with his sister. Two friends of his mum came with a van and packed everything. Then they went off. At first, he thought his dad will join them later. Colin was not happy- school mates would snigger when he did not understand things. Mum found a job at a canteen. She would be busy doing household chores when she came home. Mum was too busy to listen to him. He compared her with his dad- his dad used to talk to him and remembered names of his friends and teachers. Colin asked his mother many times about his dad. He wanted to know when his dad will come home. His mother did give him a hint about his

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father not having a proper job. He realized later that his mother did not leave any clues for his dad to follow. He then wrote a letter to his dad. But there was no reply. Every night, Colin would take the tobacco tin out of the toe of his boot and put it under his pillow. Then, he would hum his favourite song which was also his dad's favourite. He would stay awake for hours talking to his dad. He pretended that his dad was there. Colin said that it was as if his mother thought that whatever is happening is actually happening only to her. Then one day when he returned home from school, he realized that his mum had thrown away his boots. The boots were too small for him but she did not know that there was a tobacco tin hidden in there. He did not bother to tell her because she wouldn't have liked it. It has been five years, eight months and seven days and Colin still remembers his dad. He secretly writes his dad's name and his old address on the forms at school. Colin also tries to save money- he does three paper rounds. He will not try to look for his dad now- perhaps someday when he has enough money. Colin hums slowly and when asked to sing, he says that he is saving the words till he finds his dad. It was his favourite song- The Bluebird of Happiness. His friend Ralph consoled him by saying that someday Colin will find his dad.

Step By Wicked Step - Chapter 5 Ralph's Story: A Tale of Three Stepmothers Ralph has two brothers, two half-brothers, one half-sister, three stepbrothers, one stepsister, three stepmothers, one stepfather, two step-grandmothers and a step-grandfather. Living in a big family is no joke. After school on Mondays and Thursdays, he goes directly to Dad's place. His mum or his step dad, Howard sends him. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, he goes straight to his Mum's place. At times, he will be lost not knowing where to go. The lunchboxes help. M for Mickey Mouse and Mum, D for Dumbo and Dad. If he

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is lost, he has to look at his lunch box to confirm his destination. Edward and George are his brothers. The boys liked Annabel, stepmother No. 1. The only problem was she never left the boys alone with their dad. Edward and George hated this. Dad and Annabel spent all their time kissing and cuddling. Annabel was always on a diet. She disapproved of coffee. So the boys had to drink Dandelion tea every morning. She loved to read out her star sign forecast in the mornings and again in the evenings. Sometimes, she even tried to look at Edward and George to tell their aura. However, the boys would deny anything she said. Yet, their dad would not feel embarrassed. One day, Brandy, Ralph's cat was sent over as their Mum was varnishing the hall. The three boys took Brandy in a cage. Edward had made it from a broken milk bottle crate and bits of wire. Annabel was annoyed and blamed them to be cruel as Brandy did not have room to breathe. Dad distracted her by pointing out that they were out of bread. Annabel insisted in baking. The poor boys were starving to death. So, they went to the shops. They boys ate three large loaves and before they came home, they brushed away the crumbs. Dad was praising of how the dough had risen. When Annabel left it on the table, Brandy leapt up on the table and sniffed the dough. Then, Brandy lifted its paw and patted the dough. Next, Brandy curled himself comfortably into the dough. Annabel went mad. Dad tried to stick up for Brandy. The spell between Annabel and Dad was broken. In the end, Annabel ran off with someone and Dad searched high and low to get the divorce papers signed. The boys did not miss her as she was more of dad's girlfriend than a real stepmother. Dad then focused his attention on Janet, who was more keen on rules. However, Dad liked it. Edward and George did not mind as they were able to spend ample time with Dad. On the other hand, Janet

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was busy rushing her children to the doctors, dentist and school. Janet's own children, Tom, Joe and Doug and Ann moved in with the three boys. Tom and Ann could get along with Ralph but not Joe and Doug. Mum and Howard though Janet was wonderful. Janet could draw up proper schedule and Mum hardly bothered as she found Janet was easy to deal with. Due to the rules, Ralph knew he could pick up rules in no time if he was ever anywhere. Finally Janet left. She got fed up with Mum and Dad as they were taking advantage of her. Dad kept fixing up work trips on the days the boys were there. He told Janet that she had four children and another three would not make any difference. Mum started sneaking Victor's romper suit hoping that Janet would come across them and get the stains out before sending them back. So, Janet left. The boys had a wonderful time after that. Unfortunately, it was only for a short period of time. Stepmother Number 3, Flora, came into the picture. Edward met her lying on Dad's patio with hardly any clothes on. She had the cheek to tell Edward to cover up as she was enjoying the sun. George met Flora when they went shopping. Flora was dumping treats like strawberries, kiwi fruits, waffles, Belgian chocolates into the trolley. Dad was looking into the wallet, gloomily. Ralph went the next day. When he rang the bell, Flora opened and enquired. Ralph introduced himself. Flora blew her top as she did want to be a nanny. She took Ralph out for a Chinese Dinner and to watch a film. Then she met some friends and went to a coffee bar. At that time, Ralph informed his Dad of their whereabouts. Dad was furious and scolded Flora. Flora was cool and told him not to dump the children on her before checking her schedule. Ralph thought she was wonderful although she did all sorts of terrible things to him. Flora was pregnant and she ate only mint sauce sandwiches. Ralph was worried that his half sister or half

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brother would not be well taken care off by Flora. She did not know how and Ralph decided to help her out. The others usually teased Ralph. Most probably, Flora would settle in with this family. Step By Wicked Step -Chapter 6 When Pixie's parents divorced, Pixie was allowed to spend two weekends a month at her father's house which he had bought together with Lucy, her stepmother. Her two step sisters , Sophie and Hetty Payne, shared a room while Pixie was given a room to herself, as was agreed by her father. Pixie could not get along well withe her stepsisters and their actions annoyed her. One day, bothe her stepsisters got onvolved in a fight , and this caused Hetty to move into Pixie's room. Pixie was dissapointed as she was not consulted on the matter, and to make the matter worse, her father ingnored her complaints about Hetty moving into her room. Hetty's irritating behaviour also put Pixie's off. One day, while on a family holiday, Pixie had a fight with Sophie over who should occupy the top bunk bed , and both of them ended up crying. As for Hettym Pixie just could not stand her even though Hetty was closer to her in age. Pixie was also jealous of Hetty as she was everyone's darling due to her good manners and intelligence in mathematics. Pixie then divised aplan to force Hetty out from her room. Intially, she tried to frighten Hetty with ghost story and also burden Hetty with schoolwork so that Hettty would be fed up with her and voluntarily leave her room. However, those trick was failed. Hetty than complained to Lucy. Lucy tried to talk to Pixie but failed. Instead, the two of them end up arguing. Pixie's father appeared then but quickly went out of the room again as he did not want to interfere. Lucy was dissapointed with Pixie for not putting with any effort to integrate and mix with the family. Pixie was dissapointed that there was nothing for her at Lucy's home. After expressing their frustrations

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and disappointments, both Lucy and Pixie cried and then made up. Pixie was able to tolerate her stepsisters and Hetty helped her with her homework. She also tried to be more sociable at Lucy's home. Step By Wicked Step - Chapter 7 Robbo's parents split up when he was only six years old. Robbo's father then moved out from their house and Robbo and his sister, Callie visited him at his place regularly. Robbo's stepfather, Roy moved to their home but Callie disliked him. She also nicknamed him as 'The Beard' as Roy seemed to interfere with their family affairs. Their mother then gave birth to Dumpa, Robbo's half brother. One day, when Roy and their mother had a row, Callie tried to get their parents back together but failed. One day, Robbo's mother had a serious row with Roy over Callie's habit of pushing her bicycle through the narrow space between his car and the bushes beside it as it almost scratched Roy's car. They started shouting at each other. Roy was angry as he felt his wife siding with Callie and that neither of them appreciated his effort in sending the kids to school or paying for food. Robbo's mother and Roy's efforts to solve the problem but they ended up arguing. The situation worsened when Roy decided not to drive Callie to school and sledding activities when snow started to fall. He even refused to buy her favourite brand of cereals as she was not polite and civil to him. The next day, Roy decided to clear the shed during the middle of a heavy snowfall with Dumpa following him. Robbo's mother tried to get Dumpa in, but he refused and only listened to Roy. Robbo then succeeded in coaxing Dumpa into the house by offering him strawberry rocket ice lolly. From that day onward, their mother was always stuck in the middle as both Callie and Roy were unhappy and upset with each other. She also realised that the only solution to the problem is for her to move out her father's place. Robbo's father then

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suggested to his ex-wife to go on a holiday with Roy to help them solving the problem. He even offering to take care of Dumpa while there were away. The story ended with Robbo's optimistic view of his family as they can now start afresh. Ralph compared Robbo's story to Richard Harwick's story because his sister, Callie and Richared both did not like their stepfathers and had to leave their family. However, unlike Richard who ran away from his family, Callie tried something different in order to make things work at home. Ralph also mentioned that everyone in their group had tried their best to solve their problems at home. Claudia then put the journal back into its place, but took out Charlotte's little wooden cow, removed a tiny splinter, and gave the little wooden cow to Ralph who thrust it into Collin's bag , hoping that Colin would find his stepfather again.

STEP BY WICKED STEP Characters and characterisation ~ Step By Wicked Step Name of character | Descriptions/ Attributes/ Personality | Robbo | School pupil, sports-mad especially football | Ralph | School pupil, quick-witted, hardworking and occasionally likes to intercept impolitely during a conversation | Colin | School pupil, longs to be reunited with his stepdad, dreamy as ' he drifts through the hours of each school day as if his thoughts were hundreds of miles away' and this ' drove his teachers to despair' | Claudia | Steady, sensible, did not get along well with her stepmother at the beginning | Pixie | Fiery, a good reader, selfish | Richard ClaytonHarwick | Owner of Old Harwick Hall, lost his father at a very young age. His mother remarries the priest, Reverend Coldstone whose wrath Richard cannot stand. He runs away, without knowing that he has made a decision that will change three lives; his stepfather's, mother's and sister's. When he inherits Old Harwick Hall, he has lost his three closest members of the family. | Rev. Coldstone | Richard's wicked stepfather, strict

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and cold-hearted | Mr. Plumley | A staff of the school who accompanies the children to Old Harwick Hall | Miss O' Dell | The school teacher who picks five of the children on a trip after a quick glance at her list. | Mr. Digby | Gardener at the Harwick's household | Lucy | Maid at the Harwick's household | Charlotte | Richard Clayton Harwick's sister. | STEP BY WICKED STEP Moral Values ~ Step By Wicked Step Family is everything This is the main message in all the five stories from Claudia, Ralph, Colin, Pixie and Robbo. Love is the factor that binds the family together but sometimes the family unit breaks down due to a lack of understanding between parents. Most of the time, children are not prepared for such a situation and this lands them in an awkward and painful situation. It is important to minimize the impact of divorce on children and to make sure they do not feel unwanted or unimportant. Parents must always try to keep the family together despite the breakdown in their relationship. Patience is a virtue It is important to practice a lot of patience in difficult times. No parents would want a divorce if they can help it. Hence, everyone affected by a divorce must be patient and tolerant. Richard Clayton Harwick does not show enough patience when he leaves his family because he cannot get along with his step father. As a result of his action, his mother dies of heartbreak and his sister blames him for being selfish and cruel. In Pixie's story, she does not show much patience towards her step siblings. She refuses to share her bedroom with Hetty. She is also hard headed and argues intensely with her step mother. We must learn to adapt to new situations Children from broken homes have no choice but to learn to adapt to new situations. This may be unfair to the children who seem to be the 'victim' of circumstances beyond their control. However, in the five stories told, we learn that adapting is better than

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resisting although it takes a lot of patience and effort on the children's part. Claudia shows she is a rational and sensible child to accept her step mother. Ralph, who has three step mothers, gets along with all of them despite their different personalities. Don't give up hope Colin's story is the saddest of all. He does not give up hope of one day finding Jack whom he accepts as his own father. He saves all his money and plans to look for his dad when the time is right. Colin is a very determined person despite his young age. He knows what he wants. Robbo also hopes his sister Callie will accept their step father Roy. However, Callie resents Roy and decides to live with her real father in the end.

STEP BY WICKED STEP Setting ~ Step By Wicked Step 1. The haunted house of Harwick. 2. Domestic households of Claudia, Colin, Ralph, Pixie and Robbo.

STEP BY WICKED STEP Literary Devices ~ Step By Wicked Step

Simile

- Like someone stepping on stones over a river with water raging on both sides (p. 21)
- When a great ship strains at the tide, and needs a cabin boy, nobody asks the lad who speaks as roughly as a gardener's son, and claims to be Dick Digby, whether his mother knows he's off to sea. (p. 25)
- ... dressed black as a bat (p. 16)
- She (Hetty) is still wary of me, and I still get on with her that bit better when all the lights are out, and I don't have to watch her cocking her one side and fiddling with her hair or rolling the cat like a sausage across the downie (p. 103)
- It was like the Arctic. (p 87)
- Like leftover shoved in a fridge (p. 2)
- as narrow as the ones that archers used... (p. 8)
- ...over a black and white tiled floor that looked like a huge checkerboard glazed ... (p. 4)
- tight little circle, like campers round a ...(p. 6)
- She picked her way..... like someone stepping(p. 21)
- And I'd just stare down at my plate on my face that said, plain as day, with a look ' Why should you?' (p. 40)

Hyperbole Hyperbole is

exaggeration. It puts a picture into the reader's mind. Anne Fine occasionally makes a point by overstating an action or object as in the following hyperboles: i. As the driver swung the minibus (p. 1) ii. Just as if the dull-looking binder on the desk was a delicious birthday cake (p. 10) iii. No tears! I would have found obedience.... How many nights my pillow would become a flood (p. 17) iv. How many cloudless afternoons I was to water with my private showers (p. 17)

Personification Personification is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or are represented as possessing human form. Anne Fine uses personification to make this novel more dramatic and interesting or to convey a certain mood. By using this literary device, it also helps us to relate more to the object or idea that is being personified because it is easier for us to relate to something with human attributes. i. Flinching as the twisted fingers of trees scraped at the glass (p. 2) ii. And then another flash shot generously across the sky (p. 7) iii. The wind still whistled through the tree, but in the room the silence is palpable (p. 34)

Repetition This device is mostly used in two of the vignettes to emphasise on the subject in hand, as shown in the following: i. 'It isn't a story,' said Colin. 'There isn't anything to tell. We just went on.' (p. 51) ii. 'There isn't a story,' said Colin. (p. 53) iii. 'There isn't a story,' said Colin. 'We just went on.' (p. 56) iv. 'I've told you,' said Colin. 'There isn't story. It's just that, as we went on, I started getting into trouble at school...' (p. 57) v. 'Dumpa's the problem' (pgs 107, 112, 119 and 125)