Save the Last Word

Description
A strategy that uses a collaborative format for the discussion of text in which students first record interesting quotes and why they find them interesting, and then share their thinking with their peers.

Purposes
- To support students’ interaction with text
- To promote reading comprehension
- To clarify and deepen thinking about content

Directions
1. Divide students into groups of 3–5. Give each student 3–5 index cards.
2. Assign a text to read. Ask students to write quotations from the text they find interesting on one side of the card and why they find each quote interesting on the opposite side of the card.
3. After everyone is finished reading the selection and preparing their cards, the first person in each group shares one of his/her quotes but does not say why this interested him/her.
4. After everyone has taken about 1 minute to react/respond to the quote that was shared, the person who chose the quote wraps up the discussion with some final words about the quotation.
5. Discussion continues in this fashion with each person in the group taking 1–3 turns as time permits.

Extensions
- Have the group complete a group summary of the text that was read.
- Have the group debrief the session.
- Have each person select a quote to write about in a response journal.
- Ask each group to select the most important quote to share with the class with justification about why it was seen as significant.
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### Cross Content Sample

#### English Language Arts

*After* reading a poetry unit

Have students copy a stanza from a poem onto a card they find interesting with the reason on the reverse side, such as:

Archibald MacLeish, *Eleven*  
“And summer mornings the mute child, rebellious, Stupid, hating the words, the meanings, hating The Think now, Think, the O but Think! Would leave On tiptoe.”—Because it reminds me of how I feel about my mother, always wanting me to keep on studying when school gets out and I just want to be with my friends.

Robert Frost, *Birches*  
“But swinging doesn’t bend them down to stay As ice storms do.”—It gives me advice on recovering from hurt by others.

#### Mathematics

*Before, during, and after* reading the calculus j-operator unit on imaginary number properties

Have students align the math with their own interests by having them select quotes from the chapter that they connect with, such as:

“The imaginary unit is denoted by the symbol j.”—Because my name is Jay and I love science fiction and its imaginary inventions and machines.

“It is impossible to square any real number and have the product equal a negative number. We must define a new number system if we wish to include square roots of negative numbers.”—That always made me curious when we worked with square roots before now.

“We need merely to multiply numerator and denominator by the conjugate of the denominator in order to perform this operation.”—It’s just so funny that the author keeps using adjectives like “merely” to show how easy calculus is and after ten weeks in this course, I wouldn’t understand a word in this book without Ms. Smith’s excellent instruction.

#### Science

*Before, during, and after* reading newspapers for current science issues

Have students copy a scientific newspaper reference that they find interesting, such as:

“Fluorescent filaments of the organisms, known as cyanobacteria, began forming in the river last week and by yesterday they streaked the Esplanade lagoons a psychedelic green.”—I’m intrigued because a tiny bacteria caused a major transformation in a short period of time and I wonder how they will get the algae under control.

“Carnoustie, Scotland—Rain was pelting. Sideways, as they say over here. It was a cold rain, too. And the wind? Surely, even the foundation of Glamis Castle had to be shaking.”—I picked this as the only part of the paper I really like reading is the Sports section and I enjoy learning how weather affects sports, in this case golf.

#### Social Studies

*Before, during, and after* reading the U.S. Constitution, Articles, and Amendments

Have students select quotes that they feel passionately about after reading, such as:

“We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity…”—Because it says it all and because I’m worried we’re losing ground in achieving this vision.

“The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of age.”—I’ll be 18 next year and only at the very end in Amendment 26 is it reflected that youth’s ideas are important.

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