Affix Label to a small manila envelope. Hand out to individual students or pairs to help students learn how to determine important information in nonfiction texts.
Pack the Suitcase

Step 1: After students have “pre-read” the text, have them read and highlight information they think is important.

Step 2: Pass out a small manila envelope with the “Pack the Suitcase” label to each student or group.

Step 3: Have the student(s) write out the “important points” they highlighted on a notecard, Post-It, or piece of paper.

Step 4: Have the students “pack” their suitcase with the information.

Step 5: When finished, tell the students they are going on a trip, but they packed too much and must work to lighten their suitcases.

Step 6: Students review their notes to decide which items to “unpack”. They must work to take out about half of what they put in. [This is especially true of duplicate or similar answers... or notes that take the students away from the main focus of the piece.]

Step 7: Next, have each student (or group) travel across the room to find another student (or group). Once they have made the trip, both should “unpack” and share what is in their suitcases. They should be looking for commonalities.

Step 8: Pull the class back together to discuss what similarities existed and what they determined was most important from the text.