

# Mystery Quotes

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## Purpose

This protocol offers students a chance to work together to uncover the meaning of a mystery quote/passage/image before they read more about it or work more deeply with inference as a critical thinking strategy. It allows students to work in a fun, collaborative environment to use new information from a partner and to draw on their own background knowledge to uncover meaning. This protocol also asks students to put things in their own words, to compare text to experience, and to work with a variety of partners.

## Materials

- Quotes, phrases, sentences, or words from the text copied onto strips or index cards, one per student

## Procedure

1. Decide on quotes, phrases, sentences, or words directly from the text to copy onto strips or index cards.
2. Don't paraphrase the text. You may omit words to shorten a sentence, but don't change the words.
3. Have students select a quote/passage and, without revealing it to a partner, tape it on his or her back. (Students may look for a partner who "fits" the quote, or selections can be randomly determined.)
4. Students mingle about the room and stop when prompted, facing a new partner.
5. In one minute or less, students read each other's quotes and think about one hint to give the partner about his or her quote.
6. In one minute total, each student shares a hint about the partner's quote.
7. Students mingle about the room again and stop when prompted, facing another partner.
8. Students take time to read the quote and think about a story that exemplifies or reminds them of it.
9. Each student shares the story related to the partner's quote in a set time frame.
10. Continue additional rounds as desired, offering a range of possible prompts, such as, "Create a metaphor or simile to describe the quote," "Give an example of the idea in the quote in action," etc.
11. Bring the whole group together to each share a final inference about the meaning of their quote.
12. Students then guess which quote has been taped to their back from a list of all quotes and share how their inferences about the quote compare to the actual text.
13. Discuss strategies students used for inferring and how the quotes deepened or introduced knowledge.

## Variations

- Students carry index cards with them, recording their current thinking about the essence of their quotes.
- Vary partner instructions or adapt numbers of partners or rounds.
- For nonreaders, use images with or without key words. The goal is to infer what is happening in the image on their back. Images can range from concrete to abstract. It is also possible to divide the class into readiness groups and have one group work separately with sentences while the other uses images.