Pack Your Bag

THE PROBLEM THIS SOLVES



Students can list facts about a topic, but struggle to use them. This activity forces a choice: five items, one bag, and a justification for each that has to cite evidence. It works as a preview before a unit, a check for understanding in the middle, or a review at the end.

HOW IT WORKS

1

Set the destination

Name a specific time, place, person, or moment in a book. "Valley Forge, winter of 1777" beats "the Revolution." "Chapter 12, the night of the storm" beats "the book."

2

Pack the bag

Students pick five items and justify each one. A justification must cite evidence from the text, source, or research. "Because it's useful" does not count.

3

Unpack and argue

Small groups compare bags, analyze each justification, and challenge weak evidence. End with a class vote on the single most important item.

WHAT A STRONG JUSTIFICATION LOOKS LIKE

Not enough	Justified with evidence
"I'm bringing a coat because it's cold." No evidence. Anyone could write this without reading a page.	*"I'm bringing a wool coat because soldiers at Valley Forge had no winter uniforms, and many had no shoes. Wool stays warm even when wet, and it rained or snowed most of that winter."* Cites specific details, then explains why they matter for this item.

QUICK CHECK FOR EACH JUSTIFICATION

1 Cites evidence from the text or source.

2 Explains how that evidence supports the choice.

3 Shows understanding that a reader who skipped the text could not fake.

USE IT FOR

A time period: A week on the Oregon Trail, a day in ancient Rome.

Meeting a person: A visit with Marie Curie or a character from the novel.

Inside a book: The exact moment a character faces the big problem.

MODIFICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Grades K to 2	Grades 6 and up	Extension
Three items instead of five. Draw the item, then tell a partner one fact that explains it.	Require a page number or source for each item. Add a weight or cost limit so students rank what matters most.	Run it before and after the unit. Compare the two bags, and write about what changed and why.

Created by educator **Donnie Piercey**, Shared by **Edutopia**

Pack Your Bag

Name _____ Date _____

WHERE AM I GOING? A time period, a place, a person, or a moment in a book.



You can only bring five things. Pick each item, then justify it: Cite evidence from the text or your research and explain how it supports your choice.

1	**ITEM**	**JUSTIFY** Cite evidence. Explain your reasoning.
2	**ITEM**	**JUSTIFY** Cite evidence. Explain your reasoning.
3	**ITEM**	**JUSTIFY** Cite evidence. Explain your reasoning.
4	**ITEM**	**JUSTIFY** Cite evidence. Explain your reasoning.
5	**ITEM**	**JUSTIFY** Cite evidence. Explain your reasoning.

LEFT BEHIND: Analyze one item you cut. What evidence changed your mind?