Open-Ended Questions

An "open-ended" question elicits many correct responses. Open-ended are not the same as "opinion" questions, since they may be based on a specific text and have more- and less-correct responses. Teach students to build their case from evidence in the text and to be willing to challenge one another!

1. **Opening Questions:**
   Consider using a round-robin response for an opening question, asking everyone to go around and reply with a single phrase. Then, open it up for students to explain their replies.

   - Out of all the words in this passage, what one word do you think is most significant? (round 1) Please explain. (round 2)

   - What detail in the text is most interesting to you? (round 1) Why? (round 2)

2. **Textual Questions:**
   When analyzing important details in the text, you may hear that students are misunderstanding the concepts. Coach them to help another refine their understanding. What evidence do they see in the text to support this idea? How strong is their case?

   - The author writes in verse _____: "_____." What does he mean?

   - Look at verse _____: "_____." What do you think of this description?

   - Why do you think he uses the terms _____?

   - What is the relationship between _____ and _____?

   - How does the author build his case for _____?

   - Based on this text, what is meant by _____(a key term)_____? Why?

   - The author says, _____. What does he mean?

   - Why does the author say _____ if this opposite thing is true?

3. **Application Questions**
   You may hear that students are misunderstanding the meaning of concepts in the text. Coach them to question and refine one another's understanding. For instance, how much evidence do they see of this in the text? If a word or idea appears only once, is it a good candidate for a "most important" concept?

   - What does this text each us about _____?

   - The author challenges his audience to _____ How would he challenge us today?

   - What does this text teach you about your relationship to _____?

   - Based on this passage, what do you think the author wants us to believe or do as a result?