Learning Strategy #1 Roundtable w/ABC Boxes

Since our presentation, I have used many of the active learning strategies that were introduced. I have found that the students are much more engaged in the class when I use these techniques on a daily basis. I actually used one the first day of the term to get the students to work in pairs and use prior knowledge. The first activity I used was Roundtable with my 20th century history class. This is a sophomore class and I wanted to get an idea of how much they learned or remembered from their freshman history class. I have the students sitting in groups of four to begin with, so I had each group of four split into groups of two. I started out by explaining the class and what we were going to be learning this year. I proceeded to ask them what they remember from their history class last year. I handed out the ABC boxes sheet and told them that they had 3 min to write down or list as many topics as they could remember from the prior history class. I did spend some time going through the directions, etc. I gave them a signal and they got to work. After they worked with their partners, I paired them with the other set of partners and formed groups of four. We did the same activity, this time I gave the group 5 min to fill out their ABC boxes. I also gave them the option of the "pass" and to ask a team member. That seemed to work pretty well for the students that really struggle. When we were done, we went over our answers as a class and the students were very engaged. I was surprised how much they remembered from last year. I felt this activity went very well and I try to use it whenever I can. It showed me a variety of things including how students work in groups, their prior knowledge of the subject matter, and their level of understanding. I don't know if I would change anything about it. The only thing I may do differently next time would be the amount of time I give them to complete this activity. I only gave the class three minutes on the first round, and they may need a little more time than that. All in all, it was a very successful activity.