

# Strategies for Writing Your Synthesis Essay for AP

**Language** by Estelle Rankin | Barbara L. Murphy

## Strategy 1: Critical Reading of Texts



**A word about the texts:** The several texts you will be given for the synthesis prompt will be related to the topic, and you can be assured that each text has been evaluated and judged to be appropriate, of acceptable quality, and representing several points of view.

Critical reading of texts specifically for the synthesis essay demands that you determine the following:

- Purpose/thesis
- Intended audience
- Type of source (primary, secondary)
- Main points
- Historical context
- Authority of the author
- How the material is presented
- Type of evidence presented
- Source of the evidence
- Any bias or agenda
- How the text relates to the topic
- Support or opposition toward the thesis

### Practice with Critical Reading

Our example: Here is a text provided in the Master exam's synthesis essay.

#### Source E

Broder, John M., "States Curbing Right to Seize Private Homes." *New York Times*, February 21, 2006.

The following passage is excerpted from an article published in the *New York Times*.

*"Our opposition to eminent domain is not across the board," he [Scott G. Bullock of the Institute for Justice] said. "It has an important but limited role in government planning and the building of roads, parks, and public buildings. What we oppose is eminent domain abuse for private development, and we are encouraging legislators to curtail it."*

*More neutral observers expressed concern that state officials, in their zeal to protect homeowners and small businesses, would handcuff local governments that are trying to revitalize dying cities and fill in blighted areas with projects that produce tax revenues and jobs.*

*"It's fair to say that many states are on the verge of seriously overreacting to the Kelo decision," said John D. Echeverria, executive director of the Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute and an authority on land-use policy. "The danger is that some legislators are going to*

*attempt to destroy what is a significant and sometimes painful but essential government power. The extremist position is a prescription for economic decline for many metropolitan areas around the county."*

Our writer's critical reading of the passage provides the following information:

1. **Thesis:** "... What we oppose is eminent domain abuse for private development, and we are encouraging legislators to curtail it."
2. **Intended audience:** generally educated readers
3. **Main points:**
  - A. qualified opposition to eminent domain
  - B. opposed to eminent domain for private development
  - C. acknowledges that there are those who see their position as handcuffing local officials
  - D. Echeverria says, "The danger ... " He fears legislation could destroy essential government. power.
4. **Historical context:** 2006 in response to *Kelo* decision
5. **How material is presented:** Thesis + expert's direct quotation + acknowledgement of opposition + expert's direct quotation
6. **Type of evidence presented:** direct quotations of experts in the field
7. **Source of evidence:** expert opinions
8. **Any bias or agenda:** both sides of issue are presented
9. **How text relates to the topic:** specific statements for and against eminent domain
10. **Support or not for thesis:** one quotation supports a qualifying position: "I can empathize with the home owners affected by the recent 5:4 Supreme Court decision." The other quotation could be used to recognize those who would oppose it.

*Note:* This is a process that does not necessarily require that every point be written out. You could easily make mental notes of many of these items and jot down only those that you think you could use in your essay. You may prefer to annotate directly on the text itself.

## **Practice**

Now, you complete a critical reading of another text from the Master exam on eminent domain.

## **Source C**

*Kelo v. New London.* U.S. Supreme Court 125 S. Ct. 2655.

The following is a brief overview of a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005.

*Suzette Kelo, et al. v. City of New London, et al., 125 S. Ct. 2655 (2005), more commonly Kelo v. New London, is a land-use law case argued before the United States Supreme Court on February 22, 2005. The case arose from a city's use of eminent domain to condemn privately owned real property so that it could be used as part of a comprehensive redevelopment plan.*

*The owners sued the city in Connecticut courts, arguing that the city had misused its eminent domain power. The power of eminent domain is limited by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. The Fifth Amendment, which restricts the actions of the federal*

government, says in part that "private property [shall not] be taken for public use, without just compensation"; under Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment, this limitation is also imposed on the actions of U.S. state and local governments. *Kelo* and the other appellants argued that economic development, the stated purpose of the Development Corporation, did not qualify as public use.

*The Supreme Court's Ruling: This 5:4 decision holds that the governmental taking of property from one private owner to give to another in furtherance of economic development constitutes a permissible "public use" under the Fifth Amendment.*

1. Purpose/thesis: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Intended audience: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Main points: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Historical context: \_\_\_\_\_
5. How material is presented: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Type of evidence presented: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Source of evidence: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Any bias or agenda: \_\_\_\_\_
9. How text relates to topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Support or opposition for my thesis: \_\_\_\_\_

### **What Types of Visual Texts Can I Expect on the AP Language Exam?**

You can expect to encounter a variety of visual sources on the AP Language exam. They may include:

- Political cartoons
- Charts and graphs
- Posters
- Advertising
- Paintings
- Photographs

As with the steps involved in the critical reading of written material, visuals also require critical analysis. The following are steps you should consider when faced with a visual text:

- Identify the subject of the visual.
- Identify the major components, such as characters, visual details, and symbols.
- Identify verbal clues, such as titles, tag lines, date, author, and dialogue.

- Notice position and size of details.
- Does the visual take a positive or negative position toward the issue?
- Identify the primary purpose of the visual.
- Determine how each detail illustrates and/or supports the primary purpose.
- Does the author indicate alternative viewpoints?

### **What Follows Is a Sample Critical Reading of a Political Cartoon Taken from the Master Exam**

One type of text that could be used for the synthesis essay prompt on the AP English Language exam is the political cartoon. No, AP Language has not turned into a history or journalism course. But, it does recognize the variety of texts that can be created to advance or illustrate a particular thesis. The political cartoon does in a single or multiple frame presentation what would take hundreds of words in an essay, editorial, and so forth. It is a visual presentation of a specific point of view on an issue.

*Note: Even though the synthesis essay prompt may include political cartoons, or charts, or surveys, you are not required to use any of them. Your choice of texts depends on your purpose.*

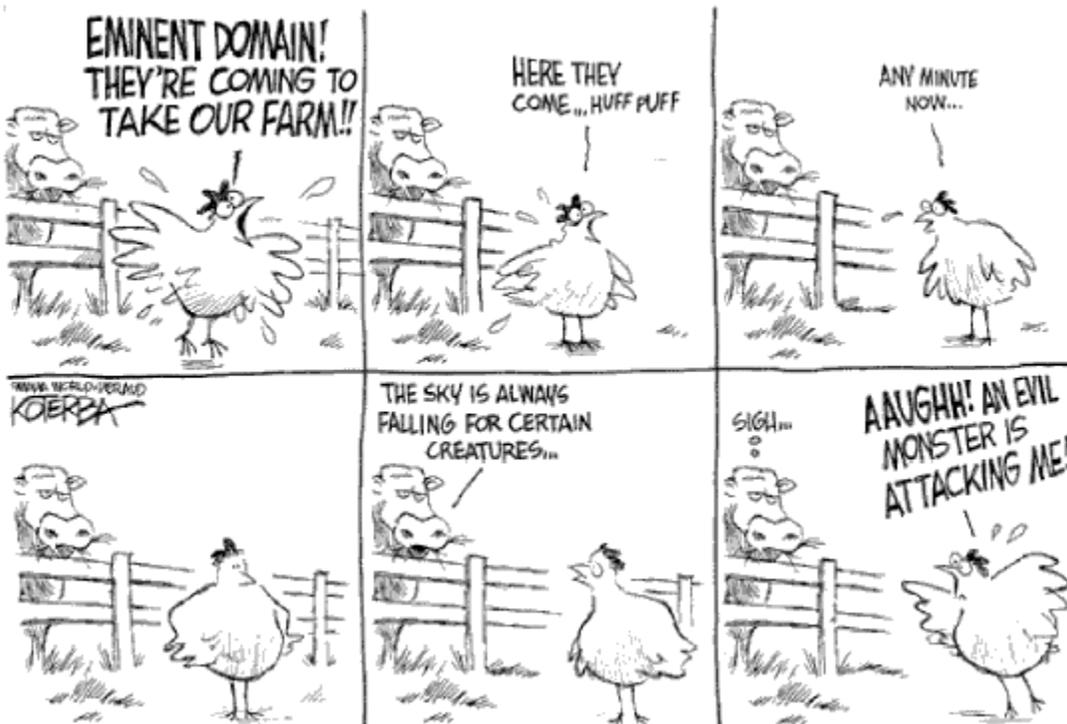
When dealing with a political cartoon, here are the specific steps to consider that are adapted from the critical reading of a visual.

- Identify the subject of the cartoon.
- Identify the major components, such as characters, visual details, and symbols.
- Identify verbal clues, such as titles, tag lines, date, cartoonist, and dialogue.
- Notice position and size of details within the frame.
- Does the cartoon take a positive or negative position toward the issue?
- Identify the primary purpose of the cartoon.
- Determine how each detail illustrates and/or supports the primary purpose.
- Does the cartoonist indicate alternative viewpoints?

Notice that a political cartoon assumes the reader is aware of current events surrounding the specific issue. So, we recommend you begin to read a newspaper or news magazine regularly and/or watch a daily news program on TV. Even listening to a five-minute news summary on the radio as you drive to and from errands or school can give you a bit of background on what's happening in the world around you.

**Example: Source D, political cartoon**

The following political cartoon appeared in an Omaha, Nebraska, newspaper. Jeff Koterba, *Omaha World Herald*, NE



1. Subject of the cartoon: eminent domain.
2. Major components: one chicken, one cow in a barnyard.
3. Verbal clues: Print size and form indicates the chicken is very excited, even panicked, while the cow is calm and unimpressed.
4. Position and size of details: The chicken and cow are drawn mostly to scale and perspective with the chicken taking center stage.
5. Position of the cartoonist: Sees fears surrounding eminent domain as overexaggerated.
6. Primary purpose of the cartoon: Ridicule those who believe that all is lost if eminent domain remains in effect.
7. How details illustrate the primary purpose: Size and form of print indicates the chicken's state of mind. The sigh of the calmly chewing cow indicates its recognition of the chicken's silly warning. The chicken's last warning that says the cow is a threatening monster is just wrong and over the top.
8. Indication of alternative viewpoints: Yes, both sides are indicated.

As pointed out previously, each of these steps is important in understanding a political cartoon, but it is not necessary that you write out each of them every time you come across one in the newspaper, and so forth. Most of the analysis is done quickly in your mind, but when you are practicing techniques and strategies, it is most beneficial to write out, just as our writer did, each of the previous eight steps.

**Practice** critically reading political cartoons that you find in newspapers and news magazines. You might even try a few included in your history textbook.

## Strategy 2: Selecting Sources

Once you've carefully read the prompt, critically read each of the given texts, and decided on your claim, you must choose which of the sources you will use in your essay. This choice is dependent on your answers to the following:

- What is your purpose?
- Is the text background information or pertinent information?
- Does the source give new information or information that other sources cover?
- Is this information that will add depth to the essay?
- Does this text reflect the viewpoints of any of the other texts?
- Does this text contradict the viewpoints of any of the other texts?
- Does the source support or oppose your claim?

Our writer has to make some important decisions about the seven texts provided in the Master synthesis essay prompt. As the writer answers each of the previous questions, he or she will decide which texts to use in the essay.

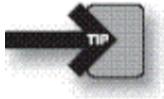
My purpose: to qualify the support and opposition to eminent domain

Background information: *Constitution* (Source A) *Kelo* decision (Source C)

Pertinent information: *60 Minutes* (Source B) Broder (Source E) Survey (Source G)

***A helpful technique to answer the next several questions is to construct a quick chart that incorporates all of the sources at once. The following is a sample of such a chart.***

SOURCE	TYPE OF INFO	ADDS DEPTH	REFLECTS VIEWS OTHER TEXTS	SUPPORT OF CLAIM OF
A	Primary and covered by Sources C and E	Yes	No	Yes and no
B	Covered by Sources C–G	Yes	Yes	Yes
C	Covered by Sources A, D, E	Yes	Yes, Sources D, G	Yes and no
D	Covered by Sources A, C	Not really	Yes, Sources A, C	Yes and no
E	Covered by Source B, F, G	Yes	Yes, Sources B, F, G	Yes and no
F	Covered by Sources B, E, G	Not really	Yes, Sources B, E, G	Yes and no
G	Covered by Sources B–F	Yes	Yes, Sources B–F	Yes



There certainly is a great deal of information to gather and consider. The good news is that the more practice you have with this process, the more quickly you will be able to complete the task. Writing the answers to the previous questions for each of the given texts is a good practice technique for you. But, when it comes to a timed writing situation, you will be annotating the given texts as you read them and jotting down brief notes that reflect the type of thinking our writer performed previously. You will NOT have time to write answers to each question for each text. But, you WILL be thinking about them as you read and as you plan.

**Practice** responding to these questions using editorials, letters to the editor, and editorial cartoons that revolve around current event issues in which you have an interest. Don't ignore your school and local newspapers, and columnists in news magazines and newspapers. **Become an informed reader and citizen!**

After carefully considering each of the given texts, our reader has decided to eliminate both political cartoons because neither seems to add much depth. The other five sources can be used to develop a position.

### Strategy 3: Choosing Which Parts of the Selected Texts to Use

Pay no attention to those texts you have eliminated. For those sources you have chosen to include in your essay, do the following:

- Review the notes/highlights on each of your chosen passages.
- Ignore those items you have not annotated.
- Determine if each excerpt contributes to the development of your thesis.
  - Identify the major point each will support.
  - Does it strengthen your position or not (if not, ignore it)?
  - How much of the excerpt will you use?
  - Why have it in your essay?
  - What comments can you make about it?

*For example: You might construct a chart such as the following:*

SOURCE:	A	B	C	E	G
	-Use all of excerpt	-City ¶ 1	-ID Kelo case ¶ 1	-Bullock “.” 1st line in title	-Survey ID
	-Use in Intro	-Background ¶ 1	-Summary in ¶3	-Echeverria“.” Line 1, ¶3	-Major result lines 1 & 2
		-1st “.” ¶ 2			
		-Mayor’s position“.” ¶7			
		-Blighted ¶8			

Our writer now has a clear idea of what part(s) of each text to use. The next task is to plan the essay. The following are some planning notes:

*INTRO: Background  
Basic prompt info  
My room when grandmother visits  
My position—qualify*

*POINT 1: Kelo decision + Saleets (oppose current ruling)  
Saleets' mayor (support ruling)  
My comments*

*POINT 2: Broder = Bullock & Echeverria (both qualify and for ruling)  
Survey*

With this brief outline in mind, our writer knows where to place each of the chosen excerpts. If this were a class situation that allotted time for prewriting plans, more details would be possible when constructing the outline.

*Note:* Our writer chose to jot down a brief outline, but could have chosen to plan the essay in a number of different ways, such as:

- Mapping
- Charting

As we stated earlier in this chapter, for the AP English Language exam, you only have time to write a first draft, and it must be clear, organized, logical, and thoughtful. In developing each of your major points, make certain to:

- Relate it to the thesis/claim
- Use specific examples (personal and otherwise)
- Use selected sources to support the major point
- Incorporate sources into the development of your point

— Attribution and introduction of cited sources

— Transitions

— Mix of direct quotations, summary, and paraphrases

### **A Note About Summary, Paraphrase, and Inference**

No doubt you have been constructing summaries, paraphrases, and inferences as you learned the techniques of close reading and research. As a quick review, here are the definitions of these processes and an example of each. If you have any further questions, we strongly recommend you ask your instructor for clarification and further examples and/or practice.

#### **Summary**

If you want to summarize a text, you read closely and locate those key words and/or phrases that enable you to reduce the piece into its essential point(s).

Example: The previous *New York Times* article by Broder

Number of words in given text: 175

Number of key words underlined: 47

Summary based on the key words and phrases: *For many, the debate about eminent domain centers around opposing local governments using it to seize private property for private development or supporting eminent domain because cities face economic disaster without this necessary power.* (34 words)

Comments: The writer has whittled the original down by more than 73 percent to its essential point.

**Practice** this strategy on newspaper or magazine articles that you read regularly.

*Note:* Many online databases provide abstracts of longer articles when you perform a search. You might want to seek these out and read them to see how they are constructed to emphasize only the main points of the articles (Jodi Rice).

## Paraphrase

To paraphrase a given text or part of a text, you transpose the original material into your own words. This will probably be close to the number of words in the original. In most cases, you need to cite the original.

Example: The first paragraph in the previous Source C

Paraphrase: *Kelo v. New London is an eminent domain case that was presented to the U.S. Supreme Court in February of 2005. The argument centered around New London using the power of eminent domain to seize private property so that it could be sold and used in the redevelopment of a section of this city (Source C).*

Comments: The original contains 67 words and two sentences, and the 54 word paraphrase is also two sentences long. Our writer has eliminated specific court numbers and the day of the month and combined several phrases into briefer and more direct ones. **Because this background on the *Kelo* case is NOT common knowledge and because our writer is NOT a recognized expert in this field, a citation is necessary.**

**Practice** this technique on sections of your own course textbooks and on newspaper or magazine articles you read regularly. You might also try to paraphrase the Master exam synthesis prompt itself, both the introduction and the assignment.

## Inference

An inference is the process of drawing a conclusion based on specific material. By carefully considering the important information provided in the text, the reader reaches a conclusion or makes a judgment.

Example: Source B given in the synthesis essay prompt

Inference: *Considering the amount of time given to the Saleets as compared to the mayor of their town, one could conclude that 60 Minutes is more inclined to side with the homeowners over the local government in this eminent domain confrontation.*

Comments: Seven out of the ten paragraphs in this interview are positively related to the Saleets or their problem. The rhetorical question and answer given by the voiceover in paragraph five is indicative of the position of *60 Minutes*, and the diction used to describe both sides of the issue is more favorable toward the position of the Saleets.

**Practice** making inferences based on editorials or letters to the editor that you find in your local newspapers. Go a step further. Take a close look at ads you find in the magazines you read regularly and draw some conclusions about their purpose, their intended audience, and the specific way the ads are presented. Remember, you must be able to support each of your inferences from specifics found in the text itself.

#### **Strategy 4: Incorporating Sources into the Text of Your Essay**

Let's be realistic. The synthesis essay is not just a list of direct quotations from sources related to the topic. Once you have chosen your passages, you need to place them appropriately and interestingly within the actual text of your essay in the order that you've planned to best support your thesis/claim.

Just how do you do this? You could select from among the following techniques:

**Direct quotation**—full citation provided at beginning of the sentence

*John Broder in his February 21, 2006, New York Times article titled "States Curbing Right to Seize Private Homes," quotes Scott G. Bullock of the Institute for Justice: "Our opposition to eminent domain is not across the board ... What we oppose is eminent domain abuse for private development, and we are encouraging legislators to curtail it."*

**Direct quotation**—citation placed outside the text

*In a 60 Minutes interview presented on July 4, 2004, Jim Saleet, a homeowner being adversely affected by the current eminent domain policy, stated, "The bottom line is this is morally wrong ... This is our home ... We're not blighted. This is a close-knit, beautiful neighborhood" (Source E).*

**Paraphrase of and direct quotation from the third paragraph**—citation placed outside of the text

*John D. Echeverria, an authority on land-use policy, sees a danger arising from legislatures doing away with many of the powers of eminent domain. For the Director of the Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute, if this policy change takes place across the country, there is a real danger that many urban areas will experience "economic decline" (Source E).*

**Combination of direct quotation and paraphrase**—citation provided outside of text; note the use of the ellipsis

*In 2005, a 5–4 Supreme Court decision in the *Kelo v. New London* case ruled that "... the government taking of property from private owner to give to another in furtherance of economic development constitutes a permissible 'public use' under the Fifth Amendment" (Source C).*

Notice that each of the examples integrates the source material into the text. The information is not just plopped down on the page. Take a close look at how our writer integrates the second example into the following paragraph in his essay.

*Contrary to what the Court sees as "permissible public use" (Source C), I believe that a government taking a person's home or business away and allowing another private individual or company to take it over goes against the idea of our private property rights. A good example of this is the situation in Lakewood, Ohio, where the mayor wants to condemn a retired couple's home in order to make way for a privately owned, high-end condominium and shopping mall. As Jim Saleet said in his interview with 60 Minutes presented on July 4, 2004, "The bottom line is this is morally wrong ... This is our home ... We're not blighted. This is a close-knit, beautiful neighborhood." The Saleets who have paid off their mortgage should be allowed to remain there as long as they want and pass it on to their children. Here, individual rights should prevail.*

Comments: Our writer uses the sources to establish negative feelings toward the current policy. The writer then refers to the *Kelo* decision in a summary and proceeds to introduce the context of the Saleet reference with the transition phrase, "A good example of this is ..." Cohesiveness is achieved by referring to Source C, which was previously cited in the essay. The actual quotation is incorporated into the text with an introductory dependent clause. Two related sentences follow that reemphasize the writer's own position.

**Practice:** As you read, become aware of HOW professional writers incorporate sources into their writing. Use these as models to practice incorporating outside sources into your own sentences and/or essays.

*Note:* You might want to take a close look at reviews or movies and books. In many cases, you will find they include direct quotations from the dialog of the film or passages from the book.

### **Strategy 5: Writing the Conclusion**

Our writer has used each of the excerpts in the body of the essay, EXCEPT for the survey information. Although this number is quite important, it does not fit into the development of the body paragraphs. Therefore, the writer decides to incorporate this survey result into the conclusion. It will contribute to a strong final statement. Following are three different ways to use the survey.

**Direct quotation**—citation after sentence

*68% of survey respondents said that they "favored legislative limits on the government's ability to take private property away from owners ..." (Source G).*

**Direct quotation**—citation within sentence

*According to a survey conducted by CNN on July 23, 2005, 66% of those responding said "never" to the question, "Should local governments be able to seize homes and businesses?"*

**Paraphrase**—citation outside sentence

*In recent polls conducted by both the Washington Times and CNN, over 60% said no when asked if local governments should be able to take over private homes and businesses (Source G).*

Carefully consider how this sentence is incorporated into the concluding paragraph.

*Ultimately, I have to agree with the large majority of people who responded to recent polls conducted by both the Washington Times and CNN. When asked if local governments should be able to take over private homes and businesses, over 60% said "no" (Source G). But, I will have to be open to the possibility that public use and the greater good may, in some cases, be the only viable solution to a complicated problem.*

Comments: The source material is sandwiched between two effective sentences. The first presents our writer's position and leads the reader to the cited excerpt employed to make the point. The last sentence begins with the word "But," which indicates that the writer is qualifying the cited sources in this paragraph and throughout the essay.

**Final Comment:**

Remember, you **MUST** establish a position and each source you choose to use **MUST** support and develop your position.

## Preparing for the Synthesis Question: Six Moves Toward Success

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### The Art of Argumentation

When I taught high school in my home state, West Virginia, I encountered a situation that teachers all over the world must deal with when they teach students how to incorporate sources in their writing. After several initial classes on searching for information (these were the pre-Internet days, so we headed directly to the library), narrowing the topic, and crafting a preliminary thesis, my students would return to the library and then come back to me with a familiar refrain: "I can't find anything that supports my thesis!" I didn't blame the students, of course -- they were just learning what it means to enter into the discourse of academic argumentation. As novices in this endeavor, they needed to learn that accomplished academic writers don't simply draw material from published sources as if the sources were

maples being tapped for their sap. On the contrary, savvy writers **converse** with sources and **incorporate** (literally: em-body) them in their argument.

As AP English Language and Composition courses prepare students to encounter the synthesis question on the free-response section of the exam, beginning with the 2007 administration, teachers will have the opportunity to teach these "moves" of academic writing in a way that will help students as they progress from high school to college. In most college courses that require substantial writing, students are called upon to write **researched arguments** in which they take a stand on a topic or an issue and then **enter into conversation** with what has already been written on it.

The synthesis question provides students with a number of relatively brief sources on a topic or an issue -- texts of no longer than one page, plus at least one source that is a graphic, a visual, a picture, or a cartoon. The prompt calls upon students to write a composition that develops a position on the issue and that synthesizes and incorporates perspectives from at least three of the provided sources. Students may, of course, draw upon whatever they know about the issue as well, but they must make use of at least three of the provided sources to earn an upper-half score.

What moves should a writer make to accomplish this task? Essentially, there are six: **read, analyze, generalize, converse, finesse, and argue.**

### Read Closely, Then Analyze

First, the writer must read the sources carefully. There will be an extra 15 minutes of time allotted to the free-response section to do so. The student will be permitted to read and write on the cover sheet to the synthesis question, which will contain some introductory material, the prompt itself, and a list of the sources. The students will also be permitted to read and annotate the sources themselves. The student will not be permitted to open his or her test booklet and actually begin writing the composition until after the 15 minutes has elapsed.

Second, the writer must analyze the argument each source is making: What **claim** is the source making about the issue? What **data** or **evidence** does the source offer in support of that claim? What are the **assumptions** or **beliefs** (explicit or unspoken) that **warrant** using this evidence or data to support the claim? Note that students will need to learn how to perform such analyses of nontextual sources: graphs, charts, pictures, cartoons, and so on.

### After Analysis: Finding and Establishing a Position

Third, the writer needs to generalize about his or her own potential stands on the issue. The writer should ask, "What are two or three (or more) possible positions on this issue that I **could** take? Which of those positions do I really **want** to take? Why?" It's vital at this point, I think, for the writer to keep an open mind. A stronger, more mature, more persuasive essay will result if the writer resists the temptation to oversimplify the issue, to hone in immediately on an obvious thesis. All of the synthesis essay prompts will be based on issues that invite careful, critical thinking. The best student responses, I predict, will be those in which the thesis and development suggest clearly that the writer has given some thought to the nuances, the complexities of the assigned topic.

Fourth -- and this is the most challenging move -- the writer needs to imagine presenting **each** of his or her best positions on the issue to **each** of the authors of the provided sources. Role-playing the author or creator of each source, the student needs to create an imaginary conversation between himself or herself and the author/creator of the source. Would the author/creator agree with the writer's position? Why? Disagree? Why? Want to qualify it in some way? Why and how?

Fifth, on the basis of this imagined conversation, the student needs to finesse, to refine, the point that he or she would like to make about the issue so that it can serve as a central proposition, a thesis -- as complicated and robust as the topic demands -- for his or her composition. This proposition or thesis should probably appear relatively quickly in the composition, after a sentence or two that contextualizes the topic or issue for the reader.

Sixth, the student needs to argue his or her position. The writer must develop the case for the position by incorporating within his or her own thinking the conversations he or she has had with the authors/creators of the primary sources. The student should feel free to say things like, "Source A takes a position similar to mine," or "Source C would oppose my position, but here's why I still maintain its validity," or "Source E offers a slightly different perspective, one that I would alter a bit."

### A Skill for College

In short, on the synthesis question the successful writer is going to be able to show readers how he or she has thought through the topic at hand by considering the sources critically and creating a composition that draws conversations with the sources into his or her own thinking. It is a task that the college-bound student should willingly take up.

# The AP English Language Synthesis Essay

First and foremost: The synthesis question requires a **PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT**. You are presenting your opinion in response to a given question; however, unlike the free-response question, *you must use the facts and ideas presented in the provided sources*.

Use the sources to support or augment your **OWN** argument. Do not summarize the sources and allow those writers to speak for themselves—you are using what they say for your **OWN** purposes.

## Basic Essay Structure

**KEY:** Argue your own idea, using your own reasons and reasoning—but you must use evidence from the provided sources.

Introduction:

1. Open with an engaging hook.
2. Identify/clarify the issue at hand.
3. Present a clear, direct thesis statement.

Body Paragraphs:

1. Topic sentence: Give one reason in support of your thesis.
2. Explain as necessary.
3. Present specific supporting evidence (viz., quotes from the provided sources—but you may also bring in other evidence).
4. All sources are documented.
5. The writer explains the significance of the specific supporting evidence (e.g., what does the evidence show or suggest as true?)

Concluding Paragraph:

1. Draw further significance from the reasons and evidence presented.
2. Bring the paper to a thoughtful ending. (Be philosophical! Show your wisdom!)