

THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY

OVERVIEW

The Synthesis Essay is the first of three essays on the AP Language and Composition Exam. You'll be asked to synthesize from 6 sources in order to formulate your own position on a given prompt. You are required to incorporate at least three of the six given sources in your essay, citing *specific information* from these sources.

Up to six points are awarded for the Synthesis Essay: 1 point for a strong, defensible thesis; up to 4 points for evidence, incorporated information or commentary; and 1 point for demonstrating a complex understanding of the topic. The official AP rubric for the synthesis essay is located at the bottom of this document.

TIPS

Before Writing

- 1) Underline key parts and strive to understand the prompt. Make sure you recognize how many sources you need to use
- 2) Once you understand the prompt, determine your viewpoint, and compose a rough thesis. You do not need to have a three-control thesis, but make sure you clearly state your viewpoint along with general reasoning why.
- 3) More often than, it's wise to take a qualified or multifaceted stance.
- 4) Know what you're looking for. Skim promising parts of sources that seem to support your view. Mark useful parts that help support your view or help you share an opponent's rationale before you counter.
- 5) Remember, you must have a counterargument. It's the law! Some start or end their arguments with this. You're in charge.

- 6) Make your voice and your opinion the focus. Your view should dominate the topic sentences. Do not summarize the source material. Instead, use them to support and enhance your argument.

During Writing

- 1) The tone is Semiformal. Personal experiences are fine, and so are personal pronouns. Including an experience or observation of your own is also welcome.
- 2) Strive to compose an enticing introduction with rhetorical flair. Make sure it flows to your thesis, the last sentence in the introductory paragraph. Here are some quick rhetorical flair possibilities:
 - a. Startling statistic or truly colorful quote (from one of the readings)
 - b. Anecdote of your own –maybe even one that starts with imagery
 - c. Relevant hypothetical question
 - d. Rhetorical question –just be sure it doesn't sound like TIME for Kids
- 3) Utilize transitions but make your view the focus. For example:
 - a. “Source A buttresses my view in that it praises...”
 - b. “I’m not alone in my view. Source B echoes the idea that...”
 - c. “Although Source C is less enthusiastic than I am, the article validates my thinking on...”
- 4) Commence your argument empathetically and with rhetorical flair, but end it in a timely manner. You could use rhetorical devices such as but not limited antithesis, call to action, anaphora or repetition. A full list of rhetorical devices can be found on the Blue Ray Studies Website.

Scoring Rubric for Question 1: Synthesis Essay

6 points

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria
<p>Row A Thesis (0-1 points)</p> <p>4.B</p>	<p>0 points For any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no defensible thesis.• The intended thesis only restates the prompt.• The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim.• There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. <p>1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only restate the prompt.• Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred.• Equivocate or summarize other's arguments but not the student's (e.g., some people say it's good, some people say it's bad).• State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense.	<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responds to the prompt rather than restate or rephrase the prompt, <u>and</u> the thesis clearly takes a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons.
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity.• The thesis may be anywhere within the response.• For a thesis to be defensible, the sources must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point.• The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point.• A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.	

Scoring Criteria					
Reporting Category Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0-4 points) 2.A 4.A 6.A 6.B 6.C	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or references fewer than two of the provided sources.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence from or references at least two of the provided sources. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student's argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides evidence from or references at least three of the provided sources. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student's argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	
	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes			
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. 	Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on summary or description of sources rather than specific details. 	Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don't strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student's claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the sources to build an argument. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the sources to build an argument. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. 	Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on summary or description of sources rather than specific details. 	Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don't strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student's claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the sources to build an argument. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the sources to build an argument. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. 				

