

FROM REPORT TO RESEARCH TO SYNTHESIS

WHY WE STUDY SYNTHESIS

The synthesis question on the AP exam reflects 4 important principles:

Students must be able to read and write about texts constructively.

Students must be able to offer thoughtful, reasoned comments about other people's ideas.

Students need to be visually literate.

Students must be able to take a position and support it effectively.

WHAT IS THE SYNTHESIS QUESTION?

You will be required to synthesize several (5-6) sources based on the same general topic. Then, you will have to utilize three of them to address the prompt.

Synthesize- fuse, blend, combine, integrate
SYNTHESIS TRIGGERS WHAT WE
ALREADY KNOW!

You will start with what you know/ believe/ think, then use the sources to support your answer.

HOW TO ADDRESS THE AP SYNTHESIS QUESTION.

1. Accurately reading the prompt: Students must answer the question being asked, as always, so it is important that they know that questions may vary in focus.

2. The argumentative synthesis

Goal: To persuade, to convince readers to agree with a particular claim

Method: The writer brings together information from various sources to support the claim, while other sources may represent views the writer rejects.

Focus: The writer develops a position using sufficient, relevant, and reliable support and the methods of effective argumentation.

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2. **Establishing a position (thesis):** BEFORE reading the sources, students should be encouraged to identify their first (intuitive) reaction to the prompt and state that as their thesis. Doing so gives them a reason to read the sources and may help them avoid the "document-driven" essay.

3. **Effectively evaluating the sources for support:** Students' use of the documents involves both test-taking strategy and the ability to discern which sources will most effectively support their thesis.
 - a. Reading the sources: Taking the time to read carefully, think about implications and inferences in the documents, and planning the essay is essential to success on this question.

 - b. Utilizing critical thinking skills of analysis and evaluation will help students make best use of the documents they choose.

WHAT WILL YOU SEE IN THE SYNTHESIS QUESTION?

1. Short articles that contain strong opinions, satire, or other biased statements, such as book and film reviews, opinion/ editorial pieces, and letters to the editor
2. Selections from a collection of the letters of a famous person, excerpts from biographies and histories, entries from published diaries or journals
3. Web sources, both reliable and unreliable
4. Political cartoons with various biases
5. Graphs or charts that “skew” data

LET'S GIVE IT A TRY:

Follow the directions on the handout provided!