

AP English Language Research Project Assignment (Synthesis)

You will be *creating* an AP Exam style Synthesis Question. The Synthesis Question gives you several sources, and asks you to **combine (or synthesize)** them with your own thoughts to create a cohesive essay. This is the same goal of a research paper! Throughout the process, use the sample Synthesis Questions to help with formatting.

The project will be broken down into several steps outlined below.

Step 1 - Choose a topic from the attached list ***Due end of class December 22***

Step 2 – Brainstorm multiple factors related to your topic. *You must narrow your broad topic to something specific that is **arguable or debatable** in society.*

Step 3 – (30 points) With your topic, write a draft of a Synthesis Question Prompt Page, including directions, introduction, and assignment. Follow the example(s) given. You are creating this Question Prompt Page with the realization that it may be modified as your project progresses. ***Typed draft is Due December 30.***

Step 4 –Individually, find 10 sources that will help to answer the Synthesis Prompt you have created. Focus on finding sources that address your assigned “piece” of the issue. These sources must be **diverse**, and according to the guidelines specified (articles, 2 graphs or charts, one photograph). **Sources due January 4, 2017.**

Step 5 –(50 points) Individually, complete an **annotated bibliography** for all ten sources. An **annotated bibliography** is a glorified Works Cited page. Each source citation must be formatted according to MLA format with an annotation (“blurb” of explanation). An **annotated bibliography** is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the **annotation**. The purpose of the **annotation** is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. Keep a printed copy of your sources for your use in the next step. Remember to alphabetize the citations. A work cited page should always be in alphabetical order by the first letter of the citation. **Annotated Bibliography Due Tuesday, January 10, 2017.**

Step 6 –(50 points) FINAL DRAFT of the completed synthesis prompt. Revise and create a final draft of Question Prompt Page in the format used on the AP Exam. Ex. Labeled, sources listed, citations, etc. **Final Prompt Due January 16, 2017**

Step 7 – (9 points) Individually, write a response to the Synthesis Question you created or a **classmate created**, synthesizing at least 5 of the sources. This will be the actual “paper.” Your sources should be integrated meaningfully and cohesively into YOUR OWN NEW OPINION. The point is not just to repeat what the sources have said, but to **“have a conversation”** with them, in which you are a participant, not a reporter. Quotations must be integrated and properly cited within the text. No Works Cited page is necessary, as you have already turned in your annotated bibliography. Essay ***Due January 20, 2017.***

*Due Dates are set to help you stay on track. This is NOT an assignment you can do last minute, at least not quality work.

*Due dates are subject to change depending on conflicts arising.

AP English Language Research Project Step 3 – Prompt Page Draft

You will be creating an AP English Synthesis Question Prompt page.

Your Prompt Page will have three parts:

Directions: This will be the same for all of you, and should read exactly as it does on the sample ones.

Introduction: This section will serve as an introduction to your topic, since the writer may be unfamiliar with the issue. It should be one to two paragraphs in length. You will want to give background information about the subject at hand. Keep in mind that this Introduction goes BEFORE the reader has gotten to the Assignment section. Be careful to address each multiple potential sides to the issue, so you do not “slant” the reader in one direction. You will need to determine what background information is MOST essential to the writer who is going to view the accompanying sources.

Assignment: Parts of this section may very closely resemble those on the sample prompts. Be sure to tell them to read the attached sources and write an essay. Your prompt should require the student to **include elements of both exposition and argument**. You may be asking your writer to propose a potential solution to the problem. You want your writer to offer an opinion or suggestion about something, not just explain the topic. But you also want them to give enough background information to explain how they came to their conclusion.

At this point, you will not be able to list your sources on your Prompt Sheet the way you see them on the examples.

*Please remember when writing your prompt, ask the writer to synthesize at least **FIVE sources for support!***

**AP English Language Research Project
Step 4 – Finding Sources**

The most effective Synthesis Prompts give the test-takers a wide variety of sources to consider. These sources are of various types, various lengths, and various opinions. This diversity allows each test-taker to choose their own individual approach to the assignment, while providing them with the tools to adequately synthesize into their paper.

You are going to choose TEN sources specific to your assigned piece. This will ensure that you are providing sources that show the complexity of the issue.

Therefore, when choosing your sources, keep several guidelines in mind:

- 1) Choose sources, which cover a variety of viewpoints on your assigned factor, making sure to keep sides “even”
- 2) Choose sources from a wide variety of locations and formats. Use the list below as guidance; it is certainly not all-inclusive. Requirements are in CAPITAL letters. Beyond those required types, you may choose the rest of your sources at your discretion.

**** ACADEMIC JOURNAL ** DATA**

Essay by an expert Field-Specific Magazine Government Publication
Government Website

Graph (limit 2)

**** IMAGE** Letter to editor Local Newspaper

Photograph/Images (limit 1) can be used to make a statement regarding the issue. The picture may be illustrating a negative or positive effect of the issue.

National Newspaper (online or print editions) **** NEWS WEBSITE**

Online Article (about.com, Wikipedia, etc.) **** EDITORIAL** (from newspaper/magazine) Poll Results

Popular Magazine (*People, Time, Newsweek*) Primary Book Source

Private Web Page or Blog

Published letter from an individual Transcript of Oral Commentary or Interview

- 3) Consider the validity of your sources. It is okay to have an opinion piece which could obviously be biased, but make sure that the source is still reliable.

- 4) Your sources should be a combination of opinion and factual writing. It’s hard to “have a conversation” with facts so make sure that you’re getting sources that talk about the issue, rather than just defining it or giving background information.

- 4) Remember that ultimately you are going to be taking EXCERPTS (see examples), not an entire source. That means that you should choose your sources even more carefully, considering which PARTS of a source you may want to use.
- 5) Think “outside the box” when looking for sources. The most obvious choices are not always the best. Consider the example given of using a school’s daily bell schedule. Not an obvious source about individuality vs. conformity, but was still capable of being effectively synthesized into an essay.
- (6) Have fun! To create an assignment like this is challenging, but can also be very rewarding and is evidence of high-level thinking skills!

AP English Language Research Project Step 5 – Create an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is essentially a Works Cited page that you will create. However, rather than simply refer to the sources used in your response, it will include all 10 of the sources that you have found for your project. Your annotated bibliography will likely be 4-5 pages long.

A sample has been provided for your perusal.

An annotated bibliography consists of two parts: the citation and commentary about it (the annotation).

First, create an accurate citation for each of your sources. This could get complicated, depending on the type of source you are using. The first question I will ask is what type of source is it and where did you find it, so make sure you have that info available. You can use resources such as the MLA Handbook, Easy Writer etc. The following sources will also help you create citations. Just fill in the information they ask for and submit. Copy and paste the citation the program offers you into your bibliography page. Make sure to select MLA format. Knight Cite, Easy Bib, Purdue Owl

Second, to accompany each citation, you will write an annotation which describes and evaluates that particular source. Annotations are usually between 150 and 200 words long. Include the following information for each source:

- - Brief summary of source: What are the main points? Overview of examples? What side of the issue is it addressing?
- - Evaluate the source: Why did you choose this source? Is it expository, persuasive, narrative, analytical, etc. How will it be useful to someone responding to your question? Is it reliable or biased? Does it address more than one complexity of the topic?

Be sure to follow MLA Formatting for your Bibliography, exactly the same way it is in the example:

- - Use a hanging indent
- - Entirely double-spaced, no extra spaces in between citations
- - Make sure that an entire line of text is being used before jumping down to the next line.
- - Do this far enough in advance so you are not rushing

TIP for Formatting: Word 2007 has some strange default settings. Go into the paragraph formatting box. Before beginning your Bibliography, make sure it is set to single line spacing and make sure that it's not adding extra space between lines (it defaults to 10pt spacing after a line... change it to 0). The best way to handle the spacing issue is to complete the entire

draft in single-spaced lines and then go back and change the whole thing to double. That way you can be sure that you're not adding extra spaces.

STEP 5 Continued:

Sample MLA Annotated Bibliography Entry

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Anchor Books, 1995.

Lamott's book offers honest advice on the nature of a writing life, complete with its insecurities and failures. Taking a humorous approach to the realities of being a writer, the chapters in Lamott's book are wry and anecdotal and offer advice on everything from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic. In the process, Lamott includes writing exercises designed to be both productive and fun.

Lamott offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main project seems to be offering the reader a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's own imperfect humanity in the process. Rather than a practical handbook to producing and/or publishing, this text is indispensable because of its honest perspective, its down-to-earth humor, and its encouraging approach.

Chapters in this text could easily be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several of the chapters in Part 1 address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' own drafting and revising processes. Some of the writing exercises would also be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises. Students should find Lamott's style both engaging and enjoyable.

In the sample annotation above, the writer includes three paragraphs: a summary, an evaluation of the text, and a reflection on its applicability to his/her own research, respectively.

For information on formatting MLA citations, see our [MLA 2016 Formatting and Style Guide](#). Visit the following site for more examples:
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03/>

AP English Language Research Project Step 6 – Formatted Sources

Follow the examples given regarding how final copies of your sources should look. Examples will be provided online and in class.

1. Make sure that each is no more than one page long. Remember you're using excerpts!
2. Give Citation information at the top of each source.
3. Give "plain-English" background information about the source's origins.

Consider that your projects will be given to future generations of AP students as examples of what a synthesis prompt looks like.

Hand in your final 10 formatted sources in a packet with your final Prompt Page

AP English Language Research Project Step 7 – Synthesis Response

At this point in the process, you will write a sample response to your own or a classmate's Synthesis Prompt Question. Your question is required to have elements of both exposition and argument, so your response should also contain those elements. Make sure that, at some point, you include a clear call-to-action on the subject.

Your book describes synthesis writing as “**entering the conversation**” that **others are having, not simply recapping**. Therefore, your essay should contain your original thoughts and ideas in your own words, just as your part in an actual conversation would. Think about it this way:

If you come upon a group of people having a conversation about a particular topic, you will probably listen for a little while to understand what subject they are talking about and figure out where each of them stands. At some point, you will feel comfortable enough jumping in with your own opinion. The group may ask you why you feel that way and you can explain yourself. Then a certain group member may tell you that he totally disagrees, or he may simply raise another side to the issue. You would then respond either by re-asserting your opinion or adding to the train of thought.

The above scenario is a model of the way a synthesis essay should be structured... except in this instance, you start with your own opinion because you've already listened to (read) those of others.

The important detail to remember is that you use your sources to support your own argument, NOT to report what they have to say. Recall, that's how a conversation works.

You wouldn't participate in a conversation where you were simply repeating what everyone else had to say; that would be boring.

Sources: You must use at least five of the sources from your group's final source packet. At least two of your references must be quotes. Please ensure that all quotations are properly integrated into a sentence and correctly punctuated!

Citations: Each time you refer to a document, whether it is by quotation, paraphrase or summary, you must cite your source. Since your source is no longer in a larger document with a page number, simply using the author's last name or source letter in parentheses will suffice as a citation. The annotated bibliography already turned in will be considered your Works Cited page.

Specs: Your essay should be 6-8 pages long. It should not be a five-paragraph essay. It should have an introduction and conclusion. It should have a

claim/thesis and clear organization (logical order of ideas, explicit topic sentences). It should follow good conventions of writing, including flawless punctuation & grammar, complex sentence structures, and sophisticated diction. It should be concise and clear throughout.

Formatting: Your paper should be MLA format, typed, double spaced. 12 Font/Times

AP English Language Research Project Step 8 – Breathe!!

You can relax; it's over! Just in time to worry about your AP exams!