

Synthesis Essay:

- You will be presented with an introduction to and a description of an issue that has varying viewpoints associated with it. Accompanying this is a selection of sources that address the topic. These sources can be written texts that could include nonfiction, fiction, poetry, drama, visual texts, photos, charts, art work, cartoons, etc. After reading and annotating the sources, the student is required to respond to the given prompt with an essay that incorporates and synthesizes at least THREE of the sources in support of your position on the subject. You will NOT be given “extra points” for incorporating more than three sources. You will NOT pass this essay if you fail to cite sources at any time.
- Use the sources as springboards or buttresses for your argument. Do not let the sources drive your essay.
- The College Board wants to determine how well a student can read critically, understand texts, analyze texts, develop a position on a given topic, support a position on a given topic, support a position with appropriate evidence from outside sources, incorporate outside sources into the texts of the essay, cite sources used in the essay
- Use the sources and your observations, readings, and experiences to support your thesis. This essay is a chance to demonstrate your ability to develop a “researched idea” using not only your personal viewpoint, but also the viewpoints of others.
- Don’t be alarmed by the length or complexity of the sources. You will choose your position, and you will choose which texts to incorporate. As long as you address the prompt and cite the required number of sources, you will be fine.
- You must be able to 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 the claim? What are the assumptions or beliefs (explicit or unspoken) that warrant using this evidence or data to support the claim?
- Ask the questions: What are two or three possible positions that I could take on this issue? Which of these positions do I want to take? Why? Keep an open mind, and choose the topic that you will have the best essay and supporting details. Many of the best essays don’t have a simple and “easy” thesis but instead take a more critical approach that recognize the complexities of the issue. Imagine arguing the topic with an individual. Argue your position and feel free to say things like, “Source A takes a position similar to mine,” or Source C would oppose this position, but here is why I still maintain its validity,” etc.
- This essay has two main approaches
 - First: Expository essay in which you develop your thesis and support it with specific examples from appropriate sources. You may use compare/contrast, cause and effect, past, present, future, or analysis
 - Second: Argumentative essay in which you take a position on a particular topic and support the viewpoint with appropriate outside sources, while indicating the weaknesses of other viewpoints.
- Common Errors not taking a clear position or wavering between positions Substituting a thesis-oriented expository essay (informing the reader of the different topics/positions) for an argumentative essay Being reluctant to engage in verbal combat because

“everybody’s entitled to his or her opinion” so there’s nothing to argue about Slipping out of focus by discussing imagery in general Trying to argue about photography by using evidence from a literary reading list (for example, *The Crucible*) and sliding off topic into theme of appearance and reality Lacking clear connections between claims and the data, and the warrants needed to support them Trying to analyze style or rhetorical strategies instead of arguing a point (wrong essay...that would be analysis!!!)

- Carefully read the prompt and all introductory material. Many times the extra information will provide you with timesaving information.
 - With visual texts
 - Identify the subject/s
 - Identify the major components
 - Identify verbal clues such as titles, date, cartoonist, and dialogue
 - Notice position and size of details of images • Identify the primary purpose
 - How do the details support the purpose?
- Pre-writing: See Notes in previous section. Clearly mark and decide which position you will take and which sources will support your viewpoint.
 - Opening Paragraph: Specifically address the prompt and clearly state your position on the topic (thesis with 3 ideas). You may use anecdotes, personal experiences, observations, startling facts/statistics, etc. to “catch” your reader’s attention. Have an interesting grabber - some way in which you relate.
 - Body Paragraphs: Use transitions to connect ideas. Build up to your strongest point with each paragraph. When citing sources, all you need to do is put the source in parenthesis (Source A) or say, “According to Source A....”
 - Use a mixture of direct quotations, summary, and paraphrases when incorporating your sources. Remember that you MUST establish a position and each source you choose MUST support and develop your position. Summary: read a text closely and locate the key words/phrases that enable you to reduce the piece to its essential points Paraphrase: transpose the original material into your own words. It will be close to number of words in the original text. Inference: drawing a conclusion based on specific material
 - Quotations:
 - Direct Quotation/Full citation provided at beginning of sentence: John Broder in his February 21, 2006, *New York Times* article titled “States Curbing Right to Seize Private Homes,” quotes Scott G. Bullock, “....”
 - Direct Quotation/Citation placed outside the text: In a *60 Minutes* interview presented on July 4, 2004, Jim Saleet, a homeowner, stated, “....” (Source E).
 - Paraphrase of and direct quotation third paragraph citation placed outside of the text: John Echeverria sees a danger arising from doing away with the powers of eminent domain. There is real

danger the areas will experience “economic decline” (Source E). • Combination of Direct Quotation and Paraphrase citation provided outside of the text (note the use of ellipsis): In 2005, a supreme court decision ruled that “...the government taking of property from private owner...” (Source C).

- 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 with Citation with 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?”
 - 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).
- Conclusion: Restate main idea but do not simply summarize. Try to powerfully connect ideas or find another source that somehow unites all items discussed. Make a wrap with whatever connection you chose for your intro.