**AP LANGUAGE SYNTHESIS PROMPT CREATION PROJECT**

**AP Language and Composition**

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 previous Synthesis Questions to help with formatting.

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

**Step 1** - Choose a topic (see attached list for options)and come up with one question for each topic

**Due Tuesday, April 5 (finalize)**

**Step 2** – (group grade) With your group, write a draft of a **Synthesis Question Prompt Page**, including directions, introduction, and assignment. Follow the examples given. You are creating this Question Prompt Page with the realization that it may be modified as your project progresses.

**Typed draft is due Thursday, 4.14**

**Step 3** – Research. **Individually**, find 4 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.

**Due Friday, 4.15**

**Step 4** – (60 points) Individually, complete an annotated bibliography for your sources. Each source citation must be formatted according to MLA format with an annotation. Your annotation should be a four-sentence rhetorical précis. Turn in a copy of each source. Keep a printed copy of your sources for your use in the next step.

**Due Friday, 4.15**

**Step 5** – (group grade) Work with your topic group on **Friday, March 25**. Compare your sources with those of your group. Together, choose excerpts from 6 sources that show the various complexities of your topic. Also make sure that they are from a **variety of locations and types**. **Format your sources** according to previous synthesis prompts given, and turn in copies of your sources in a packet. Each **source should be no longer than one page (choose excerpts)**, **including citation information**.

**Due Monday, 4.18**

**Step 6** – (group grade) Work with your topic group to revise and create a final draft of Question Prompt Page in the format used on the AP Exam. Ex. Labeled, type listed, with citation, etc.

**Due Wednesday, 4.20** (You will be given some time in class on Monday to revisit the prompt and reflect on the sources)

***\*Each of the above steps will have its own guidelines.***

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***Step 1 – Choose a topic*** (you are not limited to these options)

Consider the following possible topics for your project.

Option 1 - Personal technology effects and implications

Option 2 - Higher Ed admissions system

Option 3 – Border Control/Immigration

Option 4 – Population growth

Option 5 – Standardized testing

Option 6 – Plastic surgery

Option 7 – Social media effects and implications

Option 8 – Security vs. privacy: information

Option 9 – Parenting styles

Option 10- The War on Terrorism

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***Step 2 – Prompt Page Draft***

You will be creating an AP English Synthesis Question Prompt page. This will be modeled after the ones in the sample packets you were given.

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. Examples:

**A. Exposition Assignment (bad):** Write an essay in which you examine which issues are involved

in making decisions about Space Exploration.

**B. Argument Assignment (bad):** Write an essay in which you agree or disagree with the necessity of Space Exploration.

**C. Both (good):** Develop a position about what issues should be considered most important in making decisions about Space Exploration.

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

**Sample Prompt Directions**

Based on 6 sources. Write an essay that **evaluates** whether college is worth its cost.

Based on 7 sources. In an essay, **examine the factors** a group or **agency should consider** in memorializing an event or person and in creating a monument.

Write an essay that **argues** a clear position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how.

Write an essay that **develops a position on the extent** to which government should be responsible for fostering green practices.

**AVOID this because it limits a well-rounded argument and does not compel student to consider the counter:**

.... take a position that **supports, opposes, or qualifies** the claim that...

**Sample Prompts with Intro Included**

**2014:** Many recent college graduates have faced record levels of unemployment. This situation has led people to question what they value about higher education. Some high school students and their parents are wondering if a college education is worth the cost. Others, however, believe that a college education prepares students for more than just a job or career.

Based on 6 sources. **Write an essay that evaluates whether college is worth its cost.**

**2013:** The need to memorialize events or people is complex; in some cases, monuments honor moments of great achievement, while in other cases, monuments pay homage to deep sacrifice. A monument’s size, location, and materials are all considerations in planning and creating a memorial to the past.  
     Based on 7 sources. In an essay, **examine the factors a group or agency should consider in memorializing an event or person and in creating a monument.**

**2012:** The United States Postal Service (USPS) has delivered communications for more than two centuries. During the nineteenth century, the USPS helped to expand the boundaries of the United States by providing efficient and reliable communication across the country. Between 1790 and 1860 alone, the number of post offices in the United States grew from 75 to over 28,000. With this growth came job opportunities for postal workers and a boom in the cross-country rail system. The twentieth century brought substantial growth to the USPS, including large package delivery and airmail. Over the past decade, however, total mail volume has decreased considerably as competition from electronic mail and various package delivery companies has taken business away from the USPS. The loss of revenue has prompted the USPS to consider cutting back on delivery days and other services.  
Based on 8 sources. **Write an essay that argues a clear position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how**.

**2011:** Green living (practices that promote the conservation and wise use of natural resources) has become a topic of discussion in many parts of the world today. With changes in the availability and cost of natural resources, many people are discussing whether conservation should be required of all citizens.  
Based on 6 sources. **Write an essay that develops a position on the extent to which government should be responsible for fostering green practices.**

**English Language and Composition**

**Reading Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes**

**Directions:** The following prompt is based on the accompanying six sources.

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrase or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

# Introduction

[Introduce your topic and frame your discourse. Clearly explain the issue, define any key terms, provide any pertinent background information, and invite discussion on all sides of the issue. This section should be one or two paragraphs in length, depending on your topic.]

# Assignment

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least [insert your number here] sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that [insert your claim here].**

Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc.; titles are included for your convenience.

Source A (author’s last name)

Source B (author’s last name)

Source C (author’s last name)

Source D (author’s last name)

Source E (author’s last name)

Source F (author’s last name)

**AP LANGUAGE SYNTHESIS PROMPT CREATION PROJECT- step 3**

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 FOUR sources specific to your assigned “piece of the puzzle”** in regards to your group’s topic. This will ensure that your group will be 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 for the final synthesis 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

\*\* IMAGE

Letter to editor

Local Newspaper

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 acceptable 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.

(6) Have fun! To create an assignment like this is challenging, but can also be very rewarding and is evidence of higher-level thinking skills!

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***Step 4 – Create an Annotated Bibliography***

Your annotated bibliography will include all 4 of the sources that you have found for your project. 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. Don’t rely on an online citation-maker to complete this task for you. It’s always best to create them by hand. 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.

**Second**, to accompany each citation, you will write an annotation. Your annotation should be a four-sentence rhetorical précis.

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.

**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.

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***Step 5 – Formatted Sources***

Compare sources with those of your topic group. Together, choose excerpts from 6-7 sources total that show the various complexities of your topic. Also make sure that the ones you ultimately choose are from a variety of locations and types according to the rules outlined in Step 4.

Follow the examples given regarding how final copies of your sources should look.

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 6-7 formatted sources in a packet with your final Prompt Page (see Step 7)

***Step 6 — Revise***

Research often takes us in directions we didn’t know existed until we started looking! Since you may have made changes to your Prompt Page as you’ve acquired sources and learned more about your topic, as a group turn in a final draft at this time with your sources!

Be sure to label the prompt page with a list of sources and citations, now that you know them!