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Synthesis Question

Preparation for the

AP Exam

Mark Mooney

Ann Pagani

Diction

***Rhetoric &
Persuasion***

Argumentation
& Persuasion
(Synthesis)

Syntax

“Rhetorical
Strategies”

“It’s all tied together...”

Possible Topics for the Synthesis Question

- 1) Terrorism
- 2) Global warming
- 3) Freedom
- 4) Competition
- 5) Affirmative action
- 6) Cloning
- 7) Prejudice
- 8) Family
- 9) Love
- 10) Torture
- 11) Euthanasia
- 12) Obesity
- 13) Education
- 14) Reality shows
- 15) Marriage and divorce
- 16) Animal rights and research
- 17) Stem cell research
- 18) Driving safety and cell phones
- 19) Computers: advantages and dangers
- 20) Immigration
- 21) Capital punishment
- 22) Gun laws and lobbying
- 23) Advertising and body image
- 24) National health insurance
- 25) Standardized testing
- 26) Privacy
- 27) Art
- 28) Gender issues
- 29) Integrity
- 30) Ethics
- 31) Social security
- 32) Prison reform
- 33) Advertising
- 34) Illiteracy
- 35) Living will / Do not resuscitate

S. Council

THE COLUMBIAN

Source A
 Campbell, Angus. "Has Television Reshaped Politics?" In *Encyclopedia of Television / Museum of Broadcast Communications*, vol. 1, ed. Henace Newcomb. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005.

The following passage is excerpted from an article about television's impact on politics.

The advent of television in the late 1940's gave rise to the belief that a new era was opening in public communication. As Frank Stanton, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, put it: "Not even the sky is the limit." One of the great contributions expected of television lay in its presumed capacity to inform and stimulate the political interests of the American electorate.

"Television, with its penetration, its wide geographic distribution and impact, provides a new, direct, and sensitive link between Washington and the people," said Dr. Stanton. "The people have once more become the nation, as they have not been since the days when we were small enough each to know his elected representative. As we grow, we lost this feeling of direct contact—television has now restored it."

As time has passed, events have seemed to give substance to this expectation. The televising of important congressional hearings, the national nominating conventions, and most recently the Nixon-Kennedy and other debates have appeared to make a novel contribution to the political life of the nation. Large segments of the public have been given a new, immediate contact with political events. Television has appeared to be fulfilling its early promise.

Ex. Brook Farm / Scouted Letter
 living there inspired St.
 Could have students
 create their own synthesis paper
 6 = 5 text doc's / graphs
 (cont. next page)
 and answer sheet
 to be made by students

THE COLUMBIAN

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

Television has been influential in United States presidential elections since the 1960's. But just what is this influence, and how has it affected who is elected? Has it made elections fairer and more accessible, or has it moved candidates from pursuing issues to pursuing images? → You don't have to answer the 3/3 there

Assignment

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least two of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections.

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

- Source A (Campbell)
- Source B (Hart and Trice)
- Source C (Mennard)
- Source D (Charl)
- Source E (Raney)
- Source F (Koppel)

Handwritten notes and arrows:
 → "Has TV Reshaped Politics?"
 → Campbell's essay
 → Source A)
 → "Who, you don't know to use that graphic source"
 → "Need to use the doc's & make up in a hand 7 mins"
 → "Use the other 7 mins to make up their paper"
 → "Need all the doc's & make up in a hand 7 mins"
 → "You don't have to answer the 3/3 there"
 → "are things but - providing"
 → "Need to use the doc's & make up in a hand 7 mins"
 → "Use the other 7 mins to make up their paper"
 → "Need all the doc's & make up in a hand 7 mins"
 → "You don't have to answer the 3/3 there"
 → "are things but - providing"

Source B

Hurt, Roderick P., and Mary Trices. "U.S. Presidency and Television." Available at https://www.museum.tv/debateweb/fullmlt/qualizer/essay_usjrcstv.htm.

The following passage is excerpted from an online article that provides a timeline of major events when television and the presidency have intersected.

April 20, 1992: Not a historic date perhaps, but a suggestive one. It was on this date [while campaigning for President] that Bill Clinton discussed his underwear with the American people (briefs, not boxers, as it turned out). Why would the leader of the free world unburden himself like this? Why not? In television's increasingly postmodern world, all texts—serious and sophomoric—swirl together in the same discontinuous field of experience. To be sure, Mr. Clinton made his disclosure because he had been asked to himself. But in doing so Clinton exposed several rules connected to the new phenomenology of politics: (1) because of television's celebrity system, Presidents are losing their distinctiveness as social actors and hence are often judged by standards formerly used to assess rock singers and movie stars; (2) because of television's sense of intimacy, the American people feel they know their Presidents as persons and hence no longer feel the need for party guidance; (3) because of the medium's archly cynical worldview, those who watch politics on television are increasingly turning away from the policy sphere, years of hyperfamiliarity having finally bred contempt for politics itself.

Source C

Mensend, Louis. "Masters of the Mix: Kennedy, Nixon, and the Culture of the Image." *The New Yorker*, January 5, 2014.

The following passage is excerpted from a weekly literary and cultural magazine.

Holding a presidential election today without a television debate would seem almost undemocratic, as though voters were being cheated by the omission of some relevant text, some necessary submission to mass scrutiny.

That's not what many people thought at the time of the first debates. Theodore H. White, who subscribed fully to [John F.] Kennedy's view that the debates had made the difference in the election, complained, in *The Making of the President, 1960*, that television had dumbed down the issues by forcing the candidates to respond to questions instantaneously. . . . He also believed that Kennedy's "victory" in the debates was largely a triumph of image over content. People who listened to the debates on the radio, White pointed out, scored it a draw; people who watched it thought that, except in the third debate, Kennedy had crushed [Richard M.] Nixon. (This little statistic has been repeated many times as proof of the distorting effects of television. Why not the distorting effects of radio? It also may be that people whose medium of choice or opportunity in 1960 was radio tended to fit a Nixon rather than a Kennedy demographic.) White thought that Kennedy benefited because his image on television was "crisp"; Nixon's—light-colored suit, wrong makeup, bad posture—was "fuzzed." "In 1960 television had won the nation away from sound to images," he concluded, "and that was that."

. . . "Our national politics has become a competition for images or between images, rather than between ideals." [one commentator] concluded. "An effective President must be every year more concerned with projecting images of himself."

AP English Language and Composition: 2005-2006 Workshop Materials

Source E
 Ramsey, Austin, *Channels of Power: The Impact of Television on American Politics*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

The following passage is taken from a book that examines the relationship between politics in the United States and television.

In early 1968 [when President Lyndon Johnson was running for reelection], after five years of steadily increasing American commitment of troops and arms to the war in Vietnam, President Johnson was still holding fast to the policy that the war could and must be won. However, his favorite television newsmen, CBS's Walter Cronkite, became increasingly skeptical about the stream of official statements from Washington and Saigon that claimed we were winning the war. So Cronkite decided to go to Vietnam and see for himself. When he returned, he broadcast a special report to the nation, which Lyndon Johnson watched. Cronkite reported that the war had become a bloody stalemate and that military victory was not in the cards. He concluded: "It is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out . . . will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

On hearing Cronkite's verdict, the President turned to his aides and said, "It's all over." Johnson was a great believer in public opinion polls, and he knew that a recent poll had shown that the American people trusted Walter Cronkite more than any other American to "tell it the way it is." Moreover, Johnson himself liked and respected Cronkite more than any other newsmen. As Johnson's aide Bill Moyers put it later, "We always knew . . . that Cronkite had more authority with the American people than anyone else. It was Johnson's instinct that Cronkite was it." So if Walter Cronkite thought that the war was hopeless, the American people would think so too, and the only thing left to win it down. A few weeks after Cronkite's broadcast Johnson, in a famous broadcast of his own, announced that he was ending the air and naval bombardment in most of Vietnam—and that he would not run for another term as President.

AP English Language and Composition: 2005-2006 Workshop Materials

Source D
 Adapted from Nielsen James into Politics: Tracking the Presidential Election Years (1960-1992). New York: Nielsen Media Research, 1994.

TELEVISION RATINGS FOR PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES: 1960-1996

Year	Networks	Candidates	Date	Rating	Homes (millions)	People (millions)
1960	ABC CBS NBC	Kennedy-Nixon	Sept. 26	39.5	28.1	N/A
1964						
1968						
1972						
1976	ABC CBS NBC	Carter-Ford	Oct. 6	52.4	37.3	63.9
1980	ABC CBS NBC	Anderson-Carter-Regan	Oct. 28	58.9	45.8	80.6
1984	ABC CBS NBC	Mondale-Regan	Oct. 7	45.3	38.5	65.1
1988	ABC CBS NBC	Bush-Dukakis	Sept. 25	36.8	33.3	65.1
1992	ABC NBC CNN	Bush-Clinton-Perot	Oct. 11	38.3	35.7	62.4
1996	ABC CBS NBC CNN FOX	Clinton-Dole	Oct. 6	31.6	30.6	46.1

Source F

Koppel, Ted. *Off Camera: Privates Thoughts Made Public*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

The following reflections come from the printed journal of Ted Koppel, a newscaster who is best known for appearing on the news show *Nightline*.

All of us in commercial television are confronted by a difficult choice that commercialism imposes. Do we deliberately aim for the lowest common denominator, thereby assuring ourselves of the largest possible audience but producing nothing but cotton candy for the mind, or do we bankle the difficult subjects as creatively as we can, knowing that we may lose much of the mass audience? The good news is that even those rating low these days are filling, more often than not, to get good ratings.

It is either midnight and we have just finished our *Nightline* program on the first Republican presidential "debate" involving all of the candidates. . . . It is a joke to call an event like the one that transpired tonight a debate. Two reporters sat and asked questions of one of the candidates after another. Each man was supposed to answer only the question he was asked, and was given a minute and thirty seconds in which to do so. Since the next candidate would then be asked another question altogether, it was an act of rhetorical contention for one man to address himself to what one of his rivals had said. . . .

Because we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, *Nightline* made the whole thing look pretty good. That's the ultimate irony.

AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SAMPLE SCORING GUIDELINES FOR THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY

These scoring guidelines will be useful for most of the essays that you read. If they seem inappropriate for a specific essay, ask your Table Leader for assistance. Also consult with your Table Leader about essay booklets that seem to have no response or a response that is unrelated to the question.

Your scores should reflect your judgments of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students have only 15 minutes to read and 40 minutes to write. Therefore, the essay is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards that are appropriate for out-of-class writing assignments. Instead, evaluate the essay as if it had, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored in 8 or 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. These flaws should enter into your holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for essays that are scored an 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument and synthesis of cited sources, or impressive in their control of language.

8 Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 effectively take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They effectively support their position by effectively synthesizing and citing at least three of the sources. The writer's argument is compelling, and the cited sources effectively support the writer's position. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not flawless.

7 Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of essays that are scored a 6 but are distinguished by more complete or more purposeful argumentation and synthesis of cited sources, or a more mature prose style.

6 Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 adequately take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They adequately synthesize and cite at least three of the sources. The writer's argument is generally convincing and the cited sources generally support the writer's position, but the argument is less developed or less direct than the arguments of essays earning higher scores. Though the language may contain lapses in diction or syntax, generally the prose is clear.

5 Essays earning a score of 5 take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They support their position by synthesizing and citing at least three sources, but their arguments and their use of cited sources are somewhat limited, inconsistent, or vague. The writer's argument is generally unclear, and the sources generally support the writer's position, but the links between the sources and the argument may be strained. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer's ideas adequately.

For the purposes of scoring, synthesis refers to examining the sources and the writer's position to form a cohesive, supported argument and accurately citing all sources.

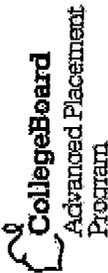




AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SAMPLE SCORING GUIDELINES FOR THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY

(continued)

- 4. **Inadequate**
 Essays earning a score of 4 inadequately take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They attempt to present an argument and support their position by synthesizing and citing at least two sources but may misunderstand, misrepresent, or exaggerate either their own argument or the cited sources they include. The link between the argument and the cited sources is weak. The prose of 4 essays may suggest immature control of writing.
- 3. Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less understanding of the cited sources, less success in developing their own position, or less control of writing.
- 2. **Little Success**
 Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate little success in taking a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They may merely allude to knowledge gained from reading the sources rather than citing the sources themselves. These essays may misquote the sources, fail to present an argument, or substitute a simpler task by merely responding to the question tangentially or by summarizing the sources. The prose of essays scored a 2 often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as a lack of development or organization, grammatical problems, or a lack of control.
- 1. Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are especially simplistic or weak in their control of writing or do not cite even one source.
- 0. Essays earning a score of zero (0) are on-topic responses that receive no credit, such as those that merely repeat the prompts.
- . Essays earning a dash (—) are blank responses or responses that are completely off topic.



AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
COMMENTS FROM THE CHIEF READER ABOUT THE SAMPLE SYNTHESIS ESSAYS

General Characteristics of High-, Middle-, and Low-scoring Responses to the TV Debate Prompt

High-scoring essays

These essays generally began by contextualizing the issue at hand for readers, explaining to them briefly why educated, informed citizens ought to read on. Generally, the thesis in a high-scoring essay does justice to the complexity of the issue being considered while foregrounding the writer's position. In addition, these essays provide an extended consideration of the sources that they reference—they go beyond merely citing sources to analyzing their significance to the thesis being developed and forging connections between the writer's position and that of the author of the source. Writers of the top essays enter into conversations with the sources that they address rather than being overwhelmed by them. These essays attribute information gained from sources rather than simply appropriating this information. Finally, these best essays provide conclusions that do not merely summarize but address the "so what?" issue. How should educated, informed citizens continue to think about the issue at hand? How will it continue to influence the readers' lives?

Middle-scoring essays

These essays generally provide a relatively brief contextualizing statement that helps readers understand why they should engage with the issue at hand. They often present a strong thesis, but it is generally rather flat and straightforward and does not do much to accommodate the complexity of the issue. The writers quote source material and comment on it briefly in order to connect it to their thesis; they forge links between their own positions and those represented by the sources, but the links are often either very literal or stretched. The conclusions tend to be a bit repetitive, often returning to language very similar to the thesis.

Low-scoring essays

These essays often seem overwhelmed by the sources. Rather than entering into conversation with other writers, these essays are dominated by them; they tend to leap directly into summarizing or describing the source material rather than contextualizing the issue at hand. The writers albeit have no recognizable thesis or a weak one that tends to become lost in their consideration of the sources. The essays generally either make rather slight reference to the sources and comment on them only obliquely or paraphrase the sources with little analysis. The sources are not always cited, making real synthesis (which requires acknowledging the ownership of ideas being examined) impossible. Occasionally the essays suggest that the writer misunderstands the sources; sometimes these essays incorporate large, directly-quoted excerpts from the sources with little or no commentary or explanation.

Mr. Mooney/Mrs. Pagani/Ms. Gaughen
AP Composition

Synthesis Question Research Project *(Revised)*

Your task is to develop your own synthesis question. Find 7 sources, 1 of which must be a graphic such as a chart or political cartoon. Use the 2006 experimental synthesis question as your model. Select one of the topics from the list provided and then narrow that topic to something interesting, narrow in scope, and intelligent. The prompt must state a "claim" and involve taking a "position" that "supports, defends, or challenges" that claim.

The directions will be the same (verbatim).

You need to write a precise and clear introduction: start with a fact that is important to the introduction of your topic. Then end with 1-2 thought-provoking questions.

Next, you need to craft a precise and lucid "Assignment" portion of the synthesis essay – all of roughly the same length. The assignment portion is the prompt; this is the most important section of the synthesis question project. This is the writer's task.

For the 7 sources, you must cite them at the top of each source using MLA format just as ETS has done for you in the model. (Source A, Source B, etc.) Each source should be less than 275 words or carefully cut so that it fits this length requirement. Your sources should include multiple perspectives on the issue, just as the 6 sources in the TV debates prompt did. Remember, the AP test taker only gets 15 minutes to read and mark up the introduction, the assignment, and all 7 sources. 

The prompt should be your 1st page, and source A should be your 2nd page, etc. until you have 8 pages, and a total of 7 sources. (Remember, for the purpose of the exam in May, you do not have to incorporate all 7 sources into your essay; you are only required to incorporate 3 of them.)

Here is a quick review on sources:

- 1 source is a cartoon, chart, or other graphic
- 1 source should come from a literary or cultural magazine (ex. *The Atlantic Monthly* or *The New Yorker*)
- 1 source should come from a book on your topic
- 1 source *could* come from an on-line article
- 1 source *could* come from a printed transcript from the media (ex. transcript from a BBC show)
- 2 other sources of your choice