

# **AP English Language Research Project Assignment**

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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 Day 53*** \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2 – (20 points – group grade) Work with your topic group to brainstorm multiple factors related to your topic. Complete the Group Brainstorm and Planning worksheet. ***Due Day 55*** \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3 – (30 points – group grade) With your topic 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 Day 55*** \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4 – Go on NACC Library Field Trip. 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. ***Trip is on Day 56 BDF – March 1st***

Step 5 – (100 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). Turn in a copy of each source for any that hasn’t already been conferenced and “checked.” You are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO SCHEDULE A CONFERENCE** to check MLA formatting. Keep a printed copy of your sources for your use in the next step. ***Due Day 64*** \_\_\_\_\_

Step 6 – (15 points – group grade) Work with your topic group. Compare your sources with those of your group. Together, choose excerpts from 12 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 the samples given and turn in copies of your sources in a packet. Each source should be no longer than one page, including citation information. ***Due Day 68*** \_\_\_\_\_

Step 7 – (10 points – 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 Day 68*** \_\_\_\_\_

Step 8 – (100 points) Individually, write a response to the Synthesis Question you created, synthesizing at least 7 of the sources in your group’s final packet of 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. ***Due Day 73*** \_\_\_\_\_

Step 9 – (25 points) Individually, write a reflection on the research process. See Step 7 assignment for more detail. ***Due Day 75*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Each of the above steps will have its own guidelines, instructions and rubrics as necessary.***

***AP English Language Research Project***  
***Step 1 – Choose Topic***

You will be completing your research paper individually. However, you will be working with a group of your classmates to brainstorm and find sources for your project. This will require collaboration and allow you to see/discuss the multiple perspectives on your topic.

Consider the following possible topics for your class. Then, on the index card given, rank them in the order you would like to work on them. Label #1 as your top choice, #2 as your second favorite, etc. You'll be grouped with other students who had similar interests. You will likely be assigned to your 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> choice.

Block 2:

- Option 1 - Personal technology effects and implications
- Option 2 - Higher Ed admissions system
- Option 3 – Border Control/Immigration
- Option 4 – Security vs. privacy: personal rights
- Option 5 – Standardized education movement
- Option 6 – Mass Violence

Block 4:

- Option 1 – Social media effects and implications
- Option 2 – Security vs. privacy: information
- Option 3 – Sex Education in schools
- Option 4 – Newspaper's changing role
- Option 5 – Parenting styles

***AP English Language Research Project***  
***Step 2 – Group Brainstorm Worksheet***

Work with your topic group to brainstorm multiple factors related to your topic. Complete the Group Brainstorm and Planning worksheet. You will be given the worksheet in class.

***AP English Language Research Project***  
***Step 3 – 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 when 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
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- A. Exposition Assignment (bad):** Write an essay in which you examine the issues related to tension in schools between individuality and conformity.
  - B. Argument Assignment (bad):** Write an essay in which you support, refute, or qualify the notion that schools’ chief goals should be to promote individuality.
  - C. Both (good):** Write an essay in which you use a chosen issue (dress code, mandatory classes, structure of the school day) to argue the extent to which schools should support individuality or conformity.

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 SEVEN 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 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 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 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. Don't rely on an online citation-maker to complete this task for you. It's always best to create them by hand and let your teacher check them for accuracy!! 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, or documentation provided by the librarian at NACC.

**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 I can help you with formatting issues if they arise!

**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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**It is HIGHLY recommended that you schedule a conference with Mrs. Jameson to go over a draft of your Annotated Bibliography before it is due. This will result in: learning how to fix your mistakes, getting a better grade, and a faster turnaround time for your grade. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board. Requests for conferences at the last minute will not be granted. When you come to your conference, make sure to have: a draft of your citations, copies of all of your sources, and your *EasyWriter* book. Coming to an appointment unprepared will not entitle you to re-schedule.**

***AP English Language Research Project***  
***Step 6 – Formatted Sources***

Compare sources with those of your topic group. Together, choose excerpts from 12 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 12 formatted sources in a packet with your final Prompt Page (see below – Step 7)

***AP English Language Research Project***  
***Step 7 – Revised Final Draft of Question Prompt***

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!

**AP English Language Research Project**  
**Step 8 – Synthesis Response**

At this point in the process, you will write a sample response to your own 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 seven 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! Use what you have learned in *They Say, I Say* when discussing your sources. Remember those templates are simply indicators of good interaction with sources!

**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 in parentheses will suffice as a citation. Your annotated bibliography 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 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. Use the standard MLA heading and header. It also must be submitted to turnitin.com

***AP English Language Research Project***  
***Step 9 – Reflection***

In a two page essay, please reflect on the research process, including the assignment, the product and your own participation in it. In a nutshell, what did you learn from this project?

Some topics to consider including in your reflection:

How did your group work together?

Did you find working in a group effective?

What did you learn about your topic that you found interesting?

Do you think your prompt page was effective?

Is there anything you feel would help the test taker adequately answer your prompt?

Do you feel that your sources were diverse and appropriate?

Were they adequate in helping you write your essay?

Was there another source you would have found helpful?

Were there any sources that you found unhelpful or unrelated?

How well do you feel you did on the response?

Is there anything you would change if you were to do the project again?

**You are certainly not limited to the above questions!**

***AP English Language Research Project***  
***Step 10 – Breathe!!***

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