

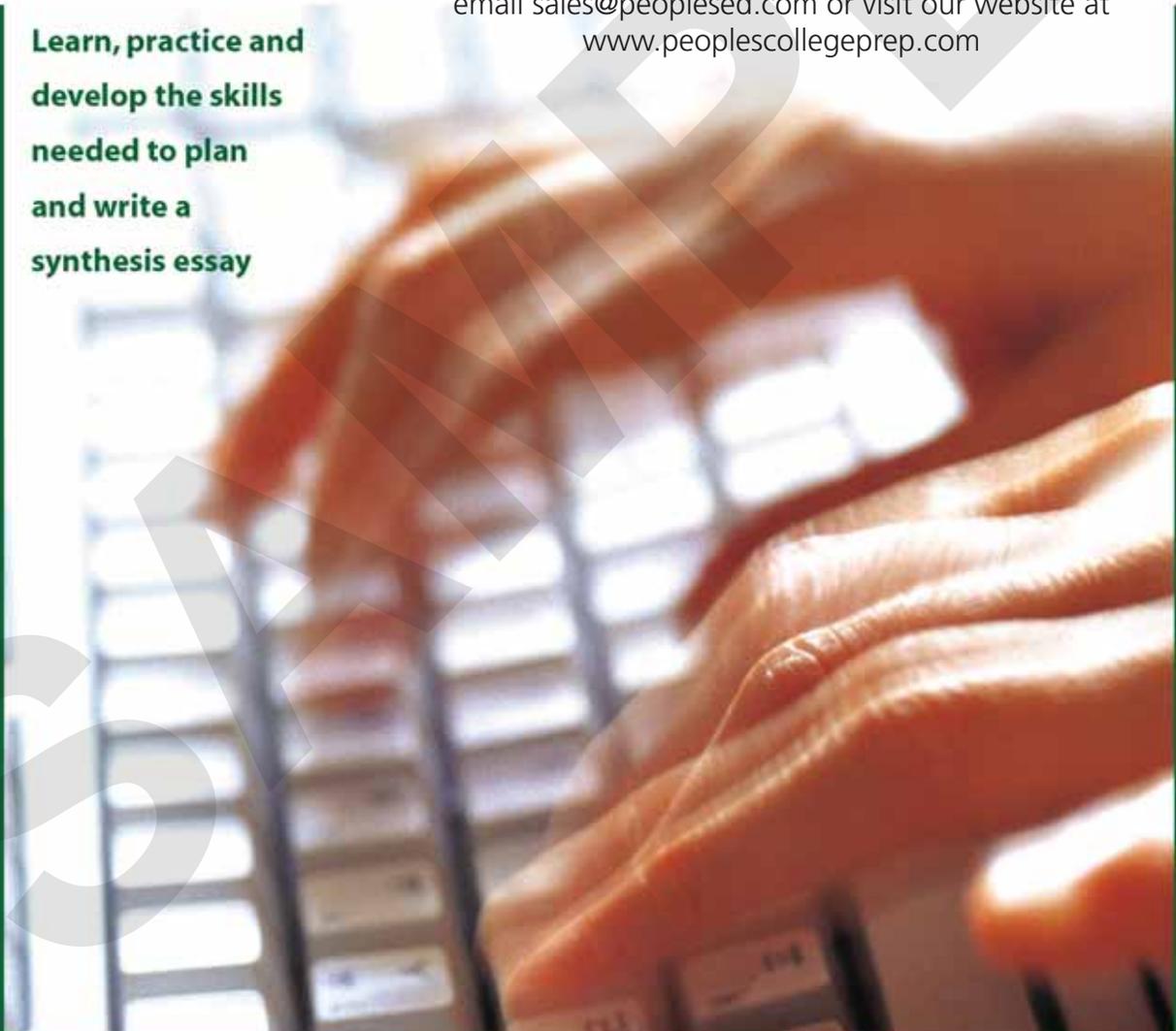
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheri Allen".

Cheri Allen
Director of Product Development
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A Peoples Education Skillbook for

AP*/Honors

Writing the Synthesis Essay

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John Brassil has taught AP English since 1983 at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham, Maine. He is a table leader at the AP English Language and Composition reading, and has conducted AP summer institutes and other workshops throughout New England, in Canada, and at the AP Annual Conference. A National Board Certified Teacher, John is a mentor to new AP English Language and Composition teachers in Maine. He also has contributed to College Board professional development publications.

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Writing the Synthesis Essay

Why Should You Use This Book?

Working with source texts is a vital academic skill. At the high school level, source-based work typically occurs in connection with major research assignments such as, say, an American history research project on The Great Depression, an “I-Search” paper about drug use by bicycle racers, a paper celebrating the work of poet Billy Collins, or a science research report concerning the world of the delectable lobster. These assignments are often massive events, sometimes taking an entire marking period with lots of library and Internet time. Extensive accountability routines such as note card checkpoints, proper source attribution, identification and use of a particular number of sources, accurate quotation and footnote form, attention to error identification and correction, and many other technical considerations are typically central to high school research assignments.

While such assignments provide valuable research experiences, the rhetorical and analytical dimensions of the research work are usually less prominent. Advanced assignments require research that integrates multiple perspectives on important topics, issues, or controversies. Such assignments require you to discover, analyze, and argue with source-based support.

At the college level, multiple-source research and source-based argument are integral to many assignments. Introductory composition courses routinely feature writing assignments that call for researched argument. Many professors assign writing topics on controversial issues and supply sources that feature contrasting ideas. College students must do more than confirm their own biases. Professors typically expect their students to read each source thoughtfully, identifying claims, important facts, ideas, and details. They often urge their students to withhold commitment to a position of their own until after they have entered into discourse with and analyzed each source. Only then should students form their own positions and muster their own arguments, pointing to sources that help shape and support their own critical judgments.

Planning and writing essays involving source-based argumentation is important for college-level academic work. Perhaps, during high school, you have been asked to develop a written argument of your own in response to several competing or distinct viewpoints. If you have, then you have already written a “synthesis” essay. If you have yet to encounter such an assignment, then the tasks in this book will acquaint you with important elements of source-based argumentation.

Each of the four synthesis tasks in this book asks you to write a source-based argument about a specific subject or issue. To respond effectively to these synthesis tasks, you must learn to embrace complex, divergent sources, and enter into virtual conversations, or discourse, with each source. You must take the time to read carefully, notice and appreciate the particular, distinct character of each source, and analyze its messages. You will identify the purpose and argument (either explicit or implicit) of each source, note points and ideas that support the argument, comment on rhetorical features and biases, raise questions, and form a response.

In working with a set of several related sources, you will compare and cross-reference the sources. After patient analysis, you will form your own position, drawing on several sources for support. You will want to weave response and analysis into your own argument in a manner that does not just represent “what someone else says for me” but that supports your own position.

How to Use Writing the Synthesis Essay

Writing the Synthesis Essay is composed of four chapters, each one featuring a distinct *Synthesis Cluster*.

Each *Synthesis Cluster* features several related texts that focus upon a specific subject or issue. You will use these teacher-selected texts, or *sources*, to prepare and complete a writing *assignment*.

The first page of each *Synthesis Cluster* explains what you are expected to do. The following is what you will find on each of these pages.

Directions

Here you will find important reminders about forming your own argument, and information about the amount of time you should devote to *both* reading and writing during the assignment.

Discourse Activities

Discourse activities guide you to analyze arguments, note issues, make inferences, and discern points of view as you read each source text. You should consider all questions and suggestions as guides during your discourse with each source. Wait to form your own argument until after you have carefully examined all sources. These activities provide you with the chance to deepen your encounter with each source in preparation for writing a synthesis essay.

In addition to responding to discourse activities, analyzing the sources demands involved, active reading on your part. You should annotate each source to identify vital ideas presented, and issues raised by the writer. You will want to mark each source so that you spotlight and quickly comment on its arguments and related supports. Thorough annotation of each source will help you move beyond response to analysis by providing you with a record of your own thinking. In addition to noting and commenting on each source's ideas, issues, and arguments, your annotations will raise questions, make connections with other sources, and underscore developing insights. These notes to yourself will help you quickly engage the Assignment and establish a direction for your own writing. Through close reading and careful analysis of each individual source, you will put yourself in a better position to respond to the entire cluster of sources.

Introduction

The Introduction provides background and a context for approaching the assignment. The question or questions in this section are designed to stimulate your thinking about the subject or issue at hand.

Assignment

This section of the first page specifies the reading and writing task. The assignment directs you to take a position in response to the sources, and states what you must write about in your essay. Each assignment requires that you form *your own argument*, and that you integrate several sources in support of your argument.

Remember to *Apply The Prompt*: respond to the task specified by the Assignment. The particular demands of the four Assignments are not uniform. Two Assignments present you with options, giving you the chance to, for example, “defend, challenge, or qualify” a particular claim. One Assignment demands that you form an argument of definition. Another Assignment requires you to evaluate viewpoints, and then argue in response to an explicit idea.

It is essential that when synthesizing ideas from sources in support of your own argument, you go beyond merely identifying and summarizing the sources that reflect your position. You must make your own argument, informed by your critical evaluation of the sources. Explain and illustrate the basis for your stance so that your own thoughts, rather than the thoughts of others, are prominent in your essay.

Source List

Each text associated with a particular *Synthesis Cluster* is identified as a *source*. You must cite particular sources by using these designations in your synthesis essay.

While related by subject, the *sources* vary in character and form, as they are drawn from a number of different publications and resources. While all *sources* have potential value in helping you complete the assignment, the particular value of each source to you will differ, depending upon your own argument about the subject.

Some *sources* are complete texts such as essays, speeches, letters, and transcripts of broadcast interviews or dialogs. Others are excerpts, passages or portions of, for example, essays, books, journal articles, or Web logs. At least one *source* in each cluster is based upon an image: a chart, cartoon, photograph, or other visual information.

Some *sources* are contemporary while others are from past decades and centuries. While many are drawn from the United States, some *sources* originate in other countries.

Four Synthesis Clusters

While the *Synthesis Clusters* share some common features, they differ in ways you will notice as you work with them. In three of the four, you will encounter discourse activities that ask you to direct your attention and your thinking to a particular question or series of questions. Some of these questions will relate to the particular source you have just read or possibly to one or more other sources. The questions are designed to push your thinking and model the kinds of questions you may want to ask when you are on your own working with a source or cluster of sources. The questions suggest some of the ways you might converse with a source, but do not tell you what to think about a source.

As you work with the *Synthesis Clusters*, you will gain confidence and authority working with supplied sources and making source-based arguments that integrate them. Accordingly, as you move from one *Synthesis Cluster* to the next, the supporting discourse activities gradually diminish in extent, and do not appear in the last cluster. In addition, time provisions for source reading, analysis, and discourse gradually diminish. Thus, Synthesis Cluster 1 offers the longest sources accompanied by the most extensive questions and greatest amount of time while Synthesis Cluster 4 presents the most compact sources, unaccompanied by additional activities or extended time.

Contents

Synthesis Cluster 1: Genes

page 1

Wright, Robert. Who Gets the Good Genes?
Cohen, Eric. The Real Meaning of Genetics
Bryant, Adey. Genetics Cartoon
McElroy, Wendy. Victims from Birth
The Hinxton Group: An International Consortium on Stem Cells, Ethics and Law. *Consensus Statement*
Rhodes, Jonathan. Building a Public Conversation on the Meaning of Genetics

Synthesis Cluster 2: Boxing

page 11

Hazlitt, William. The Fight
Makinde, Adeyinke. Pug of Ages: Weep for Me
Oates, Joyce Carol. On Boxing
Marino, Gordon. Boxing and the Cool Halls of Academe
Bird, Patrick J., Ph.D. Health Issues Concerning Boxing
Private Collection. Harvard College Varsity Boxing Team, 1937 (Photograph)
BBC Sport. Is Boxing a Spent Force?

Synthesis Cluster 3: Beauty

page 22

Etcoff, Nancy. Survival of the Prettiest
Peiss, Kathy. Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture
Koggel, Christine. Concepts of Beauty
Rosen, Christine. The Democratization of Beauty
Montez, Lola. The Arts of Beauty; or Secrets of a Lady's' Toilet with Hints to Gentlemen on the Art of Fascinating
Hickerson, Buddy. "We're lucky, aren't we, Isabella?" (A Cartoon)
Lebowitz, Fran. Beauty is Filthy Rich

Synthesis Cluster 4: War

page 29

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. On Duties
Eisenhower, General Dwight D. Message to Invasion Troops
Into the Jaws of Death (Photograph)
Boswell, James. On War
Caputo, Philip. A Rumor of War
Mead, Margaret. War is Not a Biological Necessity
MacArthur, Douglas. Commencement Address
Harbom, Lotta, and Peter Wallensteen. Patterns of Major Armed Conflicts, 1990–2005

Genes

Synthesis Cluster

Directions

Reading Time: 4 evenings of preparation

Writing Time: 1 full class period

The following task is based on the accompanying six sources.

This task requires you to integrate three to five of the supplied sources into a thoughtful, effective essay of your own. Refer to the sources in support of your own argument and cite them properly. Do not merely summarize the sources as *your* argument is vital. Use the sources so that they are integrated into your essay and support *your* argument.

Make certain that you attribute both direct and indirect citations.

Discourse Activities

Carefully read and annotate each source text, then complete the Discourse Activity that immediately follows each source. **Do not limit your observations and analysis to these specific questions.** Make sure that you read each source at least twice, first to build initial understanding, then to deepen your analysis. Try to understand the sources in light of each other and the assignment stated below.

After you have concluded your annotation of the sources and responded to each Discourse Activity, review all your notes and responses. Work through the Activity: Planning Your Essay on page 10. Then, state your own position and form your own argument.

Introduction

Genetic engineering has provoked controversy across the globe. Some people argue that such activity manipulates nature and poses serious threats to humanity. Others, however, believe that genetic engineering offers boundless and unforeseen benefits to humanity. What should be the limits of genetic engineering?

Assignment

Read the following sources and accompanying contextual information thoughtfully. Then, in an essay that synthesizes from three to five of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that genetic engineering undermines rather than enhances the promise of humanity.

Refer to the sources either as Source A, Source B, etc. or by the designation indicated below.

Source List

- Source A (Wright)
- Source B (Cohen)
- Source C (Adey)
- Source D (McElroy)
- Source E (Hinxton Group)
- Source F (Rhodes)

Source A (Wright)

Wright, Robert. "Who Gets the Good Genes?" *Time*, Jan. 11, 1999.

The following is an essay from a weekly news magazine.

In the 1932 novel *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley envisioned future childbirth as a very orderly affair. At the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Center, in accordance with orders from the Social Predestination Room, eggs were fertilized, bottled and put on a conveyor belt. Nine months later, the embryos—after “decanting”—were babies.
5 Thanks to state-sponsored brainwashing, they would grow up delighted with their genetically assigned social roles—from clever, ambitious alphas to dim-witted epsilons.

Ever since publication of Huxley’s dystopian novel, this has been the standard eugenics nightmare: government social engineers subverting individual reproductive choice for the sake of an eerie social efficiency. But as the age of genetic engineering dawns, the more
10 plausible nightmare is roughly the opposite: that a laissez-faire eugenics will emerge from the free choices of millions of parents. Indeed, the only way to avoid Huxleyesque social stratification may be for the government to get into the eugenics business.

Huxley’s scenario made sense back in 1932. Some American states were forcibly sterilizing the “feeble-minded,” and Hitler had praised these policies in *Mein Kampf*.
15 But the biotech revolution that Huxley dimly foresaw has turned the logic of eugenics inside out. It lets parents choose genetic traits, whether by selective abortion, selective reimplanting of eggs fertilized in vitro or—in perhaps just a few years—injecting genes into fertilized eggs. In Huxley’s day eugenics happened only by government mandate; now it will take government mandate—a ban on genetic tinkering—to prevent it.

20 An out-and-out ban isn’t in the cards, though. Who would try to stop parents from ensuring that their child doesn’t have hemophilia? And once some treatments are allowed, deciding where to draw the line becomes difficult.

The Bishop of Edinburgh tried. After overseeing a British Medical Association study on bioethics, he embraced genetic tinkering for “medical reasons,” while
25 denouncing the “Frankenstein idea” of making “designer babies” with good looks and a high IQ. But what is the difference? Therapists consider learning disabilities to be medical problems, and if we find a way to diagnose and remedy them before birth, we’ll be raising scores on IQ tests. Should we tell parents they can’t do that, that the state has decided they must have a child with dyslexia? Minor memory flaws?
30 Below-average verbal skills? At some point you cross the line between handicap and inconvenience, but people will disagree about where.

If the government does try to ban certain eugenic maneuvers, some rich parents will visit clinics in more permissive nations, then come home to bear their tip-top children.
35 (Already, British parents have traveled to Saudi Arabia to choose their baby’s sex in vitro, a procedure that is illegal at home.) Even without a ban, it will be upper-class parents who can afford pricey genetic technologies. Children who would in any event go to the finest doctors and schools will get an even bigger head start on health and achievement.

This unequal access won’t bring a rigid caste system a la *Brave New World*. The interplay between genes and environment is too complex to permit the easy fine-tuning
40 of mind and spirit. Besides, in vitro fertilization is nobody’s idea of a good time; even many affluent parents will forgo painful invasive procedures unless horrible hereditary defects are at stake. But the technology will become more powerful and user friendly. Sooner or later, as the most glaring genetic liabilities drift toward the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, we will see a biological stratification vivid enough to mock American values.

45 Enter the government. The one realistic way to avoid this nightmare is to ensure that poor people will be able to afford the same technologies that the rich are using. Put that way, it sounds innocent, but critics will rightly say it amounts to subsidizing eugenics.

50 State involvement will create a vast bioethical quagmire. Even if everyone magically agrees that improving a child’s memory is as valid as avoiding dyslexia, there will still be things taxpayers aren’t ready to pay for—genes of unproven benefit,

say, or alterations whose downsides may exceed the upside. (The tendency of genes to have more than one effect—pleiotropy—seems to be the rule, not the exception.) The question will be which techniques are beyond the pale. The answers will change as knowledge advances, but the arguments will never end.

- 55 In *Brave New World*, state-sponsored eugenics was part of a larger totalitarianism, a cultural war against family bonds and enduring romance and other quaint vestiges of free reproductive choice. The novel worked; it left readers thinking that nothing could be more ghastly than having government get into the designer-baby business. But if this business is left to the marketplace, we may see that government
- 60 involvement, however messy, however creepy, is not the creepiest alternative.

Discourse Activity

- 1) Wright presents his claim in the last sentence of paragraph two. State Wright's claim in your own words.
- 2) Wright points out the possible "nightmare" of government involvement in genetic engineering, yet argues for its necessity. What assumptions does he make?
- 3) Wright's concluding sentence intends to startle and generate an emotional appeal. What does Wright expect his audience to consider in his conclusion?
- 4) Those who agree with Wright would say _____
- 5) Those who oppose Wright's claim would say _____

Source B (Cohen)

Cohen, Eric. "The Real Meaning of Genetics" *The New Atlantis* 9 (Summer 2005).

The following passage is an excerpt from a journal that regularly considers the relationship between technology and society.

Possibility and Prediction

- In thinking about the new genetics, we seem to commit two errors at once: worrying too much too early and worrying too little too late. For decades, scientists and science-fiction writers—and it is sometimes hard to tell the difference—have predicted the coming of genetic engineering: some with fear and loathing, some with anticipatory glee. But when the gradual pace of technological change does not seem as wonderful as the dream or as terrible as the nightmare, we get used to our new powers all too readily. Profound change quickly seems prosaic, because we measure it against the world we imagined instead of the world we truly have.
- 5 Our technological advances—including those that require overriding existing moral boundaries—quickly seem insufficient, because the human desire for perfect control and perfect happiness is insatiable.
- 10

- Of course, sometimes we face the opposite problem: Scientists assure us that today's breakthrough will not lead to tomorrow's nightmare. They tell us that what we want (like cures for disease) is just over the horizon, but that what we fear (like human cloning) is technologically impossible. The case of human cloning is indeed instructive, revealing the dangers of both over-prediction and under-prediction. So permit me a brief historical digression, but a digression with a point.
- 15

- In the 1970s, as the first human embryos were being produced outside the human body, many critics treated in vitro fertilization and human cloning as equally pregnant developments, with genetic engineering lurking not far behind. James Watson testified before the United States Congress in 1971, declaring that we must pass laws about
- 20

25 cloning now before it is too late. In one sense, perhaps, the oracles were right: Even
if human cloning did not come as fast as they expected, it is coming and probably
coming soon. But because we worried so much more about human cloning even then,
test-tube babies came to seem prosaic very quickly, in part because they were not
clones and in part because the babies themselves were such a blessing. We barely
30 paused to consider the strangeness of originating human life in the laboratory; of
beholding, with human eyes, our own human origins; of suspending nascent human
life in the freezer; of further separating procreation from sex. Of course, IVF has
been a great gift for many infertile couples. It has answered the biblical Hannah's
cry, and fulfilled time and again the longing most individuals and couples possess to
35 have a child of their own, flesh of their own flesh. But it has also created strange new
prospects, including the novel possibility of giving birth to another couple's child—
flesh not of my flesh, you might say—and the possibility of picking-and-choosing
human embryos for life or death based on their genetic characteristics. It has also
left us the tragic question of deciding what we owe the thousands of embryos now
left-over in freezers—a dilemma with no satisfying moral answer.

40 But this is only the first part of the cloning story. Fast-forward now to the 1980s.
By then, IVF had become normal, while many leading scientists assured the world
that mammals could never be cloned. Ian Wilmut and his team in Scotland proved
them all wrong with the birth of Dolly in 1996, and something similar seems to
be happening now with primate and human cloning. In 2002, Gerald Schatten, a
45 cloning researcher at the University of Pittsburgh, said “primate cloning, including
human cloning, will not be in our lifetimes.” By 2003, he was saying that “given
enough time and materials, we may discover how to make it work.” And by 2005,
Schatten and his South Korean colleagues had reliably cloned human embryos to
the blastocyst stage, the very biological moment when they might be implanted to
initiate a pregnancy. In all likelihood, the age of human reproductive cloning is not
50 far off, even if the age of full-blown genetic engineering may never come.

Looking at where the science of genetics is heading, we must beware the twin
vices of over-prediction and under-prediction. Over-prediction risks blinding us to the
significance of present realities, by inebriating us with distant dreams and distant
nightmares. Under-prediction risks blinding us to where today's technological
55 breakthroughs may lead, both for better and for worse. Prediction requires the right
kind of caution—caution about letting our imaginations run wild, and caution about
letting science proceed without limits, because we falsely assume that it is always
innocent and always will be. To think clearly, therefore, we must put aside the grand
dreams and great nightmares of the genetic future to consider the moral meaning
60 of the genetic present—the meaning of what we can do now and why we do it. And
we need to explore what these new genetic possibilities might mean for how we live,
what we value, and how we treat one another.

Humanly speaking, the new genetics seems to have five dimensions or meanings:
65 (1) genetics as a route to self-understanding, a way of knowing ourselves; (2) genetics
as a route to new medical therapies, a way of curing ourselves; (3) genetics as a
potential tool for human re-engineering, a prospect I find far-fetched; (4) genetics as
a means of knowing something about our biological destiny, about our health and
sickness in the future; and (5) genetics as a tool for screening the traits of the next
70 generation, for choosing some lives and rejecting others. I want to explore each of
these five dimensions in turn—beginning with the hunger for self-understanding.

Discourse Activity

- 1) Cohen's thesis asks his audience to consider the dangers of our desire for perfection. State Cohen's claim in your own words.
- 2) In paragraph six Cohen urges us to consider specific questions about “the new genetics.” Consider the importance of each dimension, and its positive or negative impact on society.

War

Synthesis Cluster

Directions

Reading Time: 15 minutes

Writing Time: 40 minutes

The following task is based on the accompanying eight sources.

This task asks that you synthesize at least three of the supplied sources into an effective essay of your own. Refer to the sources in support of your own argument. Do not merely summarize the sources; *your own* argument is vital. Integrate the sources into your essay so that they support *your* argument.

You must attribute both direct and indirect citations.

Discourse Activities

Carefully read and annotate each source text. Try to understand the sources in light of each other and the assignment stated below. Do not take a position on the question posed in the Assignment below until after you have concluded your analysis of all the sources. Then, state your own position and form your own argument.

Introduction

From its earliest time, human history recounts wars among its civilizations. Wars were, and still are, typically accompanied by arguments for and against waging them. Many have justified war; many have lamented its consequences.

Assignment

Read the following sources thoughtfully. Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, develop a position in response to the following question: is war part of an effort toward its eventual eradication or is it an inevitable element of human existence?

Refer to the sources either as Source A, Source B, etc. or by the corresponding designations in parentheses.

Source List

- Source A (Cicero)
- Source B (Eisenhower)
- Source C (Photo)
- Source D (Boswell)
- Source E (Caputo)
- Source F (Mead)
- Source G (MacArthur)
- Source H (Chart)

Source A (Cicero)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *On Duties*, 1.11-13. Trans. Walter Miller. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1913.
<http://www.history.pomona.edu/kbw/violenceID1/Cicero-war.htm>.

This passage is excerpted from observations directed to his son. Cicero (106 BC–43 BC) was a prominent philosopher and citizen of Rome who was known for his oratory.

[T]here are certain duties that we owe even to those who have wronged us. For there is a limit to retribution and to punishment; or rather, I am inclined to think, it is sufficient that the aggressor should be brought to repent of his wrong-doing, in order that he may not repeat the offence and that others may be deterred from doing wrong. Then, too, in the case of a state in its external relations, the rights of war must be strictly observed. For since there are two ways of settling a dispute: first, by discussion; second; by physical force; and since the former is characteristic of man, the latter of the brute, we must resort to force only in case we may not avail ourselves of discussion. The only excuse, therefore, for going to war is that we may live in peace unharmed; and when the victory is won, we should spare those who have not been blood-thirsty and barbarous in their warfare.

Source B (Eisenhower)

Eisenhower, General Dwight D. "Message to Invasion Troops" June, 1944.
<http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/dl/dday/orderofthedayaudio.html>.

The following is a message from the Supreme Allied Commander to Allied soldiers prior to the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944.

Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security to yourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Source C (Photo)

Photo Archive. "Into the Jaws of Death: Troops Wading Through Water and Nazi Gunfire." June 6, 1944. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Public Domain Photographs, 1882-1962. <http://history1900s.about.com/library/photos/blyindexdday.htm>.

The following is a photograph of Allied soldiers wading ashore during the D-Day Invasion of France on June 6, 1944.



Source D (Boswell)

Boswell, James. "On War." 1777.

The following is an excerpt from an essay that deliberates on the nature of war.

How long war will continue to be practised, we have no means of conjecturing. Civilization, which it might have been expected would have abolished it, has only refined its savage rudeness. The irrationality remains, though we have learnt insanire certa ratione modoque, to have a method in our madness.

5 That amiable religion which 'proclaims peace on earth,' hath not as yet made war to cease. The furious passions of men, modified as they are by moral instruction, still operate with much force; and by a perpetual fallacy, even the conscientious in each contending nation think they may join in war, because they each believe they are repelling an aggressor. Were the mild and humane doctrine of those Christians, who
10 are called Quakers, which Mr. Jenyns has lately embellished with his elegant pen, to prevail, human felicity would gain more than we can well conceive. But perhaps it is necessary that mankind in this state of existence, the purpose of which is so mysterious, should ever suffer the woes of war.

15 To relieve my readers from reflections which they may think too abstract, I shall conclude this paper with a few observations upon actual war. In ancient times when a battle was fought man to man, or as somebody has very well expressed it, was a group of duels, there was an opportunity for individuals to distinguish themselves by vigour and bravery. One who was a 'robustus acri militia, hardy from keen warfare,'

20 could gratify his ambition for fame, by the exercise of his own personal qualities. It
was therefore more reasonable then, for individuals to enlist, than it is in modern
times; for, a battle now is truly nothing else than a huge conflict of opposite engines
worked by men, who are themselves as machines directed by a few; and the event
is not so frequently decided by what is actually done, as by accidents happening in
25 the dreadful confusion. It is as if two towns in opposite territories should be set on
fire at the same time, and victory should be declared to the inhabitants of that in
which the flames were least destructive. We hear much of the conduct of generals;
and Addison himself has represented the Duke of Marlborough directing an army
in battle, as an 'angel riding in a whirlwind and directing the storm.' Nevertheless
30 I much doubt if upon many occasions the immediate schemes of a commander have
had certain effect; and I believe Sir Callaghan O'Bralachan in Mr. Macklin's *Love
A la-mode* gives a very just account of modern battle: 'There is so much doing every
where that we cannot tell what is doing any where.'

Source E (Caputo)

Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War*. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1977.

The following is an excerpt from the prologue of a memoir.

For Americans who did not come of age in the early sixties, it may be hard to
grasp what those years were like—the pride and overpowering self-assurance
that prevailed. Most of the thirty-five hundred men in our brigade, born during
or immediately after World War II, were shaped by that era, the age of Kennedy's
5 Camelot. We went overseas full of illusions, for which the intoxicating atmosphere
of those years was as much to blame as our youth.

War is always attractive to young men who know nothing about it, but we had
also been seduced into uniform by Kennedy's challenge to "ask what you can do for
your country" and by the missionary idealism he had awakened in us. American
10 seemed omnipotent then: the country could still claim it had never lost a war, and
we believed we were ordained to play cop to the Communists' robber and spread our
own political faith around the world. Like the French soldiers of the late eighteenth
century, we saw ourselves as the champions of "a cause that was destined to
triumph." So, when we marched into the rice paddies on that damp March afternoon,
15 we carried, along with our packs and rifles, the implicit convictions that the Viet
Cong would be quickly beaten and that we were doing something altogether noble
and good. We kept the packs and rifles; the convictions, we lost.

The discovery that the men we had scorned as peasant guerillas were, in fact,
a lethal, determined enemy and the casualty lists that lengthened each week with
nothing to show for the blood being spilled broke our early confidence. By autumn, what
20 had begun as an adventurous expedition had turned into an exhausting, indecisive
war of attrition in which we fought for no cause other than our own survival.

Beyond adding a few more corpses to the weekly body count, none of these
encounters achieved anything; none will ever appear in military histories or be
25 studied by cadets at West Point. Still they changed us and taught us, the men who
fought in them; in those obscure skirmishes we learned the old lessons about fear,
cowardice, courage, suffering, cruelty, and comradeship. Most of all, we learned about
death at an age when it is common to think of oneself as immortal. Everyone loses
that illusion eventually, but in civilian life it is lost in installments over the years. We
30 lost it all at once and, in the span of months, passed from boyhood through manhood
to a premature middle age. The knowledge of death, of the implacable limits placed
on a man's existence, severed us from our youth as irrevocably as a surgeon's scissors
had once severed us from the womb. And yet, few of us were past twenty-five. We left
Vietnam peculiar creatures, with young shoulders that bore rather old heads.

Source F (Mead)

Mead, Margaret. "War is Not a Biological Necessity." *Asia*, vol. 40, no. 8, August, 1940.

The following is excerpted from an essay about the human nature, human progress, and war written by a prominent anthropologist.

Warfare is here, as part of our thought; the deeds of warriors are immortalised in the words of our poets, the toys of our children are modeled upon the weapons of the soldier, the frame of reference within which our statesmen and our diplomats work always contains war. If we know that it is not inevitable, that it is due to historical accident that warfare is one of the ways in which we think of behaving, are we given
5 any hope by that? What hope is there of persuading nations to abandon war, nations so thoroughly imbued with the idea that resort to war is, if not actually desirable and noble, at least inevitable whenever certain defined circumstances arise?

In answer to this question I think we might turn to the history of other social inventions, and inventions which must once have seemed as finally entrenched as warfare. Take the methods of trial which preceded the jury system: ordeal and trial by combat. Unfair, capricious, alien as they are to our feeling today, they were once
10 the only methods open to individuals accused of some offense. The invention of trial by jury gradually replaced these methods until only witches, and finally not even witches, had to resort to the ordeal. And for a long time the jury system seemed the best and finest method of settling legal disputes, but today new inventions, trial before judges only or before commissions, are replacing the jury system. In each
15 case the old method was replaced by a new social invention. The ordeal did not go out because people thought it unjust or wrong; it went out because a method more congruent with the institutions and feelings of the period was invented. And, if we despair over the way in which war seems such an ingrained habit of most of the human race, we can take comfort from the fact that a poor invention will usually give place to a better invention.

For this, two conditions, at least, are necessary. The people must recognise the defects of the old invention, and someone must make a new one. Propaganda against warfare, documentation of its terrible cost in human suffering and social waste, these prepare the ground by teaching people to feel that warfare is a defective social institution. There is further needed a belief that social invention is possible and the invention of new methods which will render warfare as out of date as the tractor
20 is making the plough, or the motor car the horse and buggy. A form of behaviour becomes out of date only when something else takes its place, and, in order to invent forms of behaviour which will make war obsolete, it is a first requirement to believe that an invention is possible.

Source G (MacArthur)

MacArthur, Douglas. "Commencement Address." Michigan State University, June 11, 1961. Reprinted by permission from *The Centennial Review*.

The following is an excerpt from a commencement address by a retired but prominent 20th century United States Army General.

The great question is, can global war now be outlawed from the world? If so, it would mark the greatest advance in civilization since the Sermon on the Mount. It would lift at one stroke the darkest shadow which has engulfed mankind from the beginning. It would not only remove fear and bring security; it would not only create
5 new moral and spiritual values; it would produce an economic wave of prosperity

that would raise the world's standard of living beyond anything ever dreamed of by man. The hundreds of billions of dollars now spent in mutual preparedness could conceivably abolish poverty from the face of the earth. It would accomplish even more than this; it would at one stroke reduce the international tensions that seem to be insurmountable now to matters of probable solution. This would not, of course, mean the abandonment of all armed forces, but it would reduce them to the simpler problems of internal order and international police. It would not mean Utopia at one fell stroke, but it would mean that the great roadblock now existing to the development of the human race would have been cleared.

Source H (Chart)

Harbom, Lotta, and Peter Wallensteen. "Patterns of Major Armed Conflicts 1990–2005." *SIPRI Yearbook 2005*. <http://editors.sipri.org/pubs/yb04/aboutyb.html>.

The table and figure below come from a Scandinavian research institute that focuses on questions of global conflict and cooperation.

Table 1.1. Regional distribution of locations with at least one major armed conflict, 1990–2005

Region	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Africa	8	9	6	6	7	6	4	5	11	11	9	8	7	5	5	3
America	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Asia	8	8	9	8	8	8	9	8	8	7	6	6	6	6	5	6
Europe	0	1	2	3	3	2	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Middle East	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	2	3	3	3
Total	25	26	24	24	26	23	21	19	26	25	22	21	19	18	17	16

Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program

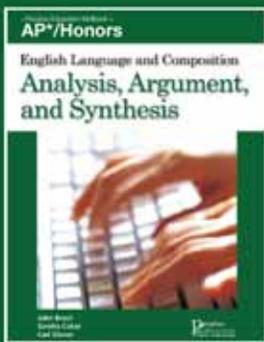
War

Activity: Planning Your Essay

How does each source relate to your own argument?

Which sources best support your argument?

Writing the Synthesis Essay



Analysis, Argument, and Synthesis

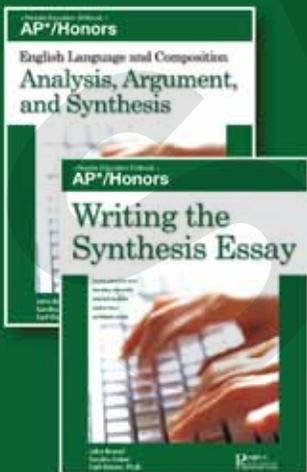
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