

Synthesis Essay

Purpose

In the previous assignment, the textual analysis, your task was to read another writer's essay closely so that you could offer readers a thoughtful interpretation of that essay's meaning through identifying and analyzing key features of its writing. Your purpose was to demonstrate to your readers that you discovered something important about the way that essay conveys its ideas. That ability to read closely and thoughtfully will serve you well as you undertake the essay of synthesis.

The purpose of your synthesis essay is to provide your readers a fuller understanding of the meanings of a group of related essays. You'll achieve this by building your essay around an **interpretive conclusion**--your perception of something important about the *relationship* among the *meanings* of the source essays.

Getting Started

The source essays will be selected from the five essays found in "Case Study: The English-Only Debate" (180-212). While you may write about all five of the essays, your synthesis essay must include at least three of the essays from that section. It is your choice which essays you synthesize.

The preliminary work necessary for a synthesis essay includes the following:

- (re)read the source essays carefully.
- identify a relationship among the source essays that interests you and you think important enough to point out to others; that relationship may involve an idea engaged by the all of the source essays, a common consideration among the essays, the subtle differences among the essays, etc.
- determine the complementary and contrary ways the source essays deal with their ideas as a means of gathering the evidence (observations, examples, quotations, etc.) you'll need to compose your synthesis.

Your task is not only to offer summaries of the source essays, though that's an aspect of the synthesis essay. Your goal is to identify an interesting and important relationship among the source essays and to explain that connection you see to your readers.

In a sense, the synthesis essay bears some similarity to a discussion in which you're the moderator. As the moderator, you must ensure each of the discussion participants (the source essays) are heard fairly and accurately, so in addition to summary you'll also be quoting and paraphrasing as a means of demonstrating how the source essays agree and disagree with one another. You'll need to organize your essay so that your reader can see where the information from the source essays overlap and/or contradict.

In this discussion, however, you get the final word. Your task is not to attack or demean another writer or lambaste any of the source essays. Rather, it is your responsibility to help your readers understand them more fully by offering your interpretive conclusion and pointing out the consistencies and disparities among them as a means of making clear what you think is most interesting and most important about them.

Organization

Among the features of your **opening**, the following are useful for your reader to encounter early in your paper:

- a brief description of the general topic the source essays consider.
- the authors' names, titles, and any other pertinent explanatory identification of the source essays.
- your interpretive conclusion, which provides the focus of your synthesis.

Your interpretive conclusion should determine how you organize your analysis.

The **middle** of *less effective* essays will be organized around the discussion of one source essay, then the second one, then the next one, etc. Such separation puts an unfair demand on your reader to follow and connect your observations. Connecting and presenting your observations is your responsibility as the writer.

More effective essays will be organized around the points of similarity and disparity you identify, for it is these points that explain the relationship among the essays you deem important.

While your synthesis requires you to engage and concentrate on the **key ideas** and **arguments** of the source essays, you know too that ideas are conveyed **rhetorically** and **stylistically** by the manner in which they are written. Do you see distinctive word choices by the authors of the source essays that mark their similarities and differences? Are there particular images the writers use to convey their ideas that you think your reader should have explained? Are the tones or attitudes of the writers important to understanding the intersection and collision of ideas among the source essays? Any such observations are also appropriate to include in your essay.

Remember that you must represent the source essays fairly and accurately.

Write a **conclusion** that reminds your readers of the most significant points you have made and the ways they form the connection you assert as your interpretive conclusion. You may also offer your opinion or position on the ideas engaged by the source essays.

Draft Due: Monday, Oct. 29

Final Due: Friday, Nov. 2