

# The Synthesis Paper

Synthesis means putting ideas from many sources together in one essay or presentation. After reading several books, plays, and short works, your task is to organize some of the information around a theme or a question, make informed observations and analyses, and then present information (quotes, examples) in a logical way to support your theme-based argument. Remember that a synthesis is NOT a summary, a comparison or a review. Rather, a synthesis is a result of an *integration* of what you heard/read and your ability to use this learning to develop and support a key thesis or argument. Learning to write a synthesis paper is a critical skill, crucial to organizing and presenting information in academic and non-academic settings. Particularly when individual readings can over-simplify a theme or perspectives from a literary work, the synthesis paper guarantees that students grapple with the complexity of issues and ideas.

## Your synthesis paper should

*Thoughtfully investigate a central theme and explain convincingly how it applies to selected major and minor works literature we have studied this year;*  
*Analyze the significance of a theme and how it contributes to meaning in each of the student-selected works;*  
*Demonstrate how you (the student) possess the ability to read, write, and think critically and competently in response to literature;*  
*Show how you (the student) successfully and artfully incorporate aptly chosen excerpts from the various works of literature discussed as specific support, as well as other details and examples from the text;*  
*Provide a thorough and meaningful review of several works of literature studied this academic year.*

## Your synthesis paper should NOT

*Merely summarize the plots of selected works of literature studied in this class;*  
*Include information or research gathered from periodicals, criticism, or other sources--the works themselves should be your only points of reference;*  
*Give the impression that you (the student) have given little attention or concern to providing specific details, examples, and textual references as support of your thesis;*  
*Plagiarize in any way--this paper must consist of 100% of your thoughts, your ideas, and your words/wording.*  
*Display writing that shows less than skillful organization, sentence structure, and use of standard English usage and mechanics.*

## Steps to Building Content—follow these, and complete each step in order!

1. Develop a thesis statement. Use your selected prompt to develop a thesis concerning how a particular theme is supported in the works you will be discussing. Your thesis statement will be the final sentence of your introductory paragraph.
2. About that introduction: this is a formal paper, and it needs a thoughtfully developed introduction (more than two sentences—more like a minimum of five). Good introductions captivate the interest of the reader, while also making the reader aware of the paper's topic and how the author feels about the topic. When written well, a quality introduction makes your audience want to continue reading the rest of the paper. Remember to begin with extremely general information, building specificity with each subsequent statement, and finishing with the thematic thesis statement.
3. Consider each of your long and short works carefully (you may have to do some re-reading!); summarize main points as they relate to the **theme** you are exploring. This is a time to remember the Big 5: setting, plot, characterization, point of view, and conflict, as well as diction, imagery, detail, syntax, and language. Consider how these literary elements support and reflect the theme you are weaving through all your works. Your teacher recommends that you not underestimate the time it will take to complete this step, and that you do some sort of pre-writing for each of the works you will discuss. In that pre-writing, you should include quotes you intend

to incorporate, and other specific information. After pre-writing, you need to begin writing the body paragraphs, one work at a time. For major works, your teacher expects **four** well-developed paragraphs discussing how the theme applies to that particular work. For minor works, write **three** well-developed paragraphs. For **any** work, no more than five paragraphs of discussion, please!

4. After all the work with Step 3, you will need to craft a stunning conclusion. Begin by re-wording and re-stating your thesis. From there, write a statement for each work you used, indicating the most obvious way this theme is revealed or supported. Finally, make a statement that applies the theme generally to the human experience, human relationships, or the world we are currently living in.

### **Format Guidelines—These are absolute and non-negotiable; please read carefully and follow!**

1. All Rough Draft assignments are to be **handwritten**, double-spaced, on lined, loose-leaf paper. You may write on the back of your paper as long as you do not use a writing instrument whose ink bleeds through the paper. Word-processed rough drafts will not receive credit or feedback. Why do I do this? Because the AP Exam date draws near and it is time to practice legible handwriting. And the double spacing gives me an area to put my comments where you can read them. You will turn these portions in a second time with your final copy, so **keep track of all rough draft sections (you have been officially warned!)**.
2. The final copy must be typed, double-spaced, twelve-point **Courier New** font, with one-inch margins on the left, right, top, and bottom of the pages. Any student who has trouble finding access to a computer may come in and type in my room before school (7:45 to 8:05), after school (until 4:00 p.m.), and during "A" or "B" lunch.
3. You will need to make parenthetical citations when you quote from the texts, which will necessitate a Works Cited list at the end of your paper. We will follow MLA rules for citation of texts. We will go over constructing the Works Cited page in class, but there are many wonderful websites you can find with a simple Google search that will help you with this.
4. All deadlines are absolute for this assignment—as they are being set well in advance, please show honor and respect for yourself, your work, your fellow classmates, and your teacher by not asking for exceptions. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent (i.e. school business, college visits, etc.), make arrangements to have the work turned in **even though you are not in class. All assignments are due at the start of your AP English class on the date specified.** Remember, all deadlines will stand, regardless of your attendance—if you are going to miss class, make appropriate arrangements in order to receive credit!
5. Do not use first (i.e. "I" "Me" or "We") or second (i.e. "You" or "Your") person at any time in this paper.
6. **Do I need a Report Cover?** The final copy must be turned in with all graded portions of the rough draft in a two-pocket folder—rubric sheet + final copy in the left pocket, all rough draft pieces in the right pocket. No other report holder is necessary. If any student cannot afford a two-pocket folder, see me and arrangements can be made for an alternative or substitution. I will keep the final copy that you turn in, but you will get your rough draft pieces and folder back when you receive your final copy grade.
7. Turn in your scoring rubric sheet with your final paper, with appropriate fields completed.
8. Any form of plagiarism will result in a score of zero for the entire assignment. This includes the creative recycling of all or part of older synthesis papers.

## Major Works List—Select Three

*Frankenstein*

*Hamlet*

*Heart of Darkness*

*A Tale of Two Cities*

*As I Lay Dying*—This novel is **REQUIRED** as one of your three major work discussions

## Minor Works—Select Three

Use the archived assignment descriptions to peruse the titles of short stories and poetry that we have examined this year (this includes poetry from SPLOTTTS, multiple-choice practice, and poetry timed writings). It is a possibility and not a probability that a master list of short works will become available on the website at some point after Spring Break.

### Prompts (Select one only for your paper):

1. Revenge. It's more than a successful evening drama on ABC. Many of the works we have examined this year have dealt with the issue of seeking revenge, and how that desire/quest affects the seeker of it and others around him/her. If you choose this prompt, you will ***analyze through thoughtful discussion how the act of revenge influences characters and action, and how the quest for revenge typically proves to be detrimental or destructive to more than the intended victim(s).***
2. According to Carl Jung, "Children are educated by what the grown-up is and not by his talk." Unquestionably, parents play a large role in the way their children act, think, and mature. If you select this prompt, ***you will analyze through thoughtful discussion how various parent-child relationships have influenced a character's development, actions, and thoughts. What observation (theme) can you derive about human nature when considering parent-child relationships?***
3. In the words of Monty Python's ridiculous knights (please pronounce "knight" properly), "Run away! Run away! RUN AWAY!" This year we have met quite a few characters who try (some valiantly, some pathetically) avoiding consequences or responsibilities through escape or running away. If you select this prompt, ***you will analyze through thoughtful discussion how various characters have run away from things and what this pattern of behavior suggests about human nature (that creates your general theme).***

## Synthesis Paper Timeline

**ALL** Deadlines must be met or no credit will be given for that portion of the assignment—NO Exceptions! The work assigned is due at the start of your AP English class on the date specified. Have it in your teacher's hands on or before that time—even if you are not present in class on these days.

Tuesday, April 2, 2013	Prompt selection and list of major & minor works form is due (15 points).
Thursday, April 4, 2013	Introductory Paragraph Rough Draft is due (15 points).
Monday, April 8, 2013	Rough Draft Body Paragraphs over first major work are due (30 points).
Thursday, April 11, 2013	Rough Draft Body Paragraphs over second major work are due (30 points).
Monday, April 15, 2013	Rough Draft Body Paragraphs over third major work are due (30 points).
Thursday, April 18, 2013	Rough Draft Body Paragraphs over first minor work are due (20 points).
Monday, April 22, 2013	Rough Draft Body Paragraphs over second minor work are due (20 points).
Wednesday, April 24, 2013	Rough Draft Body Paragraphs over third minor work are due (20 points).
Thursday, April 25, 2013	Conclusion Rough Draft is due (15 points).
Friday, May 3, 2013	Final Paper is DUE at the start of class (300 points)!*

As you receive rough draft portions back from your teacher, you should be typing, typing, typing (and saving, saving, saving—in at least two secure places, such as a flash drive + Google Drive)! Do not wait to type the entire paper in one sitting unless **you** are very happy to type a lot.

\*There will be an opportunity for bonus points at the end of this assignment. If you turn in your final copy and draft copies according to the instructions (and with all checked-out book copies) early, you will be awarded bonus points as follows:

If the paper is turned in on Tuesday, April 30, 2013: 15 bonus points

If the paper is turned in on Wednesday, May 1, 2013: 10 bonus points

If the paper is turned in on Thursday, May 2, 2013: 5 bonus points