

Synthesis Writing



Synthesis searches for meaningful and insightful connections between different materials by the identification of common themes or traits.

The main job of the synthesis essay writer is to explain why connections and relationships are important. To do this successfully, requires research and careful analysis to develop a unique and interesting argument or perspective.

It is important to note that a synthesis is not a summary or retelling of the plots of literary pieces. Instead, a synthesis essay is to create new knowledge out of existing knowledge and sources.

The writer combines or synthesizes the information in the sources to provide a unique perspective on a topic. The thesis statement then becomes the literary flag you place on your mountain that presents your perspective and identifies the new knowledge that you will create.

Through the revelation of points of convergence or divergence, the synthesis essay writer can reveal something that has been hidden from a reader who may have previously known the literary pieces has now discovered something previously unnoticed.

What Is Synthesis Writing
pg. 2

Key Features of Synthesis
pg. 3

Before Writing Your Synthesis
pg. 3

Writing Your Synthesis Essay
pg. 4

Spontaneous Synthesis Response Writing
pg. 5

Novel Synthesis Response Writing
pg. 6



Scott Findley
School District 43
Gleneagle Secondary

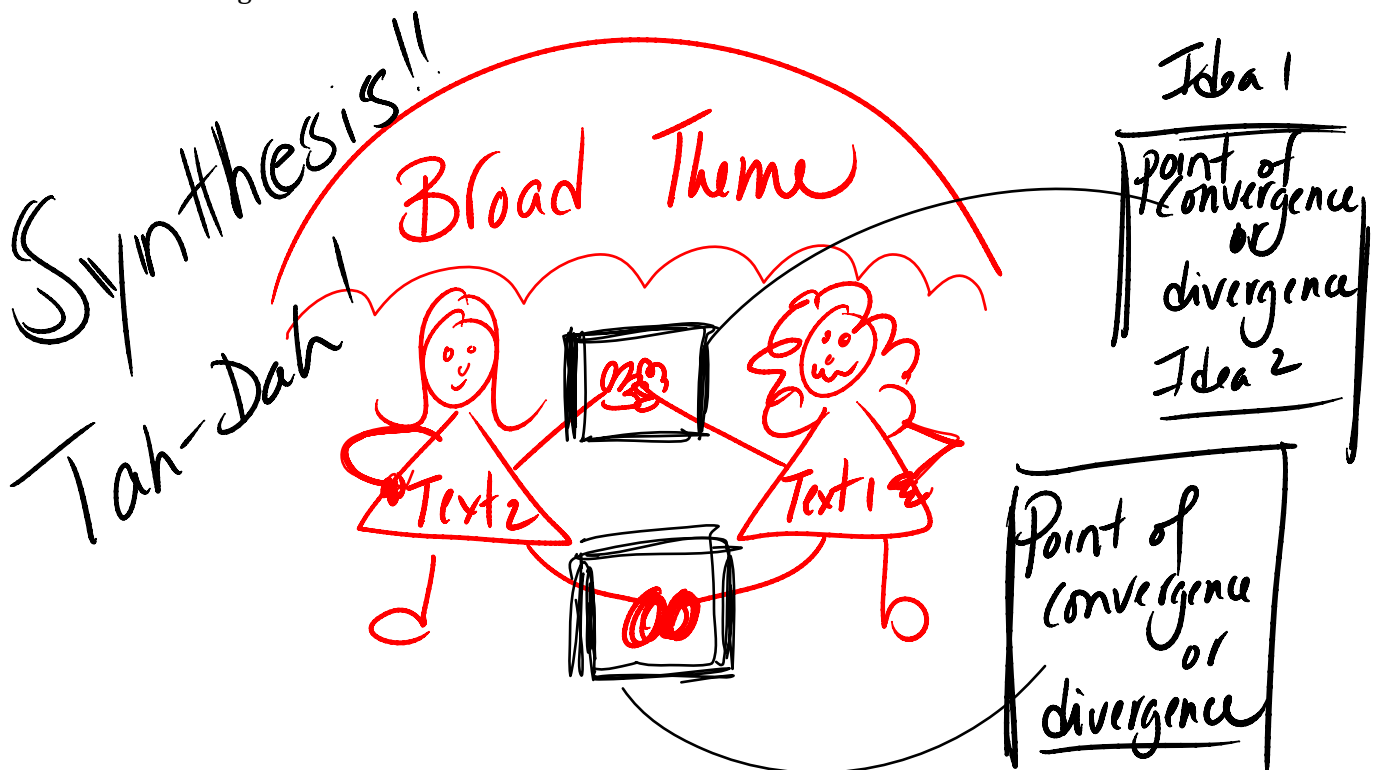
What is Synthesis Writing

Synthesis searches for **meaningful and insightful connections** between different materials by the identification of common themes or traits. The main job of the **synthesis essay writer is to explain why connections and relationships are important**. To do this successfully, requires research and careful analysis to develop a unique and interesting argument or perspective.

It is important to note that **a synthesis is not a summary or retelling of the plots of literary pieces**. Instead, a synthesis essay is to create new knowledge out of existing knowledge and sources.

The writer combines or synthesizes the information in the sources to provide a unique perspective on a topic. The thesis statement then becomes the literary flag you place on your mountain that presents your perspective and identifies the new knowledge that you will create.

Through **the revelation of points of convergence or divergence, the synthesis essay writer can reveal something that has been hidden from a reader** who may have previously known the literary pieces has now discovered something previously unnoticed. In essence the unique perspective of the writer immediately demonstrates where there is overlap between the sources and helps the reader understand this connection in greater detail.



Example: Broad Theme: Search for Identity in a postmodern world

- **First point of convergence/divergence of the two texts:** identity is externally defined for both protagonists by a judgmental world.
- **Second point of convergence/divergence of the two texts:** although both protagonists are isolated by the fabricated notions of identity as defined by society, protagonist 1 resists external definition by actively controlling his identity formation while protagonist 2 succumbs to the half-truths defined by her peers.

© Lisa Dubé: Drawing & Example

Key Features of a Synthesis

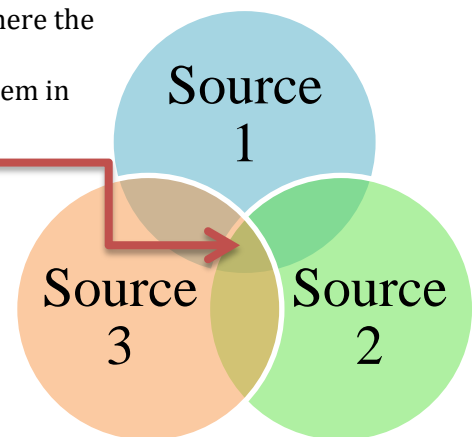
- It is organized in such a way that readers can immediately see where the information from the sources overlap
- It makes sense of the sources and helps the reader understand them in greater depth

Before Writing Your Synthesis

1. **Narrow Your Topic:** Usually you are asked to write a short essay, in which it is almost impossible to cover a large topic in depth. Therefore it is often best to choose a specific focused topic. For example, the broad topic of the individual in conflict with society would need to be narrowed to something more specific such to how characters isolate themselves when confronting society's injustices and prejudices.
2. **Summarize Briefly Common Themes or Traits in Texts:** It is often best before you start to write to try to clearly define the themes or traits that the texts have in common. This will help focus you focus specifically on where to look for your research and quotations.
3. **Develop a working thesis statement:** A working thesis statement should include a rough idea of your topic and the important point you want to make about that topic. Writing this statement at the top of a rough draft or outline and looking at it often can help you remain focused throughout the essay. However, the thesis statement that you begin with is not set in stone. If you find that your essay shifts topic slightly, you can change your thesis in later drafts so that it matches your new focus.
4. **Decide how you will use your sources:** After completing your research and gathering sources, you may have a large or overwhelming amount of information. However, the purpose of a synthesis essay is to use only the most important parts of your research, the information that will best support your claim. At this point, you must decide which sources, and/or which parts of those sources, you will use.
5. **Organize your research:** Now, decide the order in which you will present your evidence, the various arguments you will employ, and how you will convince your readers.

Key Features of a Synthesis

- It is organized in such a way that readers can immediately see where the information from the sources overlap.
- It makes sense of the sources and helps the reader understand them in greater depth.
- It zeroes in on the greatest points of convergence to show the strongest connections and most significant points of divergence.
- It has a very strong and focused thesis statement that presents the writer's point of view. It shows that the writer has a very detailed understanding of the sources and demonstrates a unique perspective or argument.



Writing Your Synthesis Essay

1. Title

- This is the personal title that you choose for your piece of writing that is designed to attract and pique the reader's interest in your writing.
- Once you know your thesis, you can use the 'main idea' to help generate a few words that encapsulate that main point as your title. Many writers think they must title their piece at the start: instead of writing it at the beginning, you can wait until you have finished your writing and choose a few interesting words from your conclusion instead.

2. Attention Getter

This is the opening sentence to your essay that precedes your thesis or topic sentences and is connected to the main idea but generalized. It is designed to attract and pique the reader's interest in your writing.

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Relate a dramatic anecdote. | • Tell a vivid anecdote. | • Define a key term. |
| • Expose a commonly held belief. | • Use a fitting quotation. | • Present an interesting observation. |
| • Present surprising facts and statistics. | • Ask a provocative question. | • Create a unique scenario |

3. Introduction

- Theme or topic statement at the point of LARGEST convergence of the two texts (the biggest umbrella, the common denominator).
- Introduce the texts to be synthesized:
 - i. Gives both the title and author of each source
 - ii. Focuses the synthesis with a brief explanation of
 - how the theme/topic emerges in each of the texts OR
 - how the author in each text forwards the theme OR
 - how the theme is significant to each text
- Answer the darn question in one succinct statement which highlights the main points of convergence or divergence.

4. Body Paragraph(s)

- Begins with a sentence or phrase that informs readers of the main idea of the paragraph;
- Includes evidence and support from both texts
- Clearly indicates which material comes from which source using lead in phrases
- Shows the similarities or differences between the different sources in ways that make the paper as informative as possible
- Represents the texts fairly

5. Conclusion

- When you have finished your paper, write a conclusion reminding readers of the organizing ideas within the body paragraphs (points of convergence or divergence) and the ways they connect to the overall topic or theme (big umbrella)
- How or why was this topic/theme significant or relevant?

6. Epiphany

- After you have concluded your essay, one more sentence as a final epiphany that leaves the reader realizing that your topic/theme is relevant and significant to their own life.

Spontaneous Synthesis Response Writing

Many times a synthesis response must be generated in a very short amount of time using newly experienced sources. Thankfully, these sources are often chosen with existing connections and a comparison question already defined such is the case on tests and exams. However, it is ALWAYS recommended to look over the topic question before you read the sources so that you can highlight quotes while doing the cold reading.

There are many ways that one can strengthen one's abilities to see patterns of convergence and divergence in order to write more effectively in these spontaneous writing situations. This can be done quite simply by taking two characters from different pieces of literature or narratives and doing a quick comparison and contrast with a Venn diagram looking at both basic elements and also point of convergence and divergence with morals and values.



<p>Romeo Montague & Jay Gatsby</p>	<p>Both men fall in love instantly with a woman from whom they are each ironically destined to lose. While circumstances conspire against both, it is the direct actions of Juliet that results in Romeo achieving his love and Gatsby's lack of affluence and his transformation to attain wealth that inevitably results in both the achieving and losing of his heart's desire.</p>
<p>Tony Stark & Bruce Wayne</p>	<p>Both are affluent and intelligent billionaires who, through tragic circumstances, assume a secondary identity to protect the innocent. While both face their own personal demons, Stark inevitably comes to embrace his heroism publicly, while Wayne instead uses his public persona as the actual mask for his dark knight.</p>
<p>Frodo Baggins & Harry Potter</p>	<p>Both young men are destined to save their respective people from a villain and his forces bent of genocide and world domination. While both men are supported by band of friends, they each must inevitably overcome their own internal conflicts to successfully save both themselves and their worlds.</p>

Novel Synthesis Response Writing

The purpose of an expository synthesis essay is to combine separate elements (in this case separate short stories and topics) into a single or unified piece to convince the reader to accept your thesis as properly outlined in your introduction and successfully supported in the body of your writing. A successful synthesis expository response will do the following:

- **Provides a strong and supportable thesis.** This is a sentence provides your reader with a position/viewpoint that is logical and can be fully supported by the reference literature and your understanding, interpretation, and insight into the material.
- **Provides a depth of discussion and effectiveness of argument.** By using both indirect and direct reference to the text(s), a clear insight is provided that effectively supports your thesis
- **Present a strong conclusion.** All your evidence and explanations should build toward a strong ending in which you summarize your view in a clear and memorable way. The conclusion in an expository synthesis essay echoes the introduction and fully reminds the reader of thesis and your insight.

1. **Topic Selection:** When writing a response, you are often given a topic to focus upon. Do not confuse the topic with the theme or thesis. As a writer it is your responsibility to find an insightful theme and thesis that connects to the topic.

- An antihero is an effective/ineffective choice for a protagonist or primary character.
- Dystopian literature is an effective genre for a modern reader.
- Character relationships is the primary way to connect with a reader

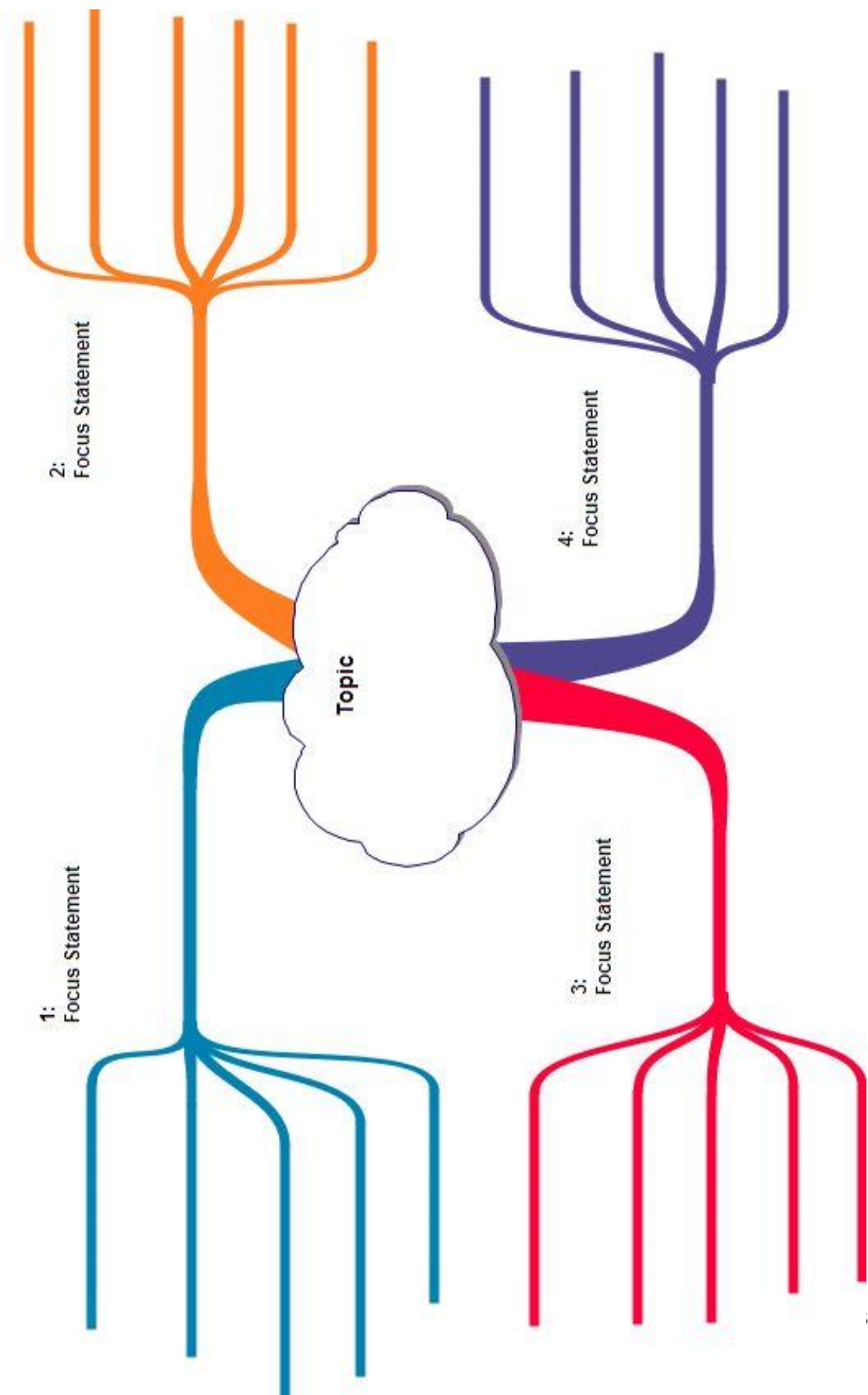
Topic Choice :

2. Literary Support

Once you have chosen your topic, it is time to determine which pieces of literature will be examined in order to effectively explain the topic through the synthesis process. You MUST have a minimum of 3 sources.

- **Source 1:** _____ will help effectively support my explanation of the topic because _____
- **Source 2:** _____ will help effectively support my explanation of the topic because _____
- **Source 3:** _____ will help effectively support my explanation of the topic because _____
- **Source 4:** _____ will help effectively support my explanation of the topic because _____

3. **Brainstorming:** With your focus statement for each source in mind, list and provide as many relevant pieces of information/ideas/quotes as you can for your chosen topic with the related source. (If you wish to use a different brainstorming/planning process on a separate piece of paper, ensure that you staple it into this booklet).



- 4. **Selection:** Of the items/ideas listed in your brainstorming, which of them provides the clearest connection to the topic and the best supportable position. Select the best/strongest ones that can be supported effectively by the literary sources. Rewrite this idea below.
- 5. **Support:** For your chosen ideas ensure that you have adequate textual support (each idea should normally have 2-3 key textual aspects that support it in the form of direct quotes). Write these quotes in the area below (including a page number as well).
- 6. **Writing Preparation:** Using your brainstorming, the source text(s), and your strongest idea/points to create a thesis

Big Idea/Insight/Topic:

Source 1 :
Support Point 1:

Support Point 2:

Support Point 3:

Source 2 :
Support Point 1:

Support Point 2:

Support Point 3:

Source 3 :
Support Point 1:

Support Point 2:

Support Point 3:

If you need more room for writing, then you can do it on a separate page and staple it into the booklet

- 7. **Thesis Writing:** Using your big idea/insight and your support points, now write a **thesis or focus statement**, which has to reveal your own point of view. A well-formulated thesis statement is the key to success, as it is the central part of your response, around which all other parts are organized

Thesis:

Sources

- Lisa Dube Synthesis Writing Handout
- Bakersfield College: What is a Synthesis Essay
- BC Ministry IRP
- <http://www.users.drew.edu/~sjamieso/Synthesis.htm>