



AP* English Language and Composition

Analyzing Sources for Synthesis *Gender Issues*



Analyzing Sources for Synthesis: Gender Issues

Lesson Introduction/Overview

The AP* English Language exam’s synthesis essay is a free response question that requires you to integrate three to five sources into an effective, persuasive essay of your own. To respond “effectively,” you must move beyond the mere recitation of quotes and stats; this sounds complex, but essentially this prompt is a good old-fashioned argument question. You should refer to the sources in support of your argument; you must cite your sources—both direct and indirect citations. *Your* argument is everything, so do not resort to summarizing the sources.

The format of a synthesis prompt consists of basic directions (the rules and requirements) much like the lesson introduction above, an introduction to the issue that may include possible positions, a writing task or assignment that tells you what to do, and a list of available sources.

Remember: All synthesis essay prompts ask the same question: Given a body of evidence, what considerations come into play when developing a position?

Introduction: Many people believe that the physical differences in size and strength between men and women affect their intellectual capabilities and social status. Brain research suggests that men and women process information in different ways. Are men and women created equal? Or do their differences suggest an inherent inequality between the sexes? Do these physical differences imply that one gender is superior to another?

Definition—Issue (*n*): the matter in question or in dispute.

What is the *issue* at hand? _____

Assignment: Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that "Human creatures ...are never entirely male or entirely female; there are no men, there are no women...."

Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc.; titles are included for your convenience.

- Source A--Stanton
- Source B--Gould
- Source C--Tannen
- Source D--Mencken
- Source E--Fairfield
- Source F--image
- Source G--brain scan

David Jolliffe, former Chief Reader for the AP* Language Exam, writes that the synthesis question involves six steps:

1. Read
2. Analyze
3. Generalize
4. Converse
5. Finesse
6. Argue

“On the synthesis question the successful writer is going to be able to show readers how he or she has thought through the topic at hand by considering the sources critically and creating a composition that draws conversations with the sources into his own thinking.”

Read, Analyze, Generalize:

What claim is the source making about the issue?

What data or evidence does the source offer in support of that claim?

What are the assumptions or beliefs that warrant using this evidence or data to support the claim? What are two or three positions on this issue I could take?

Be careful not to oversimplify the issue. Think about the nuances and complexities of the issue.

Converse:

Imagine presenting your best position to each of the authors of the sources. Create an imaginary conversation between yourself and the author of the source. Ask yourself these questions:

Would the author agree with my position? Why or why not?

Would the author disagree with my position? Why or why not?

Would the author want to qualify my position? How?

Finesse:

You now need to finesse, or refine the point you want to make about the issue. This will be the thesis. This thesis should appear quickly in the composition, after a sentence or two that contextualizes the topic or issue for the reader.

Argue:

You now need to argue your position. Incorporate into your thinking the conversations you had with the authors of the primary sources. (See “Converse.”) Learn to write sentences like the following:

“Source A takes a position similar to mine.”

“Source C would oppose my position, but here is why I still maintain its validity.”

“Source E offers a slightly different perspective, one that I would alter a bit.”

Source A

“Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions,” Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1848)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a leader of the American women’s rights movement of the mid-and late-nineteenth century. She was an organizer of the Seneca Falls, New York, Convention in 1848, where she gave this speech. This is the first three paragraphs of Stanton’s speech.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

Read, Analyze, Generalize:

What claim is the source making about the issue?

*Thomas Jefferson should have written in the Declaration of Independence that all people, men **and** women, are created equal. His failure to include women within the language of the document exposes the larger issue of inequality between the sexes.*

What data or evidence does the source offer in support of that claim?

Stanton's evidence exists in her imitation of both the form and the wording of a highly regarded document.

What are the assumptions or beliefs that warrant using this evidence or data to support the claim?

Her belief that women and men are inherently equal and that women are deserving of rights guaranteed to all citizens of the United States justifies her imitation of the document.

Converse:

Imagine presenting your best position to the author of Source A. Create an imaginary conversation between yourself and the author of the source. *Let's say we want to defend the claim that there are no inherent differences between men and women.*

Ask yourself these questions:

Would the author agree with my position?

Absolutely.

Why or why not?

Stanton recognizes the equal status of men and women in society according to the Declaration of Independence.

Would the author disagree with my position?

No.

Why or why not?

If there are no inherent differences between men and women, logic dictates they should enjoy equal rights as citizens.

Would the author want to qualify my position?

No. Her audacious imitation of such a foundational document as The Declaration of Independence reveals her total commitment to equal status for men and women. Her contention that women must "demand the equal station to which they are entitled" and her insistence that men have established "an absolute tyranny" over women are forceful and authoritarian.

Source B

Stephen Jay Gould, “Women’s Brains”

Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002) was a foremost paleontologist and evolutionary biologist.

Anthropometry, or measurement of the human body, is not so fashionable a field these days, but it dominated the human sciences for much of the nineteenth century and remained popular until intelligence testing replaced skull measurement as a favored device for making invidious comparisons among races, classes, and sexes. Craniometry, or measurement of the skull, commanded the most attention and respect. Its unquestioned leader, Paul Broca (1824-80), professor of clinical surgery at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, gathered a school of disciples and imitators around himself. Their work, so meticulous and apparently irrefutable, exerted great influence and won high esteem as a jewel of nineteenth-century science.

Broca’s work seemed particularly invulnerable to refutation. Had he not measured with the most scrupulous care and accuracy? (Indeed, he had. I have the greatest respect for Broca’s meticulous procedure. His numbers are sound. But science is an inferential exercise, not a catalog of facts. Numbers, by themselves, specify nothing. All depends upon what you do with them.) Broca depicted himself as an apostle of objectivity, a man who bowed before facts and cast aside superstition and sentimentality. He declared that “there is no faith, however respectable, no interest, however legitimate, which must not accommodate itself to the progress of human knowledge and bend before truth.” Women, like it or not, had smaller brains than men, and, therefore, could not equal them in intelligence. This fact, Broca argued, may reinforce a common prejudice in male society, but it is also a scientific truth....

Broca’s argument rested upon two sets of data: the larger brains of men in modern societies, and a supposed increase in male superiority through time. His most extensive data came from autopsies performed personally in four Parisian hospitals. For 292 male brains, he calculated an average weight of 1,325 grams; 140 female brains averaged 1,144 grams for a difference of 181 grams, or 14 percent of the male weight....

In 1879, Gustave Le Bon, chief misogynist of Broca’s school, used these data to publish what must be the most vicious attack upon women in modern scientific literature....Le Bon concluded: In the most intelligent races, as among the Parisians, there are a large number of women whose brains are closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains. This inferiority is so obvious that no one can contest it for a moment; only its degree is worth discussion. All psychologists who have studied the intelligence of women, as well as poets and novelists, recognize today that they represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man. They excel in fickleness, inconstancy, absence of thought and logic, and incapacity to reason....

I have reexamined Broca’s data, the basis for all this derivative pronouncement, and I find his numbers sound but his interpretation ill-founded, to say the least. The data supporting his claim for increased difference through time can be easily dismissed.

Read, Analyze, Generalize:

What claim is the source making about the issue?

What data or evidence does the source offer in support of that claim?

What are the assumptions or beliefs that warrant using this evidence or data to support the claim?

Converse:

Imagine presenting your best position to the author of Source B. Create an imaginary conversation between yourself and the author of the source.

Ask yourself these questions:

Would the author agree with my position?

Why or why not?

Would the author disagree with my position?

Why or why not?

Would the author want to qualify my position?

If so, how?

Source C

“There is no Unmarked Woman” by Deborah Tannen (1993)

Deborah Tannen is a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University. “There is no Unmarked Woman” analyze nonverbal communication, which is less often discussed than speech.

The term “marked” is a staple of linguistic theory. It refers to the way language alters the base meaning of a word by adding a linguistic particle that has no meaning on its own. The unmarked form of a word carries the meaning that goes without saying—what you think of when you’re not thinking anything special....

The unmarked forms of most English words ...convey “male.” Being male is the unmarked case. Endings like *ess* and *ette* mark words as “female.” Unfortunately, they also tend to mark them for frivolousness. Would you feel safe entrusting your life to a doctorette?... Gender markers pick up extra meanings that reflect common associations with the female gender: not quite serious, often sexual....

There is no woman’s hairstyle that can be called standard that says nothing about her. The range of women’s hairstyles is staggering, but a woman whose hair has no particular style is perceived as not caring about how she looks, which can disqualify her from many positions, and will subtly diminish her as a person in the eyes of some....

If a woman’s clothing is tight or revealing (in other words, sexy), it sends a message—an intended one of wanting to be attractive, but also a possibly unintended one of availability. If her clothes are not sexy, that too sends a message, lent meaning by the knowledge that they could have been. There are thousands of cosmetic products from which women can choose and myriad ways of applying them. Yet no makeup at all is anything but unmarked. Some men see it as a hostile refusal to please them....

Sitting at [a] conference table musing on these matters, I felt sad to think that we women didn’t have the freedom to be unmarked that the men sitting next to us had. Some days you just want to get dressed and go about your business. But if you’re a woman, you can’t, because there is no unmarked woman.

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Converse:

Imagine presenting your best position to the author of Source B. Create an imaginary conversation between yourself and the author of the source.

Ask yourself these questions:

Would the author agree with my position?

Why or why not?

Would the author disagree with my position?

Why or why not?

Would the author want to qualify my position?

If so, how?

Source D

In Defense of Women by H.L. Mencken (1922)

That it should still be necessary, at this late stage in the senility of the human race to argue that women have a fine and fluent intelligence is surely an eloquent proof of the defective observation, incurable prejudice, and general imbecility of their lords and masters. One finds very few professors of the subject, even among admitted feminists, approaching the fact as obvious; practically all of them think it necessary to bring up a vast mass of evidence to establish what should be an axiom. Even the Franco Englishman, W. L. George, one of the most sharp-witted of the faculty, wastes a whole book up on the demonstration, and then, with a great air of uttering something new, gives it the humourless title of "The Intelligence of Women." The intelligence of women, forsooth! As well devote a laborious time to the sagacity of serpents, pickpockets, or Holy Church!

Women, in truth, are not only intelligent; they have almost a monopoly of certain of the subtler and more utile forms of intelligence. The thing itself, indeed, might be reasonably described as a special feminine character; there is in it, in more than one of its manifestations, a femaleness as palpable as the femaleness of cruelty, masochism or rouge. Men are strong. Men are brave in physical combat. Men have sentiment. Men are romantic, and love what they conceive to be virtue and beauty. Men incline to faith, hope and charity. Men know how to sweat and endure. Men are amiable and fond. But in so far as they show the true fundamentals of intelligence--in so far as they reveal a capacity for discovering the kernel of eternal verity in the husk of delusion and hallucination and a passion for bringing it forth--to that extent, at least, they are feminine, and still nourished by the milk of their mothers. "Human creatures," says George, borrowing from Weininger, "are never entirely male or entirely female; there are no men, there are no women, but only sexual majorities." Find me an obviously intelligent man, a man free from sentimentality and illusion, a man hard to deceive, a man of the first class, and I'll show you a man with a wide streak of woman in him. Bonaparte had it; Goethe had it; Schopenhauer had it; Bismarck and Lincoln had it; in Shakespeare, if the Freudians are to be believed, it amounted to down right homosexuality. The essential traits and qualities of the male, the hallmarks of the unpolluted masculine, are at the same time the hallmarks of the Schalskopf. The caveman is all muscles and mush. Without a woman to rule him and think for him, he is a truly lamentable spectacle: a baby with whiskers, a rabbit with the frame of an aurochs, a feeble and poposterous caricature of God. ...

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Converse:

Imagine presenting your best position to the author of Source B. Create an imaginary conversation between yourself and the author of the source.

Ask yourself these questions:

Would the author agree with my position?

Why or why not?

Would the author disagree with my position?

Why or why not?

Would the author want to qualify my position?

If so, how?

Source E

“Talent, Opportunity, and Female Aspirations” by Faith Fairfield (June 1926)

The progress of man has never been impeded by preconceived ideas regarding his abilities, his proper interests, and his appropriate activities. Woman has always been so hampered. For generations her existence was narrowly prescribed because she was considered an inferior creature lacking a soul and possessing but a rudimentary intellect... Woman ... is repeatedly reminded that the greatest scientists, musicians, and artists have never been numbered among her sex...

The average woman must still choose between domesticity and a career... In exceptional cases a woman continues her work without interruption after marriage, her home life being as subordinated to her career as a man’s would be. The work these women accomplish is often exceptionally valuable, perhaps because they are emotionally as well as intellectually satisfied. This solution of the modern social problem... is probably most efficacious in giving woman an opportunity to develop her possibilities...

An intellectual man may be married to a low-grade moron with the sanction of society, but the husband of a woman of unusual ability is considered an object for pity or merriment unless his accomplishments equal or excel hers.

From *Atlantic Monthly* Volume 137, No. 6, pp. 801–804.

Go to www.theatlantic.com/ideastour to obtain the full text.

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If so, how?

Source F

*The poster was part of the war effort during **World War II** and was intended to encourage women to assume jobs traditionally held by men in manufacturing plants and industry while the men served in the Armed Forces in Europe and the Pacific.*



<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/images/women.jpg>

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Why or why not?

Would the author disagree with my position?

Why or why not?

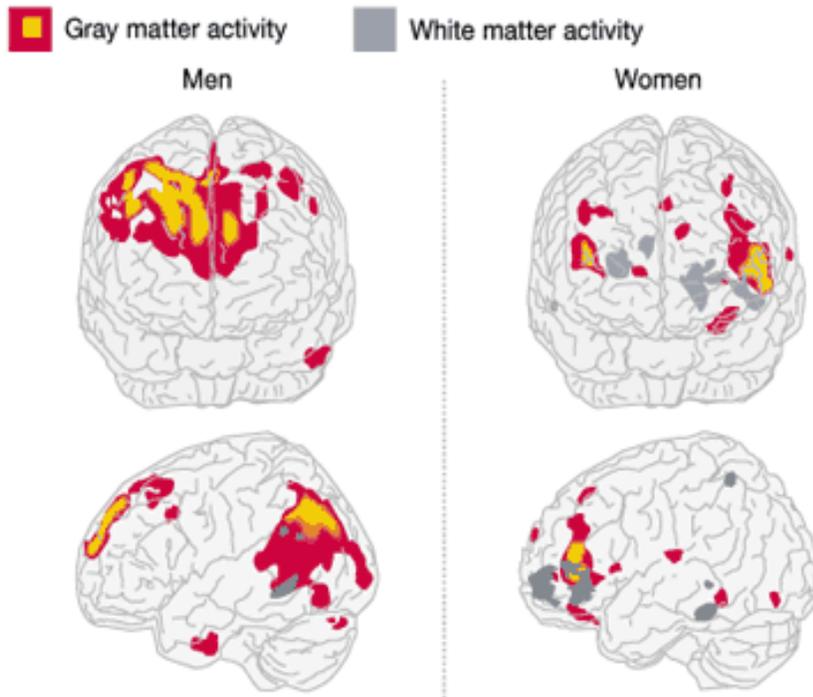
Would the author want to qualify my position?

If so, how?

Source G

How gender shapes brain function

Brain scans of men and women with equivalent IQs show that men rely more on gray matter in performing mental tasks and women rely more on white matter. Gray matter is associated with information processing, white matter with communication between parts of the brain.



Source: Richard Haier, UC Irvine

Los Angeles Times

<http://www.record-eagle.com/2005/jul/06brain1.gif>

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