



Synthesis Common Questions

Writing Center Hours: 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM M-Th,
8:30 AM- 4:30 PM F, 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM S-S
Email: okc.tutoring@okstate.edu
Phone: 405-945-3278



Definition: A synthesis essay calls for you to both compare and contrast two texts as well as respond to a synthesis question. This requires a rigorous analysis as well as a deep comprehension of both texts.

Common Questions:

Question: *What do I write about?*

Answer: Your job is to read your assigned texts, then compare and contrast the two texts as well as respond to a synthesis question.

Question: *How do I start?*

Answer: Begin by telling us about the texts you read and the authors. State the title of the work and the author's name. State the author's main points in each article.

Question: *How do I end it?*

Answer: A good way to end is by summarizing your main points (What did the authors do well, and what did they not do well?) and restating your overall response to the synthesis question.

Question: *How do I analyze rhetorical features?*

Answer: Read the text slowly, taking notes by hand and highlighting. Keep in mind the following rhetorical features:



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Genre

What is the apparent genre of the text? What are the conventions of that genre? (Think about typical length, style, tone, formatting/design, whether & how sources are cited, etc.) Are there any special features?

Author's Purpose

What is the author's purpose? (As specifically as possible, how do they want to change the reader's view?) In terms of broad rhetorical aim, is this purpose primarily *informative* or *persuasive*? Is there any element of *entertainment*?

Audience

Who is the intended audience? How busy are they? What are their motives for reading? What is the relationship between the author and the audience? What knowledge does the audience already have? What knowledge do they need?

Angle of Vision

How does the author reveal their perspective on the topic? Is it stated directly or only implied? What details are included or omitted, and what is the effect of those choices? How do word choices and sentence structures contribute to the development of a specific angle of vision?

Logos

What is the main idea of the text? What evidence or supporting details are included? How clear and consistent is the message?

Ethos

How does the author come across in the text? What contributes to the development of this persona? Is this persona effective for accomplishing the text's purpose?

Pathos

How does the author appeal to the audience's feelings or values? Are these strategies effective?

Kairos

How is the text connected to a specific time and place? Are there features that lose effectiveness or relevance outside of the text's original context?

Style/Voice

What stands out in terms of the author's ways of shaping sentences, word choices, voice or persona, and/or tone? Is the writing high or low on the ladder of abstraction? What are the effects of these choices? Overall, are the style and voice appropriate for the genre, audience, and purpose?

Design/Format

Analyze the choices used for Type, Space and Layout, and Color (see pp. 71–72). To what extent are these choice aspects of the genre? What other rhetorical effects do they have?



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Multimodal Features

Analyze any graphics, images, videos, and/or sound. How does these relate to logos, ethos, and/or pathos?

Question: How do I compare rhetorical features?

Answer: This comes down to opinion. Do YOU think that the author effectively made their point, or do you think that there was a better way that they could have gone about it? Which author had better use of each rhetorical feature you are analyzing?

Question: What if my essay isn't long enough?

Answer: Quotes, examples, reasons - oh my! Check to make sure that you clearly explain your reasoning for each point of the essay. If you have and it still isn't long enough, try adding some quotes and examples to further illustrate your point.