

Evidence, Thesis, and Stylistic Choices

AP English Language ■ Unit 6

AP English Language



What we will cover

- 1 Identifying Claims and Evidence
- 2 Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence
- 3 Identifying the Overarching Thesis
- 4 Writing a Thesis Statement
- 5 Word Choice, Comparisons, and Syntax
- 6 Using Words and Syntax for Tone and Style



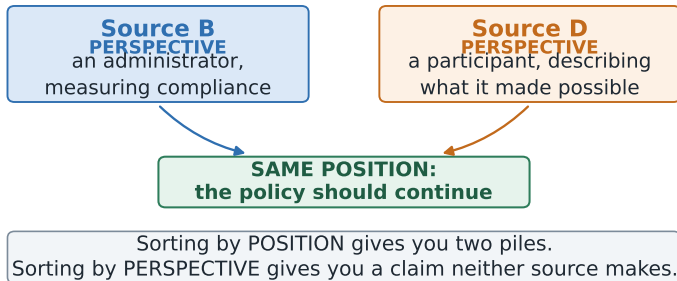
The distinction the synthesis question is built on

A **position** is what a source is for or against. A **perspective** is where it is standing when it says so.

- Two sources may hold the **same position** and still come from **different perspectives**. They agree, and they are doing different work in your argument.
- Sort the sources by **position** and you get two piles, for and against, and a paragraph per pile.
- Sort them by **perspective** and you can say why the agreement does not survive: one values the measurable gain, the other the change in what students attempt.
- That second sentence is **synthesis** – grounded in both sources, and a claim neither source makes.

The distinction the synthesis question is built on, in detail

Same position, different perspective



Two sources can agree and still be doing completely different work in your argument – the same **position**, a different **perspective**.

Identifying Claims and Evidence

Unit 6 is the synthesis unit, and it contains the single sharpest distinction in the course.

- When **synthesising**, writers **draw on arguments from multiple sources**, strategically select the most relevant information, and integrate it into their own argument.
- A source **provides information** for an argument, and **some sources are more reliable or credible than others**.
- **A position and a perspective are different**. Sources may hold the **same position** on a subject and yet each come from a **different perspective**.
- The strongest arguments **recognise and acknowledge the other positions** that exist.
- The degree to which a source considers other positions reflects the degree to which that source is credible – a test you can apply to any source on the exam.

The verb positions the source

Every source you bring in arrives through a **verb**, and the verb is already an evaluation. *Says* wastes the slot; the others cost no extra words.

- **states, reports** – you are only relaying. Use it when the fact is **not in dispute**.
- **argues, contends** – this is a **position**, and a defensible one. Use it when you will engage with it.
- **claims, asserts** – quiet doubt: a position with no support shown. Use it just before you **qualify** it.
- **concedes, admits** – the point **costs the source something**, so it is evidence against their own side.
- **demonstrates, shows** – the source has proved it. Use it when you are building on the source, not testing it.

The verb positions the source, in detail

THE VERB	WHAT IT COMMITS YOU TO	USE IT WHEN
<i>states, reports</i>	nothing — you are relaying	the fact is not in dispute
<i>argues, contends</i>	that this is a position, and defensible	you will engage with it
<i>claims, asserts</i>	quiet doubt — a position without shown support	you are about to qualify it
<i>concedes, admits</i>	that this costs the source something	it is evidence against their own side
<i>demonstrates, shows</i>	that the source has proved it	you are building on it, not testing it

Says wastes the slot. The verb positions the source **before** your commentary begins, and costs no extra words.

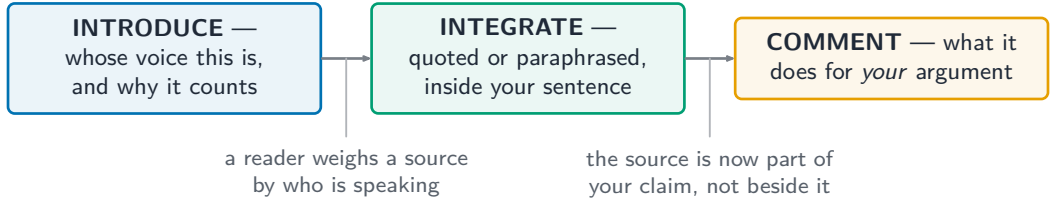


Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

The position-and-perspective distinction is what makes synthesis possible. If you sort the sources only by position, you get two piles – for and against – and a paragraph per pile. If you sort them by **perspective**, you can say things like:

It uses two sources, is grounded in what each actually says, and produces a claim neither source makes.

A source becomes evidence in three moves



A synthesis essay is not a tour of the sources. Move three is where the **synthesis** happens, and it is the one most often missing

Reading two writers who agree

the trap

two sources supporting the same conclusion are not therefore saying the same thing

the example

both the economist and the teacher support the measure, but they support it for reasons that do not survive contact with each other

why it matters

a synthesis essay that treats agreement as identity has not read either source

what to do

name each writer's **reason**, then say whether the two reasons are compatible

the payoff

a tension between two supporting sources is the most sophisticated thing a synthesis can notice

Agreement on a conclusion is cheap. The essay that earns the sophistication point is usually the one that finds where two allies would fall out.



Identifying the Overarching Thesis

A short but load-bearing point: **consideration and use of new evidence may require revision of the thesis statement and/or changes to the line of reasoning** .

Reading a text, this means a writer's thesis may be *responsive* – shaped by the evidence rather than imposed on it.



Writing a Thesis Statement

Writing under time pressure, this is permission you should use. If, while drafting, you find the evidence does not support the thesis you began with, **change the thesis**, not the evidence. Examiners reward an argument that fits its evidence; there are no marks for having predicted your own conclusion.

A thesis written after the evidence is nearly always better than one written before it.

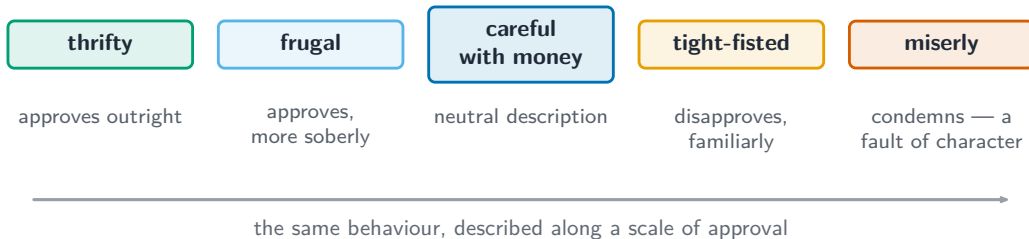


Word Choice, Comparisons, and Syntax

The third is the analytical gold. A tone shift is a visible event in a text: something changed at that point, and explaining what the writer wanted the reader to do differently after it is exactly the kind of answer that scores.

- A writer's **tone** is the writer's **attitude or feeling about a subject**, conveyed through word choice and writing style.
- Readers **infer** tone from word choice – especially from the **positive, negative, or otherwise charged** associations of the words chosen.
- A writer's **shifts in tone** from one part of a text to another may suggest **qualification, refinement, or a change in perspective**.

Same denotation, five judgements



The denotation barely moves; the **judgement** moves the whole way. Naming which word was chosen, from what alternatives, is the analysis



Using Words and Syntax for Tone and Style

In your own writing, tone should be **consistent and controlled**, and deliberately shifted only where the argument turns – for example when moving from stating your position to conceding part of an opposing one.

Worked example – two sources that only look agreed

On a synthesis prompt, compare two uses of the same two sources.

- **Low-scoring:** *“Source B agrees with Source D that the policy should continue.”*
- **Scoring:** *“Sources B and D both defend the policy, but B defends it as an administrator measuring compliance while D defends it as a participant describing what it made possible – so the agreement is thinner than it appears.”*

Position-sorting produces nothing. It is the **perspectives** that do the work, and the claim must belong to the writer.

Exam tips

- **Position and perspective are different.** This one distinction lifts most synthesis essays out of the middle band.
- Sort sources by **perspective**, not by side. Sorting by side produces a paragraph per pile and no argument.
- Use the CED's **credibility test**: a source that ignores all other positions is weaker, and you may say so.
- If the evidence does not fit the thesis, **change the thesis**. There are no marks for consistency with your first idea.
- A **tone shift** is a visible event. Say what changed and what the reader was meant to do after it.
- Keep your own tone controlled. Shift it only where the argument genuinely turns.



Unit 6 – key takeaways

1

Position vs perspective

the distinction that lifts a
synthesis essay

2

Sort sources

by perspective, not by side

3

Credibility

a source that ignores other
positions is weaker

4

Thesis

if the evidence does not fit,
change the thesis

Check yourself

- 1 Position is not the same as what?
- 2 Why not sort sources by side?
- 3 What may you say about a one-sided source?
- 4 If evidence does not fit the thesis?

Answers: perspective ▪ it produces a paragraph per pile ▪ it is weaker ▪ change the thesis