

# Synthesis Essay

What is it, and how do I write one?



# Prompt:

## Is Big Brother Still Watching?

- ◆ Identify and discuss a modern issue that can be connected in some way to the concerns that Orwell conveyed through his novel, *1984*.
  - ◆ You should be able to show the similarities (and perhaps differences) between the novel and the modern-day situation in your paper and also evaluate the relevance of Orwell's warning or concerns in relation to the present situation in your conclusion.
- ◆ This issue could relate to government control, manipulation, or abuse of power, education, foreign relations, military, surveillance, class structures and issues—the possibilities are abundant! Choose something you are interested in researching.

# What does synthesis mean?

- ◆ Synthesis is the combining of the constituent elements of separate material or abstract entities into a single or unified entity (opposed to analysis,) the separating of any material or abstract entity into its constituent elements (“Synthesis”).
- ◆ Ideas are pulled together to form a new whole rather than broken down in separate parts for analysis.
- ◆ Analysis is not “bad” or an unsophisticated thought process, and it typically is an inherent part of the synthesis process.
- ◆ Synthesis is a real world skill, applicable in daily life, college, and career.

# What is a synthesis essay?

- ◆ A synthesis essay will use several texts and other sources, drawing ideas from each text to form a new product, which is an essay in this case.
- ◆ In this case, you will use the novel along with a couple of SCHOLARLY articles\*\* in order to fully address the prompt.
- ◆ You will address the similarity with the novel and relate the relevance of Orwell's message or warning to an issue or topic of the present day.
  - ◆ The prompt will be reviewed and expanded upon later.

# An Overview of the Process:

1. Select and skim texts—Reject or save for later if they seem useful
2. Read closely—Analyze and annotate
3. Develop a thesis (claim)
4. Re-read annotations and articles—Select evidence to support the claim. Conduct more research, if you need more evidence.
5. Plan—Organize evidence to create a “road map” for your writing
6. Draft
7. Revise and Research\*\*--Conduct more research if you need better or more evidence
8. Edit and “Publish”

# Start Researching

- ◆ After you have been assigned or identified a topic for research, you need to find reliable, scholarly resources.
- ◆ Select texts and skim them, assessing for reliability, scholarliness, and relevance to your topic. Save links, or even better—save a copy of the text to a Google Doc where you can later annotate it using the comments feature.
- ◆ Typically, an educational database (including Google Scholar) evaluates sources for you, and you can trust the reliability. However, if you use commercial databases, such as Google, you **MUST** evaluate the reliability of the source.
- ◆ Possible Issues to Consider for Reliability: Author and publisher, relevancy to your topic, timeliness.

# As you research...Dig Deeper

- ◆ Later, read these articles closely in order to ANALYZE and look for connections among the texts—this could be viewed as looking similarities, overlaps, or parallels. In some cases, you may see contradictions, differences, or departures.
- ◆ Look for similar issues that you can pull together into a single topic of focus for your essay. Let your reading help shape the your conclusions and later, your thesis.
- ◆ Consider the scope of your assignment—this is an assignment limited to two or three additional sources in addition to *1984*. You will not need to use all of the information in a text, but you do not want to inaccurately convey the scope or intent of the source, either.

# What do I annotate?

- ◆ Comprehend and analyze important ideas presented in this article.
- ◆ For EXAMPLE, you can look for “answers” to questions you might ask yourself as you read:
  - ◆ Where is this happening, and who is affected?
  - ◆ What is the issue or threat to privacy, freedom, etc. described in the text?
  - ◆ How does the tactic limit privacy, freedom, or give the government control over individuals?
  - ◆ How are people affected? What are the consequences?



# Connect to Other Texts!

- ◆ **MAKE CONNECTIONS TO *1984*!**
- ◆ You should consider characters, the storyline AND Goldstein's book:
  - ◆ What similarities (or differences) do you see to characters like Winston, Symes, the Parsons, Julia, O'Brien, The Party, or others?
  - ◆ How do events in the article parallel (or differ from) events described in the plot of the novel?
  - ◆ What ideas presented in Goldstein's Book relate to the ideas presented in the article you are reading?

# Highlight Selectively

- ◆ Writing notes in the margin should consistently occur with any highlight.
- ◆ Consider that you may only be able to incorporate a few quotes from each article.
- ◆ Be on the lookout for especially important information or ideas you want to quote directly or other ideas you might want to paraphrase or summarize.

# Stake a Claim on What You Have Learned:

- ◆ Based upon your findings, develop a thesis (claim) for your paper.
- ◆ In some cases, you need to ensure that your thesis addresses all aspects of an assignment or prompt.
- ◆ In other cases where the prompt is more open-ended, **you** must decide the parameters of your thesis.

# Support Your Claim: Choose Strong Evidence

- ◆ Select evidence from each text or source that will best support your argument or thesis and help readers to understand the topic in greater depth.
- ◆ Clearly mark **possible** evidence in your notes or in the annotations.
- ◆ These notes will help make the next stage—Planning and Organizing—that much easier.

# *1984 Synthesis Paper*

The following slides relate to the specific assignment, whereas the previous slides were a tutorial, or review of the general process.

# Paper Requirements:

- ◆ This MLA-formatted paper should be 4-6 typed, double-spaced pages, INCLUDING the Works Cited page, which is always placed on its “own” page(s).
- ◆ All papers MUST include parenthetical citations and a Works Cited page if they are to receive a passing grade.
- ◆ Papers of this length should be considered a “brief” assignment for college, and one you would need to work though in a week or less, in some cases.

# Prompt:

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- ◆ This issue could relate to government control, manipulation, or abuse of power, education, foreign relations, military, surveillance, class structures and issues—the possibilities are abundant! Choose something you are interested in researching.

# Keep yourself under control...

- ◆ This is in many ways a trial run or a build up to your senior ESLR project. You may become deeply interested in your topic and want to explore it in a broader scope later on.
- ◆ For example, multiple perspectives or objections to your position should not be ignored, but you do not have to time to delve into this with great detail and additional research.
- ◆ Remember the length is between 4-6 typed, double-spaced pages, using Times New Roman 12 pt. font
  - ◆ This includes a **REQUIRED** works cited page.



# Next Steps...Research and Organize Your Paper!!

- ◆ We will work in the computer lab Monday and Tuesday. You may also research and print from home if you wish to annotate directly on articles. Students will otherwise be expected to annotate using Google Docs or a PDF annotation app in order to “capture” both the text and annotations.
- ◆ I will help you to organize your ideas in order to start drafting your paper independently. You will submit

# Draft...Revise...Finalize

- ◆ Next Wednesday, 10/4, you will have time to draft in the computer lab, and I will give support to students who need additional help setting up a paper in MLA format. We will use MLA format for this paper, as you have used in previous major papers for English.
- ◆ We will have a revision workshop in class on Friday, 10/6. You must bring a hard copy of the draft to class for this revision workshop.
- ◆ The final draft will be due to Turn It In AND Google Classroom by Monday, 10/9. We will return *1984* books on Monday, 10/9.

# Synthesis Paper... Planning Tutorial

The following slides provide support for the planning stage as well as some reminders about MLA formatting and how to get extra support.

This tutorial is intended to address the process—meaning that you should not necessarily be looking at every slide in one sitting.

# Organize

- ◆ Use some type of quick graphic organizer to select evidence and group it according to subtopic, point, or whatever organization pattern makes sense with your topic.
- ◆ Identify at least the subtopics, or write a topic sentence if you find that to be helpful.

Example:

- ◆ Torture Tactics
- ◆ Motives
- ◆ Propaganda

# Shaping your thesis for 1984:

- ◆ Your thesis should identify a similar limitation of privacy or freedom, or address some aspect of government control between *1984* and the topic you have chosen to research.
- ◆ Your thesis **COULD** be more than one sentence; however, regardless of its length, a thesis statement is most often found at the end of the introduction.

# Sample multi-sentence theses:

- ◆ When it comes to the brutality of totalitarian governments who torture their citizens, North Korea's regime is just as bad as the tyranny Orwell envisioned in *1984*. Their motives are identical, as is their use of propaganda and the media to manipulate their public image and contradict reports of abuse.
- ◆ Modern day totalitarian regimes prey on youth and poverty-stricken citizens to indoctrinate and brainwash them to the point that they will betray even their closest family members. The abusive Party Orwell predicted in *1984* is frightening, but the modern day evil of North Korea is even more frightening given the graphic details that emerge from a handful of survivors.

# Add evidence to the organizer:

- ◆ Use direct quotes or paraphrases/summaries if the evidence is particularly lengthy.
- ◆ Include direct quotes or paraphrases from *1984*, including “Goldstein’s Book” to demonstrate careful reading and strong understanding of the text.
- ◆ Balance direct quotes and paraphrases—do not rely too heavily on paraphrases that may call your level of preparation into question.
- ◆ *Cite all sources, whether you quote, paraphrase, or summarize—including the novel and two or three ADDITIONAL reliable/scholarly articles using MLA format!!*
- ◆ *You must demonstrate competency with parenthetical references that match the Works Cited Page!!*

# Draft an Introduction

- ◆ Hook—Create interest or relevance
  - ◆ Why was Orwell so worried? Connect to his concerns...
- ◆ Background—Introduce the topics and orient the reader
  - ◆ Introduce the dystopian world that Orwell created for *1984*.
  - ◆ Introduce the modern issue or topic that connects to Orwell's novel and his warnings (or fears) for the future.
- ◆ Thesis—State your claim.
  - ◆ What similarities (and/or difference) will you prove exists between the fictional world of *1984* and modern times?



# Craft a Conclusion

- ◆ Restate Thesis
- ◆ Evaluate the relevance of Orwell's warnings/fears that he expressed in 1948 (published in 1949) in light of the modern-day issue you addressed in the paper.
  - ◆ Is the threat greater?
  - ◆ Has the threat diminished over time?
  - ◆ Has the threat completely been transformed or changed?
  - ◆ Have new circumstances made what was once threatening in Orwell's viewpoint less menacing? Is the tactic now benign, or even desirable or necessary in modern times?
- ◆ Revisit hook/end with compelling, thought-provoking statement. How do you confront or combat this kind of fear? Does this make the novel one worth reading even 50 years later? What is the power of literature that makes a reader think? What would happen if voices like Orwell's were silenced? **AVOID QUESTIONS!**

# Extra Support: Think “Collegiately”

- ◆ Do NOT procrastinate!
- ◆ Use my “office hours”: Lunch time (except Wednesdays) and during 5<sup>th</sup> period. I will stay after 5<sup>th</sup> period by prior arrangement.
- ◆ Use the writing center:
  - ◆ Help with MLA formatting issues
  - ◆ Peer review/feedback—focused on a particular problem area or a general review.

“Synthesis.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. 30  
Sep. 2014. <[Dictionary.com](http://Dictionary.com)