

# American Voices Essay



General Guidelines &  
Approaching the Assignment



# What is a synthesis essay?

- Make insightful connections through a persuasive stance
- Use sources to support YOUR argument – use what they say for your purpose
- Don't adopt the arguments of the sources. Participate in a “conversation” with them. Engage in critical thinking – going beyond what the sources have said – to include your observations and analysis.

# Essay Structure

## ■ Introduction:

hook + transition +  
thesis + method

## ■ Body Paragraphs:

3 or more paragraphs  
following the structure  
outlined in the method

## ■ Conclusion:

essay summary +  
significance  
(so what?)

Thesis &  
Method

Introduction

3+ Body  
Paragraphs

Restated  
“Thesis”

Conclusion



# Building Your Thesis & Method

- **THESIS:** Present a clear, decisive, connotatively rich statement that **SYNTHESIZES** the pieces. You are not analyzing or evaluating the pieces separately; you are bringing them together to build a common statement about them.
- **METHOD:** Determine the 3(+) topics you will discuss in order to prove your thesis.



# Body Paragraph Structure

1. Body Thesis providing a clear connection to the thesis
2. 3+ Quotations (evidence), all integrated or framed, reflecting the diversity of passages
3. More Commentary than evidence, but the sentence “order” is your choice
4. Concluding Sentence explaining how the paragraph as a whole connects to the essay’s thesis (How does it support the thesis?)



# Structuring Your Essay

## DO NOT

- Write 1 body paragraph per source.
- Focus on your ideas (not informed by the passages) about the subject.
- Summarize the sources.
- Craft an obvious, feeble thesis (“People have different identities...”).

## DO

- Build paragraphs around connections, integrating a minimum of 4 selections including *To Kill a Mockingbird*.
- Make a SPECIFIC statement about the “whole” of the selections in the thesis.

# MLA Format

- Attention to detail is a must!
- Use the provided models to match up formatting of

NAME  
CONVENTIONS

PAPER  
HEADING

TITLE  
FORMAT

IN-TEXT  
CITATIONS

MARGINS

PARAGRAPH  
SPACING  
(inc. indent)

RUNNING  
HEADER

