

Substitute Guide: Synthesizing Across Sources

Course: English III (Grades 9–12) **Subject:** English Language Arts & Reading **Time:** ~50-min period or ~90-min block RLA

5-minute guide (plain language)

Students read **two** short original informational texts — **Text A** ("Let the Grass Go") and **Text B** ("Not So Fast") — that take **different angles** on one debatable, non-partisan question: *should cities replace public grass lawns with native, water-wise plants?* Students find each text's **central claim** and strongest **evidence**, mark where the texts **agree** and **disagree**, judge each source's **credibility**, and then write a short **synthesis response** that takes a position and supports it with evidence from **both** texts (Claim–Evidence–Reasoning). On a block period, they also address a **counterpoint**. **You do not need an English background to run this.** Everything students need — both full texts and the definitions of every term — is printed in their packet, and every question can be answered directly from those two texts. Hand out the packet, read the opening script, let students work independently in pencil, help by reading aloud and pointing to text and paragraph numbers (never by giving answers), and collect every packet at the end. The answer key is a separate file for the teacher only.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §110.38 (English III).

- **Synthesizing sources:** synthesize information and ideas from multiple texts to build and support a position across sources.
- **Evaluating evidence & credibility:** evaluate the relevance, sufficiency, and credibility of evidence and its sources.
- **Composing an argument:** compose an argument that states a clear position and supports it with well-chosen evidence and reasoning, including a response to a counterpoint.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted. Please confirm codes and wording against your official source.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Count and hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Confirm each student has a **pencil**. No devices or other materials are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.
- Check the plan: is this a **standard ~50-minute period** or a **~90-minute block**? (Pacing for both is below.)

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet (5–6 pages) per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no calculator, no special materials.

Timing Standard period vs. block

On a ~**50-minute period**, do Q1–Q9 and ACE (skip Q10). On a ~**90-minute block**, add Q10 (address a counterpoint) and allow deeper work on Q5–Q9.

Segment	~50-min period	~90-min block	What students do
Start — Predict & warm up	5 min	7 min	Q1–Q2 (predict the two angles + synthesis-move match)
Build — Read both texts	14 min	18 min	Read Text A and Text B, word bank; Q3
Apply — Compare & evaluate	18 min	26 min	Q4–Q8 (claims, strongest evidence, agree/disagree, credibility, best-evidence choice)
Explain — Synthesis response	10 min	16 min	Q9 synthesis using both texts (C-E-R)
Explain (block) — Counterpoint	—	9 min	Q10 address and answer a counterpoint
Close — ACE	5 min	7 min	Articulate / Connect / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional	optional	Sketch a "both/and" middle-ground plan

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's assignment is a reading and synthesis activity called *Synthesizing Across Sources*. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers. First read **two** short informational texts about the same question: should cities replace public grass lawns with native, water-wise plants? *Text A* makes the case for the change; *Text B* raises cautions about doing it too fast. Your job is to find each text's main point and strongest evidence, notice where the two agree and where they disagree, decide which sources you trust more and why, and then take your **own** position — supporting it with evidence from **both** texts, not just one. Every question can be answered from the two texts, so if you're unsure, go back and reread. Answer in order; if one is tricky, skip it and come back. Write in complete sentences where it asks you to explain, and always name the text and paragraph you're using — like 'Text A, [2].' You may quietly read the texts aloud to yourself. Put your name, class period, and date at the top now. [On a block: You'll also answer a counterpoint in Question 10.] Raise your hand if you need a word read to you or explained."

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** — either text or any question — to a student or the class.
- If they are stuck, point them to the **text and paragraph numbers** (Text A [1]–[4], Text B [1]–[4]); every answer is in the two texts.
- Remind them: a **claim** is a text's main position; **synthesis** means combining *both* sources into a new position (not summarizing each); **credibility** is how trustworthy a source is (all defined in the packet word bank).
- For "which is more credible," prompt: "Who is speaking, what is their expertise, and is their claim backed by *tracked data* or just an impression?"
- For Q9, remind them to **synthesize, not summarize** — take a position and pull evidence from **both** texts, don't retell each text in turn. Encourage the printed **sentence stems**.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "Which text and paragraph shows that?" or "Does this point come from Text A, Text B, or both?"
- It is fine if a student cannot finish the optional early-finisher task, or Q10 on a short period.

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of either text or any question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence stems** and the **word bank** (definitions provided for all five terms).
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q9 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear and cites a text and paragraph.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed:** phones, computers, outside sources (everything is in the two texts).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got, whether it was a period or a block, and any questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for two common patterns: students *summarizing one source instead of synthesizing both* on Q9 (retelling Text A, then Text B, rather than weaving evidence from both into one position) and *using only the source they already agree with*. A quick next-day mini-lesson contrasting a two-paragraph summary with a single synthesized argument that cites both texts would reinforce this well. Q4 and Q5 show who can pull each text's claim and strongest evidence; Q6 and Q7 show who can map agreement/disagreement and weigh credibility; the Q9 response — and the Q10 counterpoint on block days — show who can build and defend a position across sources.

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