

Answer Key: Synthesizing Across Sources

Course: English III (Grades 9–12) **Subject:** English Language Arts & Reading **For teacher use only** RLA

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct reasoning and cites the texts, even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer is defensible and list common misconceptions to watch for. References below use the bracketed markers [1]–[4] within **Text A** and **Text B**. Estimated grading time: ~6–8 min per packet.

Start Predict & Warm Up grade for effort · ~2 min

1 Predict how the two texts differ from their titles.

Text A ("Let the Grass Go") likely **favours** replacing lawns with native landscaping; **Text B** ("Not So Fast") likely **raises doubts / cautions** about doing it too quickly. Full credit for any prediction that assigns the pro-change angle to A and the cautionary angle to B. Accept close wording ("A is for it, B is worried about the costs").

2 Synthesis warm-up (match the reader's move).

"Text A cites a city water utility's data, while Text B cites an unnamed blog..." → **C (evaluate credibility)** — judging trustworthiness of sources.

"Both texts agree water use matters, but they disagree about cost, so... a phased approach makes sense." → **B (synthesize)** — combining both into a new position.

"Text B says removal is expensive up front." → **A (summarize)** — restating one source.

All three correct = full credit; grade for reasonable effort on this warm-up.

Build Read Both Texts ~1 min

3 Point both texts agree on ([1] of each).

Both texts accept that **the Southwest is short on water and that native plants use less of it**. Text A [1] frames native landscaping as a way to "save scarce water"; Text B [1] states plainly that "no one disputes that the Southwest is running short on water, and native plants clearly use less of it." Accept any answer naming the shared water-scarcity / native-plants-use-less-water point.

Apply Compare & Evaluate the Sources ~3 min

4 Identify each central claim.

Text A ([1], also [4]): cities **should replace public turf with native, water-wise plants now** because the long-run water, cost, and ecological benefits outweigh the up-front cost.

Text B ([1], also [4]): cities should **not rush a one-size-fits-all removal mandate**; they should convert **gradually**, budgeting for maintenance and letting neighborhoods weigh in, because a hurried change carries hidden costs.

Accept accurate restatements. **Note:** Text B's claim is *not* "keep every lawn" — it explicitly says it does not call for that ([4]); reject that misreading.

5 Strongest evidence in each text.

Text A ([2]): the Riverbend Municipal Water District's 2023 report — turf used ~40% of landscaping water on under a fifth of the green space, and native plants cut outdoor water use ~half within two years. (Dr. Ortiz's 5–8-year payback in [3] is also acceptable as "strongest.")

Text B ([2]): the Regional Parks Coalition's 2023 review — full removal/replanting costs \$4–\$8 per square foot, running a mid-sized park into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. (Delgado's maintenance/equity point in [3] is also acceptable.)

Full credit for any sourced fact/figure correctly paired with its paragraph. Accept the expert-quote evidence as an alternative to the data figure in each text.

6 Agree / disagree.

Agree: both accept that water is scarce and native plants use less (Text A [1] / Text B [1]); both also accept that native conversion *can* work and is not inherently bad (Text A [4] / Text B [4]). Either shared point earns credit.

Disagree: chiefly on **pace and cost emphasis** — Text A ([3]–[4]) argues the savings justify converting **now**; Text B ([2]–[4]) stresses the high up-front cost and uneven burden and argues for converting **gradually** with budgeting and community input.

Full credit for one valid agreement and one valid disagreement, each citing a paragraph from **both** texts.

7 Evaluate credibility of the two experts.

A defensible case exists for **either**. **Dr. Ortiz (Text A [3])** is a landscape ecologist with 10+ years studying municipal conversions, and her 5–8-year payback claim is "based on tracked spending across multiple real conversions" — expertise plus data make her credible. **Maria Delgado (Text B [3])** is a parks director speaking from direct operational experience about crew training and equity; her testimony is credible on *implementation* but is more experiential/anecdotal than quantified.

Full credit for a judgment that weighs **expertise, sourcing (tracked data vs. impression), and relevance** — e.g., "Ortiz is more credible because her estimate rests on tracked data across many cities," OR "Delgado is credible because she has firsthand operational knowledge the data can't capture." Reject answers that pick a source only because they agree with its conclusion.

8 Which single piece of evidence is strongest?

8a — B. Text A [2]: the water district's 2023 report (turf ≈ 40% of landscaping water on under a fifth of the space; native plants cut use ~half). It is specific, quantified, sourced to a body that measures its own pipes, and directly supports A's claim.

Why the others are weaker: **A** (native plants feed pollinators) is a real benefit but general and unquantified; **C** ("wastes money and public trust") is a conclusion/opinion, not evidence; **D** ("native plants clearly use less water") is a shared premise both texts grant, not distinctive support.

8b: Accept any sentence explaining that B is strongest because it is concrete, sourced, quantified data tied directly to its text's claim, while the others are general, opinion, or an agreed premise.

Explain Synthesis Response (Q9) ~2–3 min

9 Synthesis — take a position, support it with evidence from BOTH texts (C-E-R).

This is **synthesis, not summary**. A strong response states a position on the question and defends it using evidence from **both** Text A and Text B, woven together — not retold one text at a time. Any defensible position (convert, convert gradually, or do not convert) earns full credit if it is supported from both sources. **Model response:**

"Cities should replace public lawns with native plants, but **gradually**. Text A shows the payoff is real: the water district found turf used about 40% of landscaping water on under a fifth of the space, and native plants cut that use in half (Text A, [2]). That savings is too large to ignore. But Text B is right that the up-front cost is steep — \$4 to \$8 per square foot, and hundreds of thousands for one park (Text B, [2]) — and that rushed jobs land unevenly on neighborhoods without follow-up care (Text B, [3]). Putting both together, the best answer is to convert, but on a funded, phased schedule: the water and cost savings A documents justify acting, while B's evidence shows *how* to act so the benefit is real instead of a half-dead lawn."

Full credit for: (a) a clear **position** (the Claim), (b) **at least one piece of evidence from Text A AND one from Text B**, each cited by text and paragraph, and (c) **reasoning that combines them** to support the position. A response that summarizes each text in turn, or that uses only one text, has *not synthesized*; score it low on evidence/reasoning.

10 (**Block period only**) Address a counterpoint.

The response should (a) name a **counterpoint** from whichever text argues against the student's position, stated **fairly** and cited by text/paragraph, and (b) **respond** without dismissing it. **Model (for a "convert gradually" position):**

"A counterpoint from Text A [3]–[4] is that waiting costs money — Ortiz's data shows cities recover conversion costs in five to eight years, so delay just postpones the savings. That is fair. But my phased plan does not mean *never*; it means budgeting for the maintenance and training Text B [3] shows are missing, so conversions actually succeed instead of stalling into brown, half-finished parks. A slower start that finishes beats a fast start that fails."

Full credit for a fairly stated, correctly cited counterpoint **and** a reasoned response that either defends or adjusts the position. Reject responses that only restate the student's own side or that caricature the objection.

Synthesis scoring rubric (3 points, Q9)

Score	Claim (position on the question)	Evidence (from BOTH texts)	Reasoning & synthesis
3	Clear, defensible position on whether cities should convert.	At least one specific piece from Text A AND one from Text B, each cited by text + paragraph.	Weaves both sources into one argument, explaining how they combine to support the position — true synthesis.
2	Position present but vague or barely defended.	Evidence from both texts but one is weak, mislocated, or thin.	Some combining, but partly slips into summarizing each text separately.
1	No real position; mostly restates the texts.	Uses only one text, or evidence is vague/not from the texts.	Summary of one source; no synthesis.
0	No position / off-task.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Articulate / Connect / Extend.

Articulate: accept any clear one-sentence statement of the student's own position (convert, convert gradually, or do not convert), consistent with their Q9.

Connect: credit requires **one piece of evidence from EACH text** (A and B) with paragraphs — e.g., the water-savings data (Text A [2]) and the cost figure (Text B [2]). A response naming evidence from only one text is incomplete here.

Extend: accept any reasonable open question neither text settles — e.g., "How much does upkeep actually cost after year two?", "Do residents in surveyed neighborhoods support it?", or "What happens to water bills long term?" More than one answer is defensible.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Summary vs. synthesis.** On Q9, students often *retell Text A, then Text B* instead of building one position from both. Synthesis states a claim and weaves evidence from **both** sources to support it; summary just reports what each text says. Push for a stated position plus combined reasoning.
- **Using only one source.** Many students support their position using *only* the text they agree with. A synthesis must draw on **both** — including the one that pushes back — even to argue against it. Require a citation from A and from B.
- **"Which is more credible" = "which do I agree with."** On Q7, students often rate a source credible because they like its conclusion. Credibility depends on *expertise, sourcing (tracked data vs. impression), and relevance* — not on whether the reader shares the view.
- **Misreading Text B's claim.** Text B ([1], [4]) does *not* argue to keep every lawn; it argues for **gradual, funded, community-informed** conversion. Watch for students on Q4 casting B as simply "against native plants."
- **Evidence vs. conclusion.** On Q8, statements like "done in a hurry it wastes money and public trust" (choice C) are *conclusions*, not evidence. The sourced, quantified data (choice B) is the true evidence. Weigh sourcing and specificity, not how forceful a sentence sounds.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students summarize instead of synthesize on Q9, run a 5-minute mini-lesson contrasting two summary sentences ("Text A says convert; Text B says be careful") with a single synthesized one ("Because A documents large water savings and B documents the up-front cost, the best move is a funded, phased conversion"). If credibility judgments on Q7 are shaky, sort the two experts aloud by expertise, sourcing, and relevance. The Q4, Q5, and Q8 items quickly reveal who can pull each text's claim and strongest evidence; the Q9 response — and, on block days, the Q10 counterpoint — show who can build and defend a position *across* sources.

HS_ENG3_Synthesis_01 — Synthesizing Across Sources Teacher Answer Key