

Synthesizing Across Sources

Course: English III (Grades 9–12) **Subject:** English Language Arts & Reading **Time:** ~50-min period, or a ~90-min block (adds a counterpoint paragraph + deeper analysis) **Work mode:** Independent · pencil only RLA

Start Here

This is a **reading and synthesis task**. You will read **two** short original informational texts — **Text A** and **Text B** — that take **different angles** on the **same debatable question**: *Should cities replace grass lawns on public land with native, water-wise plants?* Your job is not to pick which text is "nicer." It is to **synthesize**: find each text's **central claim** and strongest **evidence**, notice where the two texts **agree** and **disagree**, weigh how **credible** each is, and then build **your own position** using evidence from **both**. Work with a pencil only; you do **not** need a computer or any device. Every question can be answered **from the two texts** — the evidence is on the page. Write in complete sentences where asked, and always name the **text and paragraph** you are drawing from (for example, "Text A, [2]"). If a question is hard, skip it, keep going, and come back. Reading quietly aloud to yourself is encouraged.

Start Predict & Warm Up 5 min

Look only at the two titles below before you read the full texts.

1**Text A** is titled "**Let the Grass Go: The Case for Native Landscaping.**" **Text B** is titled "**Not So Fast: The Hidden Costs of Ripping Out the Lawn.**" From the titles alone, **predict** how these two texts will differ. Which one likely **favors** the change, and which one likely **raises doubts**?

2**Synthesis warm-up.** Match each move a reader makes to its name. Write the letter (A, B, or C) on each blank.

A. summarize — restate what *one* source says · **B. synthesize** — combine ideas from *two or more* sources into a new position · **C. evaluate credibility** — judge how trustworthy a source's evidence is

___ "Text A cites a city water utility's data, while Text B cites an unnamed blog, so I trust A's numbers more."

___ "Both texts agree water use matters, but they disagree about cost, so overall a phased approach makes sense."

___ "Text B says removal is expensive up front."

Build Read Both Texts 14 min

Words to know (for synthesizing across sources)

claim

the central position a text is trying to establish.

evidence

facts, data, examples, or expert statements a text uses to support its claim.

synthesis

combining ideas from two or more sources to build a new, supported position — not just summarizing each one.

credibility

how trustworthy a source is, based on its expertise, sourcing, and freedom from obvious bias.

counterpoint

a reasonable objection from the other side that a strong position must address.

Text A — "Let the Grass Go: The Case for Native Landscaping" — an original informational text

[1] Across the Southwest, cities plant thousands of acres of thirsty turf grass along medians, parks, and office lawns — green ribbons that few people ever walk on. A growing number of planners argue that public land like this should be replanted with **native, water-wise species** that evolved to survive local heat and drought. The core case is simple: on land the public already pays to maintain, native landscaping saves scarce water, cuts long-term cost, and supports local wildlife.

[2] The water savings are documented, not guessed. According to the Riverbend Municipal Water District's 2023 usage report, ornamental turf on city property consumed about 40% of all water the city used for landscaping, while covering less than a fifth of its green space. In the district's pilot medians, replacing turf with native plantings cut outdoor water use on those strips by roughly half within two years. A utility that measures its own pipes has little reason to inflate those numbers.

[3] Cost follows water. Native plantings need less mowing, fertilizer, and irrigation once established, so the ongoing maintenance bill drops even though the plants cost more to put in. Dr. Lena Ortiz, a landscape ecologist who has studied municipal conversions for over a decade, notes that "most cities recover their conversion costs in irrigation savings within five to eight years." Her estimate is based on tracked spending across multiple real conversions.

[4] There is also an ecological gain that turf cannot match: native plants feed native bees, butterflies, and birds that a mowed lawn starves. Supporters do not claim the change is free or instant. They argue that on public land the city already tends, the long-run savings outweigh the up-front cost — so cities should begin converting now.

Text B — "Not So Fast: The Hidden Costs of Ripping Out the Lawn" — an original informational text

[1] No one disputes that the Southwest is running short on water, and native plants clearly use less of it. But some city officials and residents warn that **tearing out public lawns too quickly can backfire**. Their central point is not that native landscaping is bad — it is that **a rushed, one-size-fits-all mandate ignores real costs** that fall unevenly on communities, and that cities should move carefully rather than all at once.

[2] Start with the up-front bill. A 2023 review by the Regional Parks Coalition found that full turf removal and native replanting cost between \$4 and \$8 per square foot — meaning a single mid-sized park could run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars before a single plant is watered. Cities with tight budgets, the review notes, often defer the work, leaving half-dead lawns that look worse than either option.

[3] Cost is not only about money. Maria Delgado, a parks director quoted in the same review, points out that "established native gardens need skilled weeding and pruning our crews aren't trained for, and in the first two years they can look bare and brown to residents who expected a green park." Neighborhoods with the least political pull, she adds, tend to wait longest for the follow-up care that makes conversions succeed — so the burden lands unevenly.

[4] Text B does not call for keeping every lawn. It argues that cities should convert **gradually**, budget for maintenance and training first, and let each neighborhood weigh in — rather than mandate removal everywhere at once. Done well, the writers say, the change can work; done in a hurry, it wastes money and public trust.

3Both texts accept one fact about the region. In one sentence, state the point that **Text A [1]** and **Text B [1]** both agree on. Answer using details from the texts.

Apply Compare & Evaluate the Sources 20 min

Every answer in this section is in the two texts. Name the text and paragraph in your head before you write (for example, "Text B, [2]").

4Identify each central claim. In one sentence each, state the **central claim** of Text A and of Text B — the position each text is really trying to establish.

Text A — central claim (paragraph #)

Text B — central claim (paragraph #)

5Find each strongest evidence. For each text, **copy the single strongest piece of evidence** (a fact, figure, or sourced statement) and name its paragraph.

Text A — strongest evidence + paragraph #

Text B — strongest evidence + paragraph #

6Agree / disagree. The two texts do not fully oppose each other. Name **one point they agree on** and **one point they disagree on**, citing a paragraph from **each** text for both.

Where they AGREE (cite Text A and Text B)

Where they DISAGREE (cite Text A and Text B)

7Evaluate credibility. Both texts use a named expert. Compare the **quality** of the evidence each expert offers — think about their expertise, whether their claim is backed by tracked data, and how relevant it is. Which text's expert evidence do you find **more credible**, and why? (A defensible case can be made for either.)

Text A's expert (Dr. Ortiz, [3]) — how credible?

Text B's expert (Maria Delgado, [3]) — how credible?

8Which single piece of evidence is strongest? Across **both** texts, which piece of evidence most strongly supports its own text's claim? Fill in the circle for ONE choice.

- Text A [4]: native plants feed native bees, butterflies, and birds that a mowed lawn starves.
- Text A [2]: the water district's 2023 report shows turf used about 40% of landscaping water on under a fifth of the green space, and native plants cut that use by about half.
- Text B [4]: done in a hurry, the change wastes money and public trust.
- Text B [1]: native plants clearly use less water.

8b. In one sentence, explain why the evidence you chose is stronger than the others.

Explain Synthesis Response 10–15 min

Question 9. Now **synthesize**. The question is: *Should cities replace grass lawns on public land with native, water-wise plants?* **Take a position** and support it with **evidence from BOTH texts** — not just the one you agree with. Do **not** summarize each text one at a time; weave them together into a single argument. Use the C-E-R frame below, and name the **text and paragraph** for each piece you cite.

Sentence stems you may use: "Cities should (convert / convert gradually / not convert) public lawns because..."
· "Text A shows ____ (Text A, ____), which supports my position because..." · "Even Text B, which raises doubts, provides ____ (Text B, ____), and this actually strengthens my view because..." · "Putting both sources together, the best answer is..."

Claim (your position on the question)

Evidence (at least one piece from Text A AND one from Text B, with text + paragraph #)

Reasoning (how the two pieces, combined, support your position)

Block period only (~90-min class): Address a counterpoint.

Question 10. A strong synthesis answers the other side. Identify one **counterpoint** — a reasonable objection to *your* position, drawn from whichever text argues against you — and then **respond** to it without ignoring it.

Name the text and paragraph your counterpoint comes from, state it fairly, and explain why your position still holds (or how it can be adjusted to account for the objection).

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Articulate

In one sentence, say **your own position** on the question in your own words, as if telling a friend where you landed.

Connect

Name **one piece of evidence from EACH text** (A and B) that you used, and point to the paragraph.

Extend

Name **one question you would still want answered** before a city decides — something neither text fully settles.

Continue Early Finisher optional

If you finish early (no new materials needed):

Write a "both/and" plan. On the back of this page, sketch a **middle-ground policy** that honors evidence from **both** texts — for example, where a city should convert first, how it should pay for maintenance, and how neighborhoods get a say. Cite at least one piece of evidence from Text A and one from Text B to justify a choice in your plan.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class period, and date filled in. Make sure questions 1–9 and the ACE box are answered. Question 10 (counterpoint) is for block periods; the early-finisher plan is optional — turn either in if you did it.

HS_ENG3_Synthesis_01 — Synthesizing Across Sources Student Packet