

Developing Skills for Synthesizing and Integrating Sources

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How can you develop strong skills for synthesizing and integrating?

You use the skills of synthesizing and integrating when you are asked to read several selections and then write an essay about what you read. The following steps will help you understand the process of how to do this.

Step 1: Analyze the sources of information.

Step 2: Identify the relationships between ideas in the sources.

Step 3: Decide on a main idea that explains the relationship between all of the sources.

Step 4: When synthesizing multiple sources of information into your writing, use a standard format for citation.

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Step 1: Analyze the sources of information.

You have just read many different selections on the theme of identity. Suppose you want to explain what you have learned about the topic from your reading. First, you must analyze the selections to discover important ideas about personal identity.

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Directions: Use the following chart to identify selections and important ideas from *Who Am I?*

Selection	Important Idea

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Your responses may look like this.

Selection	Important Idea
“Remember Me”	The hardship surrounding the loss of his memory changes a proud prince into a much kinder person.
“Moon”	An encounter with a young Indian boy helps Moon understand his own abilities as a musician.
“Birthday Box”	A dying mother gives her daughter an empty box. After a year of grieving, she finally understands that her mother is encouraging her to make her own way in the world.

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Step 2: Identify the relationships between ideas in the sources.

Once you've identified the important ideas, you need to bring them back together into one central idea. In this book, all the selections are focused on a similar theme, so you should decide what each story says about the concept of identity. Here are some good questions to ask.

- Which ideas are similar?
- Which ideas do I believe are the most important?
- Which ideas speak the most to me personally?
- How do these ideas fit together?

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Directions: Revisit the selections and their important ideas you identified on previous screens. Identify how each one relates to the concept of identity.

Selection	Important Idea	Idea Related to Identity

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Selection	Important Idea	Idea Related to Identity

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Your responses may look like this.

Selection	Important Idea	Idea Related to Identity
Remember Me	The hardship surrounding the loss of his memory changes a proud prince into a much kinder person.	Hardship affects identity.
Moon	An encounter with a young Indian boy helps Moon understand his own abilities as a musician.	Talents and abilities affect identity.

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Your responses may look like this.

Selection	Important Idea	Idea Related to Identity
Birthday Box	A dying mother gives her daughter an empty box. After a year of grieving, she finally understands that her mother is encouraging her to make her own way in the world.	Although family and situations can influence our identities, ultimately we are responsible for the people we become.

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Step 3: Decide on a main idea that explains the relationship between all of the sources.

Remember, synthesizing and integrating are taking information and ideas and combining them into a new whole. By writing a main idea based upon the ideas you gathered from several selections in the book, you will be creating a new statement. Be sure that your main idea encompasses ideas from three or more selections. If you are writing an essay, your main idea may also become your thesis statement.

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Directions: Synthesize the information gathered from the selections into a main idea statement.

Possible synthesis: Our identity is ultimately formed by what we choose to do with the abilities and experience we've been given.

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Step 4: When synthesizing multiple sources of information into your writing, use a standard format for citation.

When writing a literary analysis, you should refer to works of literature accurately and appropriately. The following screens provide examples of how to integrate works of literature into your writing by using:

- short direct quotations
- long direct quotations
- paraphrases of literature

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The following excerpt is from “Birthday Box” by Jane Yolen (page 142).

Mama had meant / was the box, solid and sturdy, maybe even beautiful or at least interesting on the outside. But I had to fill up the box to make it all it could be. And I had to fill me up as well. She had guessed what might happen to me, had told me in a subtle way. In the two words she could manage.

The next screens will demonstrate how to integrate the information into an essay.

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Short Direct Quotations: These are word-for-word quotations that are four lines or shorter. To tell your reader exactly where the direct quotation begins and ends, use quotation marks before and after the passage. Identify the source in parentheses by listing the author's last name and the page number. If you mention the author in the text, list only the page number.

In “Birthday Box,” an empty box is a symbol of a girl who has lost her true self. “But I had to fill up the box to make it all it could be. And I had to fill me up as well” (Yolen 142).

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Long Direct Quotations: If a direct quotation is four lines or longer, set it off as a block quotation. It should be indented one inch from the left margin, double-spaced, and include a reference to the source. Since the text is set off visually, you do not need to use quotation marks around it. Do include a parenthetical source.

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Example of Citation of a Long Direct Quotation

In “Birthday Box,” an empty box is a symbol of a girl who has lost her true self.

Mama had meant / was the box, solid and sturdy, maybe even beautiful or at least interesting on the outside. But I had to fill up the box to make it all it could be. And I had to fill me up as well. She had guessed what might happen to me, had told me in a subtle way. In the two words she could manage. (Yolen 142)

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Paraphrases: These are passages written in your own words that express information that you learned from another source. Do not use quotation marks with these but do include a parenthetical citation.

It isn't until a year after her mother's death that Katie finally understands the symbolism of the empty box and her mother's final words, "It's you." Katie realizes that she must make her own way in the world; she must create her own identity (Yolen 142).

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If you used literature from many different sources, you may be asked to include a Works Cited page. A Works Cited page should include all the sources used to write your paper, not just the sources directly quoted. Here are some examples of how to list literature used in an essay.

A book:

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. New York: Levine-Scholastic, 2000. Print.

A short story in an anthology:

Yolen, Jane. "Birthday Box." *Who Am I?* Ed. Julie A. Schumacher. Logan, Iowa: Perfection Learning, 2006. Print.