

# The Synthesis Essay - II

English 11AP

# How does this work?

- You are presented with an introduction and description of an issue that has varying viewpoints attached to it.
- You are given a variety of sources that address this topic.
- After reading and annotating the sources, you are required to respond to the prompt with an essay that synthesizes at least **THREE** to support your position on the subject.

# What are you assessed on?

- Your ability to:
  - Read critically
  - Understand texts
  - Analyze texts
  - Develop a position
  - Support a position
  - Use appropriate evidence
  - Incorporate outside sources
  - Cite outside sources

# A Combination of Everything

- One way of looking at the synthesis essay is as a combination of the analysis and argument skills you have developed for the other two essays.

# What Kinds of Synthesis Essays?

- There are two types.
- The first is an expository essay in which you develop a thesis and support it with examples.
- The second kind presents an argument and asks you to take a position using appropriate outside sources and indicating the weaknesses of other viewpoints.

# How to Tackle the Synthesis Essay

- During your 15 minutes of reading time, you should:
  - Read all three prompts
  - Deconstruct the synthesis prompt
  - Read and annotate each of the synthesis texts
  - Decide how you will address the synthesis prompt
  - Choose which **THREE** synthesis texts you will use

A recent Supreme Court decision has provoked much debate about private property rights. In this decision, the court ruled that the city of New London was within the bounds of the *U.S. Constitution* when it condemned private property for use in a redevelopment plan. This ruling is an example of the classic debate between individual rights versus the greater good.

Carefully read the following sources, including any introductory information. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that supports, opposes, or qualifies the claim that the government taking property from one private owner to give to another for the creation of further economic development constitutes a permissible “public use” under the Fifth Amendment.**

Make certain that you take a position and that the essay centers on your argument. Use the sources to support your reasoning; avoid simply summarizing the sources. You may refer to the sources by their letters (Source A, Source B, etc.) or by the identifiers in the parentheses below.

- Source A (*U.S. Constitution*)
- Source B (*60 Minutes*)
- Source C (*Kelo* decision)
- Source D (Koterba, political cartoon)
- Source E (Broder)
- Source F (Britt, political cartoon)
- Source G (CNN and American Survey)

# Deconstructing the Prompt

- Carefully read the prompt, looking for key words and phrases
- Read the introduction!
- Mark it up!

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# Which are the Essential Elements?

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# The 7 Passages

## Source A

“Amendments.” The United States Constitution, 1787.

The following is a section from the Fifth Amendment to the *U.S. Constitution*.

*“nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”*

*Note:* This is known as *eminent domain*, which refers to the power of government to take private property for “public use” if the owner is fairly compensated. Eminent domain has been used to build roads, schools, and utility lines. Cities also have used it to transfer property from unwilling sellers to developers who want to build shopping malls, offices, or other projects.

## Source B

Adapted from the July 4, 2004, edition of *60 Minutes*. Available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/09/26/60minutes/main575343.shtml>.

The following is part of an interview conducted for the CBS news magazine *60 Minutes*. In it, the audience is introduced to a couple whose house had been taken by the local government for development of condos.

*Jim and Joanne Saleet are refusing to sell the home they've lived in for 38 years. They live in a quiet neighborhood of single-family houses in Lakewood, Ohio, just outside Cleveland. The City of Lakewood is trying to use eminent domain to force the Saleets out to make way for more expensive condominiums. But the Saleets are telling the town, "Hell no! They won't go."*

*"The bottom line is this is morally wrong, what they're doing here. This is our home. And we're going to stay here. And I'm gonna fight them tooth and nail. I've just begun to fight," says Jim Saleet. "We talked about this when we were dating. I used to point to the houses and say, 'Joanne, one of these days, we're going to have one of these houses.' And I meant it. And I worked hard."*

*Jim Saleet worked in the pharmaceutical industry, paid off his house, and then retired. Now, he and his wife plan to spend the rest of their days there, and pass their house on to their children.*

*But Lakewood's mayor, Madeleine Cain, has other plans. She wants to tear down the Saleets' home, plus 55 homes around it, along with four apartment buildings and more than a dozen businesses.*

*Why? So that private developers can build high-priced condos, and a high-end shopping mall, and, thus, raise Lakewood's property tax base.*

*The mayor told 60 Minutes that she sought out a developer for the project because Lakewood's aging tax base has been shrinking, and the city simply needs more money.*

*"This is about Lakewood's future. Lakewood cannot survive without a strengthened tax base. Is it right to consider this a public good? Absolutely," says the mayor, who admits that it's difficult and unfortunate that the Saleets are being asked to give up their home.*

*The Saleets live in an area called Scenic Park, and because it is so scenic, it's a prime place to build upscale condominiums. With great views, over the Rocky River, those condos will be a cinch to sell. But the condos can't go up unless the city can remove the Saleets and their neighbors through eminent domain. And, to legally invoke eminent domain, the city had to certify that this scenic park area is, really, "blighted."*

*"We're not blighted. This is an area that we absolutely love. This is a close-knit, beautiful neighborhood. It's what America's all about," says Jim Saleet. "And, Mike, you don't know how humiliating this is to have people tell you, 'You live in a blighted area,' and how degrading this is."*

*"The term 'blighted' is a statutory word," says Mayor Cain. "It is, it really doesn't have a lot to do with whether or not your home is painted. . . . A statutory term is used to describe an area. The question is whether or not that area can be used for a higher and better use."*

## Source C

*Kelo v. New London*. U.S. Supreme Court 125 S. Ct. 2655.

The following is a brief overview of a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005.

Susette Kelo, et al. v. City of New London, et al., 125 S. Ct. 2655 (2005), more commonly *Kelo v. New London*, is a land-use law case argued before the United States Supreme Court on February 22, 2005. The case arose from a city's use of eminent domain to condemn privately owned real property so that it could be used as part of a comprehensive redevelopment plan.

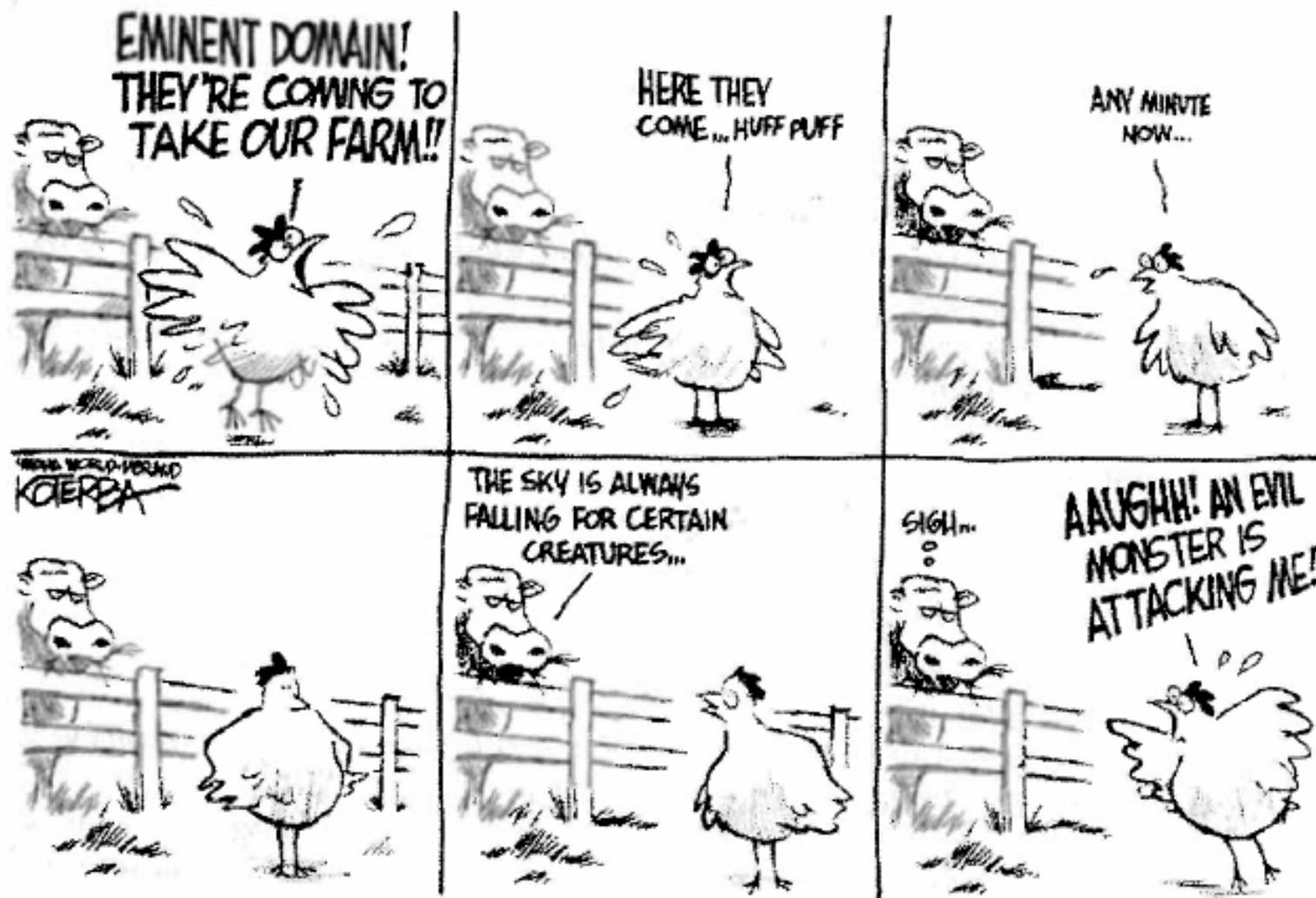
The owners sued the city in Connecticut courts, arguing that the city had misused its eminent domain power. The power of eminent domain is limited by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. The Fifth Amendment, which restricts the actions of the federal government, says, in part, that "private property [shall not] be taken for public use, without just compensation"; under Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment, this limitation is also imposed on the actions of U.S. state and local governments. *Kelo* and the other appellants argued that economic development, the stated purpose of the Development Corporation, did not qualify as public use.

*The Supreme Court's Ruling:* This 5:4 decision holds that the governmental taking of property from one private owner to give to another in furtherance of economic development constitutes a permissible "public use" under the Fifth Amendment.

Source D

Koterba, Jeff, *Omaha World Herald*. Available at <http://cagle.msnbc.com/news/EminentDomain/4.asp>.

The following political cartoon appeared in an Omaha, Nebraska, newspaper.



Jeff Koterba, *Omaha World Herald*, NE

## Source E

Broder, John M, "States Curbing Right to Seize Private Homes." *New York Times*, February 21, 2006.

The following passage is excerpted from an article published in the *New York Times*.

*"Our opposition to eminent domain is not across the board," he [Scott G. Bullock of the Institute for Justice] said. "It has an important but limited role in government planning and the building of roads, parks, and public buildings. What we oppose is eminent domain abuse for private development, and we are encouraging legislators to curtail it."*

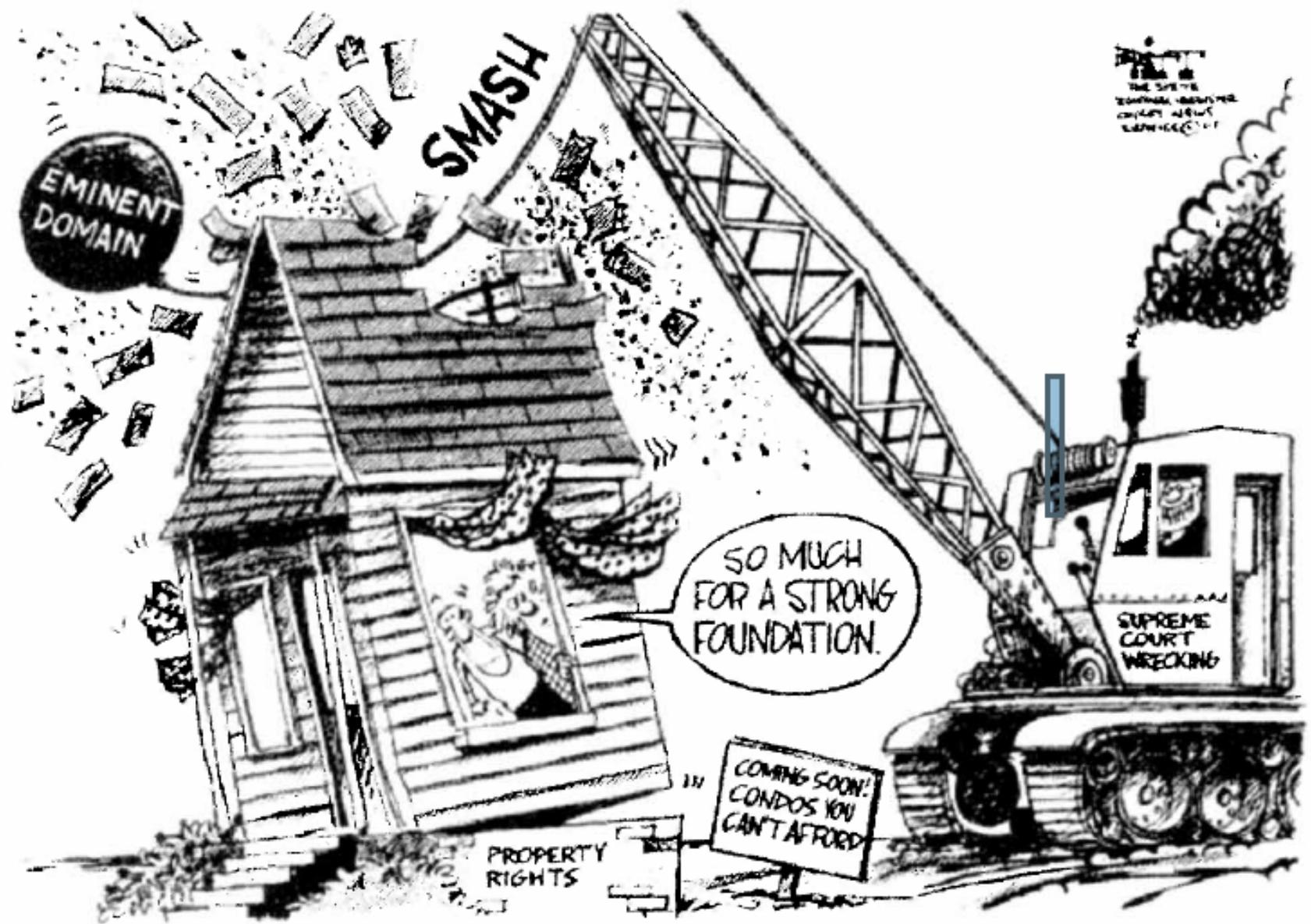
*More neutral observers expressed concern that state officials, in their zeal to protect homeowners and small businesses, would handcuff local governments that are trying to revitalize dying cities and fill in blighted areas with projects that produce tax revenues and jobs.*

*"It's fair to say that many states are on the verge of seriously overreacting to the Kelo decision," said John D. Echeverria, executive director of the Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute and an authority on land-use policy. "The danger is that some legislators are going to attempt to destroy what is a significant and sometimes painful but essential government power. The extremist position is a prescription for economic decline for many metropolitan areas around the country."*

Source F

Britt, Chris, *The State Journal-Register*. Available at <http://cagle.msnbc.com/news/EminentDomain/4.asp>.

The following political cartoon appeared in a Springfield, Illinois, newspaper.



## Source G

Andres, Gary J., "The Kelo Backlash." *Washington Times*, August 29, 2005.

CNN Pollserver, "Local governments should be able to seize homes and businesses."

*Quick Vote*, June 23, 2005. Available at <http://www.cnn.com/POLLSERVER/results/18442.exclude.html>.

The following are the results of two surveys/polls. The first appeared in a *Washington Times* article, and the second was commissioned by CNN.

### American Survey | July 14-17, 2005

*An American Survey of 800 registered voters nationwide shows 68 percent favoring legislative limits on the government's ability to take private property away from owners, with 62 percent of Democrats, 74 percent of independents and 70 percent of Republicans supporting such limits.*

Created: Thursday, June 23, 2005 at 11:48:12 EDT

#### Local governments should be able to seize homes and businesses:

For public use		33%	58481 votes
For private economic development		1%	2445 votes
Never		66%	117061 votes

Total: 177987 votes

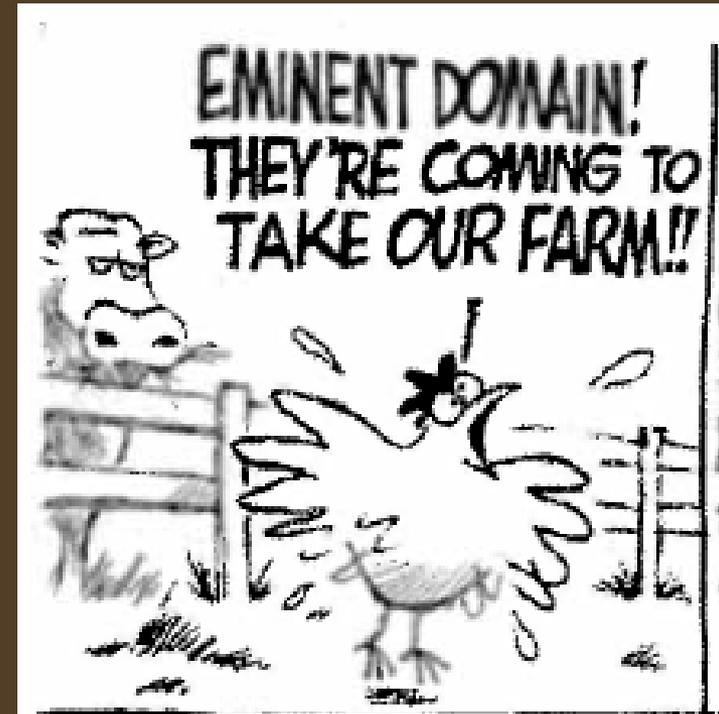
*This QuickVote is not scientific and reflects the opinions of only those Internet users who have chosen to participate. The results cannot be assumed to represent the opinions of Internet users in general, nor the public as a whole.*

# Evaluating the Passages

- You should consider:
  - Purpose/ thesis
  - Intended audience
  - Type of source (primary or secondary)
  - Main points
  - Historical context
  - Authority of the author
  - How the material is presented
  - Source of the evidence
  - Any bias or agenda
  - How the text relates to the topic
  - Support or opposition towards the thesis

# Visual Texts

- Identify the subject of the visual
- Identify the major components, such as characters, details, and symbols
- Identify verbal cues, such as titles, taglines, date, author, and dialogue
- Notice position and size of details
- Does the visual take a positive or negative position towards the issue?
- Identify the primary purpose of the visual
- Determine how each detail illustrates/ supports the primary purpose
- Does the author indicate alternative viewpoints?



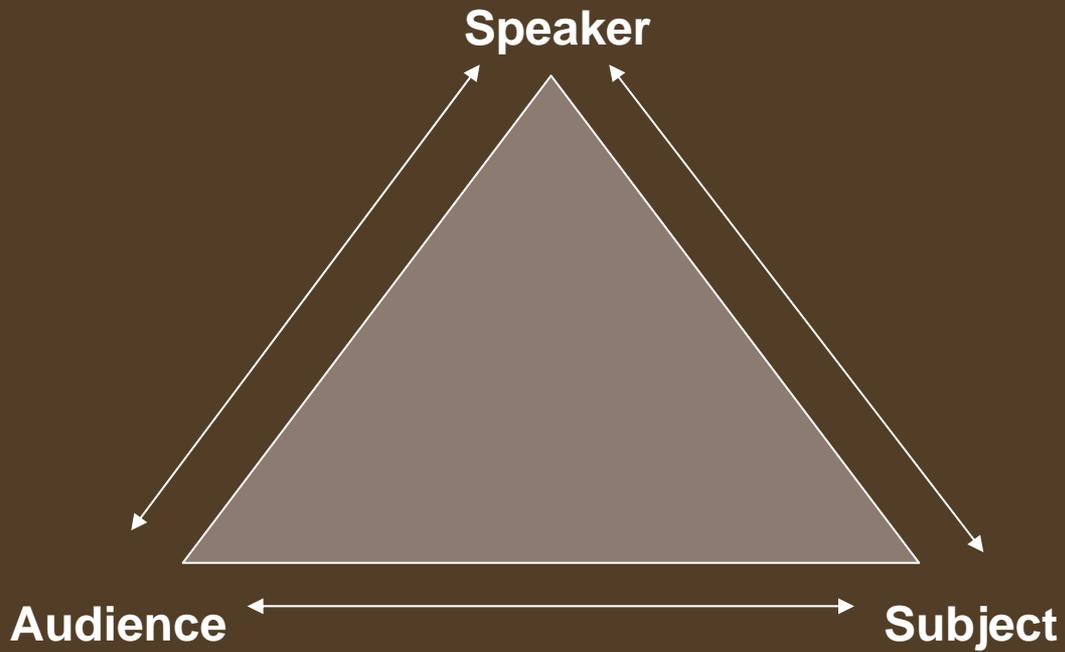
# Selecting Which Sources

- What is your purpose?
- Does it give background or other pertinent information?
- Does the source give new information or overlap with others?
- Does the text reflect the viewpoints of the others or contradict them?
- Does the source support or oppose your claim?

# Using Sources

- **Summary:** Reducing a piece to its essential points
- **Paraphrase:** Transpose the original material into your own words
- **Inference:** Drawing a conclusion based on the material

# Remember These?



# The Opening Paragraph

- Refer specifically to the prompt and introduction
- Clearly state your position on the topic
  - Support
  - Oppose
  - Qualify

# Three Sample Introductions

## A

Payday. As usual, the line at the bank drive-thru is a mile long, so Joe Citizen just sits and listens to the radio. This paycheck is especially important to him because it is the final payment on his castle—his home. Mr. Smith has a family waiting back at home for him. Even his dog will be happy to see Joe walk through the door. What Joe Citizen and his family don't know is this: waiting for Joe is a notice from his local government, a letter notifying him that his home and property are being taken, using the right of eminent domain. One has to ask, "Is this fair?" I think not.

## B

Every time that my grandparents visit, I have to vacate my bedroom, so they can have a room of their own during their visit. It's always a painful few days because I'm locked out of the room that I've decorated, the room that holds all of my things; it's the room that's "mine." As my mother always says, "It's for the good of the family." But, no matter how much I feel deprived, I always know that I'll have it back in a few days. However, the results would be different if she applied the principle of "eminent domain." I would lose my room permanently, and it would be turned into a real guest room. I would not be a happy family member.

## C

Today there is a wide-ranging debate about the individual's right to possess and protect his private property and the right of the government to seize a person's home and land needed for redevelopment that would benefit the entire community. Even though the principle of eminent domain is granted to the government in the *U.S. Constitution's* Fifth Amendment, it should be used only in the most extreme circumstances.

# Developing the Body

- What is your position?
- Which sources are you using?
- What points will you be making?
- How will you use the sources to support your points?

# Developing the Body

- For example, this student decided to present a qualifying position on eminent domain.

## **Body Paragraph Based on Point 1 (*Kelo* + Fifth Amendment)**

Because of this experience, I can empathize with the home owners affected by the recent 5:4 Supreme Court decision *Kelo v. New London* that cited a section of the Fifth Amendment to the *U.S. Constitution* that states, “nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation” (Source A). The Court ruled that New London, Connecticut, was within its constitutional rights to take private property and give it to another private individual in order to further the economic development of the city (Source C).

# Sample Body Paragraphs

## **Body Paragraph Based on Point 2 (60 Minutes interview + negative attitude)**

Contrary to what the Court sees as “permissible public use” (Source C), I believe that a government taking a person’s home or business away and allowing another private individual or company to take it over goes against the idea of our private property rights. A good example of this is the situation in Lakewood, Ohio, where the mayor wants to condemn a retired couple’s home in order to make way for a privately owned, high-end condominium and shopping mall. As Jim Saleet said in his interview with *60 Minutes*, “The bottom line is this is morally wrong . . . This is our home . . . We’re not blighted. . . . This is a close-knit, beautiful neighborhood” (Source B). The Saleets, who have paid off their mortgage, should be allowed to remain there as long as they want and pass it on to their children. Here, individual rights should prevail.

# Sample Body Paragraphs

## **Body Paragraph on Point 3 (Qualifying + Broder + *60 Minutes* and mayor)**

However, I must also take into consideration the need for cities and states to improve troubled urban areas and clear blighted sections with new construction, tax revenues, and jobs (Source E). If governments are blocked from arranging for needed improvements and income, decline of cities and other areas could result. For example, the mayor of Lakewood, Ohio, Madeleine Cain, claims that the city cannot make it without more tax money coming in. As she sees it, Lakewood needs more money to provide required services. "This is about Lakewood's future. Lakewood cannot survive without a strengthened tax base," Mayor Cain told *60 Minutes* (Source B). Here, it sounds like the greater good should prevail.

# Sample Body Paragraphs

## **Body Paragraph Based on Point 3 (Qualifying + Broder)**

Legal experts disagree about which of the two positions is the better one. Scott Bullock of the Institute for Justice sees the principle of eminent domain as an important one for government planning and building, but not for private development (Source E). On the other hand, John Echeverria, the executive director of the Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute, sees a danger in legislators going to the extreme in the opposite direction and limiting essential powers of government. “The extremist position is a prescription for economic decline for many metropolitan areas around the country” (Source E).

# The Conclusion

- A conclusion is recommended for the synthesis essay.
- However, you should avoid merely summarizing. Your reader will remember what you just wrote.
- Let's take a look at some samples:

# Sample Conclusions

## A

It seems that there is no right position in all circumstances. According to a *Washington Times* survey, 60% of the American public is against local governments having the power to seize private homes and businesses (Source G). However, there may be times when the greater good has to win the toss.

## B

Finally, 60% of the responders to a *Washington Times/CNN* survey opposed the right of eminent domain to local governments. Even though this may seem to be the most compelling position on this issue, there are going to be special circumstances when the greater good trumps private ownership.

## C

Ultimately, I have to agree with the large majority of people who responded to recent polls conducted by both the *Washington Times* and CNN. When asked if local governments should be able to take over private homes and businesses, over 60% said “no” (Source G). But, I will have to be open to the possibility that public use and the greater good may, in some cases, be the only viable solution to a complicated problem.

# Remember to:

- Be clear, organized, logical, and thoughtful
- When developing each of your major points:
  - Relate it to the thesis
  - Use specific examples
  - Use selected sources to support the point
  - Incorporate sources by using:
    - Attribution and introduction
    - Transitions
    - Mix of direct quotations, summary, and paraphrasing

# Now It's Your Turn

Green living (practices that promote the conservation and wise use of natural resources) has become a topic of discussion in many parts of the world today. With changes in the availability and cost of natural resources, many people are discussing whether conservation should be required of all citizens.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-written essay that develops a position on the extent to which government should be responsible for fostering green practices.

Make sure that your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Locavores are people who have decided to eat locally grown or produced products as much as possible. With an eye to nutrition as well as sustainability (resource use that preserves the environment), the locavore movement has become widespread over the past decade.

Imagine that a community is considering organizing a locavore movement. Carefully read the following seven sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that identifies the key issues associated with the locavore movement and examines their implications for the community.

Make sure that your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

# Now It's Your Turn

**Directions:** The following prompt is based on the accompanying six sources.

This question requires you to synthesize a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. When you synthesize sources, you refer to them to develop your position and cite them accurately. *Your argument should be central; the sources should support the argument. Avoid merely summarizing sources.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect references.

## Introduction

In much of the world, the time that regulates our lives is altered by daylight saving time. Each year, we set our clocks back an hour in the fall and then move them forward an hour in the spring. This annual shift is thought to have been invented by Benjamin Franklin, who in 1784 wrote a letter to a French journal suggesting that Parisians could economize on candles if they simply woke up earlier during the summer. Daylight saving time was adopted by the United States in the twentieth century and is regulated by the federal government. Even though daylight saving time has been widely adopted, it still has detractors.

## Assignment

Read the following sources (including the introductory information) carefully. **Then synthesize at least three of the sources into an essay that evaluates daylight saving time and offers a recommendation about its continued use.**