

**APSC #3 LANGUAGE  
SUPPORTING YOUR ARGUMENT**



**AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**

**Reading Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes**

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

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrase or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

**Introduction**

Television has been influential in United States presidential elections since the 1960's. But just what is this influence, and how has it affected who is elected? Has it made elections fairer and more accessible, or has it moved candidates from pursuing issues to pursuing image?

**Assignment**

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections.**

Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc.; titles are included for your convenience.

Source A (Campbell)

Source B (Hart and Triage)

Source C (Menand)

Source D (Chart)

Source E (Ranney)

Source F (Koppel)

## Prompt Debrief

### Reexamine the introduction.

What does it mean to be “influential”?

What synonyms could be used for the word “influential”?

How can elections be made “fairer and more accessible”?

What is the difference between “pursuing issues” and “pursuing image”?

What is the implicit question in this prompt? Make a connection to a universal idea.

## Source A

Campbell, Angus. "Has Television Reshaped Politics?" In *Encyclopedia of Television / Museum of Broadcast Communications*, vol. 1, ed. Horace Newcomb. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005.

*The following passage is excerpted from an article about television's impact on politics.*

The advent of television in the late 1940's gave rise to the belief that a new era was opening in public communication. As Frank Stanton, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, put it: "Not even the sky is the limit." One of the great contributions expected of television lay in its presumed capacity to inform and stimulate the political interests of the American electorate.

"Television, with its penetration, its wide geographic distribution and impact, provides a new, direct, and sensitive link between Washington and the people," said Dr. Stanton. "The people have once more become the nation, as they have not been since the days when we were small enough each to know his elected representative. As we grew, we lost this feeling of direct contact—television has now restored it."

As time has passed, events have seemed to give substance to this expectation. The televising of important congressional hearings, the national nominating conventions, and most recently the Nixon-Kennedy and other debates have appeared to make a novel contribution to the political life of the nation. Large segments of the public have been given a new, immediate contact with political events. Television has appeared to be fulfilling its early promise.

### Annotate the source

Underline the thesis. What claim is this source making?

Identify the purpose.

Who is the intended audience?

Number the main points.

Draw a box around any data/evidence this source offers to support its claim.

Identify any bias or agenda.

Determine if this source supports or opposes your thesis?

## Source B

Hart, Roderick P., and Mary Triece, "U.S. Presidency and Television." Available at [http://www.museum.tv/debateweb/html/equalizer/essay\\_usprestv.htm](http://www.museum.tv/debateweb/html/equalizer/essay_usprestv.htm).

*The following passage is excerpted from an online article that provides a timeline of major events when television and the presidency have intersected.*

April 20, 1992: Not a historic date perhaps, but a suggestive one. It was on this date [while campaigning for President] that Bill Clinton discussed his underwear with the American people (briefs, not boxers, as it turned out). Why would the leader of the free world unburden himself like this? Why not? In television's increasingly postmodern world, all texts—serious and sophomoric—swirl together in the same discontinuous field of experience. To be sure, Mr. Clinton made his disclosure because he had been asked to do so by a member of the MTV generation, not because he felt a sudden need to purge himself. But in doing so Clinton exposed several rules connected to the new phenomenology of politics: (1) because of television's celebrity system, Presidents are losing their distinctiveness as social actors and hence are often judged by standards formerly used to assess rock singers and movie stars; (2) because of television's sense of intimacy, the American people feel they know their Presidents as persons and hence no longer feel the need for party guidance; (3) because of the medium's archly cynical worldview, those who watch politics on television are increasingly turning away from the policy sphere, years of hyperfamiliarity having finally bred contempt for politics itself.

### Annotate the source

Underline the thesis. What claim is this source making?

Identify the purpose.

Who is the intended audience?

Number the main points.

Draw a box around any data/evidence this source offers to support its claim.

Identify any bias or agenda.

Determine if this source supports or opposes your thesis?

### Source C

Menand, Louis, “Masters of the Matrix: Kennedy, Nixon, and the Culture of the Image.” *The New Yorker*, January 5, 2004.

*The following passage is excerpted from a weekly literary and cultural magazine.*

Holding a presidential election today without a television debate would seem almost undemocratic, as though voters were being cheated by the omission of some relevant test, some necessary submission to mass scrutiny.

That’s not what many people thought at the time of the first debates. Theodore H. White, who subscribed fully to [John F.] Kennedy’s view that the debates had made the difference in the election, complained, in *The Making of the President 1960*, that television had dumbed down the issues by forcing the candidates to respond to questions instantaneously. . . . He also believed that Kennedy’s “victory” in the debates was largely a triumph of image over content. People who listened to the debates on the radio, White pointed out, scored it a draw; people who watched it thought that, except in the third debate, Kennedy had crushed [Richard M.] Nixon. (This little statistic has been repeated many times as proof of the distorting effects of television. Why not the distorting effects of radio? It also may be that people whose medium of choice or opportunity in 1960 was radio tended to fit a Nixon rather than a Kennedy demographic.) White thought that Kennedy benefited because his image on television was “crisp”; Nixon’s—light-colored suit, wrong makeup, bad posture—was “fuzzed.” “In 1960 television had won the nation away from sound to images,” he concluded, “and that was that.”

. . . “Our national politics has become a competition for images or between images, rather than between ideals,” [one commentator] concluded. “An effective President must be every year more concerned with projecting images of himself.”

#### **Annotate the source**

Underline the thesis. What claim is this source making?

Identify the purpose.

Who is the intended audience?

Number the main points.

Draw a box around any data/evidence this source offers to support its claim.

Identify any bias or agenda.

Determine if this source supports or opposes your thesis?

### Source D

Adapted from *Nielsen Tunes into Politics: Tracking the Presidential Election Years (1960-1992)*. New York: Nielsen Media Research, 1994.

#### TELEVISION RATINGS FOR PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES: 1960-1996

Year	Networks	Candidates	Date	Rating	Homes (millions)	People (millions)
1960	ABC CBS NBC	Kennedy- Nixon	Sept. 26	59.5	28.1	N/A
1964 1968 1972	NO DEBATES					
1976	ABC CBS NBC	Carter-Ford	Oct. 6	52.4	37.3	63.9
1980	ABC CBS NBC	Anderson- Carter- Reagan	Oct. 28	58.9	45.8	80.6
1984	ABC CBS NBC	Mondale- Reagan	Oct. 7	45.3	38.5	65.1
1988	ABC CBS NBC	Bush- Dukakis	Sept. 25	36.8	33.3	65.1
1992	ABC NBC CNN	Bush- Clinton- Perot	Oct. 11	38.3	35.7	62.4
1996	ABC CBS NBC CNN FOX	Clinton- Dole	Oct. 6	31.6	30.6	46.1

#### Annotate the source

Underline the thesis. What claim is this source making?

Identify the purpose.

Who is the intended audience?

Number the main points.

Draw a box around any data/evidence this source offers to support its claim.

Identify any bias or agenda.

Determine if this source supports or opposes your thesis?



## Source E

Ranney, Austin, *Channels of Power: The Impact of Television on American Politics*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

*The following passage is taken from a book that examines the relationship between politics in the United States and television.*

In early 1968 [when President Lyndon Johnson was running for reelection], after five years of steadily increasing American commitment of troops and arms to the war in Vietnam, President Johnson was still holding fast to the policy that the war could and must be won. However, his favorite television newsman, CBS's Walter Cronkite, became increasingly skeptical about the stream of official statements from Washington and Saigon that claimed we were winning the war. So Cronkite decided to go to Vietnam and see for himself. When he returned, he broadcast a special report to the nation, which Lyndon Johnson watched. Cronkite reported that the war had become a bloody stalemate and that military victory was not in the cards. He concluded: "It is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out . . . will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

On hearing Cronkite's verdict, the President turned to his aides and said, "It's all over." Johnson was a great believer in public opinion polls, and he knew that a recent poll had shown that the American people trusted Walter Cronkite more than any other American to "tell it the way it is." Moreover, Johnson himself liked and respected Cronkite more than any other newsman. As Johnson's aide Bill Moyers put it later, "We always knew . . . that Cronkite had more authority with the American people than anyone else. It was Johnson's instinct that Cronkite was it." So if Walter Cronkite thought that the war was hopeless, the American people would think so too, and the only thing left was to wind it down. A few weeks after Cronkite's broadcast Johnson, in a famous broadcast of his own, announced that he was ending the air and naval bombardment in most of Vietnam—and that he would not run for another term as President.

### **Annotate the source**

Underline the thesis. What claim is this source making?

Identify the purpose.

Who is the intended audience?

Number the main points.

Draw a box around any data/evidence this source offers to support its claim.

Identify any bias or agenda.

Determine if this source supports or opposes your thesis?



	What <b>claim</b> is the source making?	What <b>data or evidence</b> is offered by the source in support of its claim?	What part of your claim is supported by this source?
Source A			
Source B			
Source C			
Source D			
Source E			

## ESSAY CONSTRUCTION

### Introductory Paragraph: (aim for three sentences)

- an engaging hook or an overview of the organization of topics
- thesis that speaks to ALL parts of the task (do not merely restate the prompt)
- discuss what is “at stake” in the topic itself

### Body Paragraphs

- **TOPIC SENTENCE** (claim + direction + universal subject
  - hint at the specific subjects included in the paragraph
- **TWO SOURCES REFERENCED**
  - direct quotation or paraphrase, properly cited
- **EXPLANATION OF TWO EXAMPLES/REASONS THAT SUPPORT YOUR CLAIM**
  - summary or paraphrase
- **COMMENTARY 1**
  - connection of example/ reason to your claim
- **COMMENTARY 2**
  - so what? - connection to universal idea
- **EXAMPLES**
  - the worlds as support of reason and supplement to source
- **CONCESSION**
  - summary or paraphrase of source that opposes your claim
- **REFUTATION**
  - discuss why this source is illogical, irrelevant, insufficient, incorrect, etc.

**YOUR ARGUMENT MUST BE CENTRAL – not a summary of sources**

“The Worlds”		
History	Current Events	Religion
Politics	Pop Culture	Sports
Science and Technology	Literature and the Arts	Personal Experience

## Student Sample:

Television demeans presidential debates by promoting mudslinging between candidates, which distorts the focus of the election and clouds the truth of candidates' policies. The Presidential debates of 2012 were no exception. Side-stepping the candidates' stances on the issues, televised promotions for future debates instead focused on Romney's "binders full of women" or Obama's "empty-chair-poor" performance in the first debate. In fact, the promotions for subsequent debates between the two seemed more like those for an MMA match rather than an intellectual discussion of what each candidate would like to lead the country. Even the moderators seemed to join the act by asking candidates questions about personal attacks, such as the 47% of Americans that callused elitist Romney apparently did not care about or Obama's "Apology Tour" throughout the world to mend relationships with national leaders, which was clearly showed Obama's unpatriotic character because evidently American do not apologize – ever. How will the destruction of the candidates' character help us decide which one is more worthy of leading the country or help us determine the truth behind their policies? Should the President be the one who survives the character assassination hosted in the arena of televised presidential debates? Columnist Angus Campbell reports that early in its invention, many believed in the power of television to "inform and stimulate the political interests of the American electorate," but these idealists have neglected to see the dark influences of television (Source A). Television has bombarded the public with this mudslinging during presidential elections *ad nauseum*; furthermore, according to Nielsen ratings, despite the rising population and increasing number of networks showing presidential debates, since 1980, fewer people are watching them (Source D). Why? Perhaps the public has been hit in the face with the mudslinging too many times. Exhausted by the attacks and inability to distinguish who is telling the truth about the candidates and their policies, instead of television encouraging voters to tune into the debates, television is encouraging them to tune out.

← **TOPIC SENTENCE**

**Specific examples of mudslinging (exemplification)**

**refutation using a source**

**support using a source**

## COMMENTS FROM THE CHIEF READER ABOUT THE SAMPLE SYNTHESIS ESSAYS

### General Characteristics of High-, Middle-, and Low-scoring Responses to the TV Debate Prompt

#### High-scoring essays

...these essays provide an extended consideration of the sources that they reference – they **go beyond merely citing sources** to assaying their significance to the thesis being developed and **forging connections between the writer’s position and that of the author of the source**. Writers of the top essays **enter into conversations with the sources** that they choose rather than being overwhelmed by them. These essays **attribute information** gained from sources rather than simply appropriating this information. Finally, these best essays provide conclusions that do not merely summarize but **address the “so what?” issue**: How should educated, informed citizens continue to think about the issue at hand? How will it continue to influence the readers’ lives?

#### Middle-scoring essays

...often present a **strong thesis, but it is generally rather bald and straightforward** and **does not do much to accommodate the complexity of the issue**. The writers **quote source material and comment on it briefly** in order to connect it to their thesis; they **forge links between their own positions and those represented by the sources**, but the **links are often either very literal or strained**. The **conclusions tend to be a bit repetitive**, often returning to language very similar to the thesis.

#### Low-scoring essays

...**overwhelmed by the sources**. Rather than entering into conversation with the other writers, these essays are dominated by them; they tend to **leap directly into summarizing** or describing the source material rather than contextualizing the issue at hand. The writers either have **no recognizable thesis or a weak one** that tends to become lost in their consideration of the sources. The essays generally either **make rather slight reference to the sources and comment on them only obliquely or paraphrase the sources with little analysis**. **The sources are not always cited**, making real synthesis (which requires acknowledging the ownership of ideas being examined) impossible. Occasionally the essays suggest that the writer **misunderstands the sources**; sometimes these **essays incorporate large, directly-quoted excerpts from the sources with little or no commentary or explanation**.

**The following essay scored an 8:**

Our country, the United States of America, employs a peculiar sort of governing system: democracy. Simply by definition, democracy's goal as a system of rule for the people by the people implies that the greatest number of people possible should be involved. Although the media's mission of supplying pertinent information to the masses follows democratic ideals in definition, the media's impact upon American society, especially in the area of presidential elections, has done little to increase participation in political process and by doing so, has created a new sort of identity for the president himself.

**Can you identify the author's claim?**

To begin, the basic assumption of using the media to relay "news" to the people is not a bad one: television has brought widespread "penetration," "geographic distribution," and a "feeling of direct contact" to the people of America (Source A). Spanning the distance between two oceans, our country is too large for direct, personal contact between legislators and citizens, and television has allowed thousands of people the opportunity to be informed with national events. Between 1960 and 1980, the number of homes watching presidential debates sky-rocketed from 28.1 million in 1960 to 45.8 million in 1980 (Source D). Basically, television has brought our nation together in that more people than ever before can be a part of the political process if they so desire. While this "early promise" (Source A) of television does easily align itself with democratic ideals, another important ideal, that of the people's free choice whether or whether not to participate, has shown televisions less "promise"-ing aspects.

**Underline the references to sources.**

**Draw a box around the author's commentary concerning the sources.**

**Note the balance between sources and commentary.**

**How does the author "go beyond merely citing sources" and "enter into conversations with the sources"?**

The following essay scored a 4:

Today, television has the opportunity to portray someone as something they are not. By the way you hold yourself and how you speak can have an impact on those watching. Due to television presidential elections have become more popular than ever. Some people may state that television has had a positive impact, but I disagree because television has shaped a person to be shown how an audience would like to see him.

In Source C Menand believes that Kennedy's victory was due to his image. Most of the viewers thought that Kennedy had crushed Nixon on national broadcast, but through the radio it came out as a tie. Why is that? Menand stated that due to Kennedy's appearance, by portraying a cleaner look, he was the best candidate. Because Kennedy had a fresher image than Nixon he won the debate, not because he said something better, but because of how he looked.

There is no significance in knowing what type of underwear that the President wears. Source B has found a way to mock the Presidential elections through humiliating the candidates. A presidential candidate who reveals the type of underwear they have on should not be taken seriously. So why is it that Clinton felt it necessary to disclose to the public that he wears briefs, not boxers? By humiliating himself he feels closer to the public, which will help boost his image.

Television is not all it is cut out to be. Source F clearly states that a ninety-minute Nightline segment was cut down to three or four minutes of the best part of the debate. By not allowing the audience to view the screw-ups and only see the best parts the viewers are not getting the full truth of the different candidates. This process cannot help either candidate because they are not their best.

The sources have shown that image, becoming known to the public as a person and cutting segments short can help candidates become elected for offices. Although it does not hurt the candidates it portrays a false image. It is better to get the truth than nothing at all.

**Compare this 4 essay to the 8 essay. What does the 8 essay do that the 4 essay does not?**

**THESIS**

**QUALIFIER** (subordinate clause) + **CLAIM** (your argument) [topic (from the prompt) + academic (causal) verb + universal truth] + **THREE DIRECTIONS** [examples, reasons]

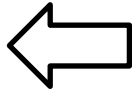


**First Supporting Argument**

**Second Supporting Argument**

**Third Supporting Argument**

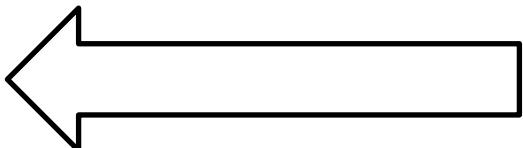
- Topic Sentence**  
claim + direction + universal subject
- Reference two sources**  
direct quotation or paraphrase
- Explain** how sources support your claim
- Commentary 1**  
connect sources and explanation o to your claim
- Commentary 2**  
connect sources and explanation o to your claim
- Examples**  
from worlds to support and supplement sources
- Concession**  
source that opposes your claim
- Refutation**  
discuss why this source is illogical, irrelevant, etc.



**Repeat format**

This is a **synthesis** essay. Make sure you talk to and with the sources. Create the give and take of a debate. Your argument should demonstrate critical thinking – going beyond what the sources have to say. Your own knowledge and observations on the subject are important too.

**Repeat format**



**CONCLUSION**

Address the so what? issue

How should educated, informed citizens continue to think about the issue at hand?

How will it continue to influence the readers' lives?