

Boost Free Lessons - Year 8 English

Lesson 15: Reading a Speech

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Read the speech transcript below carefully. It was delivered to a school assembly. The line numbers will help you refer to specific parts in your answers.

Speech: The Library Stays Open

- 1 Good morning. I have been asked to speak for three minutes, so I will use
- 2 them carefully.
- 3
- 4 Nine weeks ago the library began closing at lunch. The reason given was
- 5 staffing, and that reason was honest. I want to acknowledge that from the
- 6 start, because I am not here to accuse anybody of anything.
- 7
- 8 But I want you to picture something. Forty students used that room every
- 9 lunchtime. Not forty over a term. Forty a day. Some of them were studying.
- 10 Some were reading. And some, I think we all know, were simply somewhere
- 11 quiet, because the yard is not quiet, and not everybody finds it easy.
- 12
- 13 Where did those forty students go?
- 14
- 15 They did not stop existing at half past twelve. They went to the corridors.
- 16 They went to the stairwell behind the gym. And the number of students sent
- 17 out of afternoon classes has risen every week since.
- 18
- 19 Now, the objection. Reopening costs a staff member's time, and time is the
- 20 one thing this school has least of. That is true. I am not going to pretend
- 21 it is not.
- 22
- 23 So I am not asking for a librarian. I am asking for a roster. Twelve senior
- 24 students have already signed up to supervise, unpaid, one lunch each per
- 25 fortnight. The room does not need staffing. It needs opening.
- 26
- 27 Nine weeks ago we closed a door and assumed nothing would happen. Something
- 28 did. Open it again.



Worked Example 1

How does the speaker use the counter-argument in lines 19 to 21?

1. Identify the objection first: reopening costs staff time, which the school lacks.
2. Notice that the speaker raises it themselves rather than waiting for it.
3. They then **concede** it fully, saying *That is true* (line 20), which builds trust.
4. The refutation follows in lines 23 to 25: a solution that removes the objection entirely rather than dismissing it.

Model: The speaker raises the strongest objection themselves and concedes it outright, saying “That is true” (lines 20 to 21). This makes them appear fair, and it sets up the proposal in lines 23 to 25, which answers the objection rather than arguing against it.

Remember: In speeches, look for **rhetorical questions**, **repetition**, **direct address**, **concession** and a **call to action**. Note where the speaker pauses, and what they leave the audience with.



Question 1: Answer the following questions. Give the line numbers you used in your answers.

1. How long ago did the library begin closing at lunch?

2. What reason was given for the closure?

3. How many students used the room each lunchtime?

4. Where does the speaker say those students went?

5. What is the speaker actually asking for?

6. How many senior students have signed up?



Question 2: Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. The speaker asks a rhetorical question. Find it, then explain its effect.

2. The speaker corrects themselves from *forty over a term* to *forty a day*. Why?

3. Explain the effect of the short sentences in the final line.

4. Identify one statistic and explain why the speaker includes it.

5. How effective is this speech? Give two reasons, using evidence from the text.





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Answers and Model Responses: Reading a Speech**Question 1**

1. Nine weeks ago.
2. Staffing.
3. Forty.
4. The corridors and the stairwell behind the gym.
5. A roster, rather than a librarian.
6. Twelve.

Question 2

1. Model: It forces the audience to answer it themselves, and the answer is uncomfortable. Placing it alone on its own line gives the audience a pause in which to realise nobody had asked the question before.
2. Model: The correction stops the audience from underestimating the number. By naming the smaller figure first and rejecting it, the speaker makes forty a day feel much larger than if it had simply been stated.
3. Model: After several longer sentences, the two short ones land with force. *Open it again* is the shortest sentence in the speech and is a direct instruction, so it leaves the audience with the action rather than the argument.
4. Model: *the number of students sent out of afternoon classes has risen every week since* (lines 16 to 17). It links the closure to a measurable consequence, turning an opinion about atmosphere into evidence of a practical problem.
5. Model: It is highly effective. The speaker acknowledges the school's honest reason at the start (lines 5 to 6), which prevents the audience becoming defensive, and the proposal in lines 23 to 25 removes the objection rather than arguing with it. The one weakness is that the rise in students sent out of class is asserted but never sourced, so an audience member could question whether the two are connected.

