

Boost Free Lessons - Year 9 English

Lesson 15: Reading a Speech

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Read the speech transcript below carefully. It was delivered at a community meeting. The line numbers will help you refer to specific parts.

Speech: The Crossing

- 1 Thank you. I know several of you have been here since six, so I will be
- 2 brief.
- 3
- 4 For four years this community has asked for a pedestrian crossing outside
- 5 the primary school. We have written letters. We have signed petitions. We
- 6 have attended meetings very much like this one.
- 7
- 8 I want to be fair to the council, because I think fairness is the only
- 9 thing that will get us anywhere tonight. They have never said no. Every
- 10 response has been reasonable, and every response has been the same: the
- 11 crossing does not meet the threshold for funding.
- 12
- 13 So let us talk about the threshold. It is calculated from traffic volume
- 14 measured across a full day. Our road is quiet for twenty-two hours and
- 15 impassable for two. Averaged over twenty-four, we look like a country lane.
- 16
- 17 That is not a conspiracy. It is a formula, and formulas are written by
- 18 people, and people can be asked to look again.
- 19
- 20 Now the objection I expect. Changing a funding formula for one street sets
- 21 a precedent, and precedents are expensive. That is true, and I will not
- 22 pretend otherwise.
- 23
- 24 But we are not asking for the formula to be rewritten. We are asking for
- 25 one measurement to be taken at half past eight in the morning, and for the
- 26 result to be placed beside the daily average. That is an afternoon's work
- 27 for one officer.
- 28
- 29 Four years of letters, and what we actually need is one morning with a
- 30 clipboard. Let us ask for that, and let us ask for it tonight.



Worked Example 1

How does the speaker use concession to strengthen the argument?

1. Concession means admitting something true that appears to help the other side.
2. In lines 8 to 11 the speaker credits the council, saying every response has been reasonable.
3. This removes the audience's expectation of a complaint, and makes the speaker sound fair.
4. It is repeated in lines 20 to 22 with the precedent objection, conceded before it can be raised against them.

Model: The speaker concedes twice, first that the council has been reasonable (lines 9 to 10) and then that precedents are expensive (lines 20 to 22). Each concession removes an objection before the audience can raise it, and makes the final request appear moderate rather than adversarial.

Remember: In speeches, look for **concession**, **repetition**, **understatement** and a **specific** call to action. A modest, precise ask is usually harder to refuse than a large one.



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

1. How long has the community been asking for the crossing?

2. Name two things the community has already done.

3. What reason has the council always given?

4. How is the funding threshold calculated?

5. For how many hours a day is the road impassable?

6. What exactly is the speaker asking for?



Question 2: Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. Explain the effect of the three short sentences beginning *We have written letters*.

2. Why does the speaker say *That is not a conspiracy*?

3. Explain the effect of the comparison to a country lane.

4. How does the final line work as a call to action?

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





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

1. Four years.
2. Written letters, signed petitions and attended meetings.
3. That the crossing does not meet the threshold for funding.
4. From traffic volume measured across a full day.
5. Two hours.
6. One traffic measurement taken at half past eight in the morning, placed beside the daily average.

Question 2

1. Model: The repeated structure builds a sense of accumulated, patient effort. Each short sentence lands separately, which makes four years of work feel like a list of exhausted attempts rather than a single complaint.
2. Model: It prevents the audience from dismissing the argument as paranoid, and separates the speaker from angrier voices in the room. By naming the formula as the problem rather than the people, the speaker keeps the council able to act without losing face.
3. Model: A country lane suggests somewhere almost empty, which is absurdly far from a road outside a primary school at drop-off. The exaggeration exposes how the averaging hides the real danger, and does so with humour rather than anger.
4. Model: It contrasts four years of effort with a single morning of work, which makes the request seem trivially small. Ending on *tonight* converts agreement into immediate action while the audience is still assembled.
5. Model: It is highly effective. Conceding that the council has been reasonable (lines 9 to 10) prevents the meeting becoming a complaint session, and the specific, tiny request in lines 24 to 27 is far harder to refuse than a demand for a crossing. The main weakness is that the two-hour figure is asserted rather than sourced, which is exactly the sort of evidence the argument depends on.

