

## Sample response 4: Writing about protest

This sample response is in the form of a speech by a Year 12 student who argues for a change to some school rules.

### Task

Create a written text that responds to the following stimulus:

‘Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.’

– Congressman John Lewis

You can determine the audience, context and purpose of your piece.

### Response

Good afternoon everyone,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for allowing us to be here today. I know that it is unusual to have student council members attend a school board meeting, so I appreciate the invitation and the welcome that we have received.

For anyone who doesn't know me, my name is Amelia Dodson and I am the new school captain for Kilburn Senior College. I am here with my fellow student council members to begin discussions on a project that would reshape learning at our school.

I ran for school captain because I felt that significant and necessary changes need to occur for our students to be their best. We have long held honesty, integrity and high academic results at the core of our school values. But I worry that we have become complacent about the latest advice surrounding studying and homework habits. I come to you not just as the head of the student council, but also as a Year 12 student who is honestly worried about achieving my goals for the final year of school. So much is riding on this, why wouldn't I give myself and my cohort every chance to succeed?

Establishes the context and audience.

The speaker places herself within the debate, as Emmeline Pankhurst does in her speech 'Freedom or Death'. This creates the character of the speaker as someone who is an agent of change but currently struggling within the system as it stands.

Once in the senior years, we are trusted to go into the Study Hall for free periods. This hall is locked down into a tense atmosphere of silence and stress. Students hardly feel that they can go to the bathroom or ask a question, let alone settle into a long and sometimes arduous study session. We feel watched by the teachers who supervise, and are quickly pulled into line if we should accidentally create too much noise or distraction.

I am arguing for an official and immediate change – from Study Hall to Open Learning Annex. While traditionally long periods of silent study may have worked for enforcing good habits, recent academic research has shown that this is simply no longer the case, and our school's infrastructure needs to reflect this.

There are so many different study methods for different kinds of students – it seems so obvious! Visual learners, night owls, sprinters! All of these nicknames are designed to help people understand how they best learn. But at school we are given a one-size-fits-all treatment.

Enough.

Students in the new Open Learning Annex will be allowed to bring in headphones and listen to music, eat and drink, sit in a bean bag and get comfortable. They will be allowed to come and go as they please, and take breaks as necessary. They will be allowed to quietly discuss their group projects and engage fully with their work. The Open Learning Annex will be a place where each student can go and study in a judgement-free environment, where they are able to work in the way that suits them best – alongside the teachers who will no doubt be there to support them.

I know it doesn't sound like the perfect system; after all, many students have found the Study Hall useful as it is. However, there are other places like this on campus – empty classrooms and libraries that can actively encourage quiet study. We are asking for just one place for students who need to listen to music, or take small breaks, or walk around as they consider their latest essay. We need a space for alternative learning styles.

At the forefront of this exercise is trust. We students understand that teachers are there to enforce the rules of the school. For the most part, we feel that we are complying and committed to the rules that help advance our learning. However, for this to work we are asking to be trusted to do the right thing. We know that some of you may feel that when students are left to their own devices they will take advantage of the situation to do less. This is not the case. We are asking for the opportunity to do more. I am confident in myself and my peers that we would use this opportunity to invest in our education here at Kilburn Senior College, and create good study habits for our education opportunities to come.

Turn the Study Hall into an Open Learning Annex. I implore you to take this issue seriously and give it the consideration that it deserves. We exist as an institution of learning, and we need to make spaces that accommodate every kind of student. We need to turn the Study Hall into a shared space for diverse

Starts the main argument by outlining problems with the existing system, using emotional language and effective imagery.

States the purpose of the speech, offering a solution to the problems previously outlined (a problem-solution approach to argument).

Appeals to the audience's 'common sense'.

Repetition ('they will ...') reinforces the speaker's message and conveys her sense of conviction.

Makes a concession to an opposing point of view, then rebuts it – an effective persuasive technique.

Reaffirms the goal as the speech comes to a close, leaving the audience with a clear understanding of what is being sought.





learning styles. I believe that this is the future of learning, and we can be the ones to pave the way for Kilburn Senior College and give each student the very best shot at achieving success. We, as the student council and the school board, have the opportunity to hear the voices of all students and act now before the academic year is up.

I will now happily take any questions.

## Reflective commentary

This piece is a speech made by the student council leader to the board of her school, advocating for the Study Hall to be turned into an Open Learning Annex – that is, a room dedicated to alternative learning styles.

I used Emmeline Pankhurst's famous speech 'Freedom or Death' as a mentor text for this speech. 'Freedom or Death' inspired members of the suffragette movement, and was designed to encourage militant action for their cause.

While Amelia is not advocating for such extreme action, there are parallels to the way that she argues for her cause. Pankhurst is famous for her use of direct argumentation – which means that she is clear and purposeful in the argument, and states her position without apology. I tried to mimic this in the short, sharp sentences that Amelia uses to break up her speech.

Something as simple as a declaration of 'enough' makes clear her frustrations and strong desire for change. I placed this word on a line of its own to reflect the way that the speaker would emphasise it, and most probably pause briefly, in her delivery.

I aimed to consistently use highly emotive language and repetition to strengthen my argument. An example of emotive language occurs in the description of the Study Hall – 'a tense atmosphere of silence and stress'. I juxtaposed this with the more positive and appealing description of the proposed Open Learning Annex which would have beanbags and music. I used repetition during this passage also, emphasising what students would be allowed to do and declaring the proposed space to be 'judgement-free'. After this I included a line about the presence of a teacher in these situations, thus assuring the audience that the role of teachers had been kept in mind while making this plan.

I thought that an audience of adult board members would be likely to question the value of relaxing the rules around a school study space, so I added a segment on trust. This would enable Amelia to strengthen her connection with the audience and also reassure them that she is fully aware of what she is asking of the school board. Further, this felt like the best way to incorporate the idea contained in the stimulus quote. While Amelia's speech would be likely to create some 'good trouble', she would see it as 'necessary trouble' as the benefits would be worth it. By acknowledging what is at stake, Amelia would encourage her audience not only to feel more engaged with her arguments, but also to see her emotional ties to the school and commitment to education – keeping them united to a common cause.

Considers the choice of sentence structure.

Shows understanding of a speech as an oral form involving non-verbal elements.

Supports the reflection with brief examples.

Explains how the argument has been crafted to suit the given audience.

Reflects on how the speech responds to the stimulus quote.