The Bell Argument

Evaluate how an editorial builds a case for a later school start.

ELA.11.R.3.4 "Evaluate an author's use of rhetoric in text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the author's central claim and each piece of evidence that supports it. Circle two rhetorical moves that shape the reader's response, such as a question, concession, contrast, or repeated opening, and label each in the margin.

A Schedule for Learning

1 At 6:15 a.m., Maya waits at a dark bus stop, her backpack heavy and her eyes still adjusting to the morning. By first period, she is expected to analyze a poem, solve equations, and participate in a lab. Her experience is not an excuse for low expectations. It is a sign that our schedule ignores what we know about adolescent sleep. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools begin at 8:30 a.m. or later. If learning matters, why do we arrange the day around a clock that leaves many students exhausted before class begins?

2 Research gives the concern more weight. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that teenagers ages 13 to 18 need eight to ten hours of sleep each night. Yet a 2021 national survey found that 77 percent of U.S. high school students slept less than eight hours on school nights. No schedule can force sleep, and later start times will not solve every problem. Still, schools control one major barrier. A later bell cannot erase homework, jobs, or family duties, but it can stop requiring students to begin academic work before many have had enough rest.

3 Some families worry that a later start would push sports, jobs, and bus routes later into the afternoon. Those concerns deserve planning, not dismissal. Districts can coordinate transportation, adjust practice schedules, and ask community employers to consider student hours. The question is not whether change is effortless. The question is whether our current routine serves its purpose. We ask teenagers to prepare for adulthood, then design a school day that works against their health and attention. We can plan carefully. We can listen to families. We can choose a schedule that treats alert students as a necessity, not a luxury.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the opening description of Maya at the bus stop support the author's argument?

2. Evaluate the effect of using both the CDC sleep recommendation and the 2021 survey statistic in paragraph 2.

3. What concession does the author make about later start times, and why does that concession strengthen the argument?

4. How does repeating "We can" near the end of the passage affect the tone and persuasiveness of the conclusion?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80-100-word recommendation to school leaders about a school policy other than start times. State a clear claim and use at least two rhetorical strategies, including a specific example or realistic situation and either a concession, rhetorical question, contrast, or repeated phrase.

ANSWER KEY

The Bell Argument

GRADE 11 · ELA.11.R.3.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the author's central claim and each piece of evidence that supports it. Circle two rhetorical moves that shape the reader's response, such as a question, concession, contrast, or repeated opening, and label each in the margin. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the opening description of Maya at the bus stop support the author's argument?	**It gives the issue a concrete human example, helping readers see how an early schedule can affect a student before school begins.**
2	Evaluate the effect of using both the CDC sleep recommendation and the 2021 survey statistic in paragraph 2.	**The sources make the argument more credible and show that insufficient sleep is a broad problem, not only Maya's personal experience.**
3	What concession does the author make about later start times, and why does that concession strengthen the argument?	**The author admits that later starts could affect sports, jobs, and bus routes. Acknowledging these concerns makes the argument seem fair and realistic before offering solutions.**
4	How does repeating "We can" near the end of the passage affect the tone and persuasiveness of the conclusion?	**The repetition creates a practical, determined tone and presents later start times as a shared problem that people can solve.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

School leaders should create a quiet study hall before the final bell for students who need a place to finish work. A student who shares a bedroom or works after school may have few uninterrupted hours at home. Some people may say the program costs too much time, but it could use existing classrooms and rotating staff. Why should a completed assignment depend on having a silent kitchen table? We can offer space. We can offer time. We can make academic support part of the school day, not a privilege reserved for students with easier evenings.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect a rhetorical choice to its effect on audience, credibility, tone, or persuasiveness. For the open response, accept varied policy positions if the response is 80-100 words, has a clear claim, includes a specific situation, and uses at least two purposeful rhetorical strategies.