Phones on Trial

Compare how two speakers argue for different school phone policies.

11.3.R.5 "Students will evaluate how authors writing on the same issue reached different conclusions because of differences in assumptions, evidence, reasoning, and viewpoints, including examining rhetorical appeals, bias…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage. Underline each speaker's conclusion, circle the evidence each uses, and number the assumptions or limits each speaker mentions so you can compare their reasoning.

The Phone Collection Proposal

(1) At Harbor High, students may carry phones, but teachers decide when they must be put away. After several classes were interrupted by ringing phones, the school board proposed collecting every phone at the front office each morning. Students could retrieve them after dismissal; families with urgent news could call the main office. During a public meeting, a student, Leo, and a teacher, Ms. Ruiz, disagreed about the proposal. Both had read a school report listing 72 classroom distraction reports involving phones last semester. The report counted incidents, not the number of students involved.

(2) Leo argued against collection: "Last month, my sister needed a ride when her bus broke down. She texted me, and I reached her within minutes. If my phone had been at the office, someone there would have had to find me first. That delay could matter in an emergency." Leo assumed that direct contact would usually be faster than messages relayed through staff. He acknowledged the 72 reports but called them "small problems" without explaining how often lessons were disrupted. "The board must choose between keeping students safe and locking up our phones," he concluded.

(3) Ms. Ruiz supported collection: "In my classes, I have stopped discussions to address ringing phones, and the school recorded 72 distraction reports last semester. Lost attention costs everyone time." She assumed that a shared rule would reduce interruptions more reliably than rules set by individual teachers. She also noted that the report did not show whether a few students caused many incidents, so the number alone could not prove that every student misused a phone. "Families can still reach students through the office," she said, "although that may take longer than a text. A quieter classroom is worth that trade-off."

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does each speaker's assumption help explain the policy that speaker supports?

2. How do Leo and Ms. Ruiz treat the 72 reports differently? What limit does Ms. Ruiz place on that evidence?

3. Which detail in Leo's account appeals to concern for safety? How might that concern bias his treatment of classroom disruptions?

4. Why does Leo's final sentence present a false choice? Use one detail from the passage to challenge it.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 110 word statement for a third speaker recommending a policy different from both the current teacher-by-teacher rule and office collection. Use the 72 reports and Leo's emergency example, explain one assumption behind your recommendation, and acknowledge a possible drawback.

ANSWER KEY

Phones on Trial

GRADE 11 · 11.3.R.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage. Underline each speaker's conclusion, circle the evidence each uses, and number the assumptions or limits each speaker mentions so you can compare their reasoning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does each speaker's assumption help explain the policy that speaker supports?	**Leo assumes direct contact is usually faster than contact through staff, so he opposes collection. Ms. Ruiz assumes a shared rule will reduce interruptions more reliably than separate classroom rules, so she supports collection.**
2	How do Leo and Ms. Ruiz treat the 72 reports differently? What limit does Ms. Ruiz place on that evidence?	**Leo calls the reports "small problems" without examining their effect on lessons. Ms. Ruiz uses them as evidence of interruptions but notes that they do not show how many students caused the incidents.**
3	Which detail in Leo's account appeals to concern for safety? How might that concern bias his treatment of classroom disruptions?	**His sister needed a ride after her bus broke down, and he reached her quickly by text. His focus on rapid contact may lead him to dismiss the 72 distraction reports without considering how much learning time was lost.**
4	Why does Leo's final sentence present a false choice? Use one detail from the passage to challenge it.	**Leo suggests the board must choose either safety or phone collection. Families could still reach students through the main office, although the message might take longer.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend a schoolwide rule requiring silent phones in backpacks during class, with students allowed to check them between periods. The 72 reports show that phone interruptions need attention, although they do not show how many students caused them. Leo's sister's bus problem shows that direct contact can be useful. I assume a clear rule will limit interruptions more consistently than separate classroom rules. A drawback is that a message sent during class might not be seen immediately. Families could call the office for news that cannot wait, while students could still read other messages between classes.

Accept other supported comparisons of the speakers' assumptions, evidence, appeals, and reasoning. For Your Turn, the policy must differ from both policies named in the prompt and address every requested element.