



People and Achievement

Short-answer questions: Greta Thunberg and school strikes | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. Can one young person influence public debate?
2. What makes a protest effective?
3. Should students miss school for a cause they believe in?
4. How do speeches and social media spread a message?

Exercise 1 at a glance

Read one factual text. Answers are in the text. Copy exact words and check the question carefully before choosing your answer.

2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. How did Greta Thunberg's protest grow into a wider movement?

Greta Thunberg and School Strikes

In August 2018, Swedish student Greta Thunberg began sitting outside the Swedish parliament instead of going to school. She held a sign that said School Strike for Climate. Her action was small at first, but it soon attracted attention because she was a teenager protesting alone about climate change.

Thunberg wanted politicians to treat the climate crisis as urgent. She argued that if adults were not acting seriously enough, young people had a reason to protest. Her direct style made her speeches memorable. She often used clear, simple sentences rather than complicated political language.

The protest spread through social media and news reports. Other students began organising school strikes in their own towns and countries. The movement became known as Fridays for Future because many protests took place on Fridays. Students gathered outside government buildings, carried signs and asked leaders to follow climate science.

Thunberg's achievement was not only that she became famous. She helped make youth climate activism more visible. Many young people felt that climate change would affect their future most, even though they had little power to vote or make laws. Protests gave them a public voice.

Her message spread partly because it was easy to understand. The image of one student sitting outside parliament with a handmade sign was simple and powerful. News organisations could explain it quickly, and supporters could copy the idea in their own towns. The protest did not require expensive equipment or a large organisation at the beginning.

Social media also helped the movement grow. Photos of strikes could be shared across countries, allowing students to see that others were taking similar action. This created a sense of connection between local protests.

Thunberg was later invited to speak at international events, including climate meetings attended by political leaders. Her speeches often challenged adults directly, which made them widely quoted. Supporters admired her honesty, while critics sometimes argued that the debate had become too focused on one person rather than the wider scientific evidence.

The school strikes also changed the image of teenage activism. Instead of being seen only as future voters, young people presented themselves as citizens with a stake in decisions being made now.

Her activism also brought criticism. Some people argued that students should stay in school, while others disliked the attention given to one individual. Thunberg responded that education was important, but that a safe future was also necessary. The debate itself showed how strongly people felt about climate action.

Since 2018, Thunberg has spoken at international meetings and continued to support climate campaigns. The school strikes did not solve climate change, but they changed the conversation. They showed how a simple protest by one student could become a global symbol of youth pressure for action.

3. Strategy focus

Separate action and result

Some questions ask what one person did. Others ask what happened because of it. Check whether the question asks for the action or the result.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. Where did Thunberg first sit instead of going to school? [1]

2. What did her sign say? [1]

3. What kind of language did she avoid in many speeches? [1]

4. Why was the movement called Fridays for Future? [1]

5. What did protests give young people? [1]

6. According to the text, what are three results or effects of Thunberg's protest? [3]

5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Can protests by young people change adults' behaviour?

2. Summary: Summarise the school strikes in about 50 words.

3. Creative task: Write a short speech about an issue you care about.

4. Research: Find another young activist and explain their achievement.

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4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. outside the Swedish parliament
2. School Strike for Climate
3. complicated political language
4. many protests took place on Fridays
5. a public voice
6. Any three from: attracted attention; spread through social media and news reports; other students began organising school strikes; made youth climate activism more visible; changed the conversation; became a global symbol.

Notes for checking

1. Answers should be short and clearly based on the text.
2. Accept bracketed or optional wording if the meaning is clear.
3. For the final question, learners need three separate details.