Student 2

One of the central ways Max resists the authoritarian banking method is through his own self-directed learning, what Freire terms “inquiry” (72). Max’s instinctive desire for freedom from the specific demands of authorities finds expression in a seemingly endless series of commitments to a variety of clubs, projects, sports, and various other extracurricular activities. Max is seemingly committed to taking part in *every* activity offered by the school except for the traditional academic disciplines offered in the classroom. And if Max discovers that the school does not offer a particular extracurricular opportunity or activity that he desires, he just creates it for himself out of thin air. While it might seem perplexing that an obviously intelligent and curious student such as Max is failing all of his academic courses, things become more clear if we view these “failures” as acts of resistance, as rejections of an authoritarian system of education that he despises. In essence, I argue that Max has rejected Rushmore’s “banking method” of learning, where the student’s role “extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” (72) made by authorities; instead, Max embarks on an all-consuming journey that focuses on the pursuit of his own interests, questions, and opportunities for self-betterment and creativity. Rather than allow himself to become the “receptacle” or “container” that the banking system requires, we can see that Max is instead engaged in the “restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful” process of “inquiry” that Freire recommends. As Freire rightly claims, human beings “cannot be truly human” (72) unless we are able to inquire, freely create, and challenge ourselves to become more than the objectified “automatons” (74) desired by the banking system’s “oppressive” authorities. Max’s exuberant embrace of extracurriculars, therefore, should be seen as his attempt to embrace his own humanity and a refusal to be “filed away” by the banking system, becoming another boring and “credulous” (73) drone. Of course, as the film makes quite clear, revolting against this powerful system comes at a cost—a fact that Max learns all too well.

Although Max would certainly earn praise from Freire for his inquiry and desire to be free, Max fails to understand one of Freire’s key insights: freedom and inquiry are not things we do or have alone; rather, they are things must practice *with others*. [. . . ]