

TIME FOR CHANGE:

DREAM. ACT. CHANGE OUR WORLD.

Changemaking is a mindset and an approach to life that addresses today's pressing challenges and injustices through the application of four key abilities: conscious empathy, teamwork, changemaking leadership, and changemaking action.



ABOUT THIS SERIES

Developed based on feedback from First Book educators, this series of tip sheets offers guidance about how to incorporate changemaking into a variety of subjects and settings. Refer to the featured tips, booklists, and activities for cross-curricular connections that help students see how the skills they're learning in the classroom can help them thrive as changemakers in their communities.



ABOUT THIS TIP SHEET

This tip sheet explains how approaching literature with a focus on empathy and social awareness can deepen students' understanding and enjoyment, help them gain insight into themselves, and increase collaboration and connection with their peers. Below, you will find curated booklists, discussion questions, standards alignment, and more!

SELECTING LITERATURE WITH CHANGEMAKING THEMES

When selecting books to complement or initiate changemaking lessons and activities, choose fiction and non-fiction books with the following types of characters, themes, and topics:

Characters who find themselves in complex, challenging situations

Characters who live in time periods or environments in which injustice and inequality are prevalent and contribute to the narrative

Stories that focus on communities or feature characters working together

Books with social justice and civil rights themes

Books that work as windows* for students and provide the opportunity to consider the experiences of others

Biographies of leaders, inventors, and changemakers

Sources: berkeley.edu, [Learning Character from Characters \(ascd.org\)](https://www.ascd.org) & [Greater Good in Education](https://www.greatergoodineducation.org)

*Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop introduced these concepts in her groundbreaking article "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors" (Bishop, 1990).

GRADE LEVEL

K-12

SUBJECTS

ELA, Social Studies,
STEAM & more!

FEATURED CHANGEMAKING ABILITY

Empathy



RATIONALE

Empathy is a critical component of changemaking because feeling empathy for others' experiences is the first step toward taking action. Through literature, students can practice reflecting on the injustices and challenges faced by real people and fictional characters — empathizing with their situations and perspectives and envisioning alternative scenarios and realities.



Somewhere in our school day, there should be a place for forging connections between what students read, their personal values, and the world around them.

NANCY BOYLES,
former classroom teacher and
professor emerita at Southern
Connecticut State University

Books that teach or encourage empathy*

EARLY ELEMENTARY

Do You Know Them? Families Lost and Found After the Civil War by Shana Keller

Piece by Piece, the story of Nisrin's Hijab by Priya Huq

The Overground Railroad by Lesa Cline-Ransome

MIDDLE GRADES

A Seed in the Sun by Aida Salazar

Aniana del Mar Jumps In by Jasminne Mendez

Finding Junie Kim by Ellen Oh

Freewater by Amina Luqman-Dawson

The Star That Always Stays by Anna Rose Johnson

The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis

YOUNG ADULT

Barracoon (YA Edition) by Zora Neale Hurston and Ibram Kendi

The Blood Years by Elana K. Arnold

They Called Us Enemy by George Takei

The Lost Year by Katherine Marsh

Books from the *She Persisted* and *Who HQ* series feature changemakers and trailblazers working to promote justice and equality and improve their communities and the world.



Nonfiction read-aloud picture books that feature changemakers*



Students of all ages enjoy read alouds! Many educators use nonfiction picture books to introduce new topics and engage students with varying learning styles. Sharing a true story also sparks discussion and creates a shared baseline of background knowledge.

Nonfiction read-aloud picture books featuring changemakers who took action against injustice or environmental problems are perfect for introducing and reinforcing the changemaking mindset and key abilities. First Book favorites include:

Areli Is a Dreamer: A True Story by Areli Morales, *a DACA Recipient* by Areli Morales

I Am an American: The Wong Kim Ark Story by Martha Brockenbrough

Ida B. Wells Marches for the Vote by Dinah Johnson

If You're a Kid Like Gavin: The True Story of a Young Trans Activist by Gavin Grimm

Fall Down Seven Times, Stand Up Eight: Patsy Takemoto Mink and the Fight for Title IX by Jen Bryant

Fighting with Love: The Legacy of John Lewis by Lesa Cline-Ransome

Malala's Magic Pencil by Malala Yousafzai

Separados no somos iguales: Sylvia Méndez y la lucha de su familia por la integración (Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation, Spanish edition) by Duncan Tonatiuh

We Want to Go to School! The Fight for Disability Rights by Maryann Cocca-Leffler

* These booklists were curated by First Book's Title Selection team. Most titles were available on the First Book Marketplace at the time of publication.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS THAT ENCOURAGE EMPATHY

Thoughtful classroom discussions and focused writing assignments allow students to reflect on characters' challenges, decisions, and actions. Writing encourages deeper reflection, and discussions offer the opportunity to listen to and learn from classmates who may have different lived experiences and perspectives on the narrative. With practice and encouragement, the insights and empathy gained through reading can lead students to take meaningful action both inside and outside the classroom.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- What does the character say and think?
- How does the character act?
- How does the character treat other characters in the story?
- What happens to the character during the story?
- Does the character face any challenges?
- How would you have reacted in that situation? Faced with that problem?
- How would you have solved the problem?
- Have you ever experienced something like this? How did it make you feel?
- What emotions did the character experience?
- Why do you think the character felt that way?
- Have you ever felt like that?

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

- Which character do you relate to most? Why?
- Which character do you relate to least? Why?
- How do you think the character(s) felt when...?
- What do you think the character(s) thought when...?
- How do the characters' actions affect others?
- What impact do the characters' actions have on their own lives?
- What changes do the characters experience? How do those changes come about?
- In what ways are the characters passive participants in their own life?
- In what ways do the characters take charge of their own life?

Some notable authors who write about social justice issues

Kwame Alexander
Lesa Cline-Ransome
Chelsea Clinton
Amanda Gorman
Vashti Harrison
Kimberly Jones
Ibram Kendi
John Lewis
Ellen Oh
Sarah Prager
Jason Reynolds
Nic Stone
Sonia Sotomayor
Carole Boston Weatherford
Kelly Yang
Malala Yousafzai

Shop the First Book Marketplace

The First Book Marketplace offers diverse titles for a range of reading levels that highlight the key abilities of changemaking. Shop the Marketplace for books that model and encourage empathy and other important skills.

RESPECT & EMPATHY

KINDNESS & COMPASSION

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

TEAMWORK & TRUSTING OTHERS

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

COMMON CORE CONNECTION

Empathy helps students understand diverse characters and their motivations. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts include relevant expectations around identifying, observing, describing, and analyzing characters and their environments and experiences.

GRADE	STANDARD
<u>K</u>	With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
<u>1st</u>	Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.
<u>2nd</u>	Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
<u>3rd</u>	Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
<u>4th</u>	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
<u>5th</u>	Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
<u>6th</u>	Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
<u>7th</u>	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
<u>8th</u>	Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
<u>9th & 10th</u>	Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
<u>11th & 12th</u>	Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

ABOUT TIME FOR CHANGE

Time for Change: Dream, Act, Change Our World is a joint initiative between Ashoka, First Book, and Teach For All, made possible by Swiss Haute Horlogerie manufacturer Audemars Piguet.

In our world of accelerated change, everyone — regardless of geography, race, or socio-economic background — needs to respond to injustices and inefficiencies and take action to create change for the common good. The goal of the Time for Change initiative is to help educators incorporate a changemaking mindset into their schools and nurture the young changemakers in their classrooms and programs.

See the complete collection of Time for Change resources, including the [Inspiring Young Changemakers](#) video series, on the [First Book Marketplace](#).