

LESSON 4: Being a Changemaker



TOTAL TIME:
60 minutes

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Reflect on the benefits and challenges that come from being a changemaker.
- Identify concrete strategies for sustaining commitment when facing resistance or setbacks.
- Articulate how building community with other changemakers strengthens impact.



Guiding Questions

- What does it actually feel like to work for change, and why is it sometimes harder than it looks?
- What personal qualities help a changemaker keep going when progress is slow or people push back?
- Why is community — not just individual effort — essential to lasting change?

Differentiation Strategies

For students who need more support:

- Provide a sentence-starter bank: “One challenge a changemaker might face is...” / “A strategy for keeping going is...” / “Building community helps because...”
- Allow pair discussion before independent writing.

For advanced learners:

- Ask students to analyze the systemic or structural barriers a changemaker faced, not just personal obstacles.
- Have students research and present a “movement behind the person,” exploring how communities of support amplified an individual’s impact.

Extension

- Students research a youth-led movement (e.g., the Sunrise Movement, March for Our Lives, #1000BlackGirlBooks) and analyze how the group built and sustained community over time.
- Students write a personal “resilience plan” for a cause they care about: what obstacles might they face, and what specific strategies will they use to stay committed?

Materials

- Whiteboard or chart paper and markers



Where could this fit?

- ELA: Analyze how an author or subject of a biography navigated conflict, adversity, or doubt.
- Social Studies / Civics: Explore the history of social movements and the personal cost of civic leadership.
- Advisory / SEL: Focus on resilience, identity, and community-building as core adolescent development themes.
- After-school / At home: Ask students to identify a changemaker in their own community and explore what has sustained that person's work.



Introduction

- Open with a discussion: "Have you ever tried to change something and found it harder than you expected? What made it hard?"
- Invite 2-3 students to share their thoughts.
- Tell students: "Changemakers work hard to improve something in the world. Changemaking is powerful and meaningful. It's also genuinely hard."
- Ask: "What do you think makes someone keep going when their work gets difficult?"



10
minutes

Direct Instruction

- Present the benefits and challenges of being a changemaker. Build a class T-chart on the board.



15
minutes

Benefits of Being a Changemaker	Challenges of Being a Changemaker
A sense of purpose and meaning	Progress is slow and outcomes are uncertain
Deep, values-aligned relationships	Facing skepticism, dismissal, or active opposition
Developing confidence, leadership, and skills	Emotional weight of caring deeply about hard problems
Being part of something larger than yourself	Burnout from giving more than you receive
The satisfaction of contributing to real change	Feeling isolated if your community doesn't share your values

Guided Practice

- Share the profiles of 2-3 young changemakers below.
- For each, have students identify: (1) the specific challenge they faced, (2) what

helped them keep going, and (3) how community played a role, and (4) what T's the changemaker used



15
minutes

Continued from pg 2

Young Changemaker	What They Did & What Was Hard
Greta Thunberg (Age 15, Sweden)	Began striking alone outside the Swedish parliament for climate action. Faced widespread dismissal and personal attacks. Stayed focused on her “why” and built a global student movement — Fridays for Future — by staying consistent and publicly sharing her convictions.
Marley Dias (Age 11, USA)	Launched #1000BlackGirlBooks after noticing the absence of Black girls in school reading lists. Faced adults who underestimated her. Used her Ties (family, media connections, social media) to amplify her message and ultimately collected over 13,000 books.
Malala Yousafzai (Age 15, Pakistan)	Advocated for girls’ education under Taliban rule at enormous personal risk. After surviving an assassination attempt, she built an international organization (Malala Fund) and used her story to shift global policy conversations about girls’ education.

- Discuss as a class: What qualities did these changemakers share? What strategies did they use? How did community help them persist? What T’s did they use?

Independent/ Group Practice

- Ask students to respond to the prompt below in writing.



Independent Reflection Prompt

1. Think about a cause or issue you care about. What is one challenge you are already facing (or would face if you took your first step) in creating change around it?
2. What is one specific strategy you are using now — or are ready to use — to keep going when it gets hard?
3. Who are two or three people or communities you are already connected to or could reach out to this week who share your values? How does that community strengthen your work?

- **Optional:** Invite students to write a “commitment statement”: “I commit to [action] around [cause], even when [specific challenge]. I will stay grounded by [strategy].”

Reflection

- Ask: “Why is community essential to sustaining a changemaker’s work?”
- Ask: “Is there a difference between resilience and stubbornness? How does a changemaker know when to pivot vs. when to persist?”
- Reinforce the core idea: “Being a changemaker doesn’t mean having all the answers or never feeling doubt. It means staying connected to your values, building community, and showing up again the next day.”



Icons:: SBTS; Flowicon; Gendis Studio; ARIPATUT DASUKI, Selot Lo from the Noun Project