

# Changemakers: Taking Action

*This inquiry is adapted from material created by Jennifer Suchland, Ph.D., The Ohio State University.*

## Compelling Question

How can we become changemakers?

### State Standard(s)

Ohio/Grade 8/History Content Statement 20  
Kentucky/ 8.I.CC.3, 8.I.CC.4,

### C3 Framework Indicator(s)

D4.6.6-8, D4.7.6-8, D4.8.6-8

### Learning Goals

#### Students will understand

- The shared principles and abilities of changemakers.
- What influences someone to make change.
- What it means to be a changemaker.
- The four types of impact in changemaking.
- The benefits of changing a system. (optional)

#### Students will be able to

- Determine criteria for changemakers using examples from the past and present.
- Determine what influences changemakers using examples from the past and present.
- Determine where change is needed today.
- Design a plan of action to address a problem and make change.

### Supporting Question

What makes someone a changemaker?

### Featured Sources

- **Website:**  
[changemakers.com/stories](https://changemakers.com/stories)

### Supporting Question

Where is change needed today? Why would it help the future?

### Featured Sources

- Teacher and students selected new sources
- **Conscious Empathy Activity and Class Discussion:**  
[changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator](https://changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator)

### Supporting Question

What are the four types of impact in changemaking?

### Featured Sources

- **Website and videos:**  
[changemaking.net/main](https://changemaking.net/main)
- **Worksheet 1B:**  
[changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-1B-TypesOfImpact-2022.pdf](https://changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-1B-TypesOfImpact-2022.pdf)

Featured Sources (cont.)	Featured Sources (cont.)	Featured Sources (cont.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Conscious Empathy Journal Prompt:</b> <a href="https://changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator">changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Worksheet 2A:</b> <a href="https://changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-2A-AnalyzeProblems-2022.pdf">changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-2A-AnalyzeProblems-2022.pdf</a></li> <li>■ <b>Worksheet 2B:</b> <a href="https://changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-2B-3Systems-2022.pdf">changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-2B-3Systems-2022.pdf</a></li> </ul>
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Who is a Changemaker? (Appendix A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Discussion</li> <li>■ Empathy Journal Prompt</li> <li>■ Identifying the Problems (Appendix B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Worksheet 1B</li> <li>■ Worksheet 2A</li> <li>■ Worksheet 2B</li> </ul>

Summative Performance Task	<p>Practice Changemaking Together: Create an Awareness Campaign. <a href="https://changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator">changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator</a></p> <p>Step 1: Choose an Issue Step 2: Collect Group Knowledge Step 3: Design the Campaign Step 4: Practice Changemaking! Step 5: Reflect</p>
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Taking Informed Action	<p><b>UNDERSTAND and ASSESS:</b> Be a Changemaker: Students should deliberate and choose 1–3 campaigns to put into action. Students should apply deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action (C3 D4.8).</p> <p><b>ACT:</b> Students can create a storyboard that depicts their community project. They can use drawings, text, images, and other items to visualize the community project. This project can be brought to life!</p>
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## Inquiry Description

The Changemakers series of inquiries provide teachers multiple opportunities to incorporate the history of the Underground Railroad into their curriculum across the academic year. Additionally, there are opportunities for cross-disciplinary study and collaboration. While the inquiries are aligned to eighth grade Ohio and Kentucky standards, we hope teachers across grade levels and disciplines utilize these materials. Throughout this series, lessons and activities will connect the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement to today through

personal and community stories. Spanning various subjects, the overarching theme focuses on the impact changemakers have during their lifetime, the evidence they leave behind, and their ongoing impact today. Lessons and activities are unique and can build upon each other.

The theme is “Changemakers in the Past, Present & Future.” The series begins with an inquiry about historical myths and assumptions emphasizing historical and critical thinking. The second and third inquiries require students to apply these skills while developing questions and completing research regarding two historical narratives: John Parker and Francis Watkins Harper. The next two series inquiries provide the opportunity to consider, reflect upon, and engage the question of how we are connected to the past. The fourth inquiry has students consider the legacies and evidence we leave for future generations, including the powers that limit and restrict such evidence. The fifth inquiry engages students in changemaking to identify and address a problem of today to create a better tomorrow.

In inquiry 5 of 5, “Changemakers: Taking-Action,” students investigate the role of changemakers in society by clarifying what it means to make change and what propels people to do so. Students use what they’ve learned from changemakers of the past and present to address a societal need and change the future.

Students will engage in social justice work by identifying a societal need and taking collective action to make change. This inquiry uses resources from Changemakers.com and Changemaking.net, both partners of ASHOKA. Information about these organizations can be found at [changemaking.net/about](https://changemaking.net/about). The Changemaking materials provide students and teachers for a framework for learning how to make meaningful societal change, challenging students to look beyond acts of direct service and toward system change and shifting mindsets.

Changemakers is a place to connect with people who are transforming our world for the good of all. There are thousands of us. We are all ages. We are building new solutions to the challenges we face — from education to mental health, environmental sustainability to social justice – in any field you can dream of.

Here we find support and learn together. Discover stories, resources, and opportunities to take your impact to the next level. Join the changemaker movement.

—Changemakers.com

This inquiry embodies the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center principles of courage, cooperation, and perseverance by illustrating how each is necessary for making change. We encourage teachers and students to visit our museum and continue this exploration through our exhibits and focus on narratives. The Freedom Center uses education to inspire individuals to create positive change in society. A visit would be an excellent addition to the “Changemakers in the Past, Present & Future” series of inquiries.

## Required Prior Knowledge

Students should have an understanding of how specific historical figures have made change in society. This inquiry requires students to work collaboratively, take-action, and achieve a goal. If students do not have prior experience with such tasks, extra time will be required to teach the necessary skills.

In addition, the following teacher resources are essential to this inquiry and should be read prior to:

- **Time for Change packet:** [changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator](https://changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator)
- **Website:** [changemaking.net/main](https://changemaking.net/main)

## Staging The Compelling Question

Introduce this inquiry by generating a list of “important” people throughout history. You may narrow the frame to include specific times and places, but the idea is for students to identify prominent historical figures they have knowledge about. You may have students work individually, with a partner, or you may choose to provide a pre-set list of names. Once the names are compiled, prompt students to decide which of the individuals was a



“changemaker.” As students discuss, prompt students to consider their criteria for qualification.

### Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question — What makes someone a changemaker? — has students examine the qualifications for the title. In doing so, student will have to determine what “making change” looks like.

By examining this question,

- **Students will understand** the shared principles and abilities of changemakers.
- **Students will understand** what influences someone to make change.
- **Students will understand** that it means to be a changemaker.
- **Students will be able to** determine criteria for changemakers using examples from the past and present.
- **Students will be able to** determine what influences changemakers using examples from the past and present.

Guide students in a discussion with the goal of determining a definition for a “changemaker.” Be sure to discuss the type of change required and to keep the focus on social justice. Sample definitions include:

- A changemaker is someone who is taking creative action to solve a social problem.  
[evansville.edu/changemaker/downloads/more-than-simply-doing-good-defining-changemaker.pdf](http://evansville.edu/changemaker/downloads/more-than-simply-doing-good-defining-changemaker.pdf)
- A changemaker is someone who imagines a new reality, takes action and collaborates with others to bring that new reality into being for the good of others. Anyonee – at any age – can be a changemaker.  
<https://charity.org/give-global-blog/what-does-it-mean-be-changemaker>
- Someone who has found the self-permission to advance change for the good of all. Someone who is intentional about solving a social or environmental problem, motivated to act and be creative.  
[stthomas.edu/center-for-common-good/changemaking/changemaking](http://stthomas.edu/center-for-common-good/changemaking/changemaking)

The following article is a teacher reference for the term “changemaker:” [fastcompany.com/3062483/what-is-a-changemaker](http://fastcompany.com/3062483/what-is-a-changemaker)

Ask students to recall what they learners about John Parker and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and to apply the definition of changemaker to their actions. Inform the students how The Underground Railroad Freedom Center acknowledges three principles that abolitionists share: courage, cooperation, and perseverance. Ask students if those principles are shared by all changemakers.

Introduce the abilities of conscious empathy, teamwork, changemaking leadership, and changemaking action ([changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator](http://changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator)). Have students identify examples of these abilities using examples from history, including Parker and Harper. Discuss how everyone can demonstrate these values and abilities.

Next, have students visit <https://www.changemakers.com/stories> and choose a story to read. As they read, have students determine the following (Appendix A):

- What was the problem?
- How was the problem addressed?
- What change was made? What was the outcome?
- What influenced this person to make change?
- How did this person demonstrate courage, cooperation, and perseverance?
- How did this person demonstrate conscious empathy, teamwork, changemaking leadership, and changemaking action?

## Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question - Where is change needed today? /Why would it help the future? - has students examine present society to determine are in need to social justice and changemaking. Students will be required to think at the local/community, state, national, and global levels.

By examining this question,

- **Students will understand** that it means to be a changemaker.
- **Students will be able to** determine criteria for changemakers using examples from the past and present.
- **Students will be able to** determine what influences changemakers using examples from the past and present.
- **Students will be able to** determine where change is needed today.

Begin by having students complete the empathy journal prompt from *Time for Change* packet found at [changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator](https://changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator).

Think of different places such as your classroom, school, family, or community. Think of a time you saw a problem, such as something that seemed unfair or made you feel uncomfortable. Pick one problem that speaks to you most, and answer the questions below:

- What made you notice it?
- How did you feel? How do you think others felt?
- Have you seen this problem before?
- What did you do? What didn't you do?
- Where were you? Who were you with?

Source: *Time for Change*

Discuss the role empathy played in their actions. Provide a definition of empathy and discuss what it looks and feels like.

The kind of empathy used in changemaking is called conscious empathy. Understanding others' feelings, perspectives, and experiences provides a person with the insight required to tackle injustice around them. Noticing problems and inefficiencies, and empathizing with those who experience them, are the first steps in the changemaker journey.

Source: *Time for Change*

Have students imagine themselves making this change. Ask: How would that make you feel? What impact would that activism have on the kind of ancestor you wish to be? Would your actions leave evidence that others would be able to see in the future?

Allot time for students to review local, state, national, and global news sites for the purpose of identifying areas or issues in need of change. You may choose to assign this task for outside of the classroom. Encourage students to ask family and members of the community for their input. Students should record their findings on Appendix B.

Additional activities related to conscious empathy can be found in the *Time for Change* packet.

## Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question -. What are the four types of impact in changemaking? – has students consider the different ways people can make change (have an impact) and why it's beneficial to work beyond direct acts of service.

By examining this question,

- **Students will understand** the four types of impact in changemaking.
- **Students will understand** the benefits of changing a system. (optional)



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- **Students will be able to** determine criteria for changemakers using examples from the past and present.
- **Students will be able to** determine where change is needed today.

Begin by having students share what they found when researching areas in need of change. Then introduce students to the website [changemaking.net/main](https://changemaking.net/main). Introduce the concept of types or levels of impact. The website provides the following:

### Identifying deeper change

If everyone was planting trees, handing out blankets to the homeless or volunteering to pick up trash, there is no doubt the world would be a better place. But what if these problems could go away altogether, and more importantly, what if you could be a part of that solution?

In Part 1, we introduce the idea of Systems Change, and how our friend Marco digs deeper to find the root of the problem in his community.

There are many ways we can make positive change in this world, but here we start to discover how changing a system can bring long term, radical change to the problems we face.

Have the students watch the provided (2:30) film. Then facilitate a conversation about what they learned. Revisit each level of impact: Direct Service, Scaling Direct Service, Systems Change, and Shifting mindsets using worksheet 1B found on the website ([changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-1B-TypesOfImpact-2022.pdf](https://changemaking.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Changemaking-Worksheets-1B-TypesOfImpact-2022.pdf)).

Challenge students to come up with visuals to represent each level, and examples for each level. As a formative assessment, students should complete the quiz in worksheet 1B. As an additional assessment, have students categorize the areas or issues in need of change identified on Appendix B using these 4 levels of impact.

To extend student learning, introduce the concept of analyzing a problem via systems. Film 2, Choosing the Right Systems, and the corresponding worksheets guide students through this thinking.

## Summative Performance Task

To answer the compelling question - How can we become changemakers? – have students create a plan of action using the “Practice Changemaking Together: Create an Awareness Campaign” found in the *Time for Change* packet ([changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator](https://changemakers.com/learning-center/tool/first-book-accelerator)).

By completing this task,

- **Students will be able to** design a plan of action to address a problem and make change.

Through this exercise, your students will work in small groups to create an awareness campaign around a topic of interest and utilize the different elements of changemaking as part of the process. Making societal change can sometimes seem overwhelming if you don't know where to start. Creating an awareness campaign is an achievable first step that will give your students the confidence they need to continue their efforts toward making positive change in their community and world.

### Step 1: Choose an Issue

Break the class up into small groups. Have each group revisit the problems they identified using the Empathy Journal Prompt and vote on an issue they're most passionate about as a group. Write each selected issue on the board. Allow the students to reorganize themselves into teams based on the topic that interests each of them the most.

## Step 2: Collect Group Knowledge

Have students reflect on the following questions to gather their group's existing knowledge on this topic.

- Whom does this issue affect? Who is involved?
- Where or when does the issue occur?
- Why does this issue exist? Are there assumptions or beliefs that contribute to the issue?
- How will the community be different if the issue is addressed? What will the community be like if this problem continues?
- Where would you go to find out more about this issue? Time permitting, ask students to find three facts about the issue using any available sources, such as books or online references.

## Step 3: Design the Campaign

Ask students to design a campaign to get other students in their classroom or program interested in helping them solve their problem. As a starting point for this exercise, consider having students spend five minutes brainstorming each of the following idea starters:

- **Design a game or competition**, such as a trivia contest or scavenger hunt, that helps others learn about your issue. What would this game look like? How would you play?
- **Use a passion from your skills and passion list** (see the Changemaking Leadership Journal Prompt) to encourage others to care about your issue. What passions or skills would help you communicate the importance of your issue? Examples include writing a song or creating a comic book for those who are passionate about singing or writing comic books. Students may take inspiration from Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and use literature to create awareness about an issue. Taking a cue from Harper students may want to write a persuasive speech or create a Ted Talk. Here are some examples of short persuasive Ted Talks:
  - **Mena Fombo, No, You Cannot Touch My Hair**  
[youtube.com/watch?v=OLQzz75yE5A](https://youtube.com/watch?v=OLQzz75yE5A)
  - **Priya Vulchi and Winona Guo, What it takes to be racially literate**  
[youtube.com/watch?v=Bs2Fv3YiSFM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Bs2Fv3YiSFM)
  - **Adora Svitak, "What adults can learn from kids"**  
[ted.com/talks/adora\\_svitak\\_what\\_adults\\_can\\_learn\\_from\\_kids?referrer=playlist-ted\\_under\\_20](https://ted.com/talks/adora_svitak_what_adults_can_learn_from_kids?referrer=playlist-ted_under_20)

Have students use the Awareness Campaign Worksheet in the Appendix to think through their campaign design as a team.

## Step 4: Practice Changemaking!

It's time for the teams to create their awareness campaigns and share them with the rest of the class or program. Step back and let them get to work!

## Step 5: Reflect

Invite students to reflect on their experience in small groups or through individual journaling.

- What went well with your campaign? What didn't go well?
- What feedback did you receive?
- What lessons did you learn?
- How did you function as a team?
- What ideas from the teamwork session did you put into practice here?
- Did different people take leadership roles at different points in the process?
- How did having different people with different skills and passions help the team?
- How did it feel to run this campaign?
- What do you want to do next?

## Taking Informed Action

**UNDERSTAND and ASSESS:** Students should deliberate and choose 1 -3 campaigns to put into action. Students should apply deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action (C3 D4.8).

**ACT:** Students can create a storyboard that depicts their community project. They can use drawings, text, images, and other items to visualize the community project. This project can be brought to life!

## References

Ashoka. (2021). *Changemaking: Tools to Spark Deeper Change*. <https://www.changemaking.net/main>

Changemakers. (2021). *Stories*. Ashoka Changemakers. <https://www.changemakers.com/stories>

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