

7. BECOME ATTUNED TO SHIFTS AND CHANGES

THINKING ABOUT THE STRATEGY

Change is constant, and change is hard. Life doesn't like to let us get dusty on a shelf. It shakes us up and forces us to confront the eternal choice: change or die. Maybe not literally in most cases. No, in most cases when we don't change, we just . . . calcify. We stop growing, since growing, of course, means transforming.

As much as change is constant, it is also so very slow sometimes. Growing up, I watched He-Man and the Masters of the Universe and my favorite part of each episode was the moment when Prince Adam held up his power sword and transformed right before our eyes into the titular hero. As much as I wish my own transformations could have been so sudden and complete, they rarely were. Instead, change was gradual. Glacial, more often than not.

When students read for change, they often look for the big metamorphosis. And this is good. When we are engaged readers, we stand up, call out, or cry when Ari kisses Dante. When Gogol realizes his deep connection to his culture, his family. When Romeo dies. Yes, those are very important moments of change. But they did not come out of nowhere. As we teach students to study characters, we need to teach them to look for the little moments, the tiny shifts. The expression on a character's face as they react to something with a slight new awareness. The fleeting thought that you barely register as you read but then think, Wait a second, that's different. Yes, Ari kissing Dante is a big change, but before that he starts working a job and hanging out with kids in a new way. Before that he holds his tongue when he wants to say something snarky. Before that he asks his dad a question. These little shifts all lead to the big ones.

When we look for changes like these while reading, we read for more detail, and with more thoughtfulness, than if we just waited for the big reveal at the end of the novel.

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TEACHING THE STRATEGY

Lesson Flow

By the time you get to the middle of a book, it is a good idea to notice how things are starting to shift, helping students zero in on the smaller, more subtle moments of change.

One way to teach this lesson:

1. Tell students that today they will be playing a game or entering a debate (whichever phrase will help them lean in more). The rules of the game are this: students and their team (anyone else who is reading the same book as them) will list out three ways a character is starting to change. Set kids up into teams and have them list their moments of change.
2. Next, for each moment of change, students will look for the exact line that first shows that change happening. The point is to quote a line or phrase, a word or even a punctuation mark that the reader feels is the moment the shift begins. Model this work on one change in a common text. Have students do this work independently.
3. In timed sessions, students will compare their moments of change with those of their teammates and argue why theirs is the true moment when the shift began. You might refer to the Shifts and Changes Bingo Card in the “Optional Tools” section.
4. Coach students to try this work more authentically as they read, pausing at the end of each chapter or section in the middle of the book to notice moments of shifts and changes.

What Might This Look Like?

CHARACTER	DATE
<i>the changes - mid of book</i>	
1.	- page 89, Jess starts to distrust everyone else in her life, and suspect things aren't as they seem
ex.	- "I still felt so separate from them, even now. They were supposed to be my best friends, but lately everything was off."
her friends always change the subject to what THEY want	<i>Causes</i>
	- Jess is hearing strange noises others deny are there
	- she feels like she's not in control of her own life, and relates to her old guitar teacher who others say went crazy
	- her friends aren't supportive of her and Tyler, and are pushing her to date Patrick Kramer
	- her sister got really sick with zero warning
	- Jess is also convinced something happened to her dog, but her parents, friends, and Tyler brush it off
	<i>effects</i>
	- she will probably start to drift more from her friend group
	- there will be a plot twist soon... what are these events leading up to?
	- Jess may get closer to Tyler if she can't trust anyone else, or another newer character
	- these changes may contribute to her desire to get out of her town, possibly for college

Annika dives deep into the text to think through all of the changes the character is starting to undergo.

	DATE
2.	"I tried to back away but I knocked against the sink. There was nowhere to go. I couldn't believe I'd ever kissed him. That I'd ever liked him." Page 113
	- This moment of change is really important because it signifies the switch in the main focus of the book - going from stereotypical 'boy troubles' as the biggest issue to something much more complicated and scary (the reality that her life is a TV show and everyone around her is acting)
3.	"... I was also acutely aware that we were back on camera, back to everyone watching us ... All the memories were rewriting themselves, taking on new meaning." Page 119
	- This moment is the first time we see Jess fully start to grapple with the complete switch that has just happened in her reality. She starts to look back on her past and analyze her present under a completely new lens - that none of it is as it seems.
	- Also, this moment opens up a new question/conflict to the audience: What will Jess do in this situation? Will she attempt to get out, and how will she do so?

Here, a student unpacks a shift they see in a character in the book they are reading.

I've learned so far is that Kaz Brekker usually never loses his cool. He is usually the picture of calm and collected. "He was afraid for you." "Kaz isn't afraid of anything" "you should have seen his face when he brought you to me." And before this (long story short) he actively "faked" this guy that hurt Inej then killed him. Like wow, a bit much but whatever. These are probably better examples I could've used but the book has this going on throughout the entire thing. Again I wish I could explain this better but I'm not sure how to put it all into words. All I can say is that B love and note this at the same time, Kaz and Inej need to just sit down and talk. This book is amazing

Providing Feedback

If your students say or demonstrate . . .	Coach them on . . .
<i>I notice the change in the way a character acts or reacts to events or people in the text.</i>	Looking to see if there is also a change in how the character feels about something or if their personality starts to change
<i>I notice a change in the character’s traits and emotions.</i>	Noticing when the character sees something differently, when their opinion or worldview shifts, or when they think in a different way
<i>I notice a change in the way a character thinks or sees the world or a shift in their motivation and dreams.</i>	Doing this work on smaller, more subtle shifts and changes

Optional Tools

Online Resource 1.7a: Shifts and Changes Bingo Card

They did something they would not have done before.	Their reaction to an event is slightly out of character.	They see someone in a new light.
A new piece of information is learned.	They have a conversation that changes the way they see something.	They start to struggle with something that wasn't a problem before.
They ask a new question about themselves, others, or life.	The tone of the writing shifts around a character.	A new character is introduced.

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Online Resource 1.7b: Tracking Change Across a Novel

In the beginning the character is . . .

But then . . .

And so . . .

Which then . . .

Except . . .

All of which leads to . . .

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Shifts and Changes Bingo Card (OR 1.7a)

Tracking Change Across a Novel (OR 1.7b)