Explain How a Character Changes

Classroom copy · 1 October 2026

Use a short original story to explain how a character's choices change over time. Then cite early and later words or actions, distinguish change in a person from a change in circumstances, and avoid claiming more than the story shows.

Track a character over time

To explain character change, compare the character's words or actions near the beginning with words or actions later. Cite a detail from each time and explain what the difference suggests about the character's thinking, choices, or actions. Separate the person from changing circumstances: a broken object, new place, or changed plan is not by itself evidence that the character changed. Name what the story does not establish, and do not turn one moment into a permanent trait.

Oren shares his route notes

Invented instructional example.

Before group work began, Oren kept his observation chart folded and waited for a partner to choose the next step. When the group's sketch missed a turn, Oren opened the chart and pointed to his notes. The next day, he placed the chart beside the map and asked, “Can we check each turn together?” He still paused before sharing, but he offered to record the route.

Modeled practice

Read “Oren shares his route notes.” Find one detail from near the beginning and one detail from later. What changes in Oren’s choices? Which event changes around him? Compare your reasoning with the model.

> At first Oren keeps his chart folded and waits for a partner to choose. Later he opens it, points to his notes, asks to check the turns together, and offers to record the route. His choices shift from waiting to contributing notes and asking to work together. The missed turn changes the group’s task, but that circumstance alone does not show Oren changed. He still pauses before sharing, so the story does not show that he is always confident.

The Next Test

Original fictional story.

On Monday, Anika carried her folded-card bridge into the makers' room inside a notebook. She had built it from two index cards and a strip of tape. At the first school test, the center sagged under seven washers. Anika pressed the bridge flat and wrote, “Add a center support before I show anyone.” When Mr. Cho invited students to bring designs to Friday's family night, Anika said, “I'll bring mine when it can hold twenty.” She kept the notebook closed while she added another strip of tape by herself.

On Wednesday, Anika set the bridge at the end of the makers' room table. Tomas, who was building beside her, asked, “Which part bends?” Anika started to close the notebook. “I'll test it later,” she said. Tomas offered to add washers one at a time while she watched. After a pause, Anika moved the notebook aside. “Could you tell me when the center starts to dip?”

At seven washers, the middle sagged again. Anika traced the crease with one finger. She and Tomas folded a spare index card into a support and slipped it under the bridge. Their next test held ten washers; at eleven, one end dipped. Anika wrote, “Center held to ten. Check the left end.” She asked Tomas to test from that side next. The bridge still needed work, but Anika did not put it away.

On Friday, Anika placed the bridge on the family-night test table with her notebook beside it. A fourth grader asked if he could try it. “Yes. Add one washer at a time, and watch the left end,” Anika said. When the eleventh washer made that end dip, she recorded the result instead of covering the bridge. “Now I know where to start,” she said. It still could not hold twenty washers. Anika left it on the table and invited the fourth grader to help her plan another test.

Character change evidence tracker

Record words or actions from more than one point in “The Next Test.” Keep changes in Anika separate from changes in the bridge or setting. The tracker gives space but does not supply the answer.

Near the beginning: one action or statement by Anika

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Later: one action or statement by Anika

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What changes in the bridge or situation?

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What changes in Anika’s choices or actions? Use both details.

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One thing the story does not establish

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Guided practice

With a partner, reread “The Next Test.” Use the tracker to note one early action or statement by Anika and one later action or statement. Then identify one change in the bridge or situation. Discuss which details show a change in Anika’s choices and which describe circumstances. Point to the words; do not write the final paragraph yet.

Partner evidence notes

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