### Changemaker Lingo

What is a changemaker? Let's define a few key words to understand what it means to be a changemaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Spark</th>
<th>Changemaker</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The moment a changemaker decides to act for something they care about.</td>
<td>Anyone of any age who steps up to take action and help others.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Changemaker Journey</th>
<th>Changemaking Idea</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ups and downs that a changemaker and their team face along the way.</td>
<td>Any idea (no matter how big or small) that solves a problem or creates an opportunity.</td>
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### Story Tips

- Ask a lot of questions about the changemaker in your story. What was their first step? How does it feel to create a positive change? Who inspires them to be a changemaker?

- Look deeper into the problem. Do your research by looking online or asking your teacher or parents.
In fourth grade, sisters Mena and Zena had a homework assignment to write a story about a historical figure. As Muslim females, they wanted to write a report about someone like them, but they couldn't find any books on Muslim women in their local library! They noticed a lack of stories not only in their community, but around the world.

Mena and Zena knew that reading books about powerful female role models would create kinder and more welcoming communities. So, they launched a program called Girls of the Crescent to share stories of Muslim women. They have collected and donated books to almost 30 schools and 10 libraries in 3 states and 6 different countries! These books all feature strong Muslim women as the main character.
Sisters Mena and Zena
Mena and Zena's Parents
The Parent-Teacher Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>Did what?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mena and Zena</td>
<td>The sisters collect books about Muslim women and distribute them to libraries around the world. They are also writing their own book with real stories of Muslim women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mena and Zena's Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Parent-Teacher Association</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Where?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mena and Zena found their power to create change in their community as teenagers in middle and high school.</td>
<td>They started collecting books for their school library in Michigan. Now, they have donated books to libraries in 3 states and 6 countries.</td>
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<th>Why?</th>
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<td>Mena and Zena saw that there were not any stories of Muslim women in their school. They didn't want other girls to have the same experience. Because they stepped up to create change, other young Muslim women across the country can now access books featuring people like them. These books inspire girls to dream big. Now, more young people can feel empowered to create a change in their communities, too.</td>
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</table>
Main Character The person, animal or thing your story is about.
Create a list of different characters you want in your story and describe them.
(Spike the dog is fluffy, Aunt Sally always wears funny clothes.)

Character

Mena & Zena

Mena & Zena are sisters who grew up in Michigan. They both love to read.

Mena & Zena's Parents

Mena and Zena's parents are immigrants from Iraq. They taught their daughters about the importance of giving back to their community.

Description

Setting Where your story takes place.
Describe when and where the story took place. Where are they changemakers from? What is it like there?

Setting

- Mena and Zena's middle and high school in Michigan. Their school has a big library.
- The family's garage where they have enough space to collect books.
- Other schools that have space for a library, but have very few books.
Story Revision

Checklist

Read your story out loud.
Then ask yourself each of these questions.
If the answer is yes, check it off on the checklist!

Does my story have a character who created change?  
☑ My story has a changemaker!

Does my story include a spark (the moment a changemaker decides to act)?  
☑ The changemaker has a spark!

Does my story have a problem and an idea to solve it?  
☑ My story has a problem and a solution!

Do I describe the journey of the changemaker?  
☑ The changemaker is on a journey!

Does my changemaker have a team?  
☑ The changemaker has a team!

Did I share how the changemaker helps others to be changemakers?  
☑ My story inspires others like me!
Mena and Zena are building a more inclusive world. As young changemakers, they strive for diversity in the books they read, and they want other kids to have access to books that inspire them, too. Mena and Zena's story shows us what it means to create positive change at a young age. This is their story:

In fourth grade, Mena and Zena were given a simple homework assignment. Their teacher asked them to choose a historical figure and write a research report about their life. As Muslim females, both girls hoped to write a report on an influential Muslim woman.

"Let's find someone to write about at the library!" Mena exclaimed. So, they walked down to their school library. They searched and searched for a book about a Muslim woman, but they couldn't find a single one. "Let's go to the public library by our house," Zena suggested. They walked over to the public library, but still no luck.

Mena and Zena were frustrated. Why couldn't they find a book about a powerful Muslim woman?

A few years later, the sisters read a book that took them by surprise. The book was Randa Abdel-Fattah's *The Lines We Cross*, a novel featuring a Muslim teenager named Mina.

"Look, she looks like us!" Zena cheered. This moment was the first time the girls could see themselves in a story.
Thinking back to their homework assignment in fourth grade, the girls wanted to make sure this book was in their school library.

Mena and Zena went to their school’s Parent-Teacher Association, the PTA. "We would like to see more books about Muslim women," Mena shared, showing them the book she and Zena had read at home.

The parents and teachers were very supportive. With their help, Mena and Zena added 200 books to their library. These books featured characters from different backgrounds all over the world.

"Wow, what should we do next?" Zena asked her sister. They were inspired. So, they started a project called Girls of the Crescent, a youth-led nonprofit, to increase access to books about Muslim women.

They hoped to have an impact beyond just the Muslim community. "If everyone learned about the Muslim faith and heard real stories, I bet we could challenge negative stereotypes about our community," the sisters said to their parents.

Mena and Zena's parents immigrated to the U.S. from Iraq before they were born. They were very excited about their daughters' eagerness to share knowledge and stories about Muslim women.

"The more people learn about different cultures, the more accepting and kind they will be to others," their parents said. They have always encouraged their daughters to give back.
In a few years, the sisters collected and donated books to 30 schools and 10 public libraries. They have reached 3 states and 6 different countries, like Morocco, France, and China!

Along the way, the sisters have faced challenges. The legal paperwork was pretty confusing. Unsure what to do, Mena and Zena talked to a family friend with legal expertise for help. They both have busy schedules, too. As partners, they rely on each other for support. When one sister is busy, the other picks up the slack.

Mena and Zena have been contacted by other girls who have been inspired by stories featuring characters like them. "This has been the most rewarding part of our changemaker journey," Mena says with a smile.

Both sisters are going to college soon, where they plan to study science and technology. "We want to pass on our work to another young girl in our community. We want to inspire the next generation of changemakers in our hometown," Zena says.

Mena and Zena are also writing the book they couldn’t find in the fourth grade: a collection of biographies of powerful Muslim women. The girls both say, “Being young or inexperienced should not stop you from doing what you want to do.”

What change do you want to see in your community?