**Vertical Alignment Prompt Example**

**STAAR Writing Prompt**

**READ** the following quotation.

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks about changing himself.

Leo Tolstoy

**THINK** carefully about the following statement.

People are often reluctant to accept changes in life.

**WRITE** an essay explaining why it is sometimes important to be willing to embrace change.

Be sure to—

* clearly state your controlling idea or thesis statement
* organize and develop your explanation effectively
* choose your words carefully
* use correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentences

**SAT Writing Prompt**

As you read the passage below, consider how Kurt A. Carlson, Ph.D. uses

* evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
* reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
* stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Kurt A. Carlson, Ph.D. “The Only Way to Make Positive Change in Your Life: A simple truth on which we all can agree.” March 13, 2014. Psychology Today. **Kurt A. Carlson, Ph.D.** is an associate professor of marketing at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business and the director of the Georgetown Institute for Consumer Research.

Source:

In a moment, I am going to tell you one of the few universal truths I believe. It is the most powerful and useful universal truth of which I am aware because it highlights the way to personal success. But before we get to that, you should know that as a data guy, I am often the most skeptical person in the room. To give data the weight it deserves, I try to check my opinions and preferences at the door. In fact, the only quote above my desk includes the phrase, “What one likes and what one dislikes is the disease of the mind.”

It is this commitment to data (not to theory or [faith](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/religion)) that makes me so skeptical of many so-called universal truths. Most turn out to be wildly false when tested against the data. And believing in a universal truth can be damaging, as it discourages one from embracing data that contradict it. To avoid this trap, I tell my students that if they ever encounter a statement including always, never, every, or only, it is almost certainly wrong because most truths are conditional. For example, people find a harder task more interesting only if the task provides an intrinsic reward for completion and only if they have enough time to complete the task.

Don’t get me wrong. I understand the appeal of universal truths. I like the idea of wrapping myself in their security, simplicity, and smugness as much as the next person. And I would [love](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/relationships) to find a magical chest full of universal truths buried in my backyard. Unfortunately, after 45 years of looking, I’ve only discovered a handful I believe are worth sharing.

For example: Everything breaks down over time. Everything is relative. And: Theory and preference are enemies of data.

However, the one universal truth that, to me, seems most provocative, useful, and unconditional is this: The only way to realize positive change in your life is by making choices.

That’s right. The only way that you, I, my children, President Obama, Vladimir Putin, or Justin Bieber can positively change our lives is through the choices we make.

How can this be?

The key is recognizing that we make many more choices than we realize, or that we are willing to acknowledge.

We choose to watch scary movies. We choose to befriend people with good (or bad) habits. We choose to shake our dad’s hand instead of hugging him. We choose to go to school. We choose to watch the evening news. We choose to live in the suburbs. We choose to commute a long distance. We choose to get married. We choose to have children. We choose. We choose. We choose.

Some choices we make that don’t seem like choices at all. These generally fall into two categories: habits and normative behaviors. Habits are choices that we make so regularly that over time they demand less and less executive control. As a consequence, they start to seem automatic. But they aren't. When it comes to bad habits, we may even be motivated to cede control to automaticity. That is, we may tell ourselves that the choice was made long ago and that we are now at the mercy of the automaticity that has emerged in its wake. An example: Riding the elevator instead of taking the stairs. After years of riding the elevator to his office on the third floor, a middle-aged man may find it nearly impossible to drag his body to the stairwell. His body seems to almost pull him to the elevator button instead. But the sooner the man acknowledges that he is choosing to take the elevator, the sooner he can begin looking for tricks to help him choose the stairs over the elevator—tricks like seeing if he can make it to the first, second, or third floor without breathing heavily.

Yes, we pretty much always have a choice. Even when it comes to norms that feel impenetrably strong, where no choice seems to exist, there is always a choice. You can choose to cut the brand labels off your clothing. You can choose to drop out of school and start a company. You can choose to ask a co-worker for help with something you take great pride in being good at. You can choose to tell your mother you don’t like her habits. You can choose to hug your father instead of shaking his hand. You can choose to allow someone else to feel strong in your presence.

Sartre said, “We are condemned to be free.” My take on this is that if we have [free will](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/free-will) and choice, then we must accept ownership for the choices we do or do not make. Our freedom to choose is what makes us responsible for who we are, and thus, we are condemned to be responsible for who we are.

We are condemned to choose.

If we decide not to choose, that too is a choice. If we relegate the raising of our children to the role models of the day, that is a choice as well. We cannot have free will without owning our choices. And as a person who has free will, the only way to realize positive change in your life is by making choices.

It is this power of choice—to be an agent of good and bad for ourselves—that drives me to study the choices people make and how they make them. Every couple of weeks I will post an entry here. My posts will share data from new research studies my colleagues and I have run, thoughts I have about the choices people make, and how these choices originate. I study choice because I want to help people make better choices. As a professor of [marketing](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/consumer-behavior), I sometimes write for managers, but I also write for consumers—because consumers who understand themselves have the power to make choices that can positively influence their lives.

Write an essay in which you explain how Kurt A. Carlson, Ph.D. builds an argument to persuade his audience that the only way to make positive change in life is through the power of choice. In your essay, analyze how Carlson uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strength the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Carlson’s claims, but rather explain how Carlson builds an argument to persuade his audience.

SAT Prompt Frame

As you read the passage below, consider how \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) uses

* evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
* reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
* stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Author’s Name “title of article.” Date published. Publication. **Brief background on the author.**

Article

Write an essay in which you explain how \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) builds an argument to persuade his audience that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (topic of the essay). In your essay, analyze how \_\_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strength the logic and persuasiveness of \_\_\_\_\_ (his/her) argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with \_\_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) claims, but rather explain how \_\_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) builds an argument to persuade \_\_\_\_\_ (his/her) audience.

**AP Language Example Prompt—Question 1**

**Directions**: The following prompt is based on the accompanying three sources.

This question requires you to synthesize a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. Synthesis refers to combining the sources and your position to form a cohesive, supported argument and accurately citing sources. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument. Avoid merely summarizing sources.

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

**Introduction**:

Change is something in life that is very difficult for people to accept as it relies on a person to make specific choices for yourself and others. Many people claim that change ultimately lies in the power of a person; others, however, believe that change is simply something that happens and is part of life.

**Assignment**:

Read the following sources (including the introductory information) carefully. Then, write an essay in which you develop a position on the influences of change. Synthesize all three sources for support.

You may refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, etc.) or by the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (Fear of Change—Henry Ford)

Source B (It’s Time to Change the Way We Think About Change)

Source C (Where Freedom Begins—advertisement)

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Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

**Introduction**:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (introductory information about the topic that is roughly three sentences long).

**Assignment**:

Read the following sources (including the introductory information) carefully. Then, write an essay in which you develop a position on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the writing assignment specifics with the topic). Synthesize all three sources for support.

You may refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, etc.) or by the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (title)

Source B (title)

Source C (title)

**AP Language Example Prompt—Question 2**

In the passage below from “You Can’t Change Someone Else, But You Can Do This,” Nancy Colier responds to a post on the article, “When You’re in a Relationship with a Blamer.” Colier describes the many things that bother an individual about attempting to change the behavior of someone they care about in hopes of attempting to fix a poor situation. Read the Colier passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the strategies Colier uses to develop her perspective about forcing change on others.

So many things bother us—people, mostly. But pretty much everything has the power to upset our basic sense of well-being. Our tendency, when things bother us, is to blame the other person or situation for getting it wrong and thus causing our suffering. Once we have identified what we consider the cause of our disturbance, we usually set out to try and fix it. We attempt to change the other person’s behavior or the situation into something we consider right, or at least something that will not bother us.

There is no doubt that people and situations can be the cause of our discontent. If someone swings a baseball bat into my knee, the pain I feel is directly caused by that action. If a friend speaks unkindly to me, I feel hurt, a direct result of his choice of words. We impact one another; there are people and situations—infinite ones it seems—that can cause our suffering. That said, there is nothing wrong with trying to change a situation that we don’t like or that makes us unhappy. Such efforts are [wise](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/wisdom) and adaptive and a way of taking agency in our lives. We need to try to change what’s not working, if we can. But this is not a post about how to more skillfully change those around us so that they can better fit into how we want them to be. This is about what happens when we are not successful at changing those around us, and cannotchange the situation that is causing us pain.

I guess you could call it Plan B.

When we cannot change the cause of our suffering, many of us continue to blame the other person or situation. This may provide us with some relief, at least for a while. But what happens when trying to change the other has failed and continuing to blame is not actually making us feel better either?

Where do we go when we have run out of moves?

Freedom from the whole blaming/fixing cycle, ironically, comes from moving our attention away from the other person/problem that is to blame/fix, and turning that attention onto ourselves. When you hear that it’s time to look into yourself, you may assume (as most people do) that someone is telling you to discover how you are also to blame for the suffering you are experiencing.

This assumption would be false.

I am not suggesting that you are to blame for anything, nor am I suggesting that you search yourself for fault. This step in the process—self-investigation, the step that creates real freedom from suffering—has nothing to do with blame.

To turn your attention into yourself is to ask the question: What does this situation or person’s behavior trigger in me? What pain is generated in me when I am confronted with this behavior or reality?

I was in a relationship with a blamer for years. The problems in his life were always someone or something else’s fault and the dialogue never moved much further than that. For years I tried to change him, encouraging him to be curious and use the situations that caused suffering as opportunities to bring some light to what the real suffering was about. Through the process, sadly, I too became entrenched in blame. I blamed his blaming for my own suffering; if only he weren’t a blamer, I wouldn’t be in pain. But in the end, he didn’t change, I didn’t change, and the situation didn’t change.

And then I started thinking that probably I should take my own advice: Take the focus off the other and get curious about my own experience. Not what I was also doing (wrong) to cause the situation, but rather, what experiences, feelings, [memories](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/memory), beliefs, etc., were his blaming behavior really triggering in?

What was I experiencing that made the blaming so hard to bear?

What I discovered was simple but profound—and profoundly healing. I found the center of my own truth, what I was really in contact with inside myself in relation to the blaming. Interestingly, naming what I was experiencing and what made the blaming so painful for me did not change my partner’s behavior, nor did it make the experience that arose in me disappear. What it did, however, was ease the excruciating suffering that existed for me in the situation. Rather than the blaming setting off a screeching fire alarm inside me—a code-red emergency—I could witness the blaming behavior, know what it put me in touch with, and stay calm and non-reactive. I didn’t need to change the behavior so that I could get away from some unknowable, but unbearable experience inside myself. I could say to myself (with kindness), "Oh right, this blaming triggers this such and such in me, which has a history of its own and is understandable. That’s what’s here now." And then, oddly, the whole thing is kind of done. The experience that was so threatening, and the cause of so much pain, is deactivated. Its wires are cut. The emergency of making the situation or behavior stop eases when the inarguable truth of what is happening inside us is clear. The suffering doesn’t need much more than that.

As we all know, we can’t control anyone else’s behavior, and we can’t make another person want to or be able to change. But we can always make the choice to shift our attention inward, to focus the lens of curiosity onto ourselves. And remember, by investigating our own experience, we are not condoning the behavior that triggers our suffering, nor are we assuming responsibility for having caused it. Getting curious about what is happening inside us in a particular situation, naming it, [understanding](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/empathy) it, unpacking its history, and bringing compassion to it—this the surest path to freeing oneself from the cycle of blame and the need to change what we don’t like. Ultimately, self-awareness is the most powerful and profound antidote to suffering.

**AP Language Prompt Frame—Question 2**

In the passage below from “\_\_\_\_\_\_ (title of article),” \_\_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) responds to a post on the article, “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(title of second article).” \_\_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) describes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(summary of article). Read the \_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the strategies \_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name) uses to develop \_\_\_\_\_ (his/her) perspective about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (topic of essay).

**AP Language Example Prompt—Question 3**

Keith Ferrazzi is the CEO of Ferrazzi Greenlight, a research-based consulting and training company and the author of Who’s Got Your Back. In his article, “Managing Change, One Day at a Time,” he discusses the perspective of John Kotter in the Harvard Business review. The excerpt below is from the article that appeared in the July-August 2014 issue.

John Kotter, the preeminent change management expert, has written: “People don’t change a minute before they’re ready.” In the AA canon, “hitting rock bottom” is often the catalyst, but for companies, change readiness doesn’t require failure. Sometimes a leader’s admission of vulnerability helps others recognize and address their failings (think of the sharing done in AA meetings). You can’t force people to change—you can only help them want to. AA’s process recognizes this truth; few managers do.

The common practice of being reluctant to change until it is absolutely necessary and cannot be avoided is common in many people from all careers. In a well-written essay, develop a position on the reluctance of change for the better. Support your position with evidence from your reading, observation, and/or experiences.

**AP Language Prompt Frame—Question 3**

Context of article in roughly three sentences

Provide a short quote from the article that clearly ties to the topic

A short summary of the article’s perspective on the topic. In a well-written essay, develop a position on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (specific writing topic). Support your position with evidence from your reading, observation, and/or experiences.

**AP Literature Example Prompt—Question 1**

In the following poem by Billy Collins, the speaker addresses the subject of changing from single digit age to double digit age. Read the poem carefully. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how the poetic devices help to convey the speaker’s complex attitude toward change.

On Turning Ten

The whole idea of it makes me feel  
like I'm coming down with something,  
something worse than any stomach ache  
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light--  
a kind of measles of the spirit,  
a mumps of the psyche,  
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.  
  
You tell me it is too early to be looking back,  
but that is because you have forgotten  
the perfect simplicity of being one  
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.  
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.  
At four I was an Arabian wizard.  
I could make myself invisible  
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.  
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.  
  
But now I am mostly at the window  
watching the late afternoon light.

Back then it never fell so solemnly  
against the side of my tree house,  
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage  
as it does today,  
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.  
  
This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,  
as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.  
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,  
time to turn the first big number.  
  
It seems only yesterday I used to believe  
there was nothing under my skin but light.  
If you cut me I could shine.  
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,  
I skin my knees. I bleed.

**AP Literature Prompt Frame—Question 1**

In the following poem by \_\_\_\_\_ (author’s name), the speaker addresses the subject of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (specifics about the topic). Read the poem carefully. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how the poetic devices help to convey the speaker’s complex attitude toward \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (topic).

Title and poem

**AP Literature Example Prompt—Question 2**

Carefully read the following short story, “The Change” by Jonathan Rosenbaum*.* This is a story initially written, as I recall, during the summer of 1959, as I was preparing to leave Alabama for a boarding school in Vermont, although the version I’m posting here, most likely revised, was printed in the school’s literary magazine in June 1961, around the time of my high school graduation. I’ve done some light editing. The illustrations, which I realize are not always precisely congruent with the story, are gleaned from the Internet. This story is the last in a series of three to be posted this week on this site, all fantasies and all written when I was in high school . — J.R. Then, write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the development of Mickey’s character. In your analysis, you may wish to consider such literary elements such as the selection of detail, figurative language, and tone.

The Change

By Jonathan Rosenbaum

It happened near the end of summer, which is when I guess a lot of changes take place. The three of us, Mickey, George and I, were out at Mickey’s family camp on the lake, swimming and doing our best to forget that we only had two more days before we went off to start our first year at college.

The sun was hot and white that day, but the lake was dark and cool. Mickey and George were swimming close to the dock, splashing water at each other, but I was far away from them, almost in the middle of the lake, feeling the cool water caress my skin and change my brown hair from dry hay to seaweed.

I heard the others call to me from the dock: Hey, come on, Steve, we better be leaving, it’s getting kinda late.

Okay, I called, I’ll be back in a minute. I lay on my back and let the waters gently rock me back and forth while I looked up at the clouds. It all seemed so peaceful that I felt like closing my eyes, so I did…

But when I opened my eyes a few seconds later, I suddenly saw that the sky was dark. Maybe it’s a dark cloud, I thought at first, but I soon realized that no cloud could make the sky that black.

It was night. The stars were all out, but there was no moon, and I began to become afraid.

Hey Mickey! George! Where are you? I called out across the dark water, but there wasn’t any answer, and I saw no one ahead of me, just the blackness of the night over the ebony lake.

I swam to the dock as fast as I could and called again, but there was no answer, no sound at all except for the chirping of crickets.

I climbed up the ladder of the dock and walked through the darkness of the dressing room a few feet away. According to my luminous watch it was nine-thirty. I changed into my clothes and then tried to get into the lake home, but found it locked.

There was no car. We’d come out to the lake in Mickey’s but now it was gone, so I knew I would have to walk down the dirt road leading from the lake home until I reached a telephone.

I began walking down the dark road, shivering because I was slightly wet and there was a soft night wind. As I walked I tried to reason out what had happened to me and why it had happened. Had I fallen asleep? No — that was impossible. But what could it be? And why had Mickey and George abandoned me?

To my left was the dark lake, lit only by the stars and a sparse sprinkling of yellow lights from the opposite shore; to my right was a forest that extended almost indefinitely to the west.

After walking over a mile without passing a single person or house, I noticed a blazing fire up ahead on the right side of the road, with about a dozen men sitting around it on logs. The men looked like hoboes; they were laughing and seemed very happy.

I walked up to them, feeling the fire’s warm glow pat my cheek as I approached. Say, I asked one of the men, have you seen a black and white convertible go by this road anytime within the last few hours?

The man thought before answering. He was old, as most of the men were, and had a full head of crisp white hair. No, he finally said. Can’t say as I have. But we wouldn’t see a car going by if one did. What seems to be the trouble?

I briefly told them what had happened to me, and as soon as I finished, the men broke into loud laughter. It wasn’t unkind laughter, but it frightened and annoyed me. Then the man that I had questioned turned to me, and said, Look boy, don’t you know yet what happened this afternoon? Haven’t you found out yet?

No, I said, gazing anxiously into the fire. What happened?

It’s the end of the world, the man said, and he turned to the other men and gave a rusty sort of cackle, and the other men fell into laughter again.

What do you mean? I asked the man.

Oh, nothing at all, boy, nothing at all. That’s just a joke of ours. Nothing’s really changed for us — just for you. And even for you it’s not the end….Why not sit down and have a hot dog with us? Or maybe some coffee –

No thanks, I said. I felt uneasy hearing the men laugh and seeing the strange look in their eyes. No thanks, I better be going.

Well, boy, the man said, you’re always welcome here — anytime, remember that. We always have a lot of good stories to tell about the old days, and there’s plenty of food to pass around. New folks are always welcome.

Do you come here often? I asked.

The man gave me a quick stare. Boy, he said, don’t you know? We’re always here — we never go anywhere else.

But what do you do in the daytime?

Daytime? he said. What daytime? Don’t you know it’s always night now — it’s the end of the world, remember?

At this the men started to roar with laughter, and I walked slowly away until their voices were distant whispers in the night, and the fire behind me was a faint and faraway glow.

Finally I came to another lake home. There were no lights, but I decided to try the house anyway; the next lake home was probably a long distance away. I stepped up on the old wooden porch, hearing the boards beneath me creak and whine under my weight, and I began to knock when I heard a voice come to me from the far right end of the porch. It was the voice of an old woman:

What do you want, young man?

I turned around to see the source of the voice. It was an old whitehaired woman in a rocking chair. I could hardly see her in the darkness, but I could tell her eyes were unfriendly. Could I please use your phone? I asked.

I got no phone, the old woman said. Get away now and let me be.]

Well do you know of a place nearby, I asked, a place nearby with a phone I could use?

I don’t know, the old woman said. Now git — I can’t be bothered none with your problems. Who do you think I am, your mother?

I looked into her eyes and they seemed to be saying the same thing: Get away, they seemed to say, you’re telling me something that I don’t want to know, don’t want to think of. Get away. Get away. Get away. I walked off the porch and onto the dirt road and then walked on, further and further, hour after hour, without seeing a sign of a house or person.

Finally the road led away from the lake and connected to the highway. I passed a closed filling station, and then a dark supermarket that looked like a huge phantom in the night. All the houses were shrouded in black. I decided to wait until I reached downtown, and then phone my parents from an all-night drug store

– but when, hours later, I reached the drug store, it was dark and the door was locked. So I walked home from there, thinking; Surely Mom and Dad must be at home.

But when I reached home, and rushed inside to Mom and Dad’s room, no one was there. I checked my brother’s room. The house was empty.

Days went by, weeks, and it never got light again. I stayed in the house, waiting for something to happen, cooking my own meals.

But one day, when the supply of food at home ran out, I decided to leave. I got into the car and drove through the dark town, out onto the state highway, to other towns. I visited other states. Everywhere it was the same. Every once in a while I would meet a person, but none was any more friendly than the old woman.

Day by day I grew more lonely, but at the same time I grew more independent. As I drove through many towns, I would stop at filling stations to fill my gas tank, and at nights I would sleep in empty hotels.

But gradually things began to change. People became more friendly, although none of them would explain to me what had happened. One day I asked a man I met in a hotel; why is it always dark? Where is everybody? When is it going to be day again?

‘Day’? the man said. What does that word mean? And what do you mean, ‘Where is everybody’? No one’s gone away. Maybe you haven’t been looking in the right places.

The words of the man at the hotel stayed with me for some time. By now I was completely self-sufficient, and no longer felt the need to find my family: I would have liked to have seen them again, but I was no longer dependent on them. From this I gained a certain self-respect that I had never had before. But the words of the man started me thinking: he had said I hadn’t been looking in the right places. What did he mean?

Then I remembered the old man at the fire. Would they still be there? It would be worth finding out.

I got into my car and drove through the many towns without stopping, and in twelve hours I was back in my home town. Then I turned onto the highway leading to the lake and finally onto the dirt road. I passed by the house of the old woman, thinking, I don’t need her help any more. I saw the faint glow of the old men’s fire ahead.

I drove on, faster. At last I was there.

I pulled up on the side of the road. I got out and saw the men seated around the fire, and heard their voices while I approached. Only now it appeared different; there seemed to be more people there now than before. There were dozens of all ages and both sexes.

Suddenly I saw Mickey and George in the group. I ran up to them.

Hey, Steve, how’re you doing? Mickey said when he saw me. You know we’ve been waiting for you here a long time. Where have you been?

Everywhere, I said. I was here once before, but you and George weren’t here then. I’m sure glad I found you — Say, are Mom and Dad here?

Sure, George said. So’s your brother. They were always here, but when you came through here the first time you weren’t close enough to the fire to see them. I guess that was it. Maybe you were in such a rush you just didn’t notice them.

I turned towards the fire and saw one of the old hoboes. Hello, boy, he said. Or should I be calling you boy now. Anyway, come and have a hot dog with us. Sit down and I’ll tell you a story of the good old days –

I sat down by the glaring fire, and looked around into the familiar faces. I realized then that I was home. Shadows were dancing wildly against the surrounding trees from the flickering of the fire, and when I looked around at all of my friends who were there, I wondered why I hadn’t seen them before. Had I been too preoccupied about other things, or had they been too far away from the fire. Well, now it was unimportant.

A soft wind stirred the fire, and a few sparks shot far up into the air and seemed to become part of the starry sky. I moved closer to the fire, and listened closely while the old hobo started into his tale.

This entry was posted in Notes. Bookmark the [permalink](https://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net/1961/06/the-change-short-story/).

**AP Literature Example Prompt—Question 3**

“Things change. And friends leave. Life doesn't stop for anybody.”   
― [Stephen Chbosky](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/12898.Stephen_Chbosky), [The Perks of Being a Wallflower](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2236198)

Choose a short story, poem, play, or novel in which a struggle to change takes place in a character. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the conflict affected the character and convey the meaning of the selection as a whole to the reader.

You may choose a work from the novel or any of the related readings or an outside reading selection of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**AP Literature Prompt Frame—Question 3**

Quote from a novel, play, poem, or short story about the topic

Choose a short story, poem, play, or novel in which \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (what to look for in relationship to the topic). Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (topic) and convey the meaning of the selection as a whole to the reader.

You may choose a work from the novel or any of the related readings or an outside reading selection of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.