

Name_____ Per._____ Date_____

J.H. HULL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Incoming 8th Grade Summer Reading Assignment

Title of novel: _____

Author: _____

Main Characters (List as bullet points):

Select a character from the list above and characterize him/her using at least 3 pieces of textual evidence from the novel. *Highlight/ underline all evidence.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

In a well-written commentary — approximately 1-2 pages in length — discuss the overall theme of the novel as it relates to the idea of change (e.g. What did you learn about change? What are the effects of change? Etc.).

Use evidence from BOTH the novel and the article to support your claims. *Highlight/ underline all textual evidence.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Can People Really Change?

By Linda Sapadin, Ph.D

Surely there are things about yourself that you don't like. So you change them, right? Well, not exactly. It's more likely that you keep on doing them, even though you say you'd like to change them. So is the old adage, "A leopard can't change his spots," true? That people can't change?

No, people can change.

But you can't just snap your fingers and say goodbye to well-established patterns, even when those patterns result in bad consequences. Sure, you wish it could be easier. You may be impatient with yourself, giving yourself a good scold: "Just stop it already!" Oh, how I hate the word "just" when it pertains to change. We don't change "just" because someone (even ourselves) wants us to.

However, the opposite stance also is filled with flaws. Chase away those demons that tell you that you can't change: it's too hard, it's not in your DNA, it requires excessive effort. Such a mindset will sabotage your efforts before you even begin. Though it's true that "you are who you are" and that your personality structure "is what it is," it's not true that you can't modify, alter, or tweak many aspects of how you behave.

So, how do you change?

It's a process that begins with being aware. This may seem obvious, but it's not. If you're used to blaming everyone else for your problems, then you're not aware. If you're living your life in a daze, blaming bad luck, then you're in denial. How are you ever going to change anything if you don't own up to how your thinking and behavior help create the predicament you're in?

Self-awareness without judgment, similar to an anthropologist observing behavior in an attempt to understand it, is the first step. Yet, you can be fully aware of your bad habits and still not change. What's missing?

A no-nonsense commitment to change is what's missing. Casual commitment won't do. Going on a diet for a week doesn't hack it. Add exercise to the mix for two weeks, it still doesn't hack it. What's a no-nonsense commitment to change? In your quiet moment of truth, when you're alone and not under pressure by anything or anyone, you, your 'executive' self in harmony with your 'emotional' self, make a solemn pledge to change.

No more excuses. No more magical thinking. No more self-sabotage. You know it won't be easy, but so what? You're committed to the goal.

You acknowledge the need for self-discipline, perseverance, and hard work. You know why you want to change. You know who you want to be. You know that your actions need to adhere to your beliefs. You know it makes no sense claiming you want to change but then doing nothing about it. You're tired of disappointing yourself. You're fed up with feeling frustrated. You welcome change. You're ready to go. You get off your butt. And you get off your excuse-making 'but.'

Adopting new ways rarely comes comfortably at first. You may feel a lot of resistance to change. But if you think about change as an opportunity to grow, not as an unwanted burden, amazing things can happen.

I like Muhammad Ali's take on it when he said "A man who views the world the same at fifty as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years of his life."

So, whether you are years younger than fifty or years older than fifty, I hope you make the change you want. Don't let rigidity or fear stifle your growth. Don't get down on yourself by believing that just because everything hasn't changed, nothing has changed.

Even moderate change can reap meaningful benefits. And here's the best news of all. Change that moves in a positive direction will not only expand your confidence, it can enrich your relationships, enhance your career, and empower your well-being. Wow, what a payoff!