



# Stars

A newsletter written by and written for  
Washtenaw Literacy learners



WASHTENAW  
LITERACY

OPENS WORLDS.

Spring 2014



[www.washtenawliteracy.org](http://www.washtenawliteracy.org)

The Stars Newsletter contains unedited, original work written by and for Washtenaw Literacy learners. The opinions printed here do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of Washtenaw Literacy.

## Stars Submissions

If you are interested in having your original story or article printed in an upcoming Stars edition, please contact Washtenaw Literacy either via:

**Email:**  
[communications@washtenawliteracy.org](mailto:communications@washtenawliteracy.org)

or

**Postal Mail:**  
Washtenaw Literacy  
Attention: Stars Editor  
5577 Whittaker Road  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

**Note:** space is limited for each issue. We will do our best to include all submitted stories. But, if space fills up, stories not included will be first in the next issue!

**Articles due July 25th for publication in August.**

## ESL Group Schedule Spring / Summer 2014

effective 5/1-8/30/14, unless otherwise noted

[Click here](#) for the latest schedule

**Pinterest  
Resources for**

## Learning, Using English - Better Surviving By: Huawei Ling

When I was a 3rd grade student in an elementary school in China, I lived in Shanghai. A handful of foreigners also lived there. Once I went with my grandmother to a restaurant run by foreigners. (At that period, automatic doors hadn't been developed.) A lady tried to pull the door to get in, but failed. When I saw a sign "push", I pushed that and we entered. This is the first time that I used English and succeeded.

When I was a medical student, in the last several years of education, the students had to see how the professionals worked. I went around in the hospital wards with my teachers. In that hospital all the professionals only spoke Chinese, French, or both. No one except me understood English. Then we saw a white patient who spoke English and didn't understand French. The patient complained about his diet with gestures and said "I want soda biscuits" (he meant salted crackers), but no professional responded. At that moment, I translated and I was praised by my professor. After that, my professor wanted me to be the interpreter whenever he saw the patient. By the way, he also gave me the chance to participate in his diagnosis and management. So I got more chance to learn than my classmates did. It was well for my career.

## After Joining A Book Reading Meeting By: Micky

This was my first experience to read a book together, I thought reading book is a quiet act which just read it. But here in the Book reading meeting, we always can ask tutors about words and some. The words don't mean some definitions we get in a dictionary. The tutor gave us photos and the background, and we get in a dictionary. The tutor gave us photos and the background, and we could see how special the words are.

The book we read was 'To Kill A Mockingbird'. This book won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and spread into the world, but I didn't know the story at all.

What made me come to the meeting was I felt nice hearing others' opinions. As reading books is always done by myself, I have never discussed the scenes with somebody. Because English is my second language, I sometimes misread the book, but hearing others always led me the right directions.

The discussion also brought me more wonderful thing. At the beginning I hated this author's writing style. There are so many bendings which I felt thought are not related to the story and not important, but during discussions, I always could picture the scenes, how Scout, the main character, wears clothes and walks, sits with her family, and so on. These scenes are not the main story, but inside of me I could see how they lived. I could feel as if I was in their rooms, their streets, and their school yard.

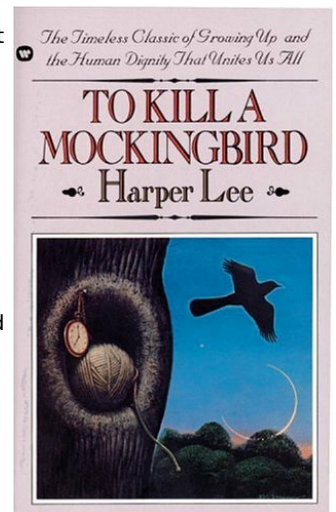
The story brings us so many questions of the age which is the 1930's. If I read it myself, I wouldn't think about them, nor notice them. The final discussion didn't make them clear, but I thought of them much deeper than ever.

Reading 'To Kill A Mockingbird' is over. It became what an impressive, dramatic book for me. I had a wonderful time with people reading together, and hope I enjoy the next book.

## Taking The Bus To The Doctor Appointment By: Paul Bryant, Sr.

I took the bus to the doctor last week. I had to take the Wave bus from my house to Wagner Road. Then I took the Ann Arbor Bus number 9 downtown, where I got the number 7 but to Briarwood Circle. The bus driver let me off at the corner by the doctor's office. I got to my appointment early and then I had to wait to see the doctor.

When I left the doctor's office I saw a bus at the corner, but the driver wouldn't pick me up there. I had to cross the street and go down the block to get the right bus that would take me back downtown to get the number 9 bus back to Wagner Road. When I got to Wagner Road, I had to wait 20-30 minutes before the Wave bus came to take me home. It took me about 6 hours to get to and from my doctor's



## Resources for Learners

Check out all of the online learning resources available on Pinterest!



If you need help learning how to navigate Pinterest or have resource suggestions, please email [Melissa Towle](mailto:Melissa.Towle).

## Learning Labs

We have begun offering goal-centered workshops specifically designed to help learners achieve a goal.

Learning Labs are different from regular groups in a few very important ways:

- ⇒ Advance registration is required; drop in is not allowed.
- ⇒ Attendance at all sessions of the specific learning lab are expected; again, these are not drop-in.
- ⇒ Learning Labs have a specific start and end date and have limited space to ensure maximum learning for participants.

If you are interested in a particular topic and hope to see it for a Learning Lab, please email Melissa Towle: [towle@washtenawliteracy.org](mailto:towle@washtenawliteracy.org)

Your name will go on a list so that if we do offer a lab on a topic of interest, we will contact you first to register.

*"No one can tell your story so tell it yourself. No one can write your story so write it yourself."*

appointment. I was glad I had on a warm coat, because it was very cold outside.

## My Autobiography! - Who Am I? By: Shaivi Divatia

I always wanted to write an autobiography about myself. I wanted to explore questions such as: Who I am? How I have become the way I am? What are the factors that took place and made me what I am today? In order to understand how I have become the person I have, I must first try to answer the question as to who am I? Erring on the side of oversimplification, I would say that I am an aspiring educationalist who feels that education and the right to live one's life with freedom and liberty are not just undeniable human rights, but anyone or any agency trying to undercut these are punishable and accountable to the human race. Naïve as it may sound, but I feel that as a future educator, I have the responsibility to do my part to make this a better, just, and more educated world.

Probably one of the most influential factors that has molded my thoughts and ideas is my family. I consider it my privilege to have been born in a family that has always been well educated, magnanimous and understood the pivotal role that education plays in one's life. My grandfather was a very learned man and was India's representative to the United Nations Organization in the early 1960's. He was very well travelled, well read and his stories about the various countries were a staple of my childhood. Not only did he open the world to me, but also his achievements are still the benchmark I strive to achieve. Apart from that, my father is an economist with an MA from the United States. He introduced to me the educational system in the US and outlined its differences with the Indian educational establishment. Since childhood, I have heard and learned about the world, its people and how education systems differ across the planet. This has given me a broad perspective that I carry today.

Not only is my paternal side of the family well educated, but I also got inspiration from my maternal side. My mother and her side of the family are also well educated, some of who were freedom fighters in India's struggle for independence. My great grandfather was a principal of a college in my city in the early 1900s. I strongly believe that the family is the first school and family members are the first teachers. A strong family background has always inspired me to look forward to life and to better it using education. The education background has followed me into marriage as well as my husband's family too is very well educated and includes as many as four teachers. No wonder I have an inclination towards the field! Add to that the love I have for children, and you get someone like me who is highly motivated for understanding educational needs of elementary school students.

Although, I must confess that this interest in teaching, education and especially for understanding pedagogical requirements for the elementary classroom have matured slowly over time. Although learned people have constantly surrounded me, several events have happened over the course of the past 23 years that have helped form my own opinions and have led me to the path I have chosen. One of the biggest peeves I have is when (at least back home in India) a girl becomes about 20 years of age, many conservative parents think of marrying her off. It is almost a custom to become a homemaker and take care of the family rather than getting more education. I have noticed this with my neighbors, distant relatives and even some friends. This unfair treatment to the girl child has never gone down well with me and although there is not much I can do, I always tried to talk to the parents of the girl child in question and tried to convince them of the importance of education. "Not only will education give your daughter financial freedom, but it will liberate her mind to ideas that will change her life", I would say to them. Most times they fell on deaf ears, but one of the maids we employed (in India, most people have hired domestic help) listened to me and let her daughter finish college. I felt very happy that I was able to make a difference in someone's life! Helping her made me feel empowered. That was the day I firmly decided to take up the

field of education as my career.

My journey to the field of education has not been straightforward. We in India have an option after the 10th grade to select the sciences, business and commerce or arts as a focus area in high school that determines our college education. There are no direct education programs and the fact that the education schools in my city were not of the highest caliber, I chose the business and commerce field as I felt I could develop skills that would eventually assist me in the field of education. The scores in the 10th and 12th grades are a make or break for students. Score well, and you can get admitted in the college of your choice. Falter slightly, and your life gets ruined. This creates unimaginable pressure on the students and this is something that I think needs improvement about the school system in India. This sheer performance based test of rote memory has spawned a huge industry of “personal tutors” for various subjects. These tutors are none other than schoolteachers themselves. Education is not provided in the confines of the school, but at the private tuition classes of these “teachers”. The fees for the private tuition are exorbitant and people from lower socio-economic classes cannot afford them. Why not educate every individual equally? Why should the dominant group get more education and opportunities than minorities? This is something I have always stood up for and tried to oppose in my own little ways. It is something that I can relate to directly in my Teacher Education for Social Justice class. Teachers are harbingers of social justice, they should not be the ones creating and perpetuating a divide!

Another very important experience that led me to strongly believe that my call in life is education was my first hand experience of public schools in India. My apartment back home is very near to a public school where people of lower income groups study. Every time I used to pass by the school, I saw the children and saw that few of them were so dedicated to their studies and seemed to be sincere students. I used to ask some students what they wanted to become when they grew up and I got replies that, “I want to become a doctor”, “I will build bridges” or “I will become a pilot”. Sometimes a child would want to become a teacher as well. I usually felt bad for them because they never had the facility that me or my other friends had. They lacked the knowledge from good and educated teachers; they lacked all the facilities that we had in our classrooms. They did not even have benches in one of the classrooms! While we learned computer programming, they were trying to attain basic literacy using a stone tablet and a chalk! The disparity was shocking to me and I felt that as a concerned citizen, I should try and do something for public schools in India.

Female education is something that is very close to my heart. I have seen two of my good friends discontinue their education after marriage. That was just because their husbands and his family members obligated them to do so. Why is it the case that women still have to look after family members and have to quit their jobs? Are women not capable of handling homes and jobs at the same time? Are men afraid of woman leading them? Many men assume that a successful woman is a bad homemaker! Such ideas and thoughts anger me to a large extent, but I also understand that if I need to change the social attitudes, anger will not do it. Here, I think the example of my neighbor would best fit in. They are less educated and they have a daughter who is now in 7th grade. She has in her mind that she will complete high school and get married. She always asks me, “Shaivi, how much more will you study?” My answer to her was, “it is always good to study if you want to achieve something in your life and to be on your own.” My words seem to have inspired her a little and now she wants to complete at least her undergraduate degree - one thing that I like the most was her change in attitude. I felt I have empowered her in her thoughts and this in a manifestation of my education and attitude. This is how change can come – one child at a time. Although I have not yet done anything significant in the field of education, the fact that I could encourage two individuals from a lower socio-economic or a lower educated group to complete college education gives me hope and strength.

Another key factor in my formative years has been the cultural environment I have grown up in. I was born in Ahmedabad, a metropolis in western India with a population of roughly 5-6 million. These 5-6 million people speak between 3 principal languages (Gujarati, Hindi and English) and many of them can converse in 2-3 other languages. The diversity in languages carries on to diversity in religion as well. India is one country where diversity is found in every city, town and village. For five years, the country had a Muslim President, a Sikh Prime-Minister and a Catholic lady as the leader of the ruling party – all governing a country that is majority Hindu. I say this because being in such a culturally rich and diverse environment has made me very tolerant to others. I have always been taught to respect others – no matter how different they are. I think we can disagree without being disagreeable. My school reflected the demographic distribution of my city as well. Since preschool, I studied in a multicultural school. I enjoyed learning more about different customs, traditions, foods and religious values from my friends and teachers as well. My teachers were too from different religious and geographic backgrounds and that was another thing that made my schooling more interesting and fun. Different teachers had a different teaching style. For example, my social studies teacher was from South side of India and she taught us more about her culture and traditions but never forgot to teach about history and geography of other parts of India. Overall, what the culture, demographics and the social

environment has done is helped me be very aware of others, their ideologies and to respect everyone.

This exposure to a multicultural environment has indirectly guided me to become a fair educator. I have seen classrooms filled with children from diametrically opposite values. I have, through years of classroom experience as a student, learned to understand them, disagree with them and to respect them. The exposure to diversity since my early life has made me open to listening to different ideas, while still making my own decisions using the best possible judgment. This formative experience of multicultural schooling gives me a niche as an educator, as I have the experience backing me that many teachers lack. I understand that education is a right that is rudimentary to the progress of the human race. Education is the chisel that helps shape the future of human destiny. In the ever globalized world, every individual must be prepared to collaborate, positively compete and converse with people from various ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds and races. The goal of education must be increasing awareness along with expanding knowledge.

To conclude, my cultural background, my husband and my well-educated family members and my experiences have inspired me to be where I am today. This inspiration will definitely make an impact on my teaching way as a future educator. I think the bias in the education system needs to be eliminated from all over the world and minorities and privileged students should be treated equally. Also, the children in the schools all around the world needs to learn more than one language to achieve success in this globalized world. I feel myself fortunate to get graduated from Purdue, one of the famous universities around the world. The classes at Purdue have taught me to raise my voice with classmates and in class. It was uncommon for me to speak in front of a professor because what I had been doing during my undergraduate years was just to sit, listen to lectures and obey the professor. Also it was so uncommon for us to move the chairs and to be in groups and discuss about an issue with the classmates. After attending few classes at Purdue, I have learned to look at things from different perspectives. I have learned to become an active citizen of the community. My education at Purdue, my volunteering experience at schools in the US, my participation during English conversation and discussion classes in the US and my past experiences are helping to shape pedagogical values and will empower me to transcend my goals in life.

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**Dear, Tutor**

**By: Shauonne Hester-Jefferson**

Hello. My Name Shauonne Jester-Jefferson

I Live Here in Ypsilanti Michigan. My Goals are in improve my reading, writing, math, and my computer skills I do know somethings but its Just not enough for me too get a Job or clothing I would Like to do to be a better mother and wife have a career. It has been very depressing for me I feel Like its been my little secret and I feel like I've just been living a lie and thats Just to myself I can't run from this anymore and I have let fear get in my way Now I'm ready Like never before So I Just want you to Know that I'm grateful for your help and Hope to see you soon.

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**WihT Love**

**By: Carol Jones**

WihT My Love I Have Time To give you my sis maryAnn She call me all The Time To see How I am Doing The othe sis DonT but I Have one That cars About Me and That is My sis MaryAnn

You Make My Day wihT I can Herer Frome You Thats Why I Love you so much,

Thing Have Happy To me for A Long Time You know what it is but I Just Dont Tell witT it is About but Just know That I Love You so so Much, you call me ve Day wihT The othe sising Dontt its That is Not Righ, We Know were we came from so we Know where we are going, you Have so Much Love To give and You Do Just That.

Thats Why I Love You so You Nev Tell Me Thing Thats You Know That going to Hut me in The Lone Time To come You go back To where me and you came From our Mothe, Know one can Tell you, are. Not My sis we Look A Likw Likw sis so That can Not say You are Not.

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**Summary Of The Book "Bread-Winner"**

**By: Qihua Cai**

This is a children's story but adults find it interesting too.

It is based on Kabul, Afghainstan in about 1996.





It is the story about Parvana's family.

The family lived in Kabul in an apartment which had been bombed. The stair way was outside. It had one small room with a small window and no water. Parvana, her sisters, her brother and her Parents lived in there.



Parvana's family had all been educated. The Taliban in Afghanistan did not let girls go to school and women go to job. They could only work inside at home. Her mother had been a writer for a Kabul radio station. Her father was a teacher in a school, but the school was bombed and Father lost a part of his leg. Both of Mother and Father lost their job.

The family went from a good life to a poor life because their home were bombed many times and they had to move many times.

The family's life was depended on Father working in the market. He read and writes letters for people or sold some things. Parvana was eleven, she helped her father in the market. But her father was arrested by the Taliban, because he had a foreign education.

To make money for her family, Parvana changed her appearance as a boy. She became a bread-winner. She did the work as her father's. It was difficult supporting all the family's life. She was an escort for her sister and Mother going outside. The business sometimes was good and sometimes was bad.

Parvana had a friend Shauzia, who was also dressed as a boy. She had no father, her mother was sick and her brother had gone to try to find work in Iran. They had not heard from him. Shauzia and her mother lived with her aunt and grandparents. They are always arguing. Shauzia was a tea boy in the market to feed the family.

The two girls had needed to earn more money. Parvana wanted more money to help with her family life. Shauzia wanted money to leave her noisy family.

They dug bones from the graveyard. They sold the bones to a bone-broker to get more money. They used this money to buy trays and things to sell in the market.

One day Mother received a letter offering Parvana's sister Nooria a wedding in Marza, a city north of Kabul. Mother wanted the family all to go the wedding, but Parvana wouldn't go without her father. If he was released by the Taliban, where would he find them.

So Parvana stayed in Kabul, still working and selling in the market. One day, after work, she found two men helping her father into the apartment. Father didn't know why he had been released.

A person came to the apartment to tell them that the Taliban had captured the city of Marza.

Parvana and her father didn't know her mother was. So they wanted to travel to find them.

This is the end of the story. So far there are two more books to read.

Parvana was a brave, kind and friendly girl. I like her.

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## **My Lovely Daughter, Yuna Jang**

**By: Myung-hye Yoo**

She was born on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012. She is now 17 months old. She can walk, run, speak and play by herself. Usually, she wakes up around 8 A.M. and drinks a cup of milk. When I do the dishes, she plays with Lego blocks and reads books alone. She and I eat breakfast together around 10A.M. after my husband has gone to school. After eating breakfast, she plays with her kitchen toys (spoons, pans etc.) and I clean up the kitchen table.

She likes reading books which have pictures stories rather than word books. She knows many shapes such as circles, triangles, squares, crescents, and star shapes. She can put shapes in to the shapes' holes. She feels happy with that work. My friend who has a 20 months old son gave Yuna a shape book. Yuna loves the book and I read that with her everyday. Yuna can recognize some alphabet letters especially O and Q. She often grabs the letters in her one hand and moves around the house and plays other things like reading books.

She loves the color green. My husband and I wonder why she loves green. We got a package from my country, South Korea, and inside the package, there were gifts for Yuna such as color crayons, papers and sticker books. Yuna always paints the green crayon on sketch paper. I try to suggest her to use such as pink, blue, purple etc. She can say green, blue, red in Korean. When she points to something colored and says the color's name, I encourage her frequently and repeat that color's name in Korean exactly.

She has a little monkey doll which is always with her. We think that she thinks the monkey is a real character in one of her books. She keeps the monkey with her at all times even when she sleeps at night. Initially, my husband and I decided that let Yuna only play with the monkey for a short time but now we think her attachment to the monkey is fine because she plays well and feels happy with it.

Recently, she isn't eating well, so I feel little bit frustrated. However, I believe that she will be better and she is fine. When she drops some rice, she picks it up and tells me she did that. Because she doesn't want to put on a bib, every part of her is messy. When I tell her she will get dirty, she tries to clean herself up. It makes me smile.

I think Yuna is an easy baby to care for and she is happy and healthy. What I like most about her is her way of greeting me. Everyday she bows to her father in the morning when he leaves home. Our parents-in-law also love that, when we call on a video telephone, they can see that.

I am so happy being Yuna's mom. She makes me feel like a real mom and has improved my life. My husband and I feel responsible to see that she grows up well.

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**A Book Report For <Al Capone Shines My Shoes> Written By Gennifer Choldenko  
By: Eunkyung Sung**

The setting of this story is on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco in 1935. The main characters are the kids living with their families on Alcatraz Island where there is a maximum security prison. One of the cons is Al Capone who may be one of the most notorious criminals of all kinds of schemes, murders, drugs, etc. The novel begins with Moose's asking a big favor to Al Capone and somehow he helped Moose's sister, Natalie, get into a school where she'd been turned down twice already. So now it's Moose's turn to pay the favor back...

According to Author's Note, while the characters and the actions are fictional, some of the scenes came from true stories. What surprised me is that the author really tried hard to get the real life experience on Alcatraz. The author became a docent on Alcatraz Island herself and she interviewed the real residents of 1930s-1950s to write this story.

At first, the book was not that interesting to me since the main characters are kids aged 7-12, who looked like somewhat childish... also the story didn't proceed fast enough for me to get excited. But toward ending, the action developed dramatically and romantic emotions involved among the characters. I like the main character, Moose, he seems sweet and caring which is highly unusual for a 12, 13 year old boy. He even takes care of his autistic big sister.

Also I like the author's writing style... her descriptions are so detailed that I can picture the scenes quite well. So I think this book is worth reading and I can recommend this book especially for aged 10-13 and adult ESL learners.

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**Whatever You Need  
By: Marquise MdDaniel AKa Qupid**

I can be  
Whatever you need

Whatever you need  
my love shall shine

if you allow me

whatever you need  
because you are mine

Whatever you need  
because you,ve been real  
whatever you need  
you,ve felt how I feel

Whatever you need  
dont take me as the same  
whatever you need  
your love is not my game

Whatever you need  
it shall come to past  
whatever you need  
your first and i'm last

Whatever you need  
what I say I do  
whatever you need  
I hope you come to

Whatever you need  
Im here always to let you know  
whatever you need  
my love endures through rain and snow

Whatever you need  
your dreams come true  
whatever you need  
\_\_\_\_\_ I love you  
name

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## **Al Capone Shines My Shoes**

**By: Serpil Mercan**

The book, Al Capone Shines My Shoes, is written by Gennifer Chaldenko. The story takes place on Alcatraz Island, in 1935. The main characters are Moose, Natalie, Jimmy, Thersa, Piper, and Annie. Moose is 12 years old, goodhearted, friendly, and everyone loves him. Natalie is Moose's autistic sister who needs to get into a special school in San Francisco. Jimmy is Moose's best friend who struggles to keep up with Moose's baseball skills. Theresa is Jimmy's seven year old sister who is very smart for her age. Piper is the warden's daughter who is beautiful but sometimes acts very mean to the other children and very jealous that her father wants a baby son. Annie is Moose's good-natured friend who is really good playing baseball.

The novel tells the story of these children who live on Alcatraz Island where their fathers work as guards at the prison. One of the hundreds of dangerous cons in the prison is the famous Al Capone. Cons do a lot of jobs around the houses that need repair and also they do laundry for families. Every Wednesday the families put out their dirty laundry in big bags marked with their names, and every Monday their clothes come back starched, pressed, and folded. Moose has never met Al Capone, but he wrote a note to Al Capone that asked to help his sister get into a school in San Francisco, because the family desperately needed it. After Natalie got accepted to the school, Moose got a note attached to his laundry that said, "Done", and a second note that said "Your turn". That meant it was Moose's turn to do a favor for Al Capone. Now, Moose had to decide if he should tell everything to his parents. If he explains what he did, he thought that his father would get fired, and Natalie would miss the chance to get accepted to the school. He doesn't want to risk his father's job and his sister's school acceptance, so he tries to solve problem by himself. Moose's life becomes more complicated and involves other children. He finds himself at center of the con's escape plan along with the other children. The cons try to escape, and they took the warden's new born baby son with them.

In the end, the escaped cons are caught with the children's help, especially with Natalie's. Natalie becomes a hero by helping find the baby.

Note: I think this is a good book as a children book. It is about relationship between children, and also between children and their parents. Moose sets a good example by taking care of his sister who needs special attention and care. The book gave a lesson that children always have to tell truth to their parents.

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