



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **A New Generation of Fighters**

Curriculum Unit 96.01.07  
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Students today are more passive, less willing to fight or stand up for their rights than the students of the early 60's and 70's. This unit, "A New Generation of Fighters" will emphasize the importance of inspiring students today to become more aware of the struggles of the people of the sixties and seventies. It will teach them that they have a responsibility to continue to fight against racism, violence and sexism with the same or greater vigor of their predecessors. The students will focus on means in which they will realize their worth and ability to stand up, be recognized and make a difference.

This curriculum unit "A New Generation of Fighters" will be taught to middle school students ages 12-14. These students, who are approaching and/or experiencing puberty, are bestowed a multitude of problems and changes; specifically their own identity and self worth. This project will help them to be able to recognize people of courage, both famous and not so famous, while realizing the courage within themselves.

## **SECTION I—CIVIL RIGHTS**

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Throughout our country's history, African Americans have struggled to obtain basic civil rights. This struggle has spanned several centuries, beginning with the mutinies of the Africans during the crossing of the Atlantic, to the rebelliousness of the slaves in the New World, to the founding of organizations such as the Free African Society, the abolition movement, and to the civil rights marches and demonstration of the twentieth century. The reconstruction era was bombarded by civil rights legislation, only to be followed by a prolonged legislation silence on racial discrimination. In addition the various laws enacted by Congress after the Civil War were negated by the Supreme Court decisions of 1883 and 1896. The justices' decision of 1883 indicated that only the states were prohibited from discriminating, while the individuals were not. The second decision, Plessy vs. Ferguson, 1896 declared that separate but equal facilities fulfilled the requirements, and was not overturned until 1954.

In 1957, the Congress broke its long silence by setting up a law which established the Civil Rights Commission to investigate discrimination. This was in reaction to years of effort by the NAACP. Additionally a Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice was established to investigate and prosecute violations of federal law and empowered the attorney general to bring suit against any person or civic body that denied another's voting rights. It is at this point that the basis of the unit is spawned.

I have selected the enthusiastic, and sometimes volatile leaders of the early sixties and seventies to provide the basis of the unit. The students will learn about those people who were the doers and shakers of that generation. While learning about the leaders of this period, the students will be able to recognize sweeping legislation that helped to change the course of history for Blacks and a framework of the struggle for peace.

The catalyst of the civil rights movement of the 60's was none other than Rosa Parks. When, on December 1, 1955, Ms. Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white man, as was required by law, she was arrested and sent to jail. As a result of Ms. Parks' arrest, the Montgomery bus boycott led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was organized and successfully led to the integration of all Montgomery city buses. Students should be led to understand that the fate of Ms. Parks, an ordinary citizen, encouraged a wave of massive demonstrations that swept across the south. In 1960, a group of students were denied service at a lunch counter in Greensboro, NC., and started a "sit in" movement. During this same year, The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was formed and its members included Julian Bond, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, and John B. Lewis.

Students will investigate what it was like to be a civil rights activist and will be given biographical information on those persons mentioned. Special emphasis will be placed on the early years in the educational and social pursuits of the activists.

At its height, the civil rights movement was the most important event taking place in America. Through demonstrations, sit-ins, marches and soaring rhetoric, the movement caused widespread public indignation, thus creating an atmosphere in which it was possible to make positive changes in American society.

Students will become familiar with additional key civil rights activists of the 60's including Ralph Abernathy, whose alliance with Martin Luther King Jr., stretched back to the mid 1950's. The family and community in which Ella Josephine Baker was raised instilled in her a sense of racial pride and resistance to any form of oppression. The class can be taught to use her example as an inspiration to set up their own student-run organization rather than be consumed under the auspices of a more conventionally structured group.

If there was one individual during the 1960's who stood at the forefront of The Black Power movement, it had to be Stokely Carmichael. He became famous as the popularizer of the phrase "Black Power", and was one of the most powerful and influential leaders of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Teenagers will hopefully be fascinated by him as he was jolted from ghetto life and as a result of his experiences at the Bronx High School of Science, was offered scholarships to many universities. He opted to attend Howard University, an historically black college. He worked ceaselessly registering and educating voters in the south. His cry for "Black Power" thrilled many disenfranchised young African-Americans but troubled others who thought it sounded too violent.

Students will not get a true picture of the 60's without mention of the Black Panther Party and the influence of Angela Davis. Her involvement in the Black Panther Party eventually led to her arrest, placement on the FBI's most wanted list, and later acquittal.

Throughout the unit, students will be participating in activities to prepare them about the reality of being Black in America so they can rise up against the afflictions of racism, violence, sexism and know that they can make a difference. Too many children have never heard of Medgar Evers, who gave his life so that they could vote and sit where they want in public places. Additionally, it is sad that too many have not read or spoken the beautiful words of Nobel Peace Prize Winners Ralph Bunche or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., as well. The memory and image of Malcolm X, which has changed as much after his death as his own philosophies changed during

his life, will be discussed and students will develop an understanding of the man that is contrary to popular belief. At first thought to be a violent fanatic, he is now understood to have been an advocate of self-help, self-defense and education; as a philosopher, he was successful in integrating history, religion, and mythology to establish a framework for his ultimate belief in world brotherhood and human justice. The class will develop a spirit of camaraderie with leaders who were ordinary youngsters who cultivated their faith and beliefs and eventually had a profound influence on people throughout the world as voices of power and reason.

## **SECTION II: CHILDREN AS HEROES**

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The novel, *Children of Crisis, A Study of Courage and Fear* by Robert Coles, M.D., will help students to understand ordinary children from the south who found themselves in a place and a time period in which they were forced, although many times by choice, to survive the desegregation of their schools and communities, along with all the struggles that made the new south possible. Dr. Coles, followed children in Louisiana, and Georgia for several school years. In addition, he was faced with strong segregationists who helped him to dispel his own misconceptions about the south and came to regard the region as that of quiet law abiding citizens so long as certain irritations or provocations were not present.

Dr. Coles tried to blend with the people of the sit-in movement. He made it clear, all the while he volunteered to work that he was not only involved in service to them, but a study as well. His aim was to find out how individual minds relate to contemporary change as future history is made. He realized that the people he studied had a destiny to fulfill. The children and parents who were the targets of his studies never realized before hand with what they would be faced in their roles of desegregating the schools. Many students found themselves as stumbling upon the movement, while others sought it out. Segregation as it existed, was a way of life for them and was intensely shared by entire towns and states.

Dr. Coles' work in the south consisted of children attending desegregated schools. He studied students from three levels. He met with high school students of both races on a weekly basis. Additionally, he held weekly interviews with young children ranging in age from five to eleven, still of both races, and lastly he had periodic interviews with the parents and teachers of all of these children.

He was able to talk with the adolescent youths and their parents and teachers, however he found that the young children were often uninterested in conversation. They were more interested in being on the move and were at times seemingly bored with talking and the expectations of maintaining a conversation. Communication for them was more successfully exhibited through games, drawings, and finger paintings that demonstrated their energy and symbolism.

Ruby was the first southern child to put the crayons and paints to use. At the onset of the relationship with Dr. Coles, Ruby was six years old. Ruby was an example demonstrating Dr. Coles' theory that a child's life, his age, family, neighborhood, medical and psychological past, history and intelligence, influences the way in which he or she draws. Racial background additionally affects the way the children draw and emphasizes what that fact means at that time in history for them. It is also the drawings that helped Dr. Coles appreciate his clinical work with adults, as he recalls grown-up southerners of both races remember their experiences as a child. It is interesting to note that their old attitudes may be a difference between their memories and actual feelings they once had, or didn't have but now claim to have had, years ago.

Dr. Coles and Ruby had to brave daily mobs to attend an almost empty school building. As a result of his long term study with her, he collected over two hundred drawings. Most of the drawings' topics were chosen by Ruby, while others were specific suggestions or requests.

For as many as four months, Ruby never used brown or black except for the soil or ground and always a layer of green grass covered it. Her drawings always showed a particular pattern, and she always distinguished between white and black people. The white people that she drew were larger and more lifelike, while blacks were smaller with bodies that were more intact. When she drew a white girl that was known to be her own size, she drew her taller with all features present. On the other hand, when Ruby drew herself, she lacked an eye in one drawing and an ear in another. The hands and legs of the white girl were carefully drawn with correct number of toes and fingers. Her own limbs however, or any other black children drawn were without a thumb or a set of toes, or a forefinger would possibly be missing, and have shorter arms or no arms at all.

Other interesting features included the ears of black children which appeared larger than their white counterparts, and even when only one ear was drawn it was very large. At times Ruby's drawing of blacks contained no mouth or a thin line was drawn. When a white child was drawn, she was more likely to have lips, open mouth and teeth showing. Many times a nose was not drawn for either race, but when drawn on a white child it was a thin orange line.

As regards hair color, and texture, white children were given blonde or yellow hair. Sometimes the hair appeared as the same color as the outline of the face. Many times no hair was drawn on either race.

The first major change in Ruby's drawings came when she asked to draw her grandfather, her mother's father. This was the first time her request to draw someone was outside of her home in New Orleans. Her grandfather owned a farm in the Mississippi Delta. She drew the picture of her grandfather with an enthusiasm that was never before exhibited. Ruby's depiction of her grandfather was that of an enormous black man. As was not done in her previous drawings, his frame took up almost the entire sheet of paper. Not only was his outline brown, but all of his skin was made brown except for a thick black belt around his waist. He had large oval eyes and beautiful yellow colored teeth. His ears were of normal size. The arms were long with large hands and thick legs ended in heavy black boots, which was notably different from the worn shoes or bare feet that was usually drawn.

Ruby enthusiastically indicated that her grandfather owned his own farm and how he had come home tired but happy, to have his supper. Ruby's father on the other hand was unemployed, and had been fired because his daughter was going to one particular school rather than another. He suffered a noticeable loss of appetite that was talked about by the entire family. When Ruby was asked why she drew her grandfather, she could not think of any specific reason. She did however, admit that she would love to live on a farm and that her daddy was the strongest man that could be found.

It was obvious that Ruby was ready to talk about her fears and her wish for escape. Dr. Coles and she had been working together for over two years at this point. She mentioned her impatience with the mobs and her tiredness of their persistence.

It took Ruby several more months to paint a black person that was not distorted. Dr. Coles was interested in finding out if the reason she drew the distorted figures was because she was intimidated by his presence as a white man, but later found that pictures she drew before desegregation showed the same pattern. He was convinced that the pictures she drew reflected a larger truth about her feelings

When Dr. Coles thought she was ready he made an observation about her drawings. He indicated that her drawings were more alive and the people were made more accurately shown. Ruby indicated that she was older and that she could see and draw better. Dr. Coles suggested that she was able to draw black people differently which was in contrast to the distortions noted in the drawings of her younger years. Ruby reflected on the question and told him that the troubles she faced going to school had enabled her to learn more about her people. She also said that she probably would have eventually come to the same place as she got older, since she surely would see herself and the white children and realize the differences that existed. Even though people would try to pretend the differences didn't exist, she had to say to herself that black people were her own people and she should be proud rather than ashamed.

Ruby's teacher had to write comments on her report card and pondered what she would say. Even though she always told her students that things would eventually get back to normal, she knew things would never be the same. She realized that her pupil had gone through a great deal and had emerged with an understanding and worldliness, that is probably rare in elementary school children, especially those in such sheltered situations.

Another case study revolved around Jimmie, a classmate of Ruby. Jimmie, one of only three children in the class, was a lively white child with freckles and blonde hair that tended to fall over his forehead. Ruby had drawn several pictures of him that certainly did not ignore his hair and eyes. She was troubled by his behavior as she referred to him as a good boy at times.

He was at times, generous and attentive, but could in a flash turn on her, specifically, when he remembered that she was black. He could be bad when he wanted his way but his badness was different when he realized what color Ruby was. He would alternate between saying bad things, being scared of her and threatening to leave and not return, although he always did. Then he would forget for a period and remember again.

Jimmie's parents were not able to establish a clear-cut set of attitudes toward black people. If there were riots and they thought going to school would be dangerous, they kept Jimmie at home. Unlike other parents who secretly sent their children through rear doors or side doors, Jimmies' parents sent him to school when they thought it was safe, in an openly manner. Dr. Coles first thought of Jimmie as Ruby's hope since his parents sent him to school in spite of Ruby, wanting him to not waste time by learning nothing. He later learned that Jimmie was instructed by his mother to stay away from Ruby, which he tried to do. He would remember his instructions, then seconds later ask her to join him in a game.

Jimmie's drawings made his feeling about blacks clear. He either thought they were related to animals or because of the color of their skin were dirty human beings, and dangerous as well. Dr. Coles didn't think that Ruby realized the amount of fear she inspired in Jimmie nor did Jimmie know how much Ruby tried to portray herself with his features and coloring, so as not to be afraid of him. Jimmie was asked to draw his school before Ruby attended and the result was quite striking. There was quite a bit of detail, including stucco bricks, nice green grass, no chimneys, and flowers were in abundance. Subsequent pictures were just as nice which showed a fondness for landscapes.

When Jimmie was asked to draw a picture of Ruby, he was obviously dismayed and said that he couldn't. His reason was as simple as he said that he didn't know what she looked like since he never looked at her closely if he could help it. He further indicated that when he did look at her, it was by accident. He did however say he had had a few glimpses of her and would try to draw her. In contrast to his drawings with distinct landscapes, Jimmie drew Ruby in a midst of a stretch of grass, where he placed her with no feet on a barren, sandy piece of land. She was made small though her arms were larger than he normally drew. She had a thin mouth and pinpoint eyes. Her hair was frizzy black and inappropriately long. She was brown-black, unlike Ruby's medium

complexion.

When asked what she was doing in the picture, Jimmie thought and indicated she was drinking a coke and eating candy or something. He said that his mother said this was what blacks did all day and was the reason they had rotting teeth. Jimmie continued to draw her as a speck of brown or caricature. It was obvious that he had trouble picturing her, he revealed that he didn't know what she looked like, that she was funny.

Additionally Jimmie made a distinction between classroom and the school playground. As was the custom in New Orleans for generations, children of all races were allowed to play together on the playground in and around the city, but the classroom was different and Ruby was usually placed on the playground outside of the school in his drawings.

In time Jimmie drew pictures locating Ruby inside the building and eventually she became an individual. She began to look more human, rather than a rodent or fallen leaf. After a year, Jimmie would even give credence to the pretty clothes he gave to others girls.

His parents were changing also, from referring to Ruby as a "nigger" to calling her "nigra". At first, they wanted no mention of her name. This changed as they began asking about her schoolwork and overall behavior.

Jimmie began to see her as an individual but no matter how much he tried to ignore her or pretend she didn't exist, he never overlooked the differences her presence made to his school. When drawing her house, although it was in very close proximity to his own he made sure hers was distinctively different. He put forth a lot of effort in drawing his house while hers was some lines hastily sketched and perpendicular to one another. He furnished his house and those of his neighbors, but not Ruby's and furthermore he denied them the sun and grass.

One day he began a drawing with a store that he said Ruby visited daily. In his conversation with Dr. Coles, he noted that Ruby had gone to the store the previous day and bought potato chips which she shared with the class. After completing the store, he moved to the house, where he used red instead of brown, and painted with slow broad strokes, rather than the hasty lines previously used. In comparing the new picture with the bridge being drawn by Dr. Coles, Jimmie indicated that he wanted to make the house as strong as the bridge so that it would not fall and no one would be hurt.

The pictures that both Ruby and Jimmie drew or painted reflected the lives each of them lived. In following two-score children like them over a period of four years, Dr. Coles was certain that there were certain patterns that existed in the drawings of children, such as style, proportions and preoccupations from year to year.

The issue of skin color affects children at a very young age, usually before school attendance begins. Even if the children are unable to talk about it their drawings indicate that the subject is definitely on their minds. The racial crisis, witnessed by Ruby and Jimmie served to draw them together by giving them common experiences and a sharing of difficult times together.

Black children of elementary school age don't reflect on why they are black, or what that fact means for their future. They will often try to deny this fact or exuberantly accept it, indicating their confusion and troubled thoughts.

Whether discussing Ruby or Jimmie or Johnny or any other children in the book, it is the job of the teacher to

inspire students to have racial pride and self worth. The students in this book shared in difficult struggles and common experiences to rise up against tremendous odds with courage and fear, and realize the privileges afforded them through all the suffering of children unlike themselves, and the psychological adaptations they accomplished as a result.

## **SECTION III: TAKE A STAND**

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The word hero needs much clarification. Some people claim that heroes no longer exist, while others claim that living and surviving in the inner city is an heroic act in itself. This section will focus on the hero within our youth. A hero is an ordinary individual who aspires and dreams, makes sacrifices, takes risks and conquers adversity, or it is a person who takes a stand and makes his position known and see his work to fruition. The students in the class will be called upon to wake up, use the biographical examples of their historical past, and proud heritage of struggle and achievement to bring out the hero within themselves.

Students will select from a menu of causes to champion which will be drawn from the following examples:

- Speaking out against violence, sex and profanity in our culture through public speaking in and out of the classroom
- Create a safe haven or forum within the school and suggest positive alternatives to the street by petitioning the administration for appropriate space and adult supervision.
- Encourage their church congregation to sponsor support groups to help parents and grandparents to become more effective parents through a letter writing campaign and/or prepared speeches before the local church congregation.
- Expand after-school tutoring and mentoring programs by soliciting individuals from the business community to more actively participate as mentors.
- Set up a voluntary gun drop-off point in conjunction with the local police and use of incentives from the business community.

The cause in which all the students will participate will involve the renovation efforts at the school in which they are in attendance. Recently money was allocated for renovation of several school within the New Haven System. Fair Haven Middle School, which tops the list as one of the oldest schools in the city and in dire need of repair was not included on the list.

The students will be inspired to use this omission as an inspiration to make the problems of their school known throughout the community and with the Board of Education itself. First the students will be encouraged to organize a petition to get signatures within the student body and the community, thus bringing the plight of the school to the forefront. Secondly the students will organize a rally at the school to inspire all the students to stand up and be counted. The Fair Haven section of the city has been overlooked and allowed to remain in

disrepair, in spite of grant money to help build it up . The job of the students in this rally is to inspire all to work together in a common cause to better their circumstances by improving their community and school as well.

The culminating activity will take place as a “March on New Haven” where the students will, after having gone through the proper procedures, walk in parade style to a designated site within the community or the New Haven Green. Letters will be sent home to parents, ads will appear in the local newspaper and heard on the radio station calling for not only the student body but the community as well, to walk together, stand together, and listen to charges by chosen guest speakers.

Participants will be encouraged to make flags and banners to emphasize the importance of standing up and being counted. In addition family pride will be encouraged as parents will be asked to make a shield or banner to be displayed to show what they stand for as a unit. Guest speakers could possibly include the Superintendent of Schools, the Mayor, and/or others who have the power to help make our school and community a better place in which to live.

It is the hope that this unit will be taught in the spring semester and the march should take place on May 4, commemorating Law Day.

## **SYNOPSIS**

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### ***“A NEW GENERATION OF FIGHTERS”***

Students today are more passive, less willing to fight or stand up for their rights than the students of the early 60’s and 70’s. This unit, will emphasize the importance of inspiring students today to become more aware of the struggles of the people who were at the forefront of the civil rights movement. It will teach them that they must continue to fight against racism, violence and sexism by using this period as an inspiration to wake up to the heroism within themselves.

The unit will begin with a study of background information on the enthusiastic, and sometimes volatile leaders of the early sixties and seventies. They will learn about those people who were the doers and shakers of that generation. They will be inspired by children who were among the first people to participate in the desegregation of the schools in the south. This will be accomplished through reading case studies as presented in the book *Children of Courage* by Robert Coles, M.D. The culminating activity will allow the student the option of getting involved by identifying a cause in which to champion, develop a plan of action to help bring the problem to fruition, while bringing out the hero within them.

### **Lesson One**

#### ***Objectives To develop an understanding and appreciation of the student’s family history.***

- To write a short biographical sketch of the student’s family.
- To develop increased ability to gather information in an organized manner.
- To enhance project with visual aids.
- To communicate effectively with parents and other family members.



**Procedure Students will develop a booklet about themselves and their families. The biographical sketch will serve as the basis to answer the question “Who Am I” and what is my role in my family. The booklet should be organized in the following manner.**

Page 1—Cover Page To include student’s name and a recent photograph.

Page 2—My Birth A photograph or drawing of the student as a baby should be included. A short paragraph should include information such as name, circumstances surrounding how student’s name was chosen, and anything significant about the birth.

Page 3—People in the House—A family picture or drawing of all family members should be included along with a description of persons living in the household and significant facts about them.

Page 4—All About Mom and Dad—Include picture, short paragraph on where parents were born and interesting facts about them.

Page 5—Ancestors’ Nationality—If photographs of grandparents or great-grandparents are available, students should use them on this page along with a brief description of who they are and the country they are from. If family pictures are not available, pictures or drawings of representative country can be used.

Page 6—Funny Story About Family—Describe a funny incident that has taken place in your home or surrounding your family.

Page 7—Parents’ Special Memories—Develop a montage using snapshots of important events that have taken place in your family, including birthdays, holidays, etc.

Page 8—Family Traditions—Describe a family tradition in which you take part. Examples might include morning prayer, attending church together the first Sunday of the New Year, cooking black-eyed peas on New Years Day for good luck, etc.

Page 9—Ethnic Foods—Make a list with possible illustrations of the foods that are popular in your household.

Page 10—Precious Possession—Bring in to share with the class your most precious possession.

### **Materials**

- folder in which to place completed works
- family photographs
- colored pens, pencils for drawings when photographs are not available
- parent commitment letter that will indicate cooperation in helping with the assignment
- encyclopedias to learn facts about country of ancestors

**Time 2 weeks**

## Lesson Two

### ***Objectives To construct a chart about people of the civil rights movement of the sixties***

- To become inspired by the biographical examples studied
- To obtain information on teenage years of the leaders to help students see them as every day people
- To work in cooperative groups

### ***Procedure***

1. Students will be divided into groups of three or four persons. 2. The following list of names will be written on the board

Fannie Hamer	Medgar Evers	
Benjamin Hooks	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.	
Julian Bond	Ralph Abernathy	
Roy Innis		Rosa Parks
Angela Davis	Corretta Scott King	
H. Rap Brown	Jessie Jackson	
Stokely Carmichael		

3. Students should choose any three persons from list for investigation 4. Teacher should try to lead students to not duplicate names from one group to next 5. Students should answer the following questions about each leader

- a. name
- b. date of birth
- c. place of birth
- d. contribution to civil rights movement
- e. describe the person's teenage years
- f. provide graphics to enhance report
- g. discuss findings with other members of class through oral presentations

## **Materials**

- Access to library
- Access to computer
- Pre-designed charts

## **Time one week**

### **Lesson Three**

#### **Objectives To conduct a survey in the community, and school**

- To gather information in an organized manner
- To report findings using percentages

**Summary** *The civil rights legislation of the 1960's went far beyond the highest expectations of most black leaders in the 1940's and 1950's. Many African American leaders today think that problems faced by African Americans have risen to an all time high. Students will conduct a survey that will address this issue.*

**Procedure** *Students will conduct a survey in their community, and at school -Parents will be advised to escort their son/daughter when canvassing the community for answers*

- Students should randomly ask teachers and peers to respond
- Students will report findings using percentages as instructed by teacher
- Each student should try to get responses from at least 10 people

**Survey** *Please prioritize in order of most important to least important your reaction to the following:*

What are the chief problems facing African Americans today?

- Employment
- Education
- Housing

- \_\_\_ Racism
- \_\_\_ Violence/Crime
- \_\_\_ Single-Parent Homes
- \_\_\_ Teenage Pregnancy
- \_\_\_ Drug Abuse

### **Materials**

- clipboards
- survey sheet
- pen/pencil

### **Time one week**

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## VIDEOS

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