



KKU: Educational Standards and International Frameworks

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AS Asir Region's main university, King Khalid University is required to impart education that serves the local, national and international requirements in terms of educational standards, jobs and research as the foundation of the knowledge based economy.

The international frameworks are the new frontiers of educational development. Unless they are adopted in the classroom, the efforts put in teaching and learning will prove futile at every level.

These frameworks allow structured progress towards achieving required international educational standards and supremacy in the modern economies. The students of those countries who participate in Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) 1 are more likely to succeed in the job market, knowledge based economies and nation building.

To maintain their standing in modern economy, the governments of the advanced countries are using PISA to advance educational standards in their countries. Big countries like the US (NAEP)2 and the UK (Sats)3 have their own national educational frameworks and reporting systems but they also participate in PISA to improve their educational standards.

PISA is triennial international survey which evaluates education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. In 2015 PISA over half a million students, representing 28 million 15-year-olds in 72 countries and economies, took the internationally agreed two-hour test. Students were assessed in science, mathemat-



ics and reading. In addition to three skills, the members can also opt to participate in collaborative problem solving skill and financial literacy tests.

The participating countries use PISA results⁴ to build and improve⁵ their education policies. The PISA results allow them to overcome their weaknesses, build on their strengths, review their assessment standards and align with future educational developments and policies at global level. These frameworks help countries to translate teaching and learning in the classroom into jobs, innovation and manufacturing.

KKU can use PISA to develop higher secondary school educa-

In this Issue

Title	Page
Inside Out: Tennyson's Treatment of Nature	3
The Experimental Arabic Narratives	4
Article Critique An Analysis of Learning Barriers: The Saudi Arabian Context	6
Language Usage	8
Poetry Corner	9
VARIA TRANSLATION	11

Page 2

tion because these students join university and they then form foundation of university education. The research centers and quality setups of KKU have a critical role in helping the local policymakers to use PISA frameworks and results to develop short practical roadmaps for higher secondary school education and level one education in the university to meet future needs of education, jobs and knowledge based economy in the region.

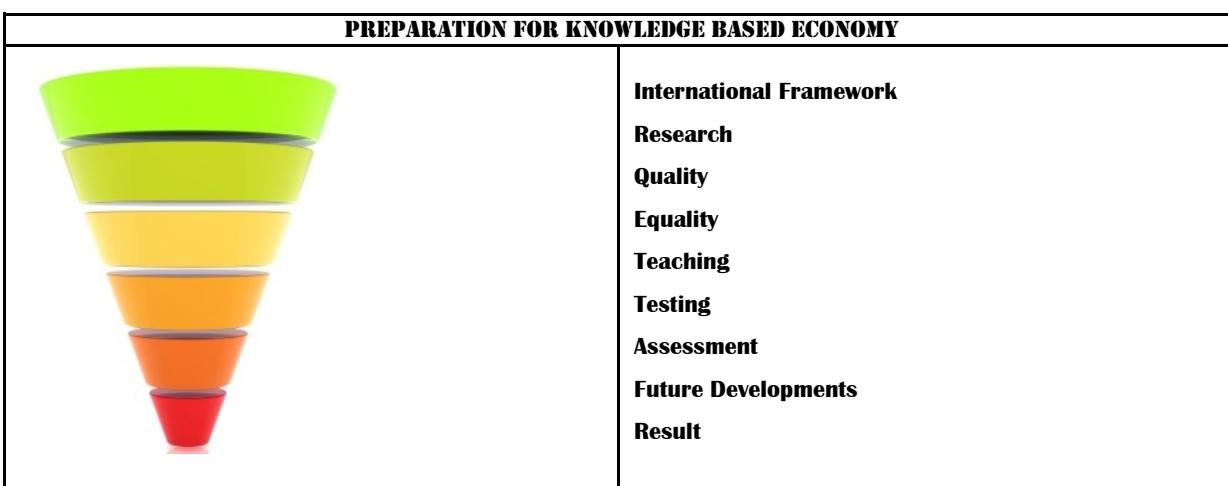
The 2015 PISA Reading framework⁶ draft shows that there are many changes in reading. New reading terminologies have been introduced like fixed text, dynamic text and so on. It has shifted from paper to computers (electronic reading), types of questions have changed, assessment scales have been reviewed, and the policies on reading skills that will be adopted in future have been discussed as well. Without keeping pace with international standards, it is not possible to achieve required output in reading.

In terms of improving reading skills with the help of PISA reading frameworks and tests⁷, a study was conducted in Finland. "Differences between students' PISA reading literacy scores and grading for mother tongue and literature at school: a geostatistical analysis of the Finnish PISA 2009 data"⁸.

Finland was ranked 4th in 2015 reading and well ahead of countries like UK (21) and USA (24). The important areas for KKU are:

- a. Latest and emerging reading strategies should be used in mother tongue to achieve better results in learning reading skill in other subjects and languages including English.
- b. The study results of grades given to students in mother tongue and literature at different schools and the same students' reading literacy performance in PISA 2009.
- c. International assessments frameworks have an increasingly important role in developing the local education system in terms of educational equality and quality.

In conclusion, the international frameworks provide an approved step-wise path to improve educational standards to bring them in line with the international standards. Reading and writing can be the starting points. The research centers and quality setups of KKU have to play their cardinal role to help KKU achieve required educational standards in Asir Region to meet future challenges in education, jobs and economy.



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Inside Out: TENNYSON'S TREATMENT OF NATURE



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“Smoke is always directed upward and it is in no hurry any time. It looks as if the rivers are also contaminated by human tiredness.”

Among the Victorian poets, Tennyson's treatment of nature is unique. Neither is he like Arnold who wanders in the woods looking for the truth in nature nor does he paint nature like Browning with "pea for pea" exactitude to exalt the magnificence of God's grandeur. In Tennyson's dexterous delineation of nature, nature becomes more and more humane. In this writing, it is shown how he enlivens nature with human feelings in the poem "The Lotos Eaters". He ascribes all the inner urges of tired soldiers into the external world. He projects the inside of the choric singers out into the external of dreamland of the lotus land. He skillfully builds a befitting anchorage for the band of exhausted sailors.

In the beginning, nature seems to be kind of weird or charmed to the readers. In this poem the tired sailors reach an island where it is always afternoon. The sun is setting and the moon is also there over their head. A number of streams are flowing down from the mountains towards the sea. On the peaks of the mountains there is old snow. The colour of the sand of this island is yellow. The land is somewhere covered with deep moss and there are galingales here and there. The area is encircled with pine and palm trees. The air is heavy with the dust of lotus fruit. In short it is a perfect place for those sailors to relish their leisure and rest their tired bones. It is after noon and, of course, is not

busy morning, nor pick-hour noon and nor the dead hours of night. Afternoon is a time when we long for some refreshment to be free from the strain of our business. In the afternoon the sailors reach the island:

In the afternoon they came unto a land,

In which it seemed always afternoon *

The sailors likewise have reached the afternoon of their lives. In this stage, completing their prime, they want to retire from the strenuous march of life and they want to say goodbye from all sorts of responsibilities. They even have lost the courage of facing the reality. They are in confusion and they know that "confusion is worse than death"*. The yellow colour of the sand stands for the sailor's diseased vitality and their broken will power. The land, at places, is covered with cool deep moss making a comfortable bed for a rest. Here the flow of the rivers is remarkably slow. It is compared to 'downward smoke'. Smoke is always directed upward and it is in no hurry any time. It looks as if the rivers are also contaminated by human tiredness. They come down not only like smoke downward but they also in the course of their flow take rest, have pause and then go forward. They are like tired wayfarers who take some rest time and again:

And like a downward smoke, the slender stream

Anon the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams!*

Continued on the Back Page

THE EXPERIMENTAL ARABIC NARRATIVES

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In the study of the emergence of the Arabic novel as a genre at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, both Western critics and literary historians have stressed the European impact. They have seen the narrative works produced by their fellow writers as a continuation of the European narrative tradition. However, modern Arab novelists digressed from the norms of the European novel, restructuring the genre by utilizing the potentialities of the Arabic language and turath.

Arab novelists have reverted to history and turath for many reasons. First, turath plays a significant role in identity formation. Second, the prevalent destitute condition and the burden of losses and defeats in the Arab world have led to the inclination to see in great periods of classical Arabic culture a basis for the present awakening and future self-determination. Third, the novelists determine to counter the hostile image fabricated of Arabs.

In fact, Arab writers have explored experimental as well as realistic narratives commenting on the social and political conditions in Arab lands. For

them, realism is neither a period concept nor a literary movement, but rather an artistic approach to a reality that is complex and dynamic. Furthermore, it is more than the details of external reality since it contains various conscious and unconscious levels of a person's interactions with the world. It came into being in the Arabic narratives amidst the nationalist atmosphere of the 1920s and 1930s, which led writers to give expression to the Egyptian personality by writing on themes pertaining to the everyday life of peasants and the lower classes. In Egypt, Realism knows no theoretical manifesto because its range is wide, embracing all forms of the genre (social, lyrical, humorous, and idyllic).

cal manifesto because its range is wide, embracing all forms of the genre (social, lyrical, humorous, and idyllic).

In the postmodern era experimental narratives have acquired an eminent position in the literary production of several Arab writers. One of the prominent Egyptian novelists is Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006). Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988. He is immersed in the Arabic tradition. Examples of his novels are The Children of Gebelawi (1959), The Harafish (1977), Arabian Nights and Days (1981) and The Journey of Ibn Fattouma (1983). In his novels, Mahfouz uses storytelling

"In the postmodern era experimental narratives have acquired an eminent position in the literary production of several Arab writers."

threads reminiscent of the Thousand and One Nights, Ibn Battuta's Travels, and other prehistoric novelistic forms in the Arabic tradition. With Mahfouz, the realistic trend became more complex. The way he sought to include a diversity of characters constituted a problem for him, and he found the solution in linking many different characters through their family ties. This is clear in *The Beginning and the End* and later in his trilogy *The Palace Walk*, *Palace of desire* and *Sugar Street*.

Another experimental Egyptian novelist is Gamal Al-Ghitany (1945-2105). Al-Ghitany uses the historical novel as a means of commenting on the present. For long, the historical novel was used in Egypt as a form of escape from the present and its problems. Later generations of writers experimented with this form as a way of examining and understanding the present. Al- Ghitani's *Zayni Barakat* (1974) appears to be a historical novel, but all the characters are imaginary, springing from Ghitani's fecund imagination. It is meant to present an image of present-day reality in veiled form. The title lends it an aura of historical authenticity. The chief innovation in *Zayni Barakat* is the use of the form of the historical novel for the purpose of commenting, examining and understanding the present. It is not an escape from the present and its problems.

In Syria, the works of Ghada al-Samman (1942-) are far removed from the conventions of realism, as exemplified by her description of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1991). What she evokes is not a social or political reality, but an inner truth, the state of the city's soul. Her most significant works are *Beirut 75* and *Beirut Nightmares* (1976). They represent attempts to convey the brutality of war using the full range of experimental narrative techniques. *Beirut 75* is notable for its prophetic quality. It does not go so far as to predict the actual event of a civil war, but it describes a psy-

chological and moral condition reflecting all the elements of the social collapse to come. *Her Night of the first Billion* (*Laylat al-Milyar*, 1986) is a thematically multilayered novel in which she skillfully blends realism with fantasy.

In Palestine, Emile Habibi (1922-1996) is one of the contemporary Arab novelists who has revolutionized the form by going back to Arabic traditions in prose and poetry. Moreover, he is considered one of the first Arab novelists to fully exploit the technique of *pastiche*, infusing the novel with a multitude of quotations including poetry, short story, folk tale, memoir and autobiography, and other literary forms. Also, he fuses the *maqamah* examples of jokes and proverbs all into a single structure.

More to the point, the literature that is considered original and moving is not that which imitates the Western tradition, but it is the literature that creates.

In conclusion, Arab writers like Naguib Mahfouz, Gamal Al-Ghitany, Ghada Al-Samman and Emile Habibi have shifted the development of the Arabic novel, and have redefined the meaning of drawing elements from both their own heritage and the European genre of the novel. In that sense, the concept of

world literature has been transformed, breaking through the Western bars that imprisoned literatures produced by other nations from East to West. More to the point, the literature that is considered original and moving is not that which imitates the Western tradition, but it is the literature that creates. Reviewing his trajectory as a novelist, Mahfouz states: "The European novel was sacred, and departure from this form was sacrilege." However, he goes further and adds: "I do not imitate either the *maqama* or Joyce. Frankly, what irritates me these days is imitation, even of tradition" (quoted in Ouyang 86).

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ARTICLE CRITIQUE

AN ANALYSIS OF LEARNING BARRIERS: THE SAUDI ARABIAN CONTEXT

[Khan, Intakhab. (2011). International Education Studies, 4, 242-247.]

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"Khan presents interesting information about learning barriers - and other factors - that have a strong impact on the learning process, and he uses very good sources of linguists and writers which help in supporting the general idea about barriers found in any place around the world. ."

In his article "An analysis of Learning Barriers: The Saudi Arabian Context" (2011), Intakhab Khan discusses the relationship between the learning and teaching processes, and the barriers that contribute to unsuccessful learning. Some barriers have a strong impact, such as social and motivational barriers. The article explains teachers' characteristics, and the role of teachers in stimulating their students' motivation in order to develop the processes of learning and teaching. Teachers need good preparation and a commitment towards their jobs to become professionals. The article describes the educational situation in Saudi Arabia - students face some barriers and exhibit a lack of motivation, and most teachers are not well equipped to teach, needing some training before embarking on a teaching career. While the article describes the barriers in very general terms, it fails when it applies - without evidence - the generalized judgments to the situation in Saudi education.

Khan presents interesting information about learning barriers (as well as other factors) that have a strong impact on the

learning process, and he cites very good sources of linguists and writers supporting the general idea about barriers found anywhere around the world. He fails, however, to use any source or investigation related to the case of Saudi education. Khan does not mention any statistics to support his claim or strengthen his case. Instead, he bases his judgement on his own experience as an assistant professor at King Abdulaziz University from 2008, referencing his own students; he does not refer to any formal studies by either himself or other researchers. For example, in his article he describes the attitude of Saudi students and teachers as follows: "It has been found that neither teachers nor students are properly motivated towards educational goals". However, he concedes that "exceptional cases exist". This means that the general (or default) situation in Saudi Arabia is a lack of motivation. Another generalization is that "Saudi students are negatively affected by scheduling issues". It is illogical to provide information without citing credible sources to support the

"The Ministry of Education in Saudi proposes very strict criteria for teaching. The National Center for Assessment (Qiyas) uses special tests with specific standards that graduates need to pass in order to have a teaching job."

"Khan, in his article, uses a lot of generalizations without any evidence to support his ideas. The majority of Saudi students and teachers do not have negative attitudes toward learning, and education would not have developed during the years of establishing of new universities, with a huge number of students."

ideas; however, Khan never discloses how he acquired this information, or how he came to these conclusions.

Some teachers do not have a passion for teaching, and only do it for the salary and benefits. Khan discusses this dangerous situation, which may lead to negative effects for the students. He writes: "If a teacher is in a teaching profession just by chance, he won't be able to serve the learner community as he should. It is simply because of the reason that, to him, teaching is just a means of earning livelihood - an occupation". Then Khan criticizes the level of efficiency of teachers in Saudi Arabia: "Most of the teachers in Saudi (local or international) are not found well prepared, while going for teaching, as they have no ready lesson plans or even schemes of work(sow)". Khan once again offers a generalization by using the word "most", but the situation is probably not the same everywhere in the kingdom. The Ministry of Education in Saudi has laid down very strict criteria for teaching. The National Center for Assessment (QIYAS) administers special tests meeting specific standards that graduates need to pass in order to be eligible for a teaching job. Another requirement is the Diploma of Education, which is a prerequisite for those intending entering the teaching profession.

As society plays an important role in the development of the learning process, Khan writes about the social barriers in general - and the social responsibilities for Saudi students in particular - which stand as obstacles in Saudi students' educational way. The article claims that "The parents, especially fathers, in Saudi are not much worried about their children's education or future career". If that were true, we would not see

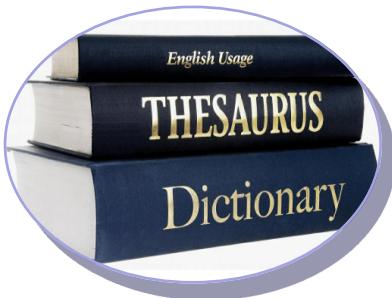
full schools everywhere in Saudi Arabia, some students travelling long distances and most being actively supported by parents. In Saudi Arabia, there are 33 universities, of which 24 are public and 9 are private. This number will increase in the coming years. Also, 70,000 Saudi students were sent to different countries around the world as part of the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program. "The program seeks to accommodate thousands of graduates from secondary school and university to study abroad in a variety of specializations in accordance with the national needs of the local, regional and international economic trends of labor market" (Ministry of Education). If there were no encouragement from the families of those students, or if social responsibilities prohibited them, would they have had the ambition to complete their education? These facts confirm that neither students' parents nor social responsibilities can prevent them from gaining knowledge.

Khan, in his article, uses numerous generalizations without any evidence to support his allegations. The majority of Saudi students and teachers do not have a negative attitude toward learning, and education would not have developed during the years of establishing new universities with a huge number of students. The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia puts a premium on the preparation for new teachers before hiring them. Social barriers do not hamper education in Saudi Arabia, and a large number of students are studying both at home and abroad.

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Language Usage

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Idiom in English	An Achilles' heel
Meaning in English	a weak or vulnerable spot in something or someone which is otherwise strong
Idiom in Arabic	نقطة ضعف - عقب أخيل
Historical Origin	According to Greek mythology, Thetis held her young son Achilles by the heel while dipping him into the river Styx to make him invulnerable. Achilles' heel, however, remained dry and was his only weakness. After years as a brave and invincible warrior, Achilles was killed during the Trojan war by an arrow which pierced his heel. His deadly enemy Paris had learned of his secret and aimed at the weak spot. The full story is told in Homer's Iliad.
Examples from Literature	A social climber can ill afford an Achilles heel, and this particular weakness on Hutchins' part would probably be disastrous to him sooner or later. JOHN WAIN, Hurry On Down, 1953. Usage Tip: As in the quotation, there may be no apostrophe. Most people would insert one, however. Originally used of people and their character, it may now be applied to projects and plans.
Examples from daily life	I'm trying to lose weight, but ice cream is my Achilles' heel. The food supply proved to be the nation's Achilles' heel in its defense against terrorist attacks

Idiom in English	The acid test
Meaning in English	a foolproof test for assessing the value of something
Idiom in Arabic	اختبار فاصل - دليل دامغ - اختبار قاطع
Historical Origin	A sure way to find out whether a metal was pure gold was to test it with aqua fortis, or nitric acid. Most metals are corroded away by nitric acid but gold remains unaffected. Although the original acid test has been known for centuries, the phrase in its figurative use is only a hundred years old. If something survives the acid test it has been proved true beyond the shadow of a doubt.
Examples from Literature	The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will. WOODROW WILSON, Address, January 8, 1918.
Examples from daily life	The senator doesn't look too popular just now, but the acid test will be if he gets reelected. The new team faced its first acid test when it played the national champions.



A Word Recalled*

Sounds, images, signs, are recorded in
Permanent black

My Creator says, *kun faya kuun*,
Like all the uncountable and unknown
I wake up after a sleep deep
In due measure and proposition

I wait anxiously for another call, not the last one,
Since I live forever

Like a river I run into ocean

I see myself in the mirror
Lines change, shapes await Sculptor's ultimate grace

Beyond the future, before the past, throughout the present
I search for a single word



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* First published in *Spectrum*, Volume 4, June 2006 (Journal of the Department of English, Dhaka University).

Love

By Alvina Yousaf

Which soil is fertile without its sun?
For there is love or there is none.

Love is but a seedling in the ground
Though flakes of perils fly around.
Say "à votre service" when it calls
For love stands firm or quickly falls.



rolling with the stone



By

Erich Beer

Language Instructor,
English Department

dead end into stepping stone

not dead at all
and not the end
pulsating with life, in fact

dead end into stepping stone

unexpected redirection
changing gears
up for the challenge

dead end into stepping stone

new destination beckoning
joy wells up inside
rearing to go

dead end into stepping stone

Exasperated Night



BY

Mahmudul Haque

Lecturer,
English Language Centre

Grappling to capture the contingent feelings,
Invocation of association some scanty words' endeavors,
While looking into the present silence of regular night.

Spreading eyes towards the heaven
To predict the obnubilated future
Through the stored association of some pasts.

In the efforts of measuring, failure resides in consequence.
Neither wild nor educative the guesses
Can hold any phenomenal conviction.

Cognition getting tired in production,
Sleeplessness induced by exhaustion,
Night ends in exasperation.



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Poet: Zohour Al mandil

The Path of Oblivion

درب النسيان

My memory has begun
To hurriedly gather its scattered leaves
On the paths of severe deprivation ,
So it similarly has,
in quest for
The route to oblivion,
Swirling me into the hillocks of
abandonment and separation
Collecting the leftovers of love withering
flowers

Sparkling off and Declaring a rebellion
Against flimsy excuses
Walking on the pavements
of your ardent love,,
Opulent with sorrows
Shrieking as a forlorn star
dipping into delirium ..

بدأت ذاكرتي
تلملم أوراقها المبعثرة
في دروب الحرمان
بدأت
تبَحُثُ عَنْ طرِيقِ النسيان ..
تطوّفُ بي في روابي
الصدّ والهجران ..
تجمع بقايا أزهار الهوى

معلنة العصيان ..
ضد المعاذرة !
تمشي على أرصفة غرامك
المليئة بالأحزان ..
صارخة كنجمة وحيدة
مستحمة بالهذيان ..



Continued from page 6

The enchanted sun is lingering in the west as if it is taking (a) rest on the horizon. The sunset is always a pleasing sight to enjoy. This protracted sunset, on the one hand, is providing the tired sailors with recreation and on the other, it has been touched by the feeling of tiredness and is taking rest itself. This prolonged sunset also procrastinates the evening to ensure long lasting enjoyment for the sailors. The wind that blows over here is not again very fast. It is slow and swooning as if it is panting wearily like the one who has dreamt a bad dream. Everything has caught an air of languor. In the eyes of those sailors, the sea also appears to be weary:

... , but evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wondering fields of barren foam.*

The moon is there to heighten the enjoyment and make the island perfect becoming refuge for those tired souls. Poppy flowers are drooping in sleep. The wind is laden with lotus dust. There is sweet music falling down from the blissful sky. People keep their eyes half shut; they do not talk but whisper and pass their time ruminating the happy memories of past life. The befitting setting allows and encourages them to retire from their hard life and indulge in affluent amenities over here avoiding adverse hateful dark blue sea. They like this becoming and lulling lap of nature in the midst of galangale, amaranth and molly. We find a very bounteous nature which sympathizes those tired soldiers and becomes a benevolent host for them.

Here the poet successfully projects the inner feelings of the soldiers into the external nature. The inner world of the exhausted sailors finds superb expression here where the objects of nature are touched and swayed by the emotion of these wondering wayfarers. Here the moon is stuck over the head in day time, the sun is lingering in the west, streams here 'fall and pause and fall', poppy flowers hang in sleep and soothing sound descends down from the heaven. All these make these island a dreamland, a befitting lulling lap for the sailors to rest their immeasurably tired bones. To conclude, in Tennyson's adept depiction of nature, nature is found to be more and more humane and sympathizing.

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