

# Social Studies in the Spotlight

## Digital Collections, Primary Sources, and the Common Core

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After years of emphasis on reading, writing, and STEM, social studies finally have a chance to shine.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) stress the importance of history and social studies knowledge in college and career readiness. A wide range of primary source materials is available through electronic databases, digital collections, and websites that can be used to address this need.

Inquiry-based, technology-enhanced approaches allow students to develop rich content knowledge while acquiring essential habits of informational reading and writing. Let's explore practical approaches to using primary sources and other engaging materials to develop information skills and promote high-level thinking.

By examining six types of digital primary sources, you'll get a sense for ways the school librarian can connect informational reading and writing experiences with the CCSS. These include articles, books, infographics, legal documents, letters, and photographs.

### ARTICLES

Newspaper and magazine articles are an effective way to help students understand the context of historical events and movements. For instance, John O'Sullivan wrote two articles introducing the idea of manifest destiny. Students can read scanned copies of "The Great Nation of Futurity" and "Annexation" in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. By reading the original articles rather than a paragraph in a textbook, youth get a much better idea of why O'Sullivan used the term *manifest destiny* when speaking out in opposition to the annexation of Texas. Under the

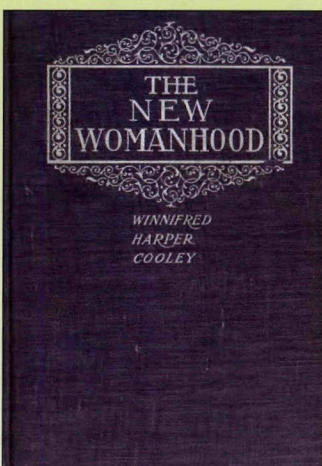
category of "Integration of Knowledge and Ideas" in the CCSS, students are asked to identify how evidence in text supports the author's claims. These articles become evidence in an exploration of the various perspectives on westward expansion.

### BOOKS

Textbooks often include excerpts from works rather than showing the context in which a work was published. Many history lessons use poems like "The New Paradise" to reflect the women's movement. However, in some cases these works are shown out of context, and the author and publication date aren't even provided. Students may wish to know who wrote the poem, when, and why to address the CCSS related to "Key Ideas and Details." Use digital book collections such as Archive.org to locate the original source of the work. In this case, the poem by Winnifred Harper Cooley was published in *The New Womanhood* (1904). The dedication provides interesting insights into the support Cooley received from her mother and husband. This finding could stimulate a discussion of whether the families of other suffragettes encouraged or discouraged their efforts in the women's movement.

TO MY MOTHER,  
IDA HUSTED HARPER,  
Whom I consider not only a great writer, but the  
most maternal of women,  
AND  
TO MY HUSBAND,  
REV. GEORGE ELIOT COOLEY,  
Who is my great inspiration,—the sympathizer  
with my successes, the comforter of my  
failures,—one who believes in the highest  
opportunities for women being the  
only salvation of the race,  
I DEDICATE  
THIS CHILD OF MY MIND AND HEART.

THE NEW PARADISE.  
God give us women—who will do and dare,  
And in the larger issues dare to do!  
Girls who are strong and brave as well as chaste,  
(And men as pure and gentle as they're strong.)  
Women who fear not petty social spite,—  
The fruit of ignorance, the cause of war—  
But dare to THINK and ACT, that they may rise  
Toward the full stature of a sexless God!  
  
We call our land a free one; let us prove  
What a democracy can rise to, in its power,  
With every voice, though feeble, recognized,  
And every daughter honored as a son.  
If such shall be, no longer men will sneer,  
Or fawn and cringe at passion's lightest whim;  
Mistress and queen will lay the scepter by,  
And "master" will be stricken from the book.  
  
In the sweet reason of our larger day,  
Each must his work contribute to the whole,  
Knowing, together, we must rise or fall.  
Man will not look to God, and woman find  
"Her God in Man," as sang the bigot-bard,  
But both will pray and toil in union,  
Finding the sweetness of togetherness,  
United labor, heaven upon earth!



"The New Paradise," a poem in *The New Womanhood* (1904) by Winnifred Harper Cooley, along with the dedication from the book, found at [archive.org](http://archive.org)

Rather than simply reading historical documents, involve youth in deep-thinking activities such as making comparisons among different perspectives, using passages as evidence to support arguments, and drawing conclusions based on multiple sources. The "Craft and





Structure” section of CCSS asks students to “evaluate authors’ differing points of view.” For instance, students might compare *The Promise of American Life* by Herbert Croley with *The New Freedom* by Woodrow Wilson. Both of these short books are available through archive.org.

## INFOGRAPHICS

In recent years, infographics have become a popular way to express complex ideas using visual representations of data. However, this approach has been around for centuries. “Stowage of the British slave ship *Brookes*” infographic, first published in 1788 by British abolitionists, is an excellent way to engage youth in a fascinating primary source document. Use the document to generate questions about the use of slave ships and the slave experience. Then read *Africa Is My Home: A Child of the Amistad* (2013) by Monica Edinger for a narrative based on a true story of one child’s experience. These two experiences help teachers address the need to integrate technical analysis of charts with qualitative analysis associated with the narrative found in the CCSS “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas” area.

## LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Sometimes a nonfiction book can lead youth to ask questions and seek primary

source documents. Look for books that connect with acts, proclamations, or other legal documents. Introduce students to the book *Let Me Play: The Story of Title IX: The Law That Changed the Future of Girls in America* (2005) by Karen Blumenthal. Read aloud passages that talk about the discrimination female athletes experienced in the 1960s. Then explain how a modest, focused law caused a revolution on athletic fields across the United States. Ask students to read the Title IX law, examine the time line of changes in the law, and explain the purpose of the law and why it changed how boys and girls were treated in terms of school sports. Through this activity students learn to determine the central ideas in a primary source as required in the “Key Ideas and Details” section of the CCSS.

In addition to the use of older laws when studying history, also look at new laws and reauthorized acts. Begin with a current law, such as the 2013 Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act. Are we ready for a pandemic? How do Congressional acts help with preparedness? The “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas” section of the CCSS asks students to “compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.” Introduce students to several secondary sources that explore the history of pandemics, such as the new nonfiction book *Pandemic Survival: It’s*

## JUNIOR FICTION

### DISCOVERY AND CHANGE

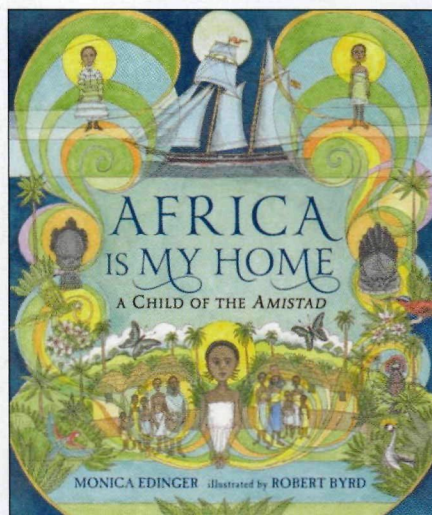
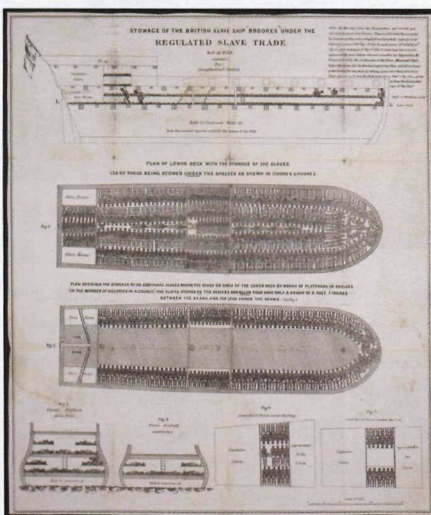
Mull, Brandon. **Arcade Catastrophe** [The Candy Shop War, Bk. 2]. Shadow Mountain, 2012. 416p. \$18.99. 978-1-609-07179-0. Grades 4-7. Can Nate and his friends figure out what’s going on at the new amusement center despite the mysterious disappearance of Mozag and John Dart? Winning stamps, club membership – and then what? Things are not what they seem...

\_\_\_\_. **Chasing the Prophecy** (Beyonders, Bk. 3). Aladdin, 2013. 512p. \$19.99. 978-1-4169-9796-2. Grades 4-7. Jason and Rachel gather friends together, according to the prophecy, to defeat Maldor and free Lyrian. The chance of success (or even surviving) is small. Will either ever see Earth again?

\_\_\_\_. **Seeds of Rebellion** (Beyonders, Bk. 2). Aladdin, 2012. 512p. \$19.99. 978-1-416-99794-8. Grades 4-7. After Jason is involuntarily transported back to Colorado from Lyrian, he can’t forget Rachel and the others left behind, who believe he’s the hero prophesied to free Lyrian from evil emperor Maldor. Then, a way to return opens . . . and the adventure continues.

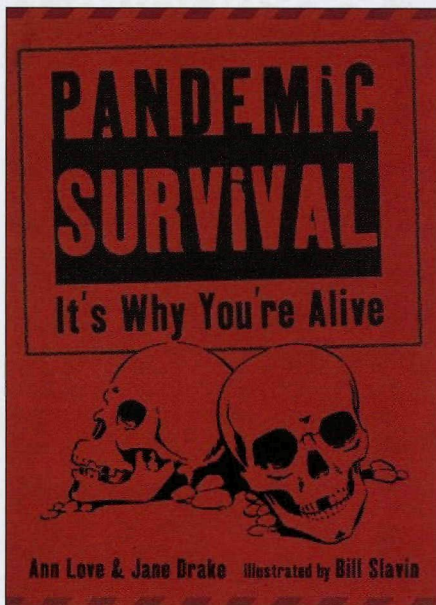
Rinaldi, Ann. **Leigh Ann’s Civil War**. Harcourt, 2009. 320p. \$17. 978-0-15-206513-3. Grades 6-8. When the Yankees attack Leigh Ann’s Georgia town, she tries to make them think the town mill is French property, but instead is arrested as a traitor and sent with other women and children to Marietta, Ohio.

Shurtliff, Liesl. **Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin**. Knopf, 2013. 272p. \$16.99. 978-0-307-97793-9. Grades 3-6. Twelve-year-old Rump has spent his whole life living down the partial name his dying mother left him, but when he discovers he can spin straw into gold, he knows his life will change. But in which direction . . . ?



Stowage of the British slave ship *Brookes* infographic and the book *Africa Is My Home: A Child of the Amistad*.



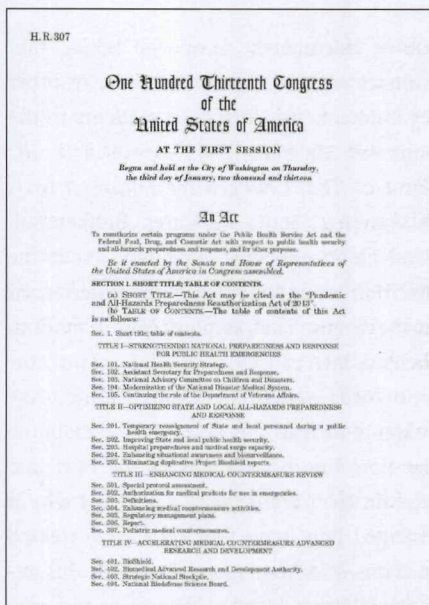


*Pandemic Survival: It's Why You're Alive* and the 2013 Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act.

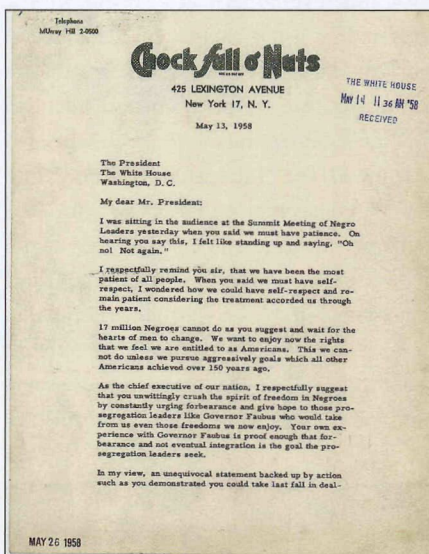
*Why You're Alive* (2013) by Ann Love and Jane Drake. It explores the history of how society survived the plague, yellow fever, smallpox, and other pandemics. Also bring out other works of nonfiction that focus on particular pandemics, such as *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793* (2003) by Jim Murphy.

## LETTERS

Use a primary source document such as a letter to generate curiosity, stimulate discussion, and provoke questions. A letter from Jackie Robinson to President Eisenhower (1958) housed at the United States National Archives is a great way to jumpstart a discussion of the Civil Rights Movement. The first black man to officially play in the big leagues, Jackie Robinson was also a civil rights advocate. In small groups, ask students to share their questions about the letter and learn more about what caused Robinson to write this letter. Youth will soon be searching the Internet for the meaning of the letterhead "Chock Full o' Nuts" and trying to locate the original speech referenced by Robinson. Both the letterhead and his speech are easy for students to find online and analyze. These types of experiences encourage students to use chains of primary sources to build



understandings using multiple sources of information.



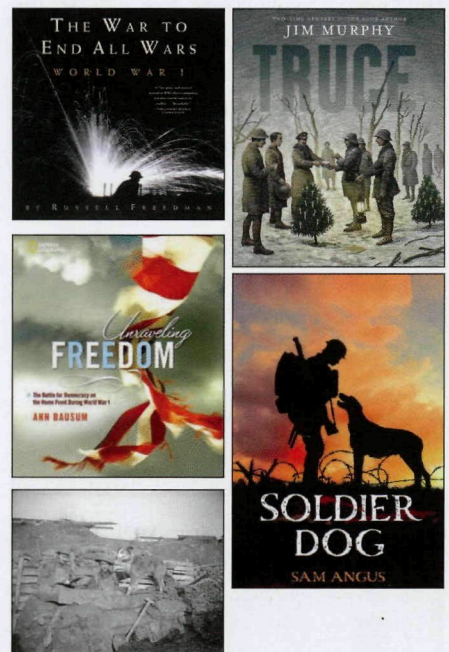
A Letter from Jackie Robinson to President Eisenhower (1958).

The Digital Public Library of America (<http://dp.la>) has developed collaborations with libraries, archives, and museums across the United States. It's working to develop exhibitions, maps, and time lines that make locating key primary sources easier for the public. For instance, their "This Land Is Your Land: Parks and Public Spaces" is an exhibit focusing on the history of public parks. The online exhibition includes a digitized copy of a letter writ-

ten in 1971 by landscape photographer and environmentalist Ansel Adams expressing his perspective on the need for the Yosemite National Park Wilderness Plan. Ask students to analyze the author's premises and seek corroborating evidence.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Historical photos are a great tool for generating interest in historical events. Begin with close examination of historical photographs. For instance, ask a small group to analyze images from World War I from places like the Imperial War Museum (<http://www.iwm.org.uk/history>). These images help set the stage for an exploration of the time period. Provide challenging texts and allow students to read independently, connecting the images with their reading as required by the "Range of Reading" CCSS. Bring out books like *Truce: The Day the Soldiers Stopped Fight-*



*The War to End All Wars: World War I* (2010) by Russell Freedman, *Truce: The Day the Soldiers Stopped Fighting* (2009) by Jim Murphy, *Unraveling Freedom: The Battle for Democracy on the Home Front during World War I* (2010) by Ann Bausum, *Soldier Dog* (2013) by Sam Angus, and a World War I photograph.





## BEST NEW SOFTWARE

ing (2009) by Jim Murphy, *The War to End All Wars: World War I* (2010) by Russell Freedman, and *Unraveling Freedom: The Battle for Democracy on the Home Front during World War I* (2010) by Ann Baumsum. Or connect youth with engaging historical fiction such as *Soldier Dog* (2013) by Sam Angus, which is based on the true story of dogs in war.

## MAKING IT WORK

When seeking digital collections with primary source documents, try to find the most authoritative source. For instance, look to government websites for laws and the National Archives for historical documents. A great place to start is the Our Documents website (<http://ourdocuments.gov/>) sponsored by the U.S. National Archives, National History Day, and USA Freedom Corps.

Digital collections can sometimes be overwhelming for students. Seek galleries and “best of” collections that help narrow the choices. For instance, the Flickr Commons (<http://www.flickr.com/commons>) project focuses on providing popular documents from museums and archives around the world. The National Archives UK at Flickr also provides document sets from around the globe.

Although excerpts and transcriptions can be very useful alongside a document, it's important to provide young people with the entire primary source. For instance, students might be exploring the impact and reactions to the Enrollment Act of 1863. When working with an act, use the Congressional Record for the complete document, such as “An Act for Enrolling and Calling Out the National Forces” (March 3, 1863). In the case of a newspaper, insights can be gained by reading the adjoining articles to get a sense of the context and times in addition to the document itself. For instance, “The Conscription a Great National Benefit” was an article in the *New York Times* on July 13, 1863. This article is surrounded by other news items about the American Civil War.

Many youth are accustomed to using websites like Wikipedia. Show students

how to scroll to the bottom of the Wikipedia page to find the external links that often connect with original digital reproductions and transcriptions. For instance, the *Declaration of the Immediate Causes . . .* Wikipedia page describes the proclamation made by the government of South Carolina in 1860. At the bottom of the wiki page, links are provided to digitized versions of the document.

Involve students in selecting primary source documents and building their own questions. The social media site Padlet (<http://padlet.com/>) is a great tool for sharing questions. For instance, students might post a primary source that gets them thinking about consumers and consuming through history.



Consumers through history Padlet project.

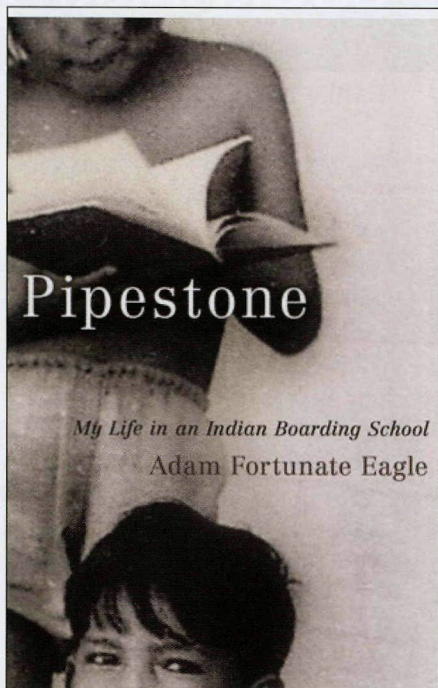
You don't need to do all the planning yourself. Many websites that contain digital collections also provide primary source documents with lesson plans. The Library of Congress Teachers Home (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/>) contains links to many resources, such as the “Assimilation through Education” teacher's guide. This resource provides teaching materials, analysis tools, and a set of primary sources including reports, photographs, maps, cartoons, interviews, and audio files related to the late-nineteenth-century practice of removing Indian children from their families and sending them to boarding schools. Pair these materials with quality works of historical fiction and nonfiction such as *Pipstone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School* (2010) by Adam Fortunate Eagle. *Pipstone* weaves together historical docu-

**Study Sync** (<http://www.studysync.com>) Gr. 2 - 12. Imagine a means of providing students with practice in reading, writing, and using digital tools that works on all platforms and tablets. The tool includes a way to collect assignments, scores rubrics, and has methods for peer review as well as teacher critique. **Study Sync** is an online tool that integrates the worlds of reading, writing, and the new assessment skills of incorporating digital items. The site includes a library of over 500 items, from class literature and non-fiction excerpts to video clips. Assignment options range from reading and writing, a writing prompt, a video clip/reading/writing, to a 140-character exercise.

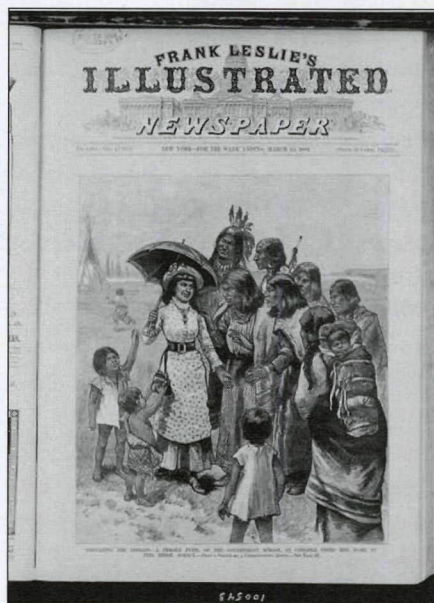
Teachers can easily set up groups, add students, and create assignments. Assignments can be crafted from the existing library, customized by starting with an existing assignment, or crafted from scratch in the writing prompt and blast options. Due dates and review dates can be added. Scoring rubrics, ranging from AP, SAT, Common Core, and other choices, can be attached to the assignment. Once the student completes the assignment, she has several options to review and revise the writing. Teacher comments are made electronically and stored for the student to review. A quick reporting feature provides a look at progress to a group and an individual student.

This tool is one of the few straightforward, well-developed, and useful tools for educators as we enter the world of Common Core, new assessments, and the stress on reading instruction at all levels. Be sure to explore this yourself and help your colleagues see the connections to their classroom.





*Pipestone: My Life in an Indian Boarding School* (2010) by Adam Fortunate Eagle and "Assimilation through Education" from the Library of Congress.



[gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr307enr/pdf/BILLS-113hr307enr.pdf](http://gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr307enr/pdf/BILLS-113hr307enr.pdf)

Adams, Ansel (1971). "This Land Is Your Land: Parks and Public Spaces." Available <http://dp.la/exhibitions/exhibits/show/this-land/building/ansel-adams>

"Assimilation through Education." Library of Congress. Available <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/assimilation/>

Cooley, Winnifred Harper (1904). "The New Paradise." *The New Womanhood*. Available <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924013851435>

Croley, Herbert (1909). *The Promise of American Life*. Available <http://archive.org/details/promiseamerican00crologoo>

Letter from Jackie Robinson to President Eisenhower (1958). Available <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/5669918642/in/set-72157628792741255>

National Archives UK at Flickr. Available: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/sets/>

O'Sullivan, John (1839). "The Great Nation of Futurity." Available: <http://goo.gl/Z1AZ0i>

O'Sullivan, John (1845). "Annexation." Available <http://goo.gl/GfUHxq>

Stowage of the British Slave Ship *Brookes* (1788). Available <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/rbc/rbpe.28204300>

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Available <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/coord/titleixstat.php>

Wilson, Woodrow (1919). *The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People*. Available <http://archive.org/stream/newfreedomcall-fo00wilsuoft>

ments, photographs, and anecdotes from the life of the author, an American Indian who spent ten years at the Pipestone Indian Boarding School in the 1930s and 1940s.

## CONCLUSION

When deep questions are combined with authentic resources, students acquire essential content-area knowledge and also learn to evaluate evidence, build persuasive arguments, and draw meaningful conclusions.

As part of a push to address the CCSS, educators are being asked to move away from textbook-based activities and toward the use of primary source documents. School librarians and classroom teachers can work together to create efficient, effective, and appealing learning environments for today's students using the many digital primary sources available online.

Adapted from the presentation "Social Studies in the Spotlight: Inquiry, Primary Sources, and Informational Reading, 7–12" by Annette Lamb.

Primary Source Documents 2013 Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Re-authorization Act. Available: [SIMPLY READ BOOKS presents  
the \*Murilla Gorilla\* series of

EARLY READERS

\\*  
"Readers will be hungry for more."  
— \*New York Times\*

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ILLUSTRATED BY JACQUI LEE

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the messy, funny, loveable jungle detective!

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