

1984

BY
GEORGE ORWELL

A NEW PLAY BY
ROBERT ICKE AND
DUNCAN
MACMILLAN



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

1984

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Nineteen Eighty-Four

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This adaptation of 1984 was first produced as a co-production between Headlong and Nottingham Playhouse, where it had its first performance on Friday, September 13, 2013. Following a national tour, it then opened at the Almeida Theatre on Saturday, February 8, 2014. It was directed by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan; the set design was by Chloe Lamford; the lighting design was by Natasha Chivers; the sound design was by Tom Gibbons; the video design was by Tim Reid. The original cast was as follows:

WINSTON Mark Arends
JULIA Hara Yannas
O'BRIEN Tim Dutton
CHARRINGTON Stephen Fewell
MARTIN Christopher Patrick Nolan
SYME Matthew Spencer
PARSONS Gavin Spokes
MRS. PARSONS Mandi Symonds

The production transferred to the Playhouse Theatre, West End, on a bright, cold day, April 28, 2014, with the following cast changes:

WINSTON Sam Crane
PARSONS Simon Coates

1984 opened on Broadway at the Hudson Theatre on June 22, 2017, produced by Scott Rudin and Sonia Friedman. It was directed by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan; the set and costume designer was Chloe Lamford; the lighting designer was Natasha Chivers; the sound designer was Tom Gibbons, and the video designer was Tim Reid. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| WINSTON SMITH | Tom Sturridge |
| JULIA | Olivia Wilde |
| O'BRIEN | Reed Birney |
| CHARRINGTON | Michael Potts |
| MARTIN | Carl Hendrick Louis |
| SYME | Nick Mills |
| PARSONS | Wayne Duvall |
| MRS. PARSONS | Cara Seymour |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Plays are the work of many hands, and this text owes a debt of gratitude to the cast and creative team of the first production, as well as to the actors and academics who gave their time and ingenuity to development workshops, and to the brilliant teams at Headlong and at Nottingham Playhouse.

We would also like to especially thank for their invaluable input at all stages from inception to production, Rupert Goold, Giles Croft, and Jenny Worton; for their extensive support with the production, Henny Finch, Stephen Daly, and Jasper Gilbert; for their feedback at various stages, Sarah Grochala, Daniel Raggett, Anthony Almeida, Robin Paxton, Jeremy Herrin, and Bill Hamilton; for their time and patience, Rachel Taylor and Katie Mitchell; and for all their love and support, Zara Tempest-Walters and Effie Woods.

—R.I. and D.M.

FOREWORD: APPENDIX

The ending of George Orwell's final novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, is notoriously bleak. "If you want a picture of the future," Winston has been told, "imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever." Sitting in a café, defeated, drunk and waiting for a bullet, he loves his oppressor. Winston loves Big Brother. As we all know, that's the end of the story.

Except it isn't.

After "THE END," there is an Appendix, "The Principles of Newspeak," that many of the novel's readers miss altogether. The American Book-of-the-Month Club, in discussions to publish the first US edition of the novel, demanded that Orwell cut the Appendix in its entirety (along with much of Goldstein's book) before publication. "I can't possibly agree to [it]," Orwell wrote to his US agent in 1949. "It would alter the whole colour of the book and leave out a good deal which is essential. It would also—though the judges, having read the parts that it is proposed to cut out, may not appreciate this—make the story unintelligible." Orwell stood to lose at least £40,000 in American sales. To Orwell, clearly the Appendix was essential to understanding the story.

By the end of the novel, though, the reader should already know about the Appendix. At the first mention of Newspeak (on page four or five in most editions) is the only footnote in the entire novel:

1. Newspeak was the official language of Oceania.

For an account of its structure and etymology see Appendix.

The reader might notice that Newspeak, oddly, is defined in the past tense. We might take up this invitation to read the Appendix before reading on. We might realize that fiction doesn't usually have footnotes or appendices.

The Appendix is fiction pretending to be fact. Written in a period long after the novel's 1984, a time in which the Party appears to have fallen, it reconsiders the text that precedes it.

It is written in "Oldspeak," our language, which should have been made obsolete, and concerns itself with the "final, perfected version" of Newspeak "as embodied in the eleventh edition of the [Newspeak] Dictionary." In the novel's 1984, "the tenth edition" is

not due to appear for some months.

It refers to Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, and Dickens and quotes the Declaration of Independence at length (the latter particularly unlikely to survive Party censorship). It finishes by telling us that “...the final adoption of Newspeak had been fixed for so late a date as 2050,” reinforcing the point its own presence makes: that the final adoption of Newspeak never happened, and its “principles” are so obsolete that they now need an explanatory Appendix. The final word of the Appendix (and of the novel) is “2050.”

O’Brien tells Winston Smith that he will be lifted “clean out from the stream of history.” Yet, there he is, named once, off-hand, in the Appendix, telling us the name of the Records Department, “in which Winston Smith worked.” We don’t know how—but Winston Smith made it into history.

But if this Appendix is written by someone who has read the novel from the future and appended these historical comments on the language, what *is* the novel in their world? Is it a Party record on Winston which survived into this post-Party future?

Something that didn’t get into the shredder or the furnace before the records offices were stormed? Or is it something to do with Winston’s diary? We don’t know quite whether to trust it. The Party controlled all records. How has this “account” of Winston’s life survived?

According to the Orwell Estate, ours is the first attempt to dramatize the Appendix in any medium. It never felt less than “essential”: given the novel’s interest in records and documents and their relationship to truth, the Appendix perfectly complicates the novel that precedes it. Treating Orwell’s Appendix as essential makes his novel something far more subjective and complex than simply a bleak futuristic dystopia: At the final moment, it daringly opens up the novel’s form and reflects its central questions back to the reader. Can you trust evidence? How do you ever know what’s really true? And when and where are you, the reader, right now?

—R.I. and D.M.
September 2050

ADAPTORS' NOTE

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a novel profoundly interested in—and innovative in—form. The formal complexity of the novel is inextricably bound up with its politics, its psychology, and its plot. In creating this adaptation it was our aim to fully translate Orwell's novel into a theatrical form: to keep its formal complexity intact and, in so doing, accurately present the ideas and argument of the book.

Alongside the text of our adaptation, we wanted to provide some notes which would explicate some of our formal/adaptation choices and aid the process of a director and designer coming to it anew. This is partly because this adaptation was created in an unconventional way: Instead of a writer creating an adaptation and presenting it to a director, we (Robert and Duncan) shared the roles equally and so the text and production were created simultaneously. As such, the text for *1984* is a partial representation of the production and, in some places, bears further explaining.

These notes aren't intended to be prescriptive. Directors, of course, must have freedom to find their own production of the play and, most of all, to allow Orwell's novel and ideas to speak in their language, to the form and pressure of their times, their country, and their audience. These notes are instead an attempt to articulate the ways in which the central mechanisms of the adaptation operate and outline the elements which aren't immediately apparent on the page.

Orwell's novel holds a particular position in our cultural collective subconscious. Some of its terminologies are now ours—terms such as “Big Brother,” “Newspeak,” and “Room 101” have taken on cultural lives of their own, outside the book. Inevitably this cultural idea of the novel, often very little to do with the novel itself, creates certain expectations in the minds of the audience. These expectations are often inaccurate to the novel or focused on one aspect of it and ignore others: an oversimplification. The most common oversimplifications are to try and present the novel as a series of Orwell's “predictions,” or as a realist depiction of the machinations of a surveillance state. There are also aesthetic expectations, similarly simplistic—blue overalls, mist, Big Brother's eyes looming down at

the populous. This adaptation seeks to confront and subvert those expectations—so productions trying to reinstate them have been (perhaps inevitably) unsuccessful.

The power of the novel is in its ambiguity—and its moral and political complexity. It is a book that has been claimed by both sides of the political spectrum, left and right, and the adaptation aims to preserve that ambiguity. To stage the text as a simple condemnation of totalitarianism or torture, for example, is to simplify it to the point of misrepresentation. For reasons we will outline below, it is problematic to set the play in a literal Oceania as described in the book, or to imply that Winston exists in any reality. This poses many challenges for the staging of this adaptation—but ones which we hope will provide rich fuel for a rehearsal room and for audiences.

THE APPENDIX AND THE COMPANY

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* concludes with an Appendix. Orwell refused to let the original publishers cut it, explaining that doing so “would alter the whole colour of the book and leave out a good deal which is essential. It would also...make the story unintelligible.” From research and experience, most readers of the novel tend not to read the Appendix—and our adaptation is the first to incorporate it. More than that, it is central to our structure.

In Orwell's novel, the Appendix, “The Principles of Newspeak,” is signaled by a footnote (the only one in the book) very early in the novel, so that the reader (at least, the reader who obeys the author) would be aware of it throughout. The Appendix, which dates to some point between the novel's 1984 and 2050, has several functions:

1) **It moves the timeframe of the novel's compilation into a future beyond the “1984” in which Winston Smith lived.** The Appendix refers to a later edition of the Newspeak dictionary than the one that exists (and is reported as published) in the main body of the novel. The Appendix, in its tense and writing, suggests that the events of the main body of the novel are now in the past. It also implies that the Party has fallen between 1984 and the date of the Appendix's composition.

2) **It challenges the “ending” of the story.** Winston is told that the Party will always win. The Appendix implies that the Party

has fallen (there are several examples—but to take one good one, somehow the Declaration of Independence has survived). Winston is told in the body of the novel that he has been deleted from history, but he is mentioned by name in the Appendix. Things aren't as bleak as the ending of the main body of the novel implies—there is, however small, however blurry, a glimpse of hope.

3) It undermines our trust in the written word and in the novel itself as an artifact. Novels don't have appendices—so what, then, is the text of this one, titled *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? A footnote and appendix imply an editor. Much of the novel is concerned with the power of the written word (Winston's diary, Goldstein's Book, etc.), but also its capacity for deception and control ("The Party control all records, so we control the past, do we not?" asks O'Brien). Is this an authoritative account or has it been censored/amended and, if so, by whom? Can we trust them? Notably, the Appendix provides no concrete information about the political situation of the year 2050, about the author of the Appendix, or about what the main body of the novel is—or means—to them. Why has it been saved?

The last word of the Appendix (and therefore of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as Orwell wrote it) is "2050." The Appendix suggests then that the main body of the novel (about Winston, set in his questionable 1984) is itself a historical document being viewed from a later future (circa 2050). So the first publishing of Orwell's novel in 1949 looked forward to a world set in a (questionable) 1984 which itself was being looked back at from a (questionable) 2050. In the novel, Orwell's depicted 1984 has much in common with the austerity London of 1948, and reflects on events of the 1930s and 1940s in Europe. Imagining the future always involves reflecting on the past—and the present.

The Company who begin our play are the Appendix dramatized. They initially seem like a modern framing device, though ultimately—by the final scene—suggest that they look back on the play's 1984 from a date around 2050. Of course, they might also be entirely the product of Winston's imagination—by the last scene, any hope of clear separation between reality and the reality inside

Winston's skull has been decisively eroded. They are deliberately ambiguous.

The Company's reality also corresponds exactly with Winston's own early dreams of a future readership for his scribbled writings—and of a free society. In the adaptation we have him dreaming of “the future, the unborn” for whom he writes his diary, seconds before the Company first appear, apparently discussing the diary he has just begun to write. Are they (as the final scene of the play proposes) *real* people in the year 2050 looking back on Winston? Are they simply an imagining, a fever dream, emanating from Winston's mind, and embodying the mirage of the future readership he dreams of? Are they just readers of Orwell's novel—a book group? Are they imagined by Winston or do they imagine him?

That these characters then go on to become the population of Oceania is a construction designed to hold all of these ambiguities. Is Winston really in Oceania and imagining versions of his colleagues into this free-to-read future? Or are the Company, real people in 2050, reading the novel and imagining Winston so that, in real terms, *he never existed* onstage other than in their imaginations? That Winston's final encounter with them, at the end of the play, happens after his mind and memory have been extensively “made perfect” by O'Brien should also cast into doubt any certainty about the Company being a “framing device”—which, given that they appear elsewhere in the play, torches in hand, isn't what they are—and suggests they might be something more essential than Winston's dream.

The construction of the play, ultimately, is one designed in order that we should never know precisely where we are. Inside Winston's head. Inside the Company's heads. In Oceania, 1984. In Oceania, 2050. Here, now? Moreover, the play deliberately echoes itself, weaving single lines and whole scenes backwards and forwards through its construction, so that there are several different equally possible candidates for which, if Winston is indeed imagining the play, is the moment he imagines it from. Winston could be in Room 101, and the play is his beating brain struggling to race through its memories up until this point—or his attempt, under duress, to make sense of what he remembers up until now. He could be sitting in the café waiting for the longed-for bullet to enter his brain. It

could all be happening in the moment he decides to write the diary and everything that comes after becomes inevitable. Are the repeating canteen scenes a solidifying memory of one day, or a series of monotonous days?

Sidenote: It is one of the best jokes in Orwell's novel that at the one moment a book—Goldstein's book—promises a single, univocal version of the truth, Winston stops reading it, never to pick it up again. Here is the final sentence before Winston's attention wanders (the ellipsis is Orwell's):

“But deeper than [doublethink] lies the original motive, the never-questioned instinct that first led to the seizure of power and brought doublethink, the Thought Police, continuous warfare, and all the other necessary paraphernalia into existence afterwards. This motive really consists...”

This denial of the “original motive,” the original truth, the single reason—is central to the meaning of the novel and to Orwell's design. The “truth,” the “real,” and the “literal” are concepts which are deliberately problematized—to be replaced with a richer, feverous, ambiguous doublethink.

“Doublethink”—holding two contradictory beliefs in the mind simultaneously, believing both of them—is central to the novel, central to Goldstein's book, and central to our adaptation. Characters within Oceania have to perform “normal”—aware that they are always being watched. They are constantly acting, holding their anxiety under a pretence of total calm.

Theatre is itself a form of doublethink: the audience knows that the actor is an actor, but simultaneously believes them a character—they know that Winston's blood is pretend blood, yet at the same time they gasp as if it were real. Theatre is always, whether we like it or not, two contradictory things at once.

This play is not set in any literal space. The stage is at once a series of literal spaces in the world of Oceania, a theatre in which *1984* is being performed, some other literal spaces in a distant future (perhaps after the Party has fallen), and the inside of Winston's head. If at any point the onstage action or the design prioritizes the Oceania of the Party as a concrete world, more “real” than some product of Winston's feverish imagination, something has been

lost. Doublethinks become multiplethinks: Like Winston, we should never know precisely where we are beyond a hunch, an impression, a fleeting instinct. Like Winston, the audience should never be sure what is inside Winston's head and what is "real."

Within the play, doublethink manifests itself as a commitment to rich, problematic ambiguity on almost every level. Is Julia an innocent girl who falls in love with Winston, or a Thought Police operative sent in to entrap him? Is O'Brien ultimately a Party man who believes he is curing Winston, or someone involved almost-invisibly in the Brotherhood and its resistance movement? Does the Party fall? Is the year 1984? Are Winston's memories his own? And so on. These are questions which productions should aim to pose, not to answer—and indeed, if any of these questions, or many others, is definitively answered by the production, rather than trying to "hold two contradictory beliefs in [the] mind simultaneously," the intention of both our adaptation and Orwell's novel is being reduced.

Where do we think we are? Always in at least two places at once.

CHARACTERS

WINSTON SMITH

JULIA,
also plays WAITRESS

O'BRIEN

CHARRINGTON,
also plays HOST

MARTIN

SYME,
also plays MAN

PARSONS,
also plays FATHER

MRS. PARSONS,
also plays MOTHER

and

A female CHILD

NOTES

A forward slash (/) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.

An ellipsis (...) within dialogue indicates a trailing off.

An ellipsis (...) on a separate line indicates a pause, a rest or a silence, the length of which should be determined by the context.

The first production used multimedia and other scenic devices.

The stage directions are presented here for ease of reading, not as a thorough account of the production decisions.

There was no intermission.

1984

A clock strikes thirteen, a bell becoming digital.

Winston inhales, and looks towards us. He is a thin man in his late thirties.

An amplified voice is heard, though the speaker is unseen.

VOICE. In that moment, it became real: The thing that he was about to do was to begin a diary. If detected it would be punished by death.

A desk lamp flickers on, its light unstable. Winston is alone in a wood-paneled room: shelves stacked with books, folders, archive boxes. It could be in a library, a records room, it could be in a school, a prison, a government building. Rooms like this have existed all over the world for years. A corridor can be seen beyond a long window. He looks around, anxiously.

There was no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police watched any particular individual was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time.

A cream-colored screen illuminates: a live-feed aerial shot of a blank page. A pen in Winston's hand hovers over the paper.

In small, clumsy letters, Winston writes today's date (in the format "April 4th"). Winston thinks. He scribbles out today's date.

In the center, below the date, Winston writes in larger letters "1984."

Winston faltered for a second. He did not know with any certainty that this was 1984; it was never possible nowadays to pin down the date within a year or two.

Winston adds a question mark to the year.

Whether he went on with the diary or not made no difference. The Thought Police would get him just the same. He had committed, would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper, the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime.

The lights flicker.

Thoughtcrime could not be concealed forever. Sooner or later they were bound to get you.

A deep-red spot appears on the screen, expanding and brightening on the paper. Winston has a nosebleed.

Every record of everything you had ever done was wiped out, your previous existence was denied and then forgotten. You were deleted, annihilated: “unpersoned” was the usual word.

Winston tends to his nose and the diary with a handkerchief.

For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary? For the future. For the unborn.

The lights flicker—first the desk lamp, then in the corridor.

His mind hovered for a moment round the doubtful date on the page, and then froze suddenly on the Newspeak word “doublethink.”

Winston looks up.

There is a sudden, total blackout. We hear Winston’s breathing. Then, with a flicker, the lights judder back on.

A Company of people are now present: the Host, the Man, the Father and Mother, Winston, and the Child. The Host, a man in his 60s, speaks, reading over Winston’s shoulder, a gentle, benevolent presence. It is his voice we’ve been listening to.

It seems to be the present day.

HOST. Doublethink.

How could you communicate with the future? It was of its nature impossible. Either the future would resemble the present, in which case it would not listen to him: or it would be different, and his words would be meaningless.

...

He was writing this diary for the future. For the unborn.

For us.

The Host snaps the book shut.

This is the moment. A thought develops into action and everything, *everything* that follows becomes inevitable. Despite the consequences of doing so, as his pen touches the paper this man is attempting to change the world

There is a moment. The others in the room look at one another. Winston's bemusement at his surroundings is mirrored by the others as they exchange glances.

Of course, it's the text itself that's important, not the name written on the front of it. It occupies a unique place in our collective subconscious—even if you've never read it. This account—its author—imagines a future—imagines us—and asks us to listen. But what is he trying to say?

FATHER. I had this feeling while I was reading it. I suddenly felt happy to be reading!

General sounds of assent from the company. The Child has located a remote control and turns on a television.

MAN. I thought I knew it, but my memory was completely wrong. I had all these ideas before I started and now I'm—I mean—how do you begin to talk about one of the most significant things that has ever been put on paper?

HOST. Exactly.

MOTHER. It's wonderful. I really think it's wonderful. I really *felt* it. I mean, I'm not sure I always know exactly what it's—

MAN. That's the point. It's about *uncertainty*, the impossibility of truly knowing / anything.

HOST. In fact, it requires us to believe two contradictory things simultaneously—and accept both of them. It's always about more than one thing.

FATHER. Ignorance, / hate-speech, perpetual war, uncertainty.

MOTHER. Love. / The future. Hope. Humanity. Freedom.

MAN. Oppression. Torture. Populism. Revolution.

FATHER. Looking at the past and dreaming a better future.

MOTHER. Exactly.

MAN. But what it so beautifully demolishes is the whole notion of objective truth, of there being one set, true reality. How do you

know anything in this world is real?

O'Brien, spectacled, smart, formal, can be seen through the window, walking along the corridor. He is looking directly at Winston. As Winston turns his head to the window, O'Brien stops.

MARTIN. Once you finish this book you become a different person. You don't feel the same. You don't *think* the same. It changes everything. And it will always be true. It's a vision of the future no matter when it's being read.

O'Brien resettles his spectacles on his nose and exits.

FATHER. It's a warning. It's a call to arms. He wants us to resist. To shut off the screens and take to the streets. To look at the world and say *this isn't good enough*. The way things are. The infringements on our liberty. The corruption. The lies. He wants us to do whatever it takes. Whatever / it takes.

WINSTON. Yes! / Yes!

MAN. Which is / what I'm saying. Or—

FATHER. Well, to quote the, er, at one point, it says, "We should never have trusted them. We should never have trusted them."

...

MOTHER. It's all very...

Everyone turns to her.

Just...

We're inside his head. You know? He's imagining us and...
When you really think about it. It's all subjective.

She looks directly at Winston.

You are Winston.

...

WINSTON. I'm—? What's going on?

Winston is troubled by a memory. A melody plays softly, "Oranges and Lemons."

The quality of the music changes to that of a cell phone ringtone.

FATHER. So sorry, hang on—

The Father fumbles with his phone, which is where the melody is coming from.

HOST. Perhaps we might all—

FATHER. Sorry.

Everyone else turns the phones off, fussing with phones, glasses. Winston has no phone.

The Host moves to a light switch to try and turn on some more lights: The bulbs burst. The Mother sings the melody quietly under her breath, concentrating.

HOST. Is it—?

FATHER. Turned off.

They put their phones away.

MARTIN. You're seeing yourself in it because it's opaque. It's a mirror. Every age sees itself reflected.

HOST. Though he was shaped by what he lived through. These key figures, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Hemingway, Swift—all people the Party wanted to suppress!—they're each the product of a particular time.

FATHER. But nothing's changed.

MAN. Oppression. Torture. / Uprisings. Revolution.

FATHER. Austerity. Unpopular politics, / perpetual war, uncertainty.

MAN. Corruption. Deceit. Infringements on our liberty.

MARTIN. How can you say a book has changed the world when the world is still exactly the same?

MAN. Exactly. It tells you what's *wrong*, but it doesn't offer / an alternative.

MARTIN. Full of fevered dreams and paranoid / hallucinations.

HOST. Written by someone who knew he'd soon be dead.

A sudden screech of noise from the screen—feet stamping, a woman's voice yelling commands. It could be an exercise program.

WOMAN'S VOICE. ONE, two, three, four! ONE, two, three...

MOTHER. Will you stop that?

1984

by George Orwell
a new play by Robert Icke
and Duncan Macmillan

6M, 2W, 1 child

Winston Smith, living under the totalitarian rule of the Party, has the idea of writing a diary. It is a crime punishable by death and there is no way of knowing if he is being watched. He imagines two futures—in one, a future readership in a free society think of him as a hero; in the other he is caught, executed and forgotten. Perhaps both things are true. That day, during the obligatory “Two Minutes Hate,” he wondered who else might be harbouring thoughts of rebellion, and who may be working for the Thought Police. Winston starts the diary. He writes the year, so far as he knows it: 1984. This multi-award winning adaptation of George Orwell’s ultimate dystopian novel continues to resonate throughout the world.

“This is a staging that reconsiders a classic with such steely power that it chills brain, blood and bone.”
—**The Times (London)**

“...pitilessly brilliant...a superbly handled multimedia speculation on the nature of truth that never lets the audience off the hook.”
—**The Guardian (UK)**

“...complex, harrowing and ingenious...”
—**The Daily Telegraph (UK)**

“...a work of extraordinary quality and intensity...a very neat theatrical telling of the classic dystopian parable...”
—**The Independent (London)**

“Icke and Macmillan’s adaptation of 1984 stands out as one of the most unique and disturbing takes on a book that sadly never seems to lose its relevance.”
—**The Hollywood Reporter**

“...fresh, tight, and horrifying. ...a deadly chilling piece for dangerous times.”
—**Time Out London**

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ISBN 978-0-8222-3592-7



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