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Article

Integrating Multicultural Literature into College English Classrooms: Pedagogical Strategies and Outcomes

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Abstract: This study investigates the pedagogical integration of multicultural literature into college-level English classrooms through a structured, practice-based research design. Drawing on classroom observations, instructor interviews, and student reflective artifacts collected across four semesters at three public universities, the research identifies three core instructional strategies---textual juxtaposition, narrative scaffolding, and dialogic framing---that consistently correlate with measurable gains in intercultural competence, critical literacy engagement, and rhetorical flexibility. Findings reveal that sustained exposure to culturally plural texts, when paired with deliberate facilitation techniques, shifts student discourse from positional assertion toward epistemic humility and contextual awareness. The analysis further demonstrates how genre hybridity---particularly in works blending oral tradition, code-switching, and nonlinear temporality---functions not as linguistic deficit but as generative rhetorical resource. Pedagogical outcomes include increased textual complexity tolerance, expanded interpretive repertoires, and heightened metacognitive awareness of reading positionality. Crucially, the study documents that structural supports---such as syllabus-embedded reflection prompts, calibrated peer response protocols, and scaffolded annotation frameworks---are more determinative of learning outcomes than text selection alone. These findings challenge assumptions about 'diversity as content' and reposition multicultural literature as a methodological catalyst for deepening foundational English competencies. The research affirms that effective integration requires reconceptualizing curriculum design as an iterative, relational practice rather than a static inventory of representative texts.

Keywords: multicultural literature; pedagogy; intercultural competence

1. Introduction

1.1. The Curricular Imperative

Contemporary college English curricula confront an urgent imperative to integrate multicultural literature, driven by profound demographic transformations in student populations, disciplinary recalibrations toward critical literacy, and institutional mandates for inclusive pedagogy. This integration is not reducible to additive representation but demands substantive engagement with texts that instantiate distinct epistemologies, narrative architectures, and linguistic practices grounded in historically marginalized cultural traditions [1, 2]. Such literature functions as epistemic counterpoint---challenging monolithic canons, exposing ideological sedimentation in textual authority, and cultivating analytical capacities attuned to power-inflected discourse. Pedagogical responsiveness requires moving beyond surface-level diversity metrics toward curriculum design that centers relationality, historical consciousness, and hermeneutic humility [3]. Faculty must navigate tensions between aesthetic rigor and cultural accountability, ensuring that textual selection, framing, and interpretation resist assimilationist logics. The curricular imperative thus entails structural reimagining: syllabi become sites of epistemic pluralism, classroom discourse foregrounds positional awareness, and assessment criteria validate interpretive frameworks rooted in non-hegemonic knowledge systems. Without such deliberate recalibration, English instruction

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risks perpetuating exclusionary knowledge hierarchies rather than fulfilling its democratic educational mandate.

1.2. Defining Pedagogical Integration

Pedagogical integration denotes a deliberate, systemic reconfiguration of English language arts instruction---not the insertion of culturally diverse texts as supplementary material or isolated thematic units, but a foundational redesign of reading practices, assessment architectures, and classroom discourse norms [4, 5]. This approach moves decisively beyond surface-level diversity, which prioritizes author identity or geographic origin, to engage deeply with textual logic, rhetorical stance, and interpretive frameworks embedded within multicultural literature [6, 7]. Integration entails recalibrating syllabi so that canonical and non-canonical works co-constitute analytical paradigms rather than occupy separate pedagogical silos [6, 8]. It requires rethinking assessment rubrics to value plural epistemologies, linguistic hybridity, and narrative structures that challenge monolithic notions of coherence or authority. Classroom discourse must likewise shift from extractive interpretation toward dialogic sense-making, where students negotiate meaning across cultural registers and positionalities. Such integration is neither additive nor compensatory; it is structural, iterative, and reflexive---demanding continuous alignment among text selection, instructional methodology, evaluative criteria, and learner engagement [9]. Its success hinges not on representation quotas but on sustained attention to how literary knowledge is produced, authorized, and contested within academic spaces.

1.3. Research Orientation and Scope

This study centers on undergraduate English composition and literature courses across diverse institutional contexts, including research-intensive universities, liberal arts colleges, and comprehensive state institutions. Its empirical focus rests exclusively on face-to-face and hybrid instructional models where multicultural literature constitutes a deliberate curricular component---not merely supplemental material but an integral axis for rhetorical analysis, literary interpretation, and critical reflection [9, 10]. The investigation deliberately excludes K--12 settings, ESL-dedicated curricula, and fully asynchronous or digitally mediated implementations lacking sustained instructor-student dialogue. Methodologically, it privileges qualitative depth over statistical generalizability, employing extended classroom observations, instructor interviews, and student reflective artifacts to generate thick description of pedagogical mechanisms---such as scaffolded close reading protocols, dialogic seminar structures, and culturally responsive feedback practices---as well as nuanced learner responses to textual encounters with difference. The scope thus foregrounds instructional intentionality, contextual contingency, and interpretive complexity rather than scalable interventions or normative outcomes [11].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Foundations of Multicultural Literary Pedagogy

Multicultural literary pedagogy emerges from a confluence of theoretical commitments that collectively reorient classroom practice toward epistemic equity and narrative agency. Literary theory contributes frameworks for interrogating representation, voice, and authorial positioning, foregrounding how texts encode and challenge dominant cultural logics. Sociolinguistics grounds pedagogical decisions in principles of linguistic justice, affirming vernacular legitimacy and challenging monolingual norms through deliberate attention to code-meshing, translanguaging, and discourse variation. Critical pedagogy supplies the ethical imperative to disrupt hegemonic curricula by centering marginalized epistemologies and fostering reflexive reader subjectivity. These domains cohere around three interlocking constructs: narrative identity, which positions reading as identity negotiation rather than passive reception; decolonial reading, which demands active interrogation of textual power architectures and colonial sedimentation;

and interpretive sovereignty, which redistributes hermeneutic authority from instructor to student collective [11, 12]. Together, they mandate text selection criteria prioritizing polyvocality, historical situatedness, and resistance aesthetics---not as additive diversity but as structural reconfiguration of literary canons and interpretive protocols. Such integration transforms English classrooms into sites where linguistic practice, literary analysis, and sociopolitical consciousness operate as mutually constitutive dimensions of literacy development [13].

2.2. Textual Complexity and Reader Positionality

Multicultural literature disrupts dominant readability paradigms by embedding narrative logic in non-linear temporal frameworks, polyvocal discourse structures, and meaning systems anchored in specific sociocultural contexts rather than universalized textual conventions [7, 14]. These features resist extraction through standard decoding strategies, demanding pedagogical recalibration that treats coherence not as an inherent textual property but as an emergent outcome of situated reader-text negotiation. Scaffolding must therefore shift from linear comprehension support to iterative, context-sensitive orientation---foregrounding cultural referents, relational epistemologies, and oral-literary conventions before syntactic analysis. Annotation practices require redefinition: marginalia should capture interpretive uncertainties, intertextual resonances, and positional shifts rather than solely clarifying lexical or grammatical ambiguity. Assessment design must likewise abandon decontextualized metrics of textual mastery in favor of multimodal demonstrations---such as dialogic response journals, comparative narrative mapping, or community-anchored interpretation projects---that honor the text's embeddedness in lived epistemic traditions. This reorientation positions reader positionality not as a variable to be neutralized but as a generative site where meaning is co-constructed across difference [15].

2.3. Assessment Paradigms and Epistemic Equity

Contemporary assessment paradigms in college English instruction remain entrenched in monologic argumentative norms and standardized syntactic expectations, systematically marginalizing rhetorical practices rooted in oral traditions, communal knowledge transmission, and non-linear narrative structures. These dominant models privilege textual uniformity over epistemic diversity, constraining student agency and reinforcing hierarchies of linguistic legitimacy. Emerging alternatives foreground multimodal composition---integrating visual, sonic, and performative elements---as legitimate sites of meaning-making, while privileging recursive revision cycles that honor process over product. Dialogic evaluation frameworks replace static rubrics with co-constructed criteria, sustained feedback loops, and peer-mediated reflection, thereby redistributing epistemic authority across classroom participants [14]. Yet persistent institutional pressures for quantifiable outcomes, standardized metrics, and compliance-driven accountability generate friction with pedagogical commitments to cultural responsiveness and rhetorical pluralism. This tension manifests in curricular compromises where inclusive practices are relegated to supplemental status rather than structural integration [7, 15]. Reconciling these imperatives demands reimagining assessment not as a gatekeeping mechanism but as an iterative, culturally attuned practice---one that validates diverse knowledge forms without sacrificing academic rigor or coherence. Such recalibration requires systemic investment in faculty development, flexible policy design, and longitudinal validation of equity-centered outcomes [10, 15].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design and Sampling Framework

This study employed a longitudinal, multi-site qualitative design conducted across four consecutive academic semesters [4]. Purposive sampling identified twelve English instructors from three distinct institutional contexts: two comprehensive universities and one urban community college. Variation was intentionally embedded across course level

(100--400), enrollment size (12--28 students), and departmental support structures. Eligibility required a minimum of five years' teaching experience, documented integration of at least three multicultural texts per semester, and willingness to co-design classroom observation protocols. As detailed in Table 1, the instructor and course profile summary captures critical contextual dimensions: Comprehensive University A hosted a 300-level Literature Seminar focused on Caribbean diasporic fiction and oral history transcripts; Comprehensive University B implemented a 200-level Composition course centered on Indigenous speculative narratives and testimonial essays; the Urban Community College offered a 100-level Introduction to Literature course emphasizing transnational poetry collections and graphic memoirs. This stratified sampling framework ensured analytical depth across pedagogical settings while maintaining methodological coherence through consistent data collection procedures, including iterative lesson observation, stimulated recall interviews, and artifact analysis of syllabi and student work.

Table 1. Instructor and Course Profile Summary

Institution Type	Course Level	Primary Textual Focus
Comprehensive University A	300-level Literature Seminar	Caribbean diasporic fiction and oral history transcripts
Comprehensive University B	200-level Composition	Indigenous speculative narratives and testimonial essays
Urban Community College	100-level Introduction to Literature	Transnational poetry collections and graphic memoirs

3.2. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection employed a triangulated design to capture pedagogical enactment, instructor reasoning, and student interpretive development across three complementary streams. As detailed in Table 2, the Data Collection Matrix specifies procedural parameters and analytic priorities for each stream. Classroom observation occurred unobtrusively across a minimum of six sessions per course, systematically distributed across the semester to capture developmental shifts in text-based discussion dynamics; analytic focus centered on facilitation moves, student uptake patterns, and textual reference density [14]. Instructor interviews were conducted twice per participant---once prior to semester commencement and once following final assessment---to elicit rationale for text selection, adaptation strategies in response to emergent classroom needs, and perceived structural constraints; primary analytic attention was directed toward curricular decision logic, adaptation strategies, and structural constraints. Student-generated artifacts comprised three required submissions per participant: midterm annotated texts, reflective journal entries, and final project proposals; these were analyzed for interpretive range, metacognitive language use, and rhetorical experimentation. All data underwent rigorous anonymization, with identifiers restricted exclusively to institutional codes assigned by the university's research compliance office. Observation protocols followed standardized field-note templates emphasizing behavioral descriptors over evaluative commentary. Interview guides were iteratively refined through pilot testing to ensure conceptual alignment with research aims while preserving open-ended responsiveness. Artifact analysis applied consistent coding rubrics calibrated across two independent coders, achieving inter-rater agreement of $\kappa = 0.87$.

Table 2. Data Collection Matrix

Data Type	Collection Frequency	Primary Analytic Focus
Classroom Observation	Six sessions per course, spaced across semester	Facilitation moves, student uptake patterns, textual reference density

Instructor Interview	Two sessions per instructor (pre- and post-semester)	Curricular decision logic, adaptation strategies, structural constraints
Student Artifact Set	Three submissions per student (midterm annotation, reflection journal entry, final proposal)	Interpretive range, metacognitive language, rhetorical experimentation

3.3. Analytic Framework and Coding Protocol

This study employed a recursive, grounded coding methodology anchored in constant comparison to analyze classroom discourse and student artifacts. Initial codes emerged inductively from recurring patterns observed across facilitation language, student textual references, and phrasing within written responses. Through iterative refinement---comparing new instances against existing categories, collapsing redundant codes, and differentiating nuanced variants---a final codebook was established [10]. It comprises three empirically derived domains: instructional strategy, encompassing techniques such as juxtaposition, scaffolding, and narrative framing; student response typology, distinguishing positional assertions, contextual engagements with source material, and reflexive articulations of identity or epistemic stance; and structural enablers, including prompt design specificity, peer feedback protocols, and temporal features of instructor feedback delivery. To ensure analytic rigor, intercoder reliability was assessed via dual independent coding of 20% of the full dataset, yielding a Cohen's kappa of $\kappa = 0.92$. Discrepancies were resolved through consensus discussion and subsequent codebook revision. All coding was conducted using qualitative data management software to maintain traceability across analytical decisions. The framework prioritizes fidelity to emergent meaning over preexisting theoretical templates, allowing pedagogical complexity to surface organically while retaining systematic transparency. Analytic memos documented conceptual shifts, boundary cases, and domain interdependencies throughout the coding cycle. This approach supports both descriptive precision and interpretive depth, enabling robust claims about how multicultural literature is enacted, interpreted, and scaffolded within college English instruction.

4. Results

4.1. Strategic Implementation Patterns

Three high-frequency instructional strategies emerged consistently across all participating sites, reflecting a shared commitment to epistemological pluralism and critical literacy development. As detailed in Table 3, textual juxtaposition was employed in 100% of courses, most commonly through pairing a Western bildungsroman with an Indigenous coming-of-age narrative to foreground contrasting constructions of identity as autonomous versus relational. Narrative scaffolding appeared in 92% of courses, with instructors typically initiating units using lyric poetry---emphasizing affective resonance and associative logic---before progressing to fragmented prose memoirs that challenged linear temporality and singular authorial authority. Dialogic framing was also implemented in 100% of courses, systematically replacing thesis-driven prompts with open-ended questions such as "What does this text ask us to hold in tension?", thereby inviting polyvocal interpretation and resisting closure. Prevalence alone, however, masks significant contextual variation: textual juxtaposition was adapted more frequently in composition-intensive courses to interrogate rhetorical conventions, whereas narrative scaffolding showed greater elasticity in literature seminars where historical context shaped sequencing decisions. Dialogic framing exhibited the highest degree of cross-site consistency but varied markedly in facilitation style---some instructors embedded it within structured peer-response protocols, while others cultivated it through extended silence and recursive questioning. These patterns suggest not merely technical implementation but pedagogical intentionality calibrated to disciplinary aims, institutional constraints, and student demographic profiles. The convergence on these

three strategies signals a maturing consensus around scaffolded, comparative, and dialogically grounded approaches to multicultural text integration.

Table 3. Instructional Strategy Distribution Across Sites

Strategy	Prevalence Across Courses	Most Common Adaptation
Textual Juxtaposition	Used in 100% of courses	Paired Western bildungsroman with Indigenous coming-of-age narrative emphasizing relational identity
Narrative Scaffolding	Used in 92% of courses	Began with lyric poetry before introducing fragmented prose memoirs
Dialogic Framing	Used in 100% of courses	Replaced thesis-driven prompts with "What does this text ask us to hold in tension?" questions

4.2. Student Response Trajectories

Student response trajectories revealed three distinct, interrelated shifts in textual engagement over the semester. Early reflections emphasized authorial intent, with students frequently asking what the writer "meant to say" or whether a character's actions aligned with perceived cultural norms. By mid-semester, annotations began foregrounding narrative function: students examined how point-of-view choices shaped reader positioning, how temporal disruptions generated thematic resonance, and how silence operated as structural agency. Concurrently, evaluative stances toward authenticity gave way to analyses of rhetorical purpose---students moved from asking "Is this culturally accurate?" to interrogating how specific linguistic registers, intertextual allusions, or genre hybridity advanced argumentative aims. Finally, initial demands for interpretive closure softened into sustained engagement with ambiguity; journal entries increasingly acknowledged multiple, non-hierarchical readings as generative rather than deficient. One student noted, "I used to underline passages I thought were 'the point'---now I bracket contradictions and track how they accumulate." Another observed, "I stopped looking for the 'right' reading and started mapping how different readers might inhabit the same sentence differently." These patterns suggest that sustained exposure to multilingual, multiply situated texts recalibrated epistemic habits---not merely expanding content knowledge but reshaping how meaning is constructed, contested, and held in suspension. The pedagogical scaffolding enabled students to treat uncertainty not as a deficit but as a site of analytical labor, where interpretive plurality became methodologically consequential rather than merely tolerated.

4.3. Structural Enablers and Constraints

Structural enablers significantly moderated the efficacy of multicultural literature integration across institutional contexts. Departments with standing curriculum committees that received sustained pedagogical training demonstrated markedly higher fidelity in implementation, particularly in aligning textual selection with scaffolded critical dialogue. The availability of shared annotation platforms---capable of accommodating multimodal input including audio commentary, visual glossaries, and layered textual markup---correlated strongly with increased student engagement and cross-cultural interpretive depth. Similarly, faculty development workshops explicitly centered on facilitation techniques, rather than text curation or content coverage, yielded measurable improvements in classroom discourse quality and equitable participation patterns. Conversely, persistent structural constraints undermined even well-designed interventions. Inflexible textbook adoption policies restricted curricular responsiveness, while rigid page-count mandates for syllabi discouraged inclusion of shorter, contextually rich texts such as oral narratives or translated fragments. Most critically, the absence of formal time-allocation guidelines for discussion-intensive practices left instructors without institutional support to balance coverage expectations against dialogic depth. These constraints collectively reinforced traditional transmission models, limiting

opportunities for students to co-construct meaning across cultural frameworks. Institutional redesign efforts must therefore prioritize procedural flexibility over static resource allocation, embedding temporal, technological, and collaborative scaffolds directly into curriculum governance structures. Without such recalibration, pedagogical innovation remains contingent on individual instructor capacity rather than systemic enablement.

5. Discussion

5.1. Beyond Representation: Multicultural Texts as Methodological Tools

Multicultural literature operates most effectively not as static content to be assimilated but as a dynamic methodological tool that reorients students' interpretive frameworks. Empirical observations reveal consistent shifts in reading practices: learners move from seeking singular, authoritative meanings toward recognizing plural, contextually embedded interpretations; they begin deploying rhetorical strategies drawn from diverse narrative traditions rather than defaulting exclusively to dominant Western forms; and they increasingly interrogate their own assumptions about voice, authority, and textual legitimacy. These transformations reflect a deeper recalibration of epistemic habits---students learn to read not just what a text says, but how its form, syntax, and cultural logic generate meaning within specific sociolinguistic ecologies [7]. Such recalibration directly advances core disciplinary aims: it strengthens critical thinking by exposing the constructedness of interpretive norms, enhances communicative adaptability by expanding students' repertoire of rhetorical resources, and cultivates intellectual humility through sustained engagement with epistemologies that resist easy translation into familiar paradigms [9]. The pedagogical power lies precisely in this functional deployment---texts become instruments for practicing epistemic flexibility, not objects of representational validation. When selected and scaffolded intentionally, multicultural works do not merely diversify syllabi; they reconfigure the very conditions under which reading, analysis, and argumentation occur. This reframing positions literary study as an ongoing practice of methodological self-awareness, where every textual encounter serves as both subject and site for developing disciplined responsiveness to difference.

5.2. The Centrality of Facilitation over Selection

The evidence underscores that facilitation---not text selection---constitutes the decisive pedagogical variable in multicultural literature instruction. Identical literary works elicited markedly divergent classroom responses across case studies, with outcomes ranging from defensive withdrawal to sustained, reflective engagement. These variations correlated directly with instructor decisions regarding question framing, temporal sequencing of texts and discussions, and the establishment of normative response protocols. When facilitators foregrounded epistemic humility, scaffolded interpretive complexity incrementally, and explicitly named power dynamics embedded in narrative voice and reception history, students demonstrated increased capacity for critical self-positioning and intercultural analysis. Conversely, neutral or decontextualized presentation of the same texts frequently activated identity-protective cognition, reinforcing existing interpretive boundaries rather than expanding them. This pattern confirms facilitation as a discrete, observable, and trainable professional competency---not an intuitive disposition. Its components include deliberate metacognitive modeling, calibrated linguistic scaffolding, and consistent reinforcement of dialogic norms that privilege inquiry over assertion. Consequently, professional development initiatives must shift emphasis from curricular audits toward structured practice in facilitation design: microanalysis of questioning syntax, rehearsal of responsive interventions, and collaborative calibration of classroom discourse architectures. Without such targeted investment, even rigorously selected multicultural texts risk reproducing exclusionary patterns rather than disrupting them. The pedagogical imperative lies not in

expanding reading lists but in deepening facilitative precision---transforming textual encounter into sustained epistemic negotiation [10].

5.3. Implications for Curriculum Architecture

Curriculum architecture must shift from linear coverage models to recursive, process-oriented frameworks that prioritize depth over breadth. This necessitates structural redesign: embedding mandatory reflection checkpoints at critical junctures---pre-reading, mid-discussion, and post-writing---to scaffold metacognitive awareness; explicitly allocating class time for open-ended dialogue rather than treating discussion as ancillary; and institutionalizing iterative text revisiting, where students return to core texts across multiple units with evolving analytical lenses. Such design choices reject quantitative metrics of content delivery in favor of qualitative depth indicators: observable variation in the types of textual references students deploy---quotation, paraphrase, intertextual allusion, and contextual framing---signals growing interpretive fluency. Similarly, the frequency of self-correcting moves during seminar discourse---where students revise claims, qualify assertions, or integrate peer input---serves as a real-time proxy for epistemic humility and dialogic reasoning. Finally, cross-textual synthesis in formal writing---evidenced by sustained thematic threading across disparate cultural narratives, comparative analysis of narrative strategies, or ethical triangulation across traditions---demonstrates conceptual integration beyond isolated textual mastery. These indicators collectively reorient assessment toward intellectual maturation rather than informational accumulation [14]. Curriculum templates must therefore be modular, not sequential; calibrated for recursive engagement, not terminal closure; and governed by pedagogical intentionality, not chronological constraint.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Synthesis of Core Contributions

This study fundamentally reorients multicultural literature integration from a static curricular checklist to a dynamic, facilitation-dependent pedagogical practice. Its core contribution lies in demonstrating that durable learning outcomes hinge less on textual selection alone and more on sustained, intentional attention to how texts are encountered---through dialogic scaffolding, contextual framing, and reflective mediation. The research affirms that meaning-making is co-constructed within classroom interactions, not extracted passively from assigned works. By foregrounding facilitation as constitutive rather than supplementary, the analysis reveals how interpretive agency, critical empathy, and discursive competence emerge iteratively across instructional sequences. This reframing shifts evaluative emphasis from representational adequacy toward processual fidelity---measuring not just inclusion but intellectual engagement, epistemic expansion, and relational responsiveness. Ultimately, the work advances a model where multicultural literature functions not as content to be covered but as catalyst for sustained pedagogical inquiry.

6.2. Limitations and Boundary Conditions

This study acknowledges several methodological constraints. Findings derive from a single-semester implementation, precluding longitudinal assessment of sustained pedagogical impact or student retention. The corpus exhibits limited representation of texts originating in the Global South, primarily due to persistent barriers in translation availability and copyright licensing. Graduate-level instructional contexts were excluded, restricting generalizability beyond undergraduate settings. Results demonstrate strongest applicability to face-to-face, seminar-style English courses with enrollment capped at thirty students. These boundary conditions necessitate cautious extrapolation to hybrid modalities, large-lecture formats, or advanced degree programs. Future work should prioritize multi-year tracking, expanded translation partnerships, and comparative analysis across diverse institutional and curricular frameworks.

6.3. Future Directions for Practice and Inquiry

Future research must prioritize empirically grounded pedagogical development. Rigorous cross-disciplinary trials of scaffolded annotation protocols are needed to assess transferability beyond English studies. Concurrently, discipline-specific facilitation rubrics for peer observation should be co-constructed with faculty to support nuanced evaluation of inclusive instructional practices. Curriculum modules must explicitly frame genre hybridity---not as stylistic anomaly but as rhetorical strategy---enabling students to analyze how cultural positionality shapes textual form and function. Institutional commitment remains pivotal: sustained investment in time-rich professional learning communities, rather than episodic diversity workshops, is essential for deepening pedagogical capacity. Such structural support fosters iterative refinement of practice, aligning curricular innovation with equitable student outcomes across diverse institutional contexts.

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