

# **Better Together in RE Enquiry Based Learning**

## **Handbook for Teachers**

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# What do we mean by theology?

'reasoning and discussion concerning the Deity' (Augustine)

'discourse on god' ( Plato)

'systematic and rational study of concepts of God and of the nature of religious truths' (Wikipedia)

' the study of God, His nature, His will and how Christians apply this to themselves' ( Slick)

## So what do we mean by theological enquiry?

- It means:
- going beyond the mere collecting of information about religion and belief
- enabling children and young people to encounter and wrestle with fundamental questions about God
- engaging children and young people with the core beliefs and ideas in the Christian faith e.g. salvation, incarnation, creation
- involving children and young people in exploring inner meanings and interpretation of 'texts'

So this means our purpose in RE is to enable children to become 'religiously literate'.

## Understanding our purpose

- The primary aim of religious education is religious literacy.
- We want (and need) our children and young people to be religiously literate
- SMSC, personal development, and values education are important... BUT...they are not the primary function of the subject.



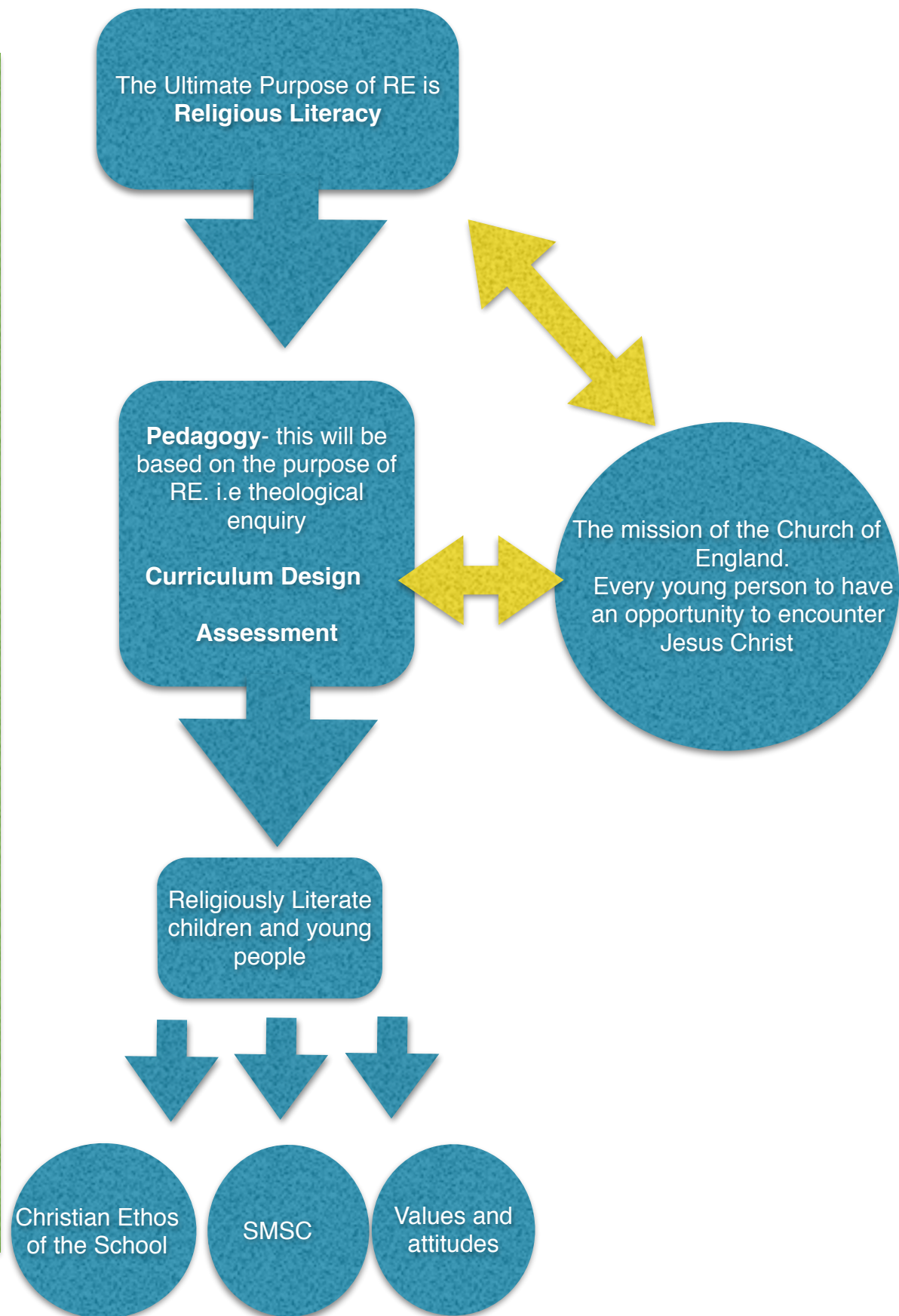
On the next page the notion of religious literacy is unpacked. It also shows the link between religious literacy, pedagogy, the curriculum and assessment.

# What are we learning in RE?

## What do we mean by religious literacy?

- Asking enquiring questions about religion and belief and making informed response to them
- Understanding the nature of religious language
- Understanding the diversity of religion and belief in the contemporary world
- Understanding the beliefs, practice, values and ways of life of religions and non religious world views
- Understanding the impact that religion and belief can have on individuals and society
- Beginning to make sense of the world of religion and belief

(Paraphrase Ofsted 2013)



This means theological enquiry using the Norfolk Syllabus will look like...

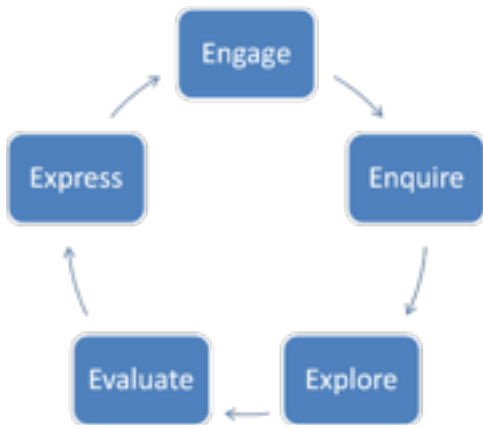
## The Art of Theological Enquiry

- **Asking questions** - engage with a key enquiry question which focuses on theology
- **Investigate** the concept in depth. 'How deep can we go?!'
- **Evaluate and draw conclusions** about the concept and its impact on the lives of believers. What difference does this belief/practice make?
- Ensure the students **reflect on and express** an understanding of the enquiry question! It should be focused on knowledge and understanding, not values or SMSC development!!!

The rest of the Better Together 'input' sessions will focus on the areas of enquiry in the Norfolk Syllabus and how to ensure they are effective in your classroom practice.



# ENGAGE



- Every topic in RE should start with a **big enquiry question**. This should be a broad and open question. It should have a concept at the heart.

For example....

Is forgiveness always possible?

Concept: Atonement

*Questions to ask yourself...*

Are the questions we use big and broad?  
Do I know what the concept is that lies at the heart of the enquiry?  
Can I answer the question?!

- To focus the learning experience it is useful to have **‘operational’ questions** that help to drive the enquiry. These may or may not be shared with pupils, but they can be used to help set clear outcomes for learning based on a mastery approach.

**Big Question:** Is forgiveness always possible?

**Concept:** Atonement (Jewish and Christian views)

**Example Operational Questions:**

Which beliefs are central to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

What happens during the Ten Days of Repentance?

What happened in the Holocaust, and can something so terrible ever be forgiven?

Why is forgiveness important to Christians?

Why is atonement an important idea for Christians?

How is the death of Jesus an expression of forgiveness?

What does the Bible teach about forgiveness?

How do Christians and Jews work for peace and reconciliation?

This approach ensures that the knowledge and understanding you expect pupils to





## Teaching and learning strategies in the **ENGAGE** stage

- Using Godly Play
- Using Philosophy for Children
- Using images, sculpture and film
- Using sacred text e.g. a story, quote
- Using artefacts
- Inviting in a visitor to ‘launch’ the big question
- Using a visualisation to spark the imagination
- Setting up an enquiry along the lines of ‘Mantle of the Expert’



# ENQUIRE

- This aspect of the enquiry should flow from the engage stage.
- Choosing the right stimulus in the engage stage should enable questions to follow naturally

Some other strategies that may be useful...

- Using a Godly Play approach
- Using a Philosophy for Children approach
- Using ‘what we already know’ and ‘what we want to find out’
- Using images, film or text encouraging children to ask questions about it
- Ask children to put questions on post it notes, then categorise them. You can use your operational questions to help sort them out into areas of learning
- Always ask ‘is this question going to help us answer our ‘big question?’

# EXPLORE- going deeper with our learning

The 'explore' stage of the enquiry is where pupils will be primarily learning about religion and belief. In order for this to be effective there are some strategies we can use to 'deepen' the learning

- Interpreting sacred texts
- Using challenging and controversial questions
- Extended pieces of writing
- Discussion which continually asks 'Have we gone deep enough yet? How deep can we go?'
- Using different lenses (sheet)
- Students engage with authentic religious believers ( face to face, via webcams, podcasts, video, Skype etc)
- Grapple with complex theological questions and issues

On the next few pages we look at some of these in more detail.

# Digging Deeper

## 1. Close reading

**Close reading is digging deeper!**

Looking at a concept from different angles, asking different kinds of question

Close Reading a text... or an image or artefact...

1st reading: break the surface  
2nd reading: get more information  
3rd reading: understand it!

**Dig DEEPER with CLOSE Reading**

\* Read the same text SEVERAL times!

1st reading (break the surface)  
2nd reading (get more information and a better understanding)  
3rd reading (get a deeper understanding)

Encourages questioning, wondering and creation of hypothesis

**Digging Deeper in Reading**

Step 1: Get the 'tip' of the text. What is the main message? 'What is the author's purpose?' 'What is the main idea?'  
Step 2: Get more info for a better understanding of the text.  
Step 3: Attain a 'deep' understanding of text.

Supports understanding, not just retelling

Close reading means "Digging Deeper"  
"Rereading gives you a better understanding (improving understanding)"

## 2. Double Entry Journal

**DOUBLE ENTRY JOURNAL**

From the text	From your mind
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a passage</li> <li>interesting language</li> <li>quotation</li> <li>key event</li> <li>critical fact</li> <li>main idea</li> <li>a problem or conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a reaction</li> <li>a theory or hypothesis</li> <li>a comparison</li> <li>an explanation</li> <li>a discussion of significance</li> <li>a discussion of reactions to text</li> </ul>

LEFT SIDE

RIGHT SIDE

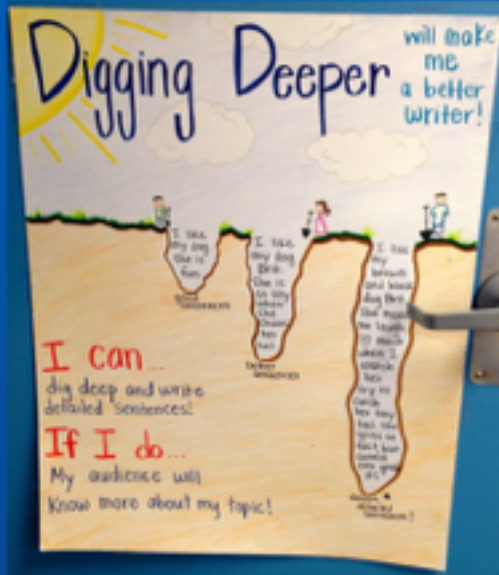
Supports the development of **theological** enquiry

Encourages pupil response, but one which supports high order thinking

Views RE as an academic discipline, which also supports key skills

### 3. Digging deeper in writing

Writing in depth- supporting literacy... too often RE is too superficial and doesn't get to the heart of the matter!



### 4. Asking deeper questions

## Developing theological thinking

Philosophical   Historical   Spiritual   Sociological   Theological   Anthropological





Here are some examples of questions that go deeper...

## Some examples

- What is the big idea in this story/practice/artefact...?
- What difference does the context of this story make?
- What is the purpose of the story?
- Is this story as important today as it was when it was written?
- What does this story tell us about religious beliefs about God?
- What does this story tell us about humans?

### 5. Looking for 'truth'

Rather than 'is it true'? we can ask...

What is the truth in this narrative?



## 6. Tackling some of the tricky bits!

### Embrace the tricky issues

- We often present a chocolate box view of religion and belief
- The view of religion we present must be authentic and real #reforreal project <http://www.gold.ac.uk/faithsunit/reforreal/>
- Don't avoid the tricky bits! But make sure they are age appropriate!



We avoid divergent views and attitudes at our peril... they will arise so we need to be able to listen critically to the voice of our pupils... although challenging... these opportunities are some of the best ways of promoting SMSC development and British Values!

## Here is some advice from Three Faiths Forum:

- Always talk about personal beliefs; no individual is representative of a whole community. Use "I" statements (e.g. 'I believe ...')
- 'Oops/Ouch': Sometimes you may say something that comes out all wrong and you wish you hadn't said it. You can agree as a group that if this happens then the person speaking can say 'Oops' as a way of acknowledging this feeling and allowing them the opportunity to rephrase.

Similarly, if someone says something that you find offensive or upsetting (or believe someone else might find it so) you can agree to say 'Ouch', as a clear way of expressing this. Once you have explained why you found the comment difficult, the person who said it then has the opportunity to rephrase.

## 7. Considering your role as teacher

### The teacher's role

- Neutral Chair - teacher acts as facilitator
- Balanced approach - teacher may present a range of opinions, giving each one equal weight and playing devils advocate
- Committed participant- teacher makes own position and reasons for that position

Which is most effective for RE?  
Are there other roles the teacher could play?

## 8. Authentic encounters to deepen learning experiences

### Engage with faith and belief communities

- Invite in visitors ( SIFRE, SACRE links)
- Visit places of worship
- Invite in members of the local community/parents who have a faith to share their experiences. They do not need to be 'faith leaders'.
- Use digital technology- Facetime, Skype, virtual visits, podcasts...
- Work of 3FF ( workshops available).



### Getting back to the heart...

- Get back to the heart of the Christian faith AND what it means to Christians today
- Balancing the theology at the heart of the Christian faith, with the outworking of this faith in practice today.

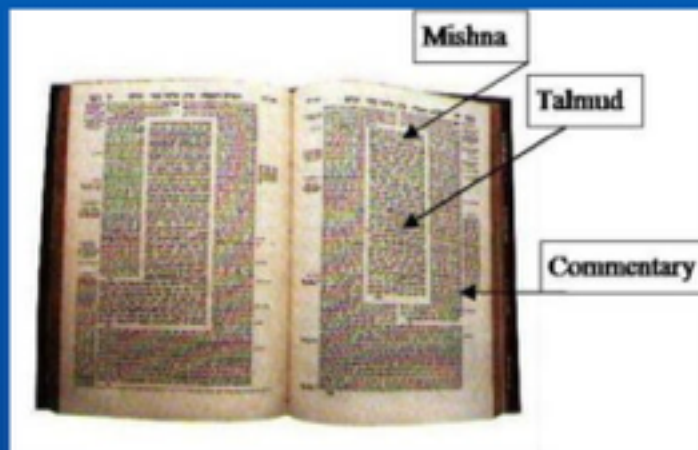


## 9. Make links with your community

- Take your RE into the community!
- How does religion and belief affect- the supermarket, the parish council, politics, cinemas....?
- Creating displays and interactions with the local and national communities e.g. Advent, Spirited Arts, film competitions...

## 7. Commentary and analysis

### Talmudic Commentary Style Analysis





## 8. Wearing different hats

### Putting on a hat!

- Read a narrative from a particular viewpoint.
- The Feeding of the 5000: From the perspective of a baker, a fisherman, someone who believes in God, someone who does not believe in God, a magician....
- The Healing of the Paralysed Man: from the perspective of the man himself, Jesus, one of the men who carried him, a member of the crowd, a teacher of the law...

## 9. Zooming in

### Zooming in...

- Focussing on the detail. Take your magnifying glass!! Adapting Lectio Divina.
- Great for looking at one verse in a sacred text
- Great for looking at detail in a painting or image.



## *Questions to ask yourself....*

Which of these strategies might you use to deepen learning in the explores stage?  
What other innovative ideas might you come up with yourself to deepen learning?



# EVALUATE

Many of the strategies used in the explore stage can also be used in this aspect of the enquiry process.

The aim of this part of the enquiry is to encourage dialogue about the learning. Pupils should use skills of analysis and evaluation. The focus should be on the 'impact' of the belief or practice on the religious or belief community being studied.

Some other strategies that might be used...

- Diamond Nine
- Continuum Line
- Concept dartboard
- Revisiting questions and/or stimulus from the engage or enquiry stage
- Sorting ideas on cards
- Gathering class views
- Using Blooms Taxonomy
- Using a 'Wonder Wall' to record insight and perception

## Questions to ask pupils in the evaluate stage...

Have we answered our questions?

Does this knowledge help us to understand this concept better, in what ways...? What do we understand by this concept now?

Do we think this is accurate?

How can we create a hypothesis?

How far have we answered the key question?

Which 'answers' do we think provide the best understanding?

Does it matter if we have conflicting views?

Are there questions that still need resolving?



# EXPRESS

The aim of this stage of the enquiry is that pupils **express their knowledge and understanding of the concept. They ‘answer’ the big enquiry question** from the perspective of the faith and belief traditions that they have encountered.

Ideally the express task should:

- Be linked to the real world e.g. creating a webpage, giving a presentation to other children or adults, making something for a faith group, designing a leaflet, ...
- Include some form of assessment against expected outcomes

*A question to ask yourself...*

Do the express tasks you do at the moment allow pupils to demonstrate progress?

# A Lesson Study Approach

This provides a summary of the lesson study approach. You will need to read the accompanying booklet to ensure you gain the most from the experience.

1.

What are you hoping to achieve?

- What is the goal of this lesson study?
- What are the success criteria?

2.

What are you going to focus on?

- Specify the focus that you wish to develop e.g. an aspect of the enquiry process, a particular strategy, assessment, a particular group of children who are under performing...

3.

## What is the reality now?

- What is happening at the moment?
- What do you want to change?

4.

## What are you going to do?

- What could you do? List some different options, before deciding on the best one.
- Plan each stage of the lesson with your partner
- Identify some pupils whom the observer will focus on during the lesson

5.

## When will you start?

- Agree when the lesson study will take place. Ideally you both want to use the same approach and observe each other. The lesson should be jointly planned and jointly owned!

6.

## How will we know whether we have achieved our goal?

- Interview some pupils
- Discuss the outcomes together as colleagues  
e.g. p.14 in booklet
- Review the lesson against your success criteria
- Decide on your next steps...

Something to consider....why not film the lesson? Watching a lesson on film has proved to be very powerful in other lesson studies undertaken across the country

Remember... the focus is on the **learning**.



7.

## Now share with others!

- We will be sharing the outcomes together at a twilight meeting
- Each pair should produce a short ( 4-5min) presentation. This might include showing pupils work, examples of a lesson plan....

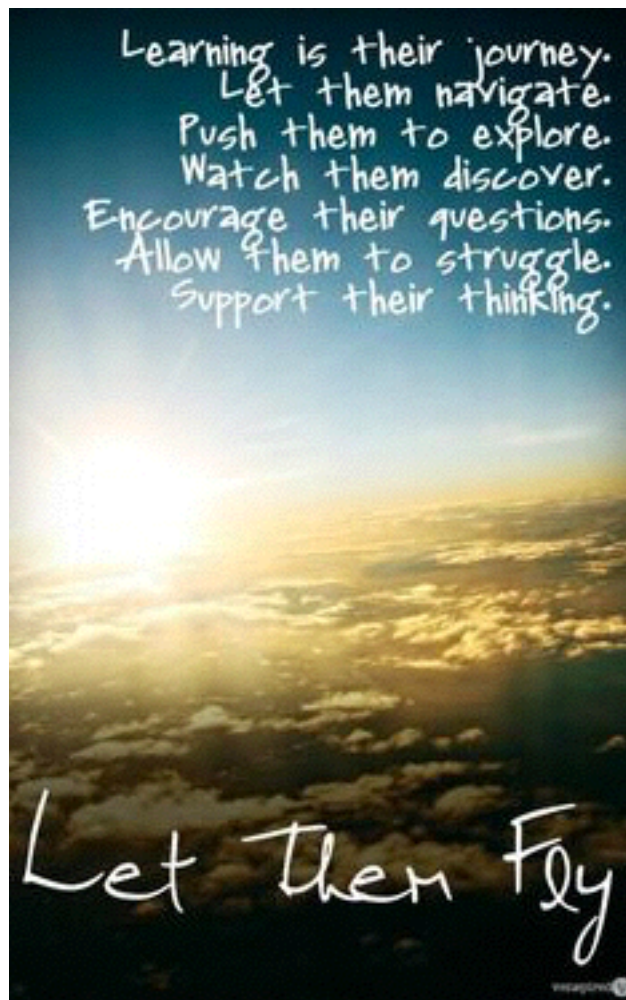
### The planning session in school....

- Use it wisely
- Perhaps mind map your ideas
- Try and do as much of the planning as possible
- Remember you should **jointly** plan
- Make notes on your starting points, so you can clearly evaluate the impact later.

# The Final Session

This gives everyone the opportunity to share their lesson study outcomes.

The focus is on what you learned through the experience and what your next steps are.



Note down here the most important areas of learning for you during the INSET sessions we have had together.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin grey border, intended for the user to write down their most important areas of learning from the INSET sessions.

Now take a photo of your response on your phone and email it to Kathryn. [kathryn.wright@dioceseofnorwich.org](mailto:kathryn.wright@dioceseofnorwich.org)

For further CPD opportunities including two day subject knowledge development sessions on Islam and Judaism visit:

<http://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools/training/>

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