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Eng. 112B

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World Wide War 2.0: Global Perspectives on the Holocaust and WWII

There are two main reasons that history is a subject taught in schools: to form identity and to reflect upon and avoid (as much as possible) repeating mistakes of the past. The latter reason is my motivation for creating this annotated bibliography on the topic of the Holocaust, widely considered the worst atrocity in human memory— which should remain solely a memory.

Although much about the world has changed since the Holocaust, today's highly divisive political atmosphere hovers precariously near the phantom political volatility of the WWII era. Regardless of one's political beliefs, teaching students to seek out and understand multiple perspectives both similar and different from their own will help students become knowledgeable, critical thinkers able to make informed decisions. Because discussing present-day politics without delving into the personal is not only difficult but often taboo in schools, one way to put present situations into context and discuss them with a degree of distance is through historical works that present relevant issues and themes.

Yet when it comes to learning history in school, many students groan at the prospect of memorizing a deluge of dates, documents and treaties. They dread keeping straight numerous whittled-down acronyms for complex issues, policies, and ideals regarding the lives and times of people either long dead or long distance. Much of their displeasure arises from the preconception that history is boring, emotionless, and irrelevant. One way to change this disposition is through

supplementing history lessons with a variety of literature and media, particularly works that present history from young adult perspectives. Both fictional and non-fictional historical works told from the viewpoint of young adults can help students form connections with the main characters and interest in those characters' lives and circumstances, bringing history to life. The best historical works will show students that no matter who they are, where they are from, or when they are from all people are united by the same human emotions, questions, and struggles.

At first, some students may find it is easy to choose sides or assign “good guys” and “bad guys” to a conflict. However, the very occurrences of WWII and the Holocaust prove the danger and tragedy that results from stereotyping and dehumanizing others, rather than trying to understand them or imagine them complexly. My centerpiece work for this annotated bibliography, Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*, is one of the strongest reinforcements on the importance of seeing and understanding people multidimensionally. Zusak’s characters cover nearly the entire range of roles people play during war, delving into each character’s complex thoughts, feelings, and motivations; this aspect makes *The Book Thief* both exceptional and unique. While the setting is geographically focused only on Germany, Zusak’s characters are familiar to people facing war in any country or era. As a centerpiece, *The Book Thief* provides an overview of the political conflict from physical and ideological standpoints and a well-rounded introduction to each of the “types” of characters whose stories and struggles presented by the other works.

Selected Works

Directed by Arima, Stafford. *Allegiance*, produced by Sing Out, Louise! Productions. Performances by George Takei and Lea Salonga, 2015-2016. Summary from *Allegiance Website*

Summary: *Allegiance* is the story of the Kimura family whose lives are upended when they and 120,000 other Japanese-Americans are forced to leave their homes following the events of Pearl Harbor. Sam Kimura seeks to prove his patriotism by fighting for his country in the war, but his sister, Kei, fiercely protests the government's treatment of her people. An uplifting testament to the power of the human spirit, *Allegiance* follows the Kimuras as they fight between duty and defiance, custom and change, family bonds and forbidden loves. But as long-lost memories are unlocked, Sam finds that it is never too late to forgive and to recognize the redemptive power of love.

Evaluation: This Broadway musical was inspired by the childhood experiences of *Star Trek* actor George Takei and his family, who were registered, rounded up, and sent to live in a Japanese internment camp during WWII. *Allegiance* presents the rarely acknowledged discrimination against and subsequent hardships of Japanese-Americans during and after the war. Much as Germany dislikes discussing the concentration camps, America dislikes discussing the internment camps, but both are integral parts of WWII and the experiences of those who suffered in either type of camp should not be overlooked. *Allegiance* once again shows that good and bad are not always separate, and right and wrong not always so clear.

Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Translated by B. M. Mooyart. Bantam Books, New York, NY, 1967.

Summary: Anne Frank was a teenage German Jewish girl whose family moved to Amsterdam, Holland, then went into hiding in a "secret annex" in the apartment of Otto Frank's Dutch friends and business partner. Anne kept this diary chronicling her life throughout their two years in hiding, 1943-1945, until the Franks and their roommates were captured by the Nazis, and Anne's diary was left behind. Except for her father, Otto, Anne and her family died in the concentration camps; after the war Otto received Anne's diary from the friends who had hidden the Franks, and eventually published it.

Evaluation: Anne Frank's diary is a nonfictional, in-the-moment document that is not based on history, but IS history. It is the account of a real girl growing up during WWII, and in it Anne shares her fears, concerns, philosophies, and hopes. Her diary is a direct proof that teenagers face the same struggles and issues regardless of their location or lifetime. The existence of Anne Frank's diary also serves as a reminder of the deepest side of all the losses of the Holocaust: those of bright human spirit. If readers feel any connection to Anne, they have connected to direct history and humanity across time.

Giff, Patricia R. *Lily's Crossing*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, New York, NY, 1997.

Summary: In the summer of 1944, ten-year-old Lily Mollahan is looking forward to spending time fishing with her father and spinning stories at her grandmother's summer house in Rockaway, New Jersey. However, Lily's idyllic summer plans are dashed when her best friend moves away to a war factory town and her father is sent overseas to help the Allies. Lily is sad, bored, and lonely until she meets and befriends Albert, a Hungarian refugee sent to live with her next-door neighbors. When one of Lily's stories puts Albert in danger, Lily goes out to save him. But can she save their friendship?

Evaluation: *Lily's Crossing* tells the story of how WWII affects two children in America separated from friends and family under different circumstances, yet with similar results. Because of the wariness induced by the war, both children are suspicious of each other upon first meeting. However, Lily and Albert become friends, bonding through their restlessness in Rockaway and their sadness at separation from their parents. *Lily's Crossing* depicts both history and themes of loss, separation, sacrifice, and friendship through simple yet effective language and scenarios that shows how the emotion reach beyond geographical borders. This book would be a good introduction to WWII for children learning about this period of history for the first time.

Green, Bette. *Summer of My German Soldier*, Puffin Books, New York, NY, 1999. Summary from *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resources of Story* (131-132).

Summary: Patty Bergen is a young Jewish girl in Jenkinsville, Arkansas, in the years of World War II. Her unlikely small town becomes the site of a prisoner of war camp for Germans, who the townspeople see only as "Nazis." Patty is also the victim who suffers from an abusive, controlling father and a mother who can't seem to love her. In her precociousness, Patty sees herself as a constant irritation and wonders why she is the way she is. A German prisoner, Frederick Anton Reiker, and the Black nanny, Ruth, teach Patty to see herself as a talented and potentially beautiful young woman. Is it any wonder that Patty is willing to risk all to hide Reiker when he escapes?

Evaluation: *Summer of My German Soldier* is a work of historical fiction that takes place during WWII in America, but because of its universal issues, could occur in any time or place. Patty Bergen learns to get to know people for who they are as individuals and treat them accordingly; most significantly, she learns to show herself the same consideration towards herself. *Summer of My German Soldier* reiterates the wisdom of not stereotyping people and realizing that belonging to a group in some way doesn't necessarily mean someone belongs to it completely. Patty makes choices to defend her right to identify herself, and not be limited by what others may think of her.

Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA, 1989.

Summary: AnneMarie Johansen's younger sister has never known life to be any different than the present, but AnneMarie remembers when Denmark had no soldiers and their older sister Lise, a Resistance fighter, was alive. When the soldiers begin rounding up the Jews, AnneMarie's best friend Ellen Rosen is given a fictitious alias and background, accompanying the Johansens who leave for the countryside. One day without warning, AnneMarie is suddenly called upon in her mother's place to help deliver a basket vital to Ellen and her family's escape to Sweden. AnneMarie is afraid of what could happen to the Rosens, but also afraid for herself. How will she get through?

Evaluation: In Nazi-occupied Copenhagen, AnneMarie Johansen is caught between childhood and young adulthood, innocence and despair. Annemarie's parents deem her too young to fully comprehend the political situation, but she feels the pressures of high expectation. When AnneMarie hesitantly takes on a delivery task without knowing the contents or their purpose, she must muster all of her courage and rely on her own wits to see things through. AnneMarie does not understand what is going on, and is afraid of being caught and jeopardizing everyone's safety for lack of knowledge. However, AnneMarie realizes that her innocence can serve as protection, and begins to learn in bits and pieces how to survive, and how to be courageous when times are especially trying. *Number the Stars* would be a highly appropriate yet still impactful introduction to the Holocaust for youngest readers, giving them a sense of the gravity of the situation without the traumatizing gruesomeness that will be (relatively) easier to handle as older readers.

Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, Penguin Books, New York, 2003.

Summary: Art Spiegelman, son of Holocaust survivor Vladek Spiegelman, records his father's experiences with the Holocaust, while struggling to deal with the effects of his father's experience on their relationship. *Maus* discusses and illustrates (literally) the complications of identity formed through the Holocaust on direct survivors and their descendants. The Spiegelmans' story is depicted in graphic novel form and presented as a work-in-progress, thus noting and reflecting on the simultaneous processes of chronicling his Vladek's history and interacting with him in the present. Art Spiegelman doesn't claim to have a grand message to make with *Maus*; leaving the interpretation and takeaway up to the readers allows for innumerable discussions and meanings.

Evaluation: *Maus* combines the best storytelling elements of both the written and visual form: clear, precise, evocative, language and detailed, expressive visuals. The graphic novel format allows for easy tracking of changes in perspective and action in past and present, and the metaphorical decision to depict different groups of people as different anthropomorphic animals emphasizes the arbitrariness of politically decided collective identity. *Maus* covers the rise, event, and aftermath of the Holocaust, and is an entertaining and haunting commentary on how inhuman humans can be. Using the graphic novel is a way to visually display the events of the Holocaust without losing integrity but without being too realistically graphic, or bound to the limits of text- or visual-only storytelling formats.

Directed by Spielberg, Steven. *Schindler's List*, produced by Kathleen Kennedy, performance by Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley and Ralph Fiennes. Universal Pictures, 1993.

Summary: *Schindler's List* is a dramatic biopic based on a creative nonfiction book of the same name by Thomas Keneally. Both are based on the true story of Oskar Schindler, an opportunist businessman and a prison camp director, and the Schindlerjuden— more than one thousand Jews who he saved from the gas chambers. Initially, Schindler takes advantage of the war to supply his kitchenware factory with unpaid labor from the Jews rounded up into a nearby ghetto. When his employees are assigned to a labor camp overseen by the crazed Commandant Amon Goeth, who shoots Jews on sporting whim, however, Schindler is struck by conscience and strives to run his factory with an ulterior yet admirable motive: to save the lives of his workers.

Evaluation: *Schindler's List* takes the multiple perspectives of German people presented by *The Book Thief* as different characters, but combines them into a fewer number of thus even more complex characters, particularly the titular Oskar Schindler. In contrast to the cinematography of the film, Oskar Schindler's personality, behavior, actions, and motives cannot be sorted into black and white, pure bad or pure good. This film stirs up critical thinking about morals, conscience, bravery, and selfishness through powerful scenes that depict the ambiguity and weight of the times in a poignant way that books at times cannot achieve. Spielberg's *Schindler's List* is a bleak yet hopeful film that serves as inspiration and a reminder that no matter how small it may be on a scale, the choice to make a difference is still a difference.

Spinelli, Jerry. *Milkweed*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 2003. Summary from *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resources of Story* (233-234).

Summary: He is called many things since no one really knows his name. He is a Gypsy living in Warsaw, Poland, during the early Hitler years, still young enough to think that he will be safe because he isn't a Jew. He's first called simply "Stopthief" since that is what he has heard many times during his smuggling incidents. Later, Uri, one of the boys who befriends "Stopthief" and takes him into the lifestyle of other young boys who live by smuggling, creates a story of Misha Pilsudski, and that becomes "Stopthief"'s new identity. The novel is a courageous story of Misha's attempts to feed and save orphans, especially Janina, amid the ghetto life of Warsaw.

Evaluation: The first thing people who know about WWII tend to think of is the Holocaust and the genocide of European Jews. However, many either forget or don't realize that the Jews were not Hitler's only targets, which also included people who hid Jews, resisted the Reich, the disabled, the elderly, people of LGBTQ orientations, and gypsies. *Milkweed* is the story of "Stopthief", who is suspected to be a gypsy but is unsure himself of his true background and identity. Once "Stopthief" becomes Misha and makes connections with people around him, he learns that in these dangerous times, it may be safer not to have a set identity. *Milkweed* emphasizes how dangerous the war was for people besides the Jews, and how identity is a malleable construction.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Translated by Marion Wiesel. Hill and Wang, New York, NY, 2006.

Summary: *Night* is the memoir of Elie Wiesel, once a deeply religious Transylvanian teenager who endured Auschwitz and Buchenwald between 1944 and 1945, two of the most famous concentration camps created by the Nazis. Wiesel's memoir recounts details of the camp layout, daily routines, and dehumanizing behavior from both guards and fellow prisoners. As Wiesel spends more time in the camp, he buries his despair in desensitization, denouncing God and all hope. By the end of the book, young Elie does not recognize himself—and at that point, readers may not want to recognize him, either.

Evaluation: Elie Wiesel's memoir of his time in the concentration camps may be slim, but is by no means sparse. The plain and direct language, so matter-of-fact, suffices to relate the stark conditions and realities of daily operation within the camps. The simplicity of the language and structure reflects the numbness, hopeless, and despair wrought upon the prisoners by their situation, and makes the few outbursts of emotion all the more wrenchingly sublime. Wiesel's story recreates the pain, guilt, and incomprehensibility of the atrocities that went on around and inside the concentration camps, giving a brief, empathetic entry for readers into the tortured emotional and mental state of concentration camp prisoners.

Yolen, Jane. *The Devil's Arithmetic*, Puffin Books, New York, NY, 1988.

Summary: Hannah Stern, the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, dreads Passover visits from family members because she doesn't connect to their "doom and gloom stories" of the Holocaust, and is tired of hearing about them. Grudgingly, she is convinced to symbolically open the front door to welcome the prophet Elijah; when the door opens, Hannah has time traveled to Poland in 1942, and everyone she meets assumes she is Chaya, a relative recently orphaned due to an outbreak of cholera. When Nazi soldiers come to the village, Hannah tries to persuade the villagers not to leave with the Nazi, but everyone is shuttled onto trains toward the concentration camps. As Chaya, Hannah experiences the horrors of the concentration camp, and is sent to a gas chamber. As she loses consciousness in the chamber, Hannah returns to the present day, shaken, and begins to express interest in her family's stories.

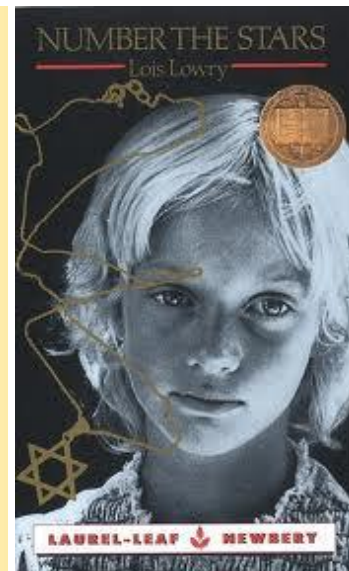
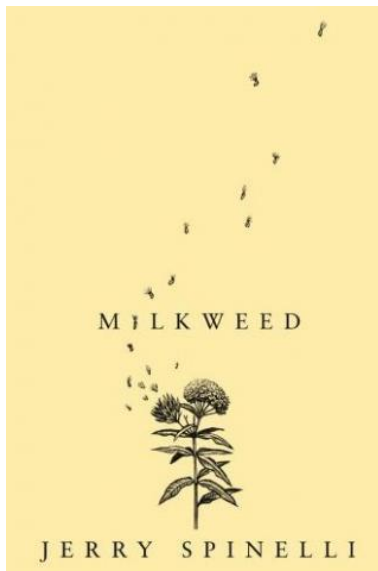
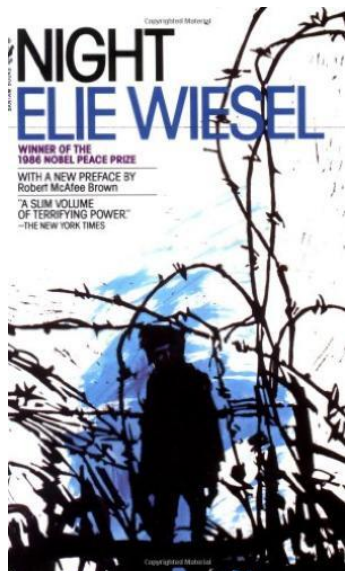
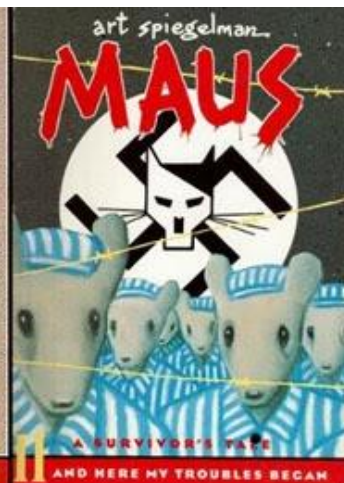
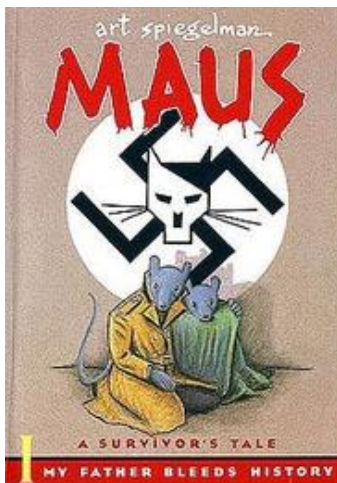
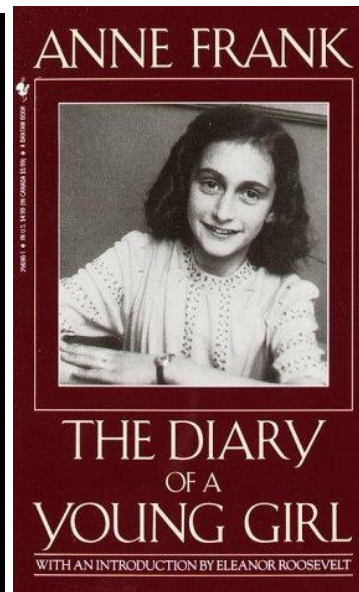
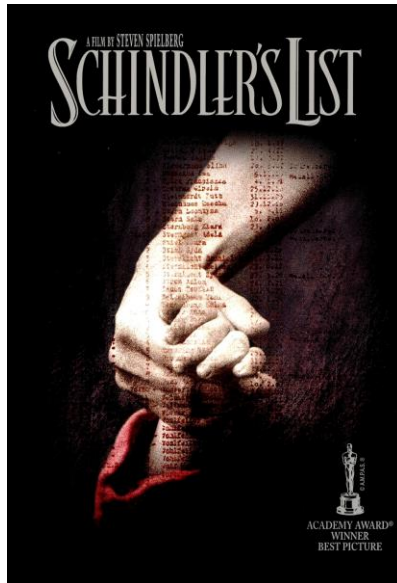
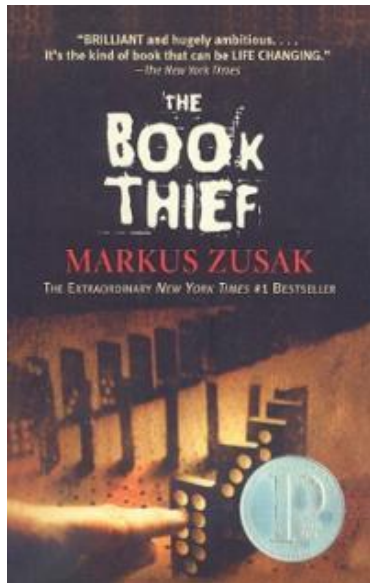
Evaluation: *The Devil's Arithmetic* is one of the few books about the Holocaust which contemplates its effects on and importance to the descendant generations, rather than to the sake of honoring their parents and elders. This thematic question of the purpose of custom and relevance of history to posterity relates to the experience immigrants, families with far-tracing ancestry, and the subject of human history as a whole. What is most important to continue doing and remembering, and why should anyone spend the time and effort? *The Devil's Arithmetic* presents multiple reasons why history remains relevant, and should not be forgotten. The book promotes the value of learning about the past, and seeking to get to know people and customs we don't understand, rather than dismissing them out-of-hand before we do. *The Devil's Arithmetic* pairs well for comparison and contrast with *Maus*, which presents two adult perspectives on the Holocaust, one character directly raised by a Holocaust survivor.

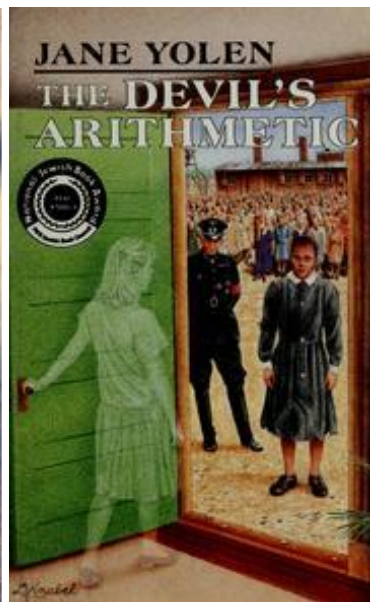
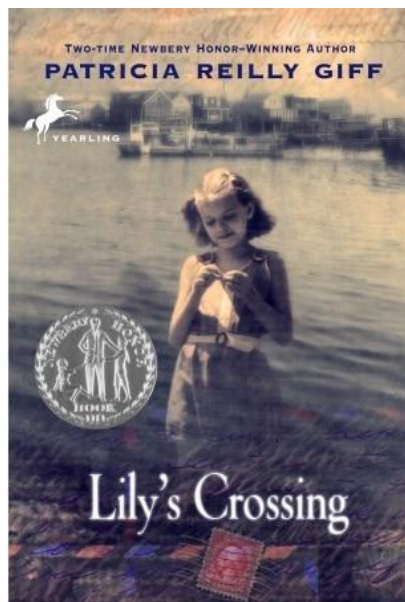
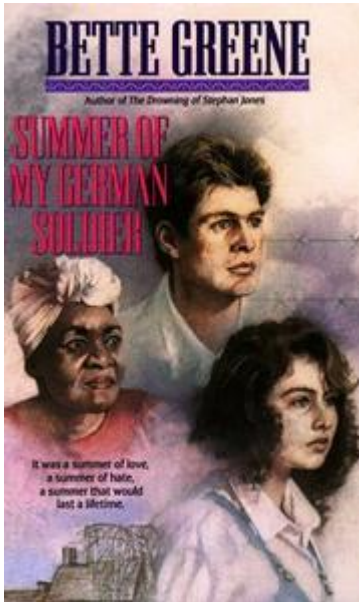
Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 2005. Taken from Nichelle

Kamrar's book talk for Dr. Warner's 112 Fall 2016 class.

Summary: *The Book Thief* centers on Liesel Meminger, a young girl sent to live with foster parents Hans and Rosa Hubermann. Liesel arrives clutching *The Grave Digger's Handbook*, stolen from her brother's burial site despite her inability to read. As time passes, Hitler becomes more powerful, and through her literacy, so does Liesel. Through her thievery and her relationships with the Himmel Strasse community, Liesel learns about the immense power of words, which can spread hurt and hatred, but can also provide healing and hope.

Evaluation: In *The Book Thief*, Death presents its interpretation of WWII from Germany's point of view—but not any *singular* Germany. *The Book Thief* includes characters of all ages who both oppose and support the Nazi status quo, and explores the effects of the war and Hitler's ideology on the average citizen of Himmel Strasse: young children, guilt-wracked veterans, worried wives, broken mothers, Hitler supporters, and Hitler targets. While WWII rages without, Liesel Meminger and her neighbors face wars within themselves about such ideas as fear, courage, mortality, shame, guilt, morality, suffering, and friendship. The multitude of perspectives from people differently involved in WWII and the depth of themes presented in *The Book Thief* are a strong example of how history remains relevant and universal.





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