

Gary Paulsen's writing is a gold mine when it comes to teaching students how to enhance their narrative writings. Paulsen uses a lot of detail to take the reader into the character's world. Rich descriptions, backstories, and character motives weave together pulling the reader into the story.

By the time readers reach the end of one of the books from the *Hatchet Series*, they have an excess of how-to-knowledge. Imagine being lost in the woods after reading the novel. You would have the basic understanding of starting a fire without matches, constructing a bow and arrow, or even making a fishing spear.

In *Hatchet* and *Brian's Winter*, sensory details and sentence structure enhance the story. Run-on sentences and fragments fill the book. This writing style often gives the reader a sense of urgency causing excitement to build. By incorporating unrest with frequent cliffhangers, Paulsen's novels are simply difficult to put down. This style also makes readers feel like they are sitting around the campfire having a chat with Brian instead of reading a book.

While each one of these style details is great lessons, this post is going to focus on another feature of Paulsen's writing - figurative language. Paulsen uses a lot of it. This activity uses examples from *Brian's Winter* to help students identify similes, metaphors, personification, and idioms. In a second activity, students will learn the meanings of the idioms found in *Brian's Winter*.

Similes are by far the most used type of figurative language in *Brian's Winter*. Even though I narrowed down the simile list to keep the types more even, you will still find more similes than the other figurative language types.

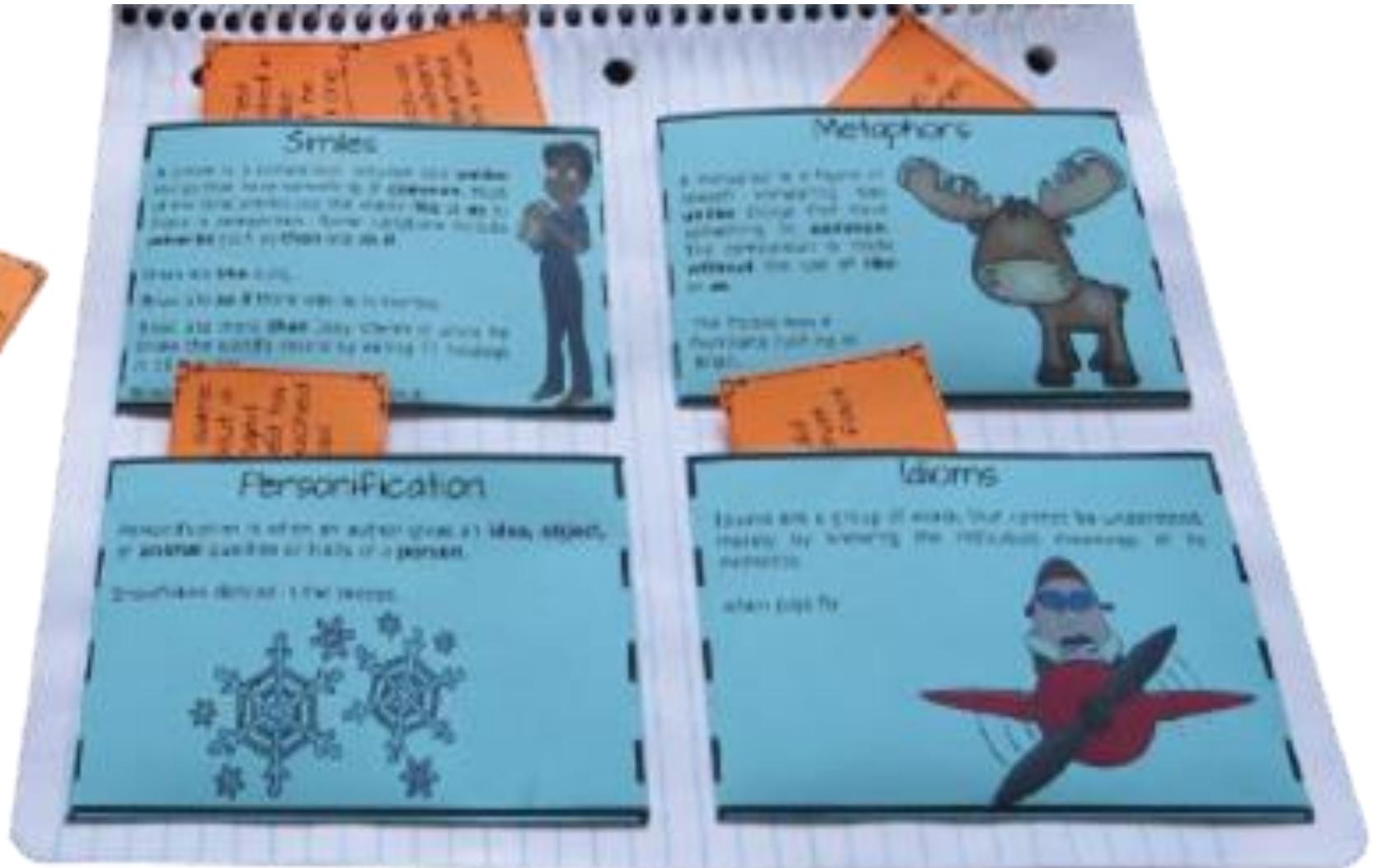
[Get the Google Slides version of these activities here.](#)



[Check out the bundle on TPT.](#)

Activity #1 - Sorting

Students sort the passages from *Brian's Winter* by figurative language type. Four pockets have been provided so this can be made into a file folder activity. The pockets could also be glued into interactive notebooks for an individual activity.



Activity #1 - Sorting

Another option for a learning center is to cut the rectangles out from the center of the pockets and tape them onto 4 Solo (or other type of plastic cups) using clear Contact paper or packing tape.

Note: The different color strips in the digital version represent the locations of where the passages can be found in *Brian's Winter*.

But the cow was a treasure house of food and hide and he wasn't about to leave her for the wolves, or the bear if it came along again.

... at the same time a sliver of...

... then used the hatchet to cut the ends of new evergreen boughs and laid them like a carpet in the shelter.

... his body felt as if he'd been sleeping in a cement mixer.

The sliver-a foot long and slightly bigger in diameter than his thumb.

... dew drops hit his cheek.

Brian hadn't gone off the deep end.

... a idea that they seemed to be very crude tennis racket-but that was it.

... as clockwork winter came.

He was going stir-crazy.

It was delicious, almost like having steak sauce or a kind of bitter catsup.

... sugar...

ed flour

Similes

A simile is a comparison between two **unlike** things that have something in **common**. Most of the time similes use the words **like** or **as** to make a comparison. Some variations include **adverbs** such as **than** and **as if**.

Brian ate **like** a pig.

Brian ate **as if** there was no tomorrow.

Brian ate **more than** Joey Chestnut when he broke the world's record by eating 73 hotdogs in 10 minutes.

Brian ate **as much as** Joey Chestnut.

Metaphors

A metaphor is a figure of speech comparing two **unlike** things that have something in **common**. The comparison is made **without** the use of **like** or **as**.

The moose was a hurricane rushing at Brian.

Personification

Personification is when an author gives an **idea**, **object**, or **animal** qualities or traits of a **person**.

Snowflakes danced in the breeze.

Idioms

Idioms are a group of words that cannot be understood merely by knowing the individual meanings of its elements.

when pigs fly

Activity #2 - Matching Idioms to Meanings

Print the two pages for the idiom activity. Cut out the boxes that contain the passages from *Brian's Winter*.

Student match the passages to the definitions.

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>He was g pped dead in s.</p> | <p>to make someone or something come to a complete halt immediately or very suddenly</p>  | <p>acutely anxious, restless, irritable, irrational, and/or depressed from remaining for too long in an unstimulating, confined, and/or isolated environment</p> | <p>a byproduct of awe, that rare but overwhelming feeling of reverence we experience when witnessing something wondrous or witnessing a frightening event</p>  |
| <p>... the imag his mind fr day sewing</p> <p>Just as bad things could snowball, Brian found that</p> | <p>Brian hadn't gone off the deep end.</p> | <p>The woods were so beautiful, so changed—it was a whole different world—that he walked slowly along and feasted his eyes on first one scene and then another.</p> | <p>be anxious while you are waiting for something that you are worried about</p>  |
| <p>Regular as clockwork winter came.</p> | <p>impossible things to forget</p>  | <p>a situation in which the results or consequences of an action grow at an increasingly faster rate over time</p>  | <p>never late or always at the same time</p> |

Idiom Definitions

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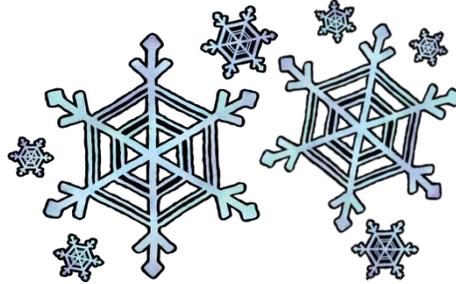


Cut out the pockets on the bold lines. Next fold the left and right sides toward the back of the pocket on the dotted lines. Then fold the bottom flap up toward the back. Glue the flaps in place. Finally glue the pocket onto the interactive notebook.

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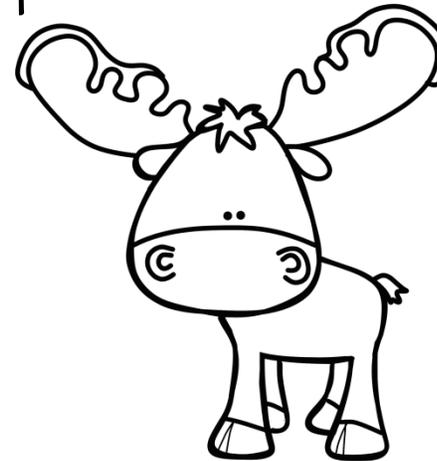
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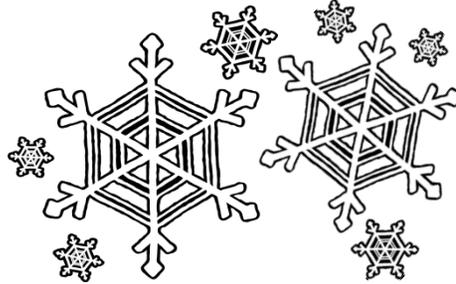


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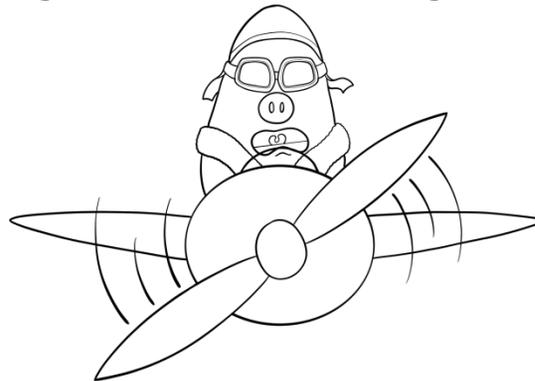
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...even the package of dried prunes-something he'd hated in his old life. They tasted like candy and were so good he ate the whole package in one sitting.

Just as bad things could snowball, Brian found that good things could come fast as well.

His body was a machine, it needed food, needed calories, and for that to happen something had to die.

There was a large patch-as big as a football field-where an ancient fire had burned the trees off and left brush.

It was the same air, the same sun, the same morning, but it was different, so changed that he stopped and raised his hand to his cheek and touched where the coolness had brushed him.

The edge was as sharp as a razor and it cut his finger slightly.

When they dried they were like thick paper with hair on one side, dry and crinkly and easy to tear.

All sounds, any movement went into him, filled his eyes, ears, mind so that he became part of it, and it was then that he noted the change. A new coolness, a touch, a soft kiss on his cheek.

... the moon was full and so bright it was almost like a cloudy day.

It blew up under his foot in a flash of leaves and feathers like a grenade detonating and flew off at a quartering angle away and to Brian's left front.

But Brian had become part of nature, had become a predator, a two-legged wolf.

Of course the hair was still on the skin and stuck out all around and made the arrow look like a pom-pom...

All that was really left was the head and neck and front shoulders and tattered bits of hide, the whole thing looking like a roadkill hit by a semi.

It's a treasure...and actually started to salivate and then smiled more widely as he had a fleeting image of back in the world and what they would think if they could see him now, salivating over what amounted to a roadkill.

The word stopped him.

Brian holding his breath waiting to be nailed...

But on the fourth try he came away with a piece almost as wide as his palm and about seven inches long, tapering to a sharp point and with two edges like razors.

Time seemed to stop.

There, a small opening. Not four feet across and about four feet off the ground—almost a tunnel through the brush...

She was at him like a cat, so fast that she seemed a blur, and yet his mind took it all in.

To death, he thought, the truth sliding in like a snake.

On its back there were several white spots, each about as large as a silver dollar.

I've got a roommate with a terminal hygiene problem . . .

The woods were so beautiful, so changed—it was a whole different world—that he walked slowly along and feasted his eyes on first one scene and then another.

... he was surprised to see the liquid in the pot become semihard, like Jell-O...

... the image burned into his mind from sitting all day sewing.

It was like having a pet nuclear device.

Listen, you little robber-I'm sorry it's too hot.

He named it Betty after deciding that it was a female and that it looked like his aunt, who was low and round and waddled the same way.

...none close enough to shoot, all standing out like sore thumbs because they were brown against the white snow.

The bear stopped dead in the darkness.

I've got a pet skunk who's a terrorist.

Then her head hit his forehead. Brian saw one flash of white light, as bright as all the snow, then nothing but pain and darkness.

When they got angry it was like having a Buick mad at you.

It was like having a pet nuclear device.

Moose...she came out of the brush on top of him. He had one fleeting image of a wall of brown hair with the feathers of the arrow sticking out of the middle and he went down.

Regular as clockwork winter came.

He had seen pictures of snowshoes and had a vague idea that they seemed to be a web -a very crude tennis racket-but that was it.

... at the same time a sliver of wood from the tree came at him like an arrow.

The snow was dry, like crystallized flour or sugar...

It was delicious, almost like having steak sauce or a kind of bitter catsup.

The sliver-a foot long and slightly bigger in diameter than his thumb.

... dew drops hit his cheek.

Brian hadn't gone off the deep end.

But the cow was a treasure house of food and hide and he wasn't about to leave her for the wolves, or the bear if it came along again.

... then used the hatchet to cut the ends of new evergreen boughs and laid them like a carpet in the shelter.

... his body felt as if he'd been sleeping in a cement mixer.

He was going stir-crazy.

Answer Key for Chapters 1-4

| Simile | Metaphor | Personification | Idiom |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>...even the package of dried prunes—something he'd hated in his old life. They tasted like candy and were so good he ate the whole package in one sitting.</p> <p>... the moon was full and so bright it was almost like a cloudy day.</p> <p>There was a large patch—as big as a football field—where an ancient fire had burned the trees off and left brush.</p> <p>It blew up under his foot in a flash of leaves and feathers like a grenade detonating and flew off at a quartering angle away and to Brian's left front.</p> <p>The edge was as sharp as a razor and it cut his finger slightly.</p> <p>When they dried they were like thick paper with hair on one side, dry and crinkly and easy to tear.</p> <p>Of course the hair was still on the skin and stuck out all around and made the arrow look like a pom-pom...</p> | <p>But Brian had become part of nature, had become a predator, a two-legged wolf.</p> <p>His body was a machine, it needed food, needed calories, and for that to happen something had to die.</p> | <p>All sounds, any movement went into him, filled his eyes, ears, mind so that he became part of it, and it was then that he noted the change. A new coolness, a touch, a soft kiss on his cheek.</p> <p>It was the same air, the same sun, the same morning, but it was different, so changed that he stopped and raised his hand to his cheek and touched where the coolness had brushed him.</p> | <p>Just as bad things could snowball, Brian found that good things could come fast as well.</p> |

Answer Key for Chapters 5-9

| Simile | Metaphor | Personification | Idiom |
|--|--|------------------------------|--|
| <p>All that was really left was the head and neck and front shoulders and tattered bits of hide, the whole thing looking like a roadkill hit by a semi.</p> <p>... he was surprised to see the liquid in the pot become semihard, like Jell-O...</p> <p>He named it Betty after deciding that it was a female and that it looked like his aunt, who was low and round and waddled the same way.</p> <p>It was like having a pet nuclear device.</p> <p>But on the fourth try he came away with a piece almost as wide as his palm and about seven inches long, tapering to a sharp point and with two edges like razors.</p> <p>To death, he thought, the truth sliding in like a snake.</p> <p>On its back there were several white spots, each about as large as a silver dollar.</p> <p>...none close enough to shoot, all standing out like sore thumbs because they were brown against the white snow.</p> <p>When they got angry it was like having a Buick mad at you.</p> <p>She was at him like a cat, so fast that she seemed a blur, and yet his mind took it all in.</p> <p>Then her head hit his forehead. Brian saw one flash of white light, as bright as all the snow, then nothing but pain and darkness.</p> | <p>It's a treasure, he thought, and actually started to salivate and then smiled more widely as he had a fleeting image of back in the world and what they would think if they could see him now, salivating over what amounted to a roadkill.</p> <p>I've got a pet skunk who's a terrorist.</p> <p>"Listen, you little robber—I'm sorry it's too hot.</p> <p>I've got a roommate with a terminal hygiene problem . . .</p> <p>There, a small opening. Not four feet across and about four feet off the ground—almost a tunnel through the brush...</p> <p>Moose...she came out of the brush on top of him. He had one fleeting image of a wall of brown hair with the feathers of the arrow sticking out of the middle and he went down.</p> | <p>The word stopped him.</p> | <p>Brian holding his breath waiting to be nailed...</p> <p>The bear stopped dead in the darkness.</p> <p>... the image burned into his mind from sitting all day sewing.</p> <p>The woods were so beautiful, so changed—it was a whole different world—that he walked slowly along and feasted his eyes on first one scene and then another.</p> <p>Time seemed to stop.</p> |

Answer Key for Chapters 10-14

Simile

... his body felt as if he'd been sleeping in a cement mixer.

... then used the hatchet to cut the ends of new evergreen boughs and laid them like a carpet in the shelter.

It was delicious, almost like having steak sauce or a kind of bitter catsup.

The snow was dry, like crystallized flour or sugar...

... at the same time a sliver of wood from the tree came at him like an arrow.

Metaphor

But the cow was a treasure house of food and hide and he wasn't about to leave her for the wolves, or the bear if it came along again.

The sliver—a foot long and slightly bigger in diameter than his thumb.

He had seen pictures of snowshoes and had a vague idea that they seemed to be a web—a very crude tennis racket—but that was it.

Personification

... dew drops hit his cheek.

Idiom

He was going stir-crazy.

Brian hadn't gone off the deep end.

Regular as clockwork winter came. (formatted as a simile)

to make someone or something come to a complete halt immediately or very suddenly



acutely anxious, restless, irritable, irrational, and/or depressed from remaining for too long in an unstimulating, confined, and/or isolated environment

a byproduct of awe, that rare but overwhelming feeling of reverence we experience when witnessing something wondrous or witnessing a frightening event



to overreact; to let one's emotions carry one away

to gaze (upon something) with joy or pleasure

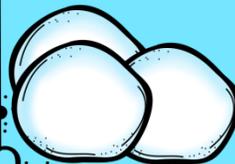
be anxious while you are waiting for something that you are worried about



impossible things to forget



a situation in which the results or consequences of an action grow at an increasingly faster rate over time



never late or always at the same time

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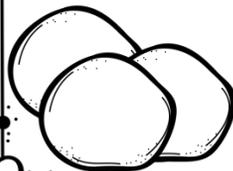
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Brian holding his breath
waiting to be nailed...

Brian hadn't gone off the
deep end.

The bear stopped dead in the
darkness.

Just as bad things could
snowball, Brian found that
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as well.

He was going stir-crazy.

... the image burned into his
mind from sitting all day
sewing.

The woods were so beautiful,
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Regular as clockwork winter
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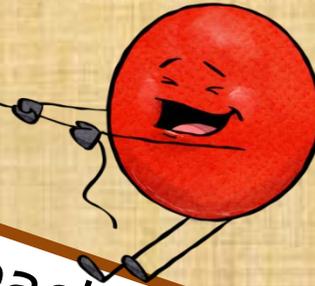
Time seemed to stop.

Answer Key for Idiom

| Idiom | Definition |
|--|---|
| The bear stopped dead in the darkness. | to make someone or something come to a complete halt immediately or very suddenly |
| He was going stir-crazy. | acutely anxious, restless, irritable, irrational, and/or depressed from remaining for too long in an unstimulating, confined, and/or isolated environment |
| Time seemed to stop. | a byproduct of awe, that rare but overwhelming feeling of reverence we experience when witnessing something wondrous or witnessing a frightening event |
| Brian hadn't gone off the deep end. | to overreact; to let one's emotions carry one away |
| The woods were so beautiful, so changed—it was a whole different world—that he walked slowly along and feasted his eyes on first one scene and then another. | to gaze (upon something) with joy or pleasure |
| Brian holding his breath waiting to be nailed... | be anxious while you are waiting for something that you are worried about |
| ... the image burned into his mind from sitting all day sewing. | impossible things to forget |
| Just as bad things could snowball, Brian found that good things could come fast as well. | a situation in which the results or consequences of an action grow at an increasingly faster rate over time |
| Regular as clockwork winter came. | never late or always at the same time |

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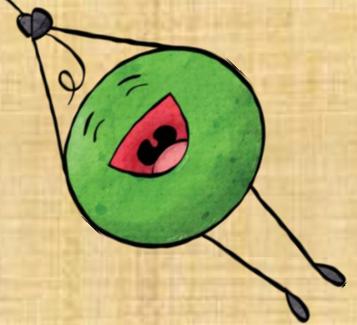
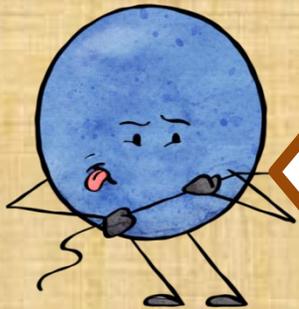


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