



**READING COMPREHENSION LEVEL AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THE READING
COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF
ST. ANTHONY'S COLLEGE OF SANTA ANA, CAGAYAN INCORPORATED**

***Gagote, Romel P., Garcia, Ana Marie P., Ponce, Jenny Rose
Co-Authors: Balanay, Elsa T., Sagario, Arjay M.***

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the reading comprehension level of senior high school students of Saint Anthony's College Inc. and to examine the factors that influence their comprehension skills. Out of the 200 senior high school students, 158 were randomly selected as respondents. Findings revealed that the students performed highly at the literal level of comprehension, followed by the inferential level. However, their performance at the evaluative level was lower, indicating the need for students to develop more effective reading habits, strategies, and exposure to reading materials that enhance vocabulary and critical thinking. Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed to analyze the relationship between socio-demographic factors (age, sex, parents' educational attainment, and occupation) and the reading comprehension levels of the respondents. Results showed no significant relationship between these factors and the students' reading comprehension performance. Based on the findings, it is recommended that teachers utilize well-developed learning materials that strengthen vocabulary and comprehension skills, particularly at the evaluative level. Future studies are encouraged to further investigate additional factors that may influence students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, vocabulary, reading materials, literal level, inferential level, evaluative level, reading habits, strategies.*



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Introduction

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret written text. It enables students to think critically and communicate their ideas effectively. Engaging with books and other educational resources builds a strong foundation for comprehension, since these practices expand vocabulary, improve fluency, boost motivation and interest, and develop strategies for understanding texts.

As Dr. Seuss once said, *"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."* This famous line emphasizes the strong connection between reading and learning. Reading is not simply the act of decoding words; it requires active engagement with the text, building knowledge, and making meaningful connections that lead to deeper understanding.

Research supports this view. Nurhayati and Najoan (2023) found that students' reading habits and comprehension levels were at a moderate level, and their study revealed a significant correlation between the two. This suggests that teachers should pay attention to students' reading practices as a way to improve their comprehension. Similarly, Wagstaff (2020) concluded that reading provides numerous benefits, including enhanced cognitive performance. Students who read regularly were shown to perform better academically and in assessments.

Reading books and using multimedia resources also play important roles in developing comprehension. Books expose students to diverse vocabulary and sentence structures, which support fluency and make it easier to understand complex texts.

Educational videos, on the other hand, provide a multi-sensory learning experience that can enhance interest and motivation. Hibbing and Erickson (2003) emphasized the role of visual images in improving comprehension, especially for struggling readers. They found that the use of picture books helped older students better understand complex texts. Likewise, Damanik and Harianja (2022) discovered that integrating comic books into instruction improved students' comprehension of narrative texts.

Nurhayati and Najoan (2023) found that students' reading habits and comprehension were at a moderate level but significantly correlated, highlighting the importance of teachers encouraging good reading practices. Similarly, Ningrum et al. (2017) confirmed the significant correlation between reading habits and comprehension among Indonesian high school students.

Wagstaff (2020) concluded that reading enhances cognitive performance and contributes to better classroom and test performance. Reading literary fiction, in particular, develops theory of mind and fosters healthy emotional engagement.

Fatiloru et al. (2017) investigated reading habits among college students in Oyo town. They found that 65.5% read daily in their field of specialization and 25% read weekly, confirming that strong reading habits improve academic performance.

Wu et al. (2019) emphasized that metacognitive awareness of strategies and autonomous motivation were the strongest predictors of reading comprehension among Chinese students. Teacher qualifications and experience also influenced performance.



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Sukarni (2019) likewise found a strong positive correlation between reading attitude and comprehension among undergraduate students, underscoring the importance of fostering positive reading attitudes.

Despite these strategies, large-scale assessments show that Filipino students continue to perform below global standards in reading comprehension. In the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Filipino students obtained an average score of 347, far below the OECD average of 476. This result is consistent with the 2018 PISA, in which Filipino students scored an average of 340, also well below the global average of 487.

Hijazi (2018) investigated the relationship between students' reading comprehension and English achievement at Yarmouk University using a 20-item comprehension test and a 40-item achievement test. The study found that both reading comprehension and achievement were at a medium level, with no significant gender differences.

Similarly, Estremera and Estremera (2018) examined the comprehension levels of Grade 6 pupils using PHILIRI. Results showed that in silent reading, 5% of pupils experienced frustration, 30% needed instruction, and 12% were independent readers. In oral reading, 71% were frustrated, 59% needed instruction, and only a few were independent. Factors influencing reading comprehension included pupil characteristics, language, teacher, school head, school resources, home, and community.

These findings highlight the urgent need to examine the factors influencing students' comprehension skills. As modern learners are increasingly exposed to technology, reading

habits, educational resources, and media consumption may all shape their comprehension performance. Motivated by this concern, the present study investigates the tools and practices of senior high school students at Saint Anthony's College and identifies the level of comprehension literal, inferential, or evaluative at which they perform.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the reading comprehension level and the factors influencing the reading comprehension skills of Senior High School students of St. Anthony's College of Sta. Ana, Cagayan Incorporated.

Specifically, the following questions will be answered:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of SHS students in terms of:
 - a. Age
 - b. Sex
 - c. First language/ Mother tongue
 - d. Education of parents
 - e. Occupation of parents
 - f. Reading materials available at home
2. What are the factors influencing the reading comprehension skills as perceived by the students themselves?
3. What is the reading comprehension level of SHS students along:
 - a. Literal
 - b. Inferential
 - c. Evaluative
4. Is there a significant relationship between socio-demographic profile of the SHS students and their reading comprehension level?

Hypothesis



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There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile and the reading comprehension level of the senior high school students of Saint Anthony's College.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Schema Theory, a cognitive theory that explains how individuals organize and interpret information. It was first introduced by British psychologist Frederic Bartlett (1930) and later applied to education and reading comprehension by researchers such as Rumelhart (1980).

According to Schema Theory, comprehension is an interactive process between a reader's background knowledge and the text. Readers draw upon their existing knowledge structures, or "schemas," to make sense of new information. Rumelhart (1980) emphasized that understanding a text is not a passive activity but involves actively connecting prior knowledge with the information being read.

Anderson et al. (1977, as cited in Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983) further explained that *"every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well."* This highlights the critical role of background knowledge in interpreting meaning. Students with well-developed schemas are more likely to achieve stronger comprehension skills, which in turn influence their academic performance.

Research Paradigm

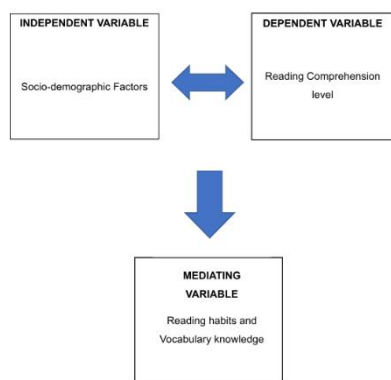


Figure 1. *Research Paradigm of the Study*

This paradigm illustrates the relationship between the socio-demographic profile of the respondents (independent variable), their reading habits and vocabulary knowledge (mediating variables), and their reading comprehension levels literal, inferential, and evaluative (dependent variable).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a **quantitative research design**, which involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data. This approach was selected to evaluate and investigate the factors influencing the reading comprehension skills of senior high school students. The quantitative method allowed the researchers to measure comprehension levels and examine possible relationships with socio-demographic factors.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at the **Senior High School Department of Saint Anthony's College, Santa Cruz, Santa Ana, Cagayan.**



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Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were **158 out of 255 senior high school students** from Saint Anthony's College, chosen through random sampling. The respondents came from different strands, namely STEM, HUMSS, ABM, and TVL. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

TABLE 1: *Respondents of the study*

YEAR LEVEL & STRAND:	TOTAL POPULATION	SAMPLE POPULATION	PERCENTAGE
STEM 11	56	24	43
HUMSS 11	18	13	72
ABM 11	19	16	84
TVL 11	29	20	69
STEM 12	38	26	68
HUMSS 12	41	24	59
ABM 12	19	17	89
TVL 12	35	18	51
TOTAL	255	158	62

Instrumentation

The data for this study were collected using self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items designed to assess the factors influencing their reading comprehension skills and 30 items designed to assess the reading comprehension level of the senior high school students.

The researchers prepared their own questionnaire to gather data and to answer all the specific questions under the statement of the problem. The chosen respondents were given a copy of the summary of the story titled "the gift of magi" before answering the research question.

Before distribution, the questionnaire underwent a thorough process of preparation and validation.

After the preparation and validation process, 158 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers created researcher-made questionnaire, and after validation, they asked permission to the principal of the basic education department through letter of request for the approval to conduct the study at Saint Anthony's College. Once the request was approved, the researchers reproduced the questionnaires to the numbers of copies sufficient to all the respondents, and after preparation, the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the chosen respondents to gather information needed in this study. After the questionnaires were retrieved, the researchers analyzed and interpreted the result using statistical procedures.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data employed a descriptive statistic such as mean, frequency and percentage to provide a comprehensive summary of the findings. The researchers utilized a survey questionnaire, and all responses were consolidated before analysis.

Ethical Considerations



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The researchers used the ethical consideration principles that Bryman and Bell (2007) formulated. The participants in this study didn't experience any negative effects from their participation. The participants in the study, Saint Anthony's SHS students gave their complete consent prior to the investigation. Furthermore, measures were taken to safeguard research participants' privacy. Respondents' voluntary participation in the study was given high consideration. An appropriate degree of confidentiality was maintained when managing the data. We refrained from providing inaccurate information of any kind and from portraying the results of primary data in a biased manner. The study took into consideration in maintaining the highest level of objectivity in discussions and evaluations. Finally, there was an honest communication style for this research in all communication.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

TABLE 1: *Respondents of the study*

The table presents the total and sample populations across year levels and academic strands. The percentages represent the proportion of each strand included in the sample. Among the respondents, the STEM strand shows a strong representation, with 24 students from Grade 11 and 26 students from Grade 12. HUMSS follows closely, with 13 from Grade 11 and 24 from Grade 12. ABM students accounted for 33 respondents across both grade levels, while TVL students accounted for 38 respondents. Overall, the study had 158 participants, representing 62% of the senior high school population.

YEAR LEVEL & STRAND:	TOTAL POPULATION	SAMPLE POPULATION	PERCENTAGE
STEM 11	56	24	43
HUMSS 11	18	13	72
ABM 11	19	16	84
TVL 11	29	20	69
STEM 12	38	26	68
HUMSS 12	41	24	59
ABM 12	19	17	89
TVL 12	35	18	51
TOTAL	255	158	62

TABLE 1.1. *Age Distribution of Respondents*

The majority of respondents were 16 and 17 years old, comprising 88% of the total sample. A smaller percentage fell into other age groups, with 15-year-olds at 5%, 18-year-olds at 4%, and very minimal representation from older ages (19, 20, and 24).

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
15	8	5.1
16	64	41
17	74	47
18	7	4
19	1	1
20	3	1
24	1	1

TABLE 1.2. *Sex Distribution of Respondents*



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The table indicates that 59% of respondents were female, while 41% were male, showing a slightly higher participation of female students in the study.

SEX:	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	64	41
FEMALE	94	59

TABLE 1.3. *Mother Tongue of Respondents*

Ilocano was the dominant mother tongue (77%), followed by Tagalog (20%). Only a small fraction (3%) spoke other local languages, such as Dupanangan.

MOTHER TOUNGE:	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
ILOCANO	121	77
TAGALOG	32	20
OTHERS	5	3

TABLE 1.4. *Father's Educational Attainment*

The results reveal that one-third of the respondents' fathers were college graduates (33%), followed by elementary graduates (30%) and high school graduates (25%). A small number had attained postgraduate education (MA/MS or Ph.D.).

FATHER'S EDUCATION :	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
ELEMENTARY GRADUATE	47	30
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	40	25

COLLEGE UNDER GRADUATE	15	9
COLLEGE GRADUATE	52	33
WITH MA/MS UNITS	2	1
MA/MS GRADUATE	1	1
PH. D GRADUATE	1	1

TABLE 1.5. *Mother's Educational Attainment*

Similarly, the mothers' educational attainment showed the highest proportion as college graduates (30.3%), followed by high school graduates (29.1%) and college undergraduates (22%). Very few had pursued postgraduate education.

MOTHER'S EDUCATION :	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
ELEMENTARY GRADUATE	25	16
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE	46	29.1
COLLEGE UNDER GRADUATE	34	22
COLLEGE GRADUATE	48	30.3
WITH MA/MS UNITS	2	1
MA/MS GRADUATE	3	1

TABLE 1.6. *Father's Occupation*



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The results show that 41% of the respondents' fathers were unemployed, while 30% were self-employed. Others worked in the private sector (16%), local government (8%), or were employed overseas as OFWs (5%).

FATHER'S OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	13	8
PRIVATE SECTOR	26	16
SELF-EMPLOYED	47	30
NOT EMPLOYED	64	41
OFW	8	5

TABLE 1.7. *Mother's Occupation*

The mothers' occupation profile also showed a high percentage of unemployment (33%) and self-employment (27%). Notably, more mothers were OFWs (18%) compared to fathers (5%), indicating their significant role in providing family support.

MOTHER'S OCCUPATION:	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	15	9
PRIVATE SECTOR	20	13
SELF-EMPLOYED	42	27
NOT EMPLOYED	53	33
OFW	28	18

TABLE 1.8. *Reading Materials Used by Respondents*

The most commonly accessed reading material was cellphones (ranked 1), followed by television (ranked 2) and books (ranked 3). Laptops, journals, magazines, and comics were used less frequently. This suggests a strong reliance on digital platforms for reading.

READING MATERIALS:	FREQUENCY	RANK
BOOKS	88	3
COMICS	20	6
JOURNALS	26	5
MAGAZINES	26	5
CELLPHONES	151	1
TV	94	2
LAPTOP	74	4

TABLE 2: *Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension*

The findings reveal that respondents consistently rated the listed factors as "Often" influencing their reading comprehension skills, with an overall mean of 3.76. The highest-rated factor was "searching for the meaning of words to understand texts" (mean = 3.98), while the lowest was "using free reading apps such as Wattpad" (mean = 3.51). This indicates that vocabulary-building practices and active engagement strategies were perceived as the most beneficial.

INDICATORS	WEIGHTED MEAN	DESCRIPTION
1. Is having a strong vocabulary essential for good comprehension?	3.79	OFTEN
2. Is reading books, novels and other educational	3.83	OFTEN



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resources at home improving your reading comprehension skills?		
3. Is using apps such as Wattpad and other free reading apps affecting your reading comprehension skills?	3.51	OFTEN
4. Is reading news reports and watching movies improving your vocabulary and comprehension skills?	3.74	OFTEN
5. Is searching for the meaning of the words in order to understand what you are reading improving your reading comprehension skills?	3.98	OFTEN
6. Is using a dictionary to understand the meaning of the unfamiliar words improving your reading comprehension skills?	3.82	OFTEN

7. Does actively engaging with the text by highlighting key points, taking notes, and summarizing content to better understand and retain information increasing your reading comprehension skills?	3.93	OFTEN
8. Is expanding my vocabulary through a words list, context clues, and word mapping in order to grasp the meaning of unfamiliar terms in the text improving my reading comprehension skills?	3.64	OFTEN
9. Does clarifying confusing parts of the text by re-reading and seeking additional information to overcome comprehension difficulty improving reading your	3.72	OFTEN



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comprehension skills?		
10. Is watching educational videos improving your reading comprehension skills?	3.72	OFTEN
OVERALL MEAN	3.76	OFTEN

TABLE 3: *Reading comprehension Levels*

TABLE 3.1. *Literal Level*

Respondents performed relatively well at the literal level, with correct responses ranging from 66% to 84%. This indicates strong ability to recall and recognize directly stated information.

LITERAL LEVEL	CHECK	WRONG
Who are the main characters in the story?	84%	16%
What does Della decide to sell in order to buy Jim a gift?	68%	32%
What does Jim sell to buy Della a gift?	75%	25%
When do Jim and Della exchange their gifts?	74%	26%
What is the main theme of the story "The gift of the Magi"?	82%	18%
Who is the author of the story?	77%	23%

Where does Della go to sell her hair?	75%	25%
What struggles are Della and Jim facing?	82%	18%
What gift did the couple buy for each other?	78%	22%
What was the special occasion that prompted the couple to exchange gifts?	66%	34%

TABLE 3.2. *Inferential Level*

Performance at the inferential level was slightly lower, with correct responses ranging from 61% to 83%. This suggests greater difficulty in deriving implied meanings and making logical inferences.

INFERENTIAL LEVEL	CHECK	WRONG
Based on the story, what can you infer about the importance of communication in a relationship?	83%	17%
What can you infer about the couple's understanding of each other's desires through their gift choices?	75%	25%
How does the title of the story relate to the characters' actions?	65%	35%
What does the story teach you about the idea or concept of true wealth?	61%	39%
Why did Della decide to cut and sell her hair to a wig designer?	73%	27%
What was the reason why Jim decided to sell	70%	30%



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his treasured pocket watch?		
What does the gift exchange between the couple reveal about their relationship?	65%	35%
What is the significance of the couples selling their important and treasured things in the story?	72%	28%
What is the main theme of the "Gift of the Magi"?	62%	38%
How does the theme of sacrifice contribute to the development of the story?	66%	34%

TABLE 3.3. *Evaluative Level*

The evaluative level showed the weakest performance, with correct responses as low as 33% on some questions. This highlights a challenge among students in critically analyzing and evaluating texts.

EVALUATIVE LEVEL	CHECK	WRONG
What is the message behind the story "The Gift of the Magi"?	68%	32%
What lesson can you learn from the characters' actions in the story regarding relationships?	63%	37%
What do you think is the significance of the gift exchanged between Della and Jim?	80%	20%
What does the ending of "The Gift of the Magi" suggest about the	56%	44%

essence of true happiness?		
How does the couple demonstrate their love for each other in the story?	60%	40%
What is the significance of the story "The Gift of the Magi"?	33%	67%
How does the story impact your perception of sacrifice?	41%	59%
How does the story impact your perception of selflessness?	55%	45%
What lesson about love and sacrifice does the story teach you?	37%	63%
How does Della and Jim feel when they see the gifts, they bought for each other?	59%	41%

TABLE 4: *Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Socio-Demographic Profile*

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed **no significant relationship** between reading comprehension levels and socio-demographic factors such as age, sex, mother tongue, parents' educational attainment, and parents' occupation. The null hypothesis of no correlation was therefore accepted in all cases.

READING COMPREHENSION	Pears on Correlation	Sig .	REMARKS	DECISION
AGE	-0.121	0.130	NOT SIGNIFICANT	ACCEPT HYPOTHESES



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SEX	.187*	0.019	NOT SIGNIFICANT	ACCEPT HYPOTHESES
FIRST LANGUAGE/MOTHER TONGUE	0.077	0.334	NOT SIGNIFICANT	ACCEPT HYPOTHESES
FATHER'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	0.022	0.785	NOT SIGNIFICANT	ACCEPT HYPOTHESES
MOTHER'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	0.080	0.316	NOT SIGNIFICANT	ACCEPT HYPOTHESES
FATHER'S OCCUPATION	0.019	0.810	NOT SIGNIFICANT	ACCEPT HYPOTHESES
MOTHER'S OCCUPATION	-0.034	0.673	NOT SIGNIFICANT	ACCEPT HYPOTHESES

DISCUSSION

The study involved 158 senior high school students out of a total population of 255. Most respondents were 16 to 17 years old, with a greater proportion of females than males. Ilocano emerged as the dominant mother tongue, while the educational background of parents showed that many were college graduates, followed by elementary-level graduates. In terms of occupation, a significant portion of both fathers and mothers were unemployed, with

self-employment also common. The findings further revealed that cellphones and books were the most frequently used educational resources, reflecting the growing reliance on technology for learning.

The results indicate that students recognize the importance of strong vocabulary, consistent reading habits, dictionary use, word mapping, and educational videos in improving comprehension. These findings support Wagstaff (2020) and Manguilimotan et al. (2024), who emphasized the role of reading habits and vocabulary knowledge in academic performance.

In terms of comprehension levels, students performed best at the literal level (reading the lines), which involves recalling and understanding directly stated information. Their performance declined at the inferential level (reading between the lines), suggesting difficulties in drawing conclusions and interpreting implied meanings. The lowest scores were recorded at the evaluative level (reading beyond the lines), indicating challenges in critical thinking and analysis. This pattern is consistent with previous research that identifies higher-order comprehension skills as the most difficult for learners to master.

Finally, correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between reading comprehension levels and socio-demographic factors such as age, sex, mother tongue, or parents' education and occupation. This suggests that other variables such as reading environment, motivation, and instructional strategies may play a greater role in shaping reading comprehension outcomes.

CONCLUSION



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This study examined the reading comprehension levels of senior high school students at Saint Anthony's College and the factors influencing their performance. The results revealed that students performed best at the literal level, followed by the inferential level, with the lowest performance at the evaluative level. These findings highlight the need for strengthening higher-order comprehension skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and critical reflection.

The study also confirmed that socio-demographic factors, including age, sex, mother tongue, and parents' education and occupation, had no significant relationship with students' comprehension levels. Instead, the findings underscore the role of vocabulary development, reading habits, and access to effective educational materials in enhancing comprehension.

Overall, the results emphasize the importance of fostering supportive learning environments both at home and in school to improve students' reading comprehension, particularly at the evaluative level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

1. **For Teachers:** Develop and integrate advanced instructional materials and strategies that strengthen students' vocabulary knowledge and higher-order comprehension skills.
2. **For Parents:** Provide diverse and effective reading resources at home to support children's literacy development and encourage sustained reading practices.
3. **For Students:** Cultivate healthy reading habits by engaging with various genres and using effective tools, such as dictionaries and word mapping, to enhance comprehension.
4. **For Future Researchers:** Conduct further studies using different methods, populations, or additional variables to gain deeper insights into the factors influencing reading comprehension among senior high school students.

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