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How reading diverse texts enhances critical thinking skills: Exploring the development of analytical, evaluative, and problem-solving abilities

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Abstract - The purpose of this study is to explain how the activity of reading can enhance a person's critical thinking ability. Critical thinking ability is extremely necessary in studying and social life since it assists one in analysing information, making the appropriate choices, and solving problems in the best manner. The method applied in this study is a literature study, through the collection of data from scientific journals, books, and reliable articles that define the connection between reading and critical thinking. The study was conducted by comparing several published findings and theories, and then relating them to Ennis (1996) and Bloom's (1956) critical thinking theory. The outcome of the study discovers that reading, particularly difficult and argumentative texts like essays, novels, and opinion columns, is able to condition readers to evaluate information, balance arguments, and form their own opinions. Finally, active and reflective reading is an effective way to build critical thinking skills.

Keywords: reading, critical thinking, literacy, analysis, literature study

1. Introduction

In the digital era, the ability to read critically is essential for navigating vast information and making informed decisions. Reading not only transmits knowledge but also serves as a primary vehicle for developing and enhancing critical thinking skills, which are vital for academic, professional, and personal growth.

Reading is foundational to learning, enabling individuals to access, interpret, and evaluate information. However, mere reading is insufficient; the depth of understanding and the ability to critique, synthesize, and apply information distinguish critical readers from passive ones. Research consistently demonstrates a strong, positive correlation between reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities, with students who excel in critical thinking also performing better in reading tasks (Roomy, 2022; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023; Amumpuni et al., 2024). This relationship is bidirectional: critical thinking enhances reading comprehension, and reading, especially when approached critically, sharpens higher-order thinking skills 15815.

Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) provides a robust framework for understanding how reading can foster critical thinking. The taxonomy outlines a hierarchy of cognitive skills, from basic recall to higher-order processes like analysis, evaluation, and creation. Critical reading engages these upper levels, requiring readers to interpret, analyse, and critique texts (Omar & Mohamed, 2025; Hasan et al., 2025). Paul and Elder (2008) further argue that reading is inherently evaluative, involving the assessment of arguments, inference-making, and the formation of independent judgments (Hasan et al., 2025). Metacognitive strategies—such as self-questioning, summarizing, and reflecting—are also crucial, as they help readers monitor and adapt their understanding (Hasan et al., 2025; Munawaroh, 2024).

A growing body of research affirms the role of reading in cultivating critical thinking: Empirical Correlations: Studies using standardized tests and critical thinking inventories reveal a significant positive relationship between students' critical thinking skills and their reading comprehension performance (Amumpuni et al., 2024; Roomy, 2022; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023). Students with higher critical thinking abilities consistently outperform peers in reading tasks. Experimental research shows that integrating critical thinking instruction into reading curricula—through strategies like Socratic questioning, reciprocal teaching, and contextual reading materials—significantly improves both reading comprehension and critical thinking (Pratama et al., 2024: Hasan et al., 2025; Moghadam et al.,2023; Arifin, 2020). For example, contextual and expository texts, as well as literature, are particularly effective in stimulating analysis, inference, and evaluation (Izzah, 2025; Mansurovich & Qizi, 2025; Rachuri, 2024).

Critical reading activates a range of cognitive processes, including inference-making, argument analysis, perspective-taking, and synthesis (Fazliddinovich, 2025; Zambrano-Cruz et al., 2025). Working memory has been identified as a key cognitive predictor of critical reading ability (Zambrano-Cruz et al., 2025). Metacognitive awareness—knowing how and when to use specific reading strategies—differentiates proficient critical readers from novices (Omar & Mohamed, 2025; Munawaroh, 2024). Effective teaching of critical reading involves scaffolding, interactive discussions, and tasks that require students to question, annotate, summarize, and evaluate texts (Mansurovich & Qizi, 2025; Hasan et al., 2025; Wilson, 2016; Munawaroh, 2024). Teachers play a pivotal role in modelling and fostering these skills, creating environments that encourage inquiry and reflection (Munawaroh, 2024; Wilson, 2016).).

Table 1: Types of Reading Most Effective for Critical Thinking

Reading Type	Key Features	Impact on Critical Thinking
Expository Texts	Factual, structured, argument-based	Promotes analysis, evaluation
Literary Texts	Complex characters, moral ambiguity, symbolism	Fosters interpretation, empathy
Contextual/Real-World Texts	Relates to students' experiences and environment	Enhances relevance, application
Argumentative/Opinion Pieces	Present multiple viewpoints, require judgment	Stimulates debate, critical stance

Critical reading is a dynamic, multi-layered process involving breaking down arguments, identifying assumptions, and evaluating evidence (Fazliddinovich, 2025; Arifin, 2020; Omar & Mohamed, 2025). Drawing conclusions beyond explicit content, reading between the lines (Fazliddinovich, 2025; Omar & Mohamed, 2025; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023). Integrating information from multiple sources, forming new ideas (Fazliddinovich, 2025; Arifin, 2020; Roomy, 2022). Judging the credibility, logic, and relevance of information (Fazliddinovich, 2025; Omar & Mohamed, 2025; Arifin, 2020; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023). Monitoring comprehension, adjusting strategies, and reflecting on understanding (Omar & Mohamed, 2025; Munawaroh, 2024; Hasan et al., 2025).

Fluent readers employ sophisticated strategies, such as adapting to text complexity and engaging emotionally and cognitively, while novices rely more on repetition and contextual cues 4. Working memory supports these processes by enabling readers to hold and manipulate information as they analyse and synthesize content (Zambrano-Cruz et al., 2025). Reading is not merely a passive activity but a powerful tool for developing critical thinking. Theoretical models and empirical studies converge on the view that critical reading—especially of complex, contextual, and argumentative texts—activates higher-order cognitive processes essential for critical thinking. Effective pedagogy, metacognitive awareness, and targeted reading strategies are key to nurturing these skills. As information becomes ever more abundant and complex, fostering critical reading and thinking is indispensable for lifelong learning and informed citizenship.

2. Method

1 This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach. This method was chosen because the main focus of the study is on collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information from various written sources that discuss the relationship between reading activities and improving critical thinking skills. Library studies allow researchers to examine and interpret the main ideas of experts in the field of literacy and critical thinking in depth without the limitations of space and time.

2.1. Data Sources

The main data sources in this study come from scientific journals, academic books, popular articles, and relevant research reports. The criteria for selecting sources include: Relevance to the topic (reading and critical thinking); The credibility of the author or publisher (Scopus indexed journals, academic books, and articles from universities). Publications in the last 20 years (except for classical theories that are still used such as Bloom's taxonomy and Ennis' theory). Some of the main sources used include: The book "Critical Thinking" by Paul and Elder (2008); Article by Norris and Phillips on the relationship between literacy and critical thinking (2003); Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) as a cognitive thinking framework; The journal "Reading and Critical Thinking" from ERIC and JSTOR

2.2. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through systematic searches in several academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, JSTOR, and ERIC. Keywords used in the search include: critical thinking, reading comprehension, reading and cognition, analytical reading, and thinking skills. In addition, the search was conducted in two languages, namely English and Indonesian, to expand the scope of references.

Each source found was evaluated based on the abstract and conclusion to ensure its relevance. After that, important quotes were classified based on topics such as: the benefits of reading for logical analysis, the relationship between text comprehension and argument evaluation, and the role of fictional literature in shaping empathy and moral reasoning.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, namely identifying recurring patterns or themes from various sources. These themes were then linked to the critical thinking theory developed by Ennis and Bloom, and studied in depth to see the consistency between theory and empirical findings. The author also conducted a comparison between theory and practice, namely comparing the opinions of experts with the results of empirical research on reading habits and critical thinking skills in students and college students. To maintain the validity and reliability of the data, source triangulation is carried out. This means that information from one source will be validated with information from another different source. In addition, classical theories are also reviewed together with the latest research results to provide a more comprehensive and balanced understanding.

3. Results and Discussion:

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3.1 Results

3.1.1 The Role of Reading in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills

Reading is widely recognized as a powerful tool for developing critical thinking skills. This section synthesizes theoretical perspectives and empirical findings to analyse how reading fosters critical thinking, the cognitive processes involved, the types of reading most effective for this purpose, and the barriers and strategies relevant to critical reading.

Critical thinking is a reflective, logical, and evidence-based process that enables individuals to evaluate information, arguments, and assumptions objectively. It encompasses skills such as inference, analysis, evaluation, and decision-making based on evidence. Bloom's taxonomy situates critical thinking at the higher levels of cognitive functioning—analysing, evaluating, and creating—while Ennis's framework highlights the importance of making inferences, evaluating arguments, and drawing logical conclusions. In the context of reading, critical thinking involves not only understanding the text but also evaluating perspectives,

identifying bias, comparing arguments, and synthesizing information to reach reasoned conclusions. This aligns with the view that reading is an active, evaluative process requiring the reader to engage deeply with the material, question its premises, and reflect on its implications.

Reading is far from a passive activity; it is a complex cognitive process involving attention, working memory, semantic comprehension, and inference. Readers actively construct meaning by forming questions, predicting content, connecting new information to prior knowledge, and evaluating the credibility and logic of the information presented. These processes mirror those involved in critical thinking. For example, when engaging with argumentative or editorial texts, readers assess the strength of the author's claims, seek supporting evidence, and determine the validity of conclusions. This active engagement is essential for developing higher-order thinking skills and is particularly effective when reading is reflective and dialogic, as it encourages readers to challenge assumptions and consider alternative viewpoints. The use of interactive and multimodal reading environments, such as those incorporating augmented reality, has been shown to further enhance engagement, comprehension, and motivation, thereby supporting the development of critical thinking skills by lowering cognitive load and providing richer contextual information. Moreover, reading literary texts and narratives encourages empathy, perspective-taking, and creativity, further enriching the critical thinking process (Munawaroh, 2024; Nesterenko & Drahinda, 2022).

Not all reading materials contribute equally to the development of critical thinking. The literature identifies several types of texts that are particularly effective. Reading fiction enhances theory of mind and empathy, foundational for critical thinking, as it encourages readers to consider multiple perspectives and understand complex social dynamics. Literary texts require readers to interpret symbolism, analyse character motivations, and reflect on moral ambiguities, all of which foster analytical and evaluative skills. Argumentative essays present opinions and arguments that require readers to evaluate evidence, assess logical coherence, and form independent judgments. Engaging with argumentative writing directly activates the evaluative processes central to critical thinking.

Informational Texts and Scientific Journals such texts demand analytical and synthesis skills, as readers must interpret data, assess methodologies, and integrate findings from multiple sources. This type of reading encourages methodological thinking and objectivity. News and Editorials materials train readers to recognize bias, framing, and rhetorical strategies. Readers learn to distinguish between fact and opinion, develop scepticism, and critically assess the reliability of information sources.

The use of literature in language teaching, for example, has been shown to promote skills such as comparing, contrasting, analysing, and synthesizing information, all of which are integral to critical thinking. Activities that require students to read between the lines, discuss, and apply critical lenses to texts further enhance these skills.

Table 2: Types of Reading and Their Impact on Critical Thinking

Type of Reading	Key Critical Thinking Skills Developed	Example Activities
Fiction Literature	Perspective-taking, empathy, analysis	Character analysis, moral debates
Argumentative Essays	Evaluation, inference, logical reasoning	Argument mapping, evidence assessment
Informational Texts	Analysis, synthesis, methodological thinking	Data interpretation, research critique
News/Editorials	Bias detection, scepticism, evaluation	Fact-checking, rhetorical analysis

3.1.2 Critical Thinking Components Enhanced Through Reading

Reading, especially when approached critically, hones several core components of critical thinking. Analytical Ability in which complex texts require readers to deconstruct arguments,

identify main and supporting ideas, and recognize rhetorical strategies. This process directly strengthens analytical skills. Evaluative ability where readers assess the validity of arguments and the quality of evidence, particularly in opinion pieces and editorials, fostering the ability to judge the credibility and logic of information. Inference ability where many texts present information implicitly, requiring readers to draw inferences and uncover underlying meanings. This trains readers to think beyond the surface and develop deeper understanding. Metacognitive awareness how reflective reading encourages individuals to monitor their own thinking, question assumptions, and revise interpretations. Metacognition is foundational to critical thinking, as it enables self-evaluation and adaptive learning.

Empirical research consistently supports the positive relationship between reading and critical thinking. Studies have shown that students who engage in analytical reading and text-based discussions demonstrate significant improvements in critical thinking scores compared to those who do not. Research on the use of literature in language teaching indicates that literary texts, when used with appropriate pedagogical strategies, foster intellectual skills such as analysis, synthesis, and interpretation. The integration of technology, such as augmented reality, into reading activities has been found to increase motivation, lower cognitive load, and enhance comprehension, all of which contribute to the development of critical thinking skills. Classroom strategies that encourage students to read between the lines, discuss, and apply critical lenses to texts have been shown to develop both critical and creative thinking skills.

To maximize the benefits of reading for critical thinking, several strategies are recommended: (a) SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review): This structured approach encourages active engagement with the text, prompting readers to question, summarize, and reflect on information. (b) Reading Journals or Reflective Notes: Recording questions, reactions, and conclusions helps internalize the critical thinking process and promotes metacognitive awareness. (c) Group Discussion: Collaborative reading and discussion broaden perspectives, strengthen arguments, and challenge initial assumptions, fostering deeper critical engagement.

Despite its potential, several barriers can hinder the development of critical thinking through reading: Lack of interest where limited exposure to quality reading materials reduces opportunities for critical engagement; Passive reading solely for information, without analysis or evaluation, limits the development of higher-order thinking skills; Insufficient guidance where a lack of instruction in understanding text structure and argumentation impedes the ability to read critically. These barriers can be addressed through early critical literacy education, targeted critical thinking training, and the provision of diverse and challenging reading materials.

3.2 Discussion

The synthesis of theoretical and empirical literature affirms that reading, when approached actively, reflectively, and strategically, is a highly effective means of developing critical thinking skills. This discussion explores the mechanisms, contexts, and pedagogical strategies through which reading fosters critical thinking, drawing on a diverse body of research. Reading is not merely a process of decoding text but a complex cognitive activity that involves analysis, evaluation, inference, and synthesis. Engaging with a variety of texts—fiction, argumentative essays, informational texts, and editorials—challenges readers to navigate multiple viewpoints, ambiguous interpretations, and complex arguments, thereby stimulating higher-order thinking skills. Critical reading, in particular, is an analytic activity that requires readers to interpret, evaluate, and comprehend materials, fostering the development of critical thinking through inference-making, argument analysis, and perspective-taking (Goertel, 2018; Baki, 2025; Arifin, 2020; Fazliddinovich, 2025).

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Critical thinking itself encompasses a range of cognitive skills, including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. These skills are activated and honed through reading, as readers are compelled to question assumptions, assess evidence, and draw reasoned conclusions (Paige et al., 2024; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023). The act of reading thus becomes a vehicle for reflective and reasoned decision-making, essential for informed citizenship and lifelong learning.

A robust body of empirical research demonstrates the positive impact of reading on critical thinking development across educational levels and contexts. Studies have shown that exposure

to diverse literary genres—such as short stories, expository texts, and argumentative essays—enhances students' ability to analyse, synthesize, and evaluate information (Izzah, 2025; Bendraou & Sakale, 2023; Rachuri, 2024). For example, experimental studies with English language learners and high school students reveal that reading stories and engaging in problem-based learning significantly improve critical thinking skills, as measured by pre- and post-test assessments (Bendraou & Sakale, 2023; Rachuri, 2024).

Critical reading strategies, such as questioning, analysing, and reflecting on texts, have been found to directly support the development of critical thinking. Students who practice critical reading demonstrate improved comprehension, the ability to infer meaning beyond the literal, and greater capacity for independent thought (Baki, 2025; Roomy, 2022; Arifin, 2020). Moreover, active learning approaches—such as group discussions, debates, and collaborative reading tasks—further enhance critical thinking by encouraging students to articulate perspectives, defend viewpoints, and engage in higher-order cognitive processes (Zhong, 2024; Phimphimon et al.,2024).

Effective pedagogical strategies are central to leveraging reading as a tool for critical thinking development. Approaches such as Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), project-based learning, and the integration of critical reading tasks into curricula have been shown to foster critical thinking by making reading an interactive and reflective process (Zhong, 2024; Acosta et al., 2025; Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022). Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students through shared conversations, reflective prompts, and cooperative efforts that require higher-order cognitive processing (Roomy, 2022; Rachuri, 2024). The use of contextual and multimodal reading materials—such as digital texts, multimedia e-books, and real-world scenarios—further supports critical thinking by increasing motivation and lowering cognitive barriers. Innovative pedagogies, including role-playing and multi-perspective discussions in digital environments, have been found to enhance engagement and cognitive presence, leading to superior critical thinking outcomes (Medranda-Morales et al., 2023; Kao et al., 2024).

Critical thinking skills developed through reading are not confined to academic settings but extend to everyday life, supporting lifelong learning and informed participation in society. The ability to critically analyse information, discern bias, and make reasoned judgments is increasingly vital in a digital age characterized by information overload and media proliferation (Van et al., 2022; Baki, 2025; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023). Reading habits cultivated early and sustained throughout life contribute to the development of autonomous, reflective, and conscious individuals capable of navigating complex social and professional environments (Anggraeni et al., 2025; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023).

While the benefits of reading for critical thinking are well-documented, challenges remain. Students with limited language proficiency or inadequate reading strategies may struggle to fully engage in critical reading and thinking processes (Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022). Differentiated instruction and targeted support are necessary to ensure that all learners can benefit from reading-based critical thinking development (Omar & Mohamed, 2025). Additionally, research highlights the need for further investigation into the integration of critical reading in STEM education and the development of conceptual frameworks tailored to diverse educational contexts (Van et al., 2022).

The literature converges on the conclusion that reading—when active, reflective, and strategically guided—is indispensable for the cultivation of critical thinking skills. Through engagement with diverse texts, interactive pedagogies, and supportive learning environments, readers develop the capacity to analyse, evaluate, infer, and reflect. These skills are foundational not only for academic success but also for lifelong learning and informed citizenship, underscoring the enduring value of reading in personal and societal development (Baki, 2025; Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022; Izzah, 2025; Van et al., 2022; Pratama et al., 2024; Rachuri, 2024; Arifin, 2020; Fazliddinovich, 2025).

4. Conclusion

The relationship between reading and the enhancement of critical thinking skills is robustly supported by a diverse body of research. Reading, particularly when it involves complex texts, expository materials, or literary works, serves as a powerful tool for developing the cognitive processes essential to critical thinking, such as analysis, evaluation, inference, and synthesis (Pratama et a., 2024; Medranda-Morales et al., 2023; Nesterenko & Drahinda, 2022; Rachuri, 2024; Fazliddinovich, M. (2025).

This conclusion synthesizes key findings and implications from recent studies, highlighting the mechanisms, educational strategies, and broader impacts of reading on critical thinking. Reading is not merely a passive activity for information acquisition; it is an active, dynamic process that challenges individuals to engage deeply with content. When readers encounter texts that present multiple viewpoints, ambiguous interpretations, or complex arguments, they are compelled to analyse, question, and reflect—core components of critical thinking 136. The act of making inferences, evaluating evidence, and synthesizing ideas from diverse sources fosters higher-order thinking and problem-solving abilities (Medranda-Morales et al., 2023; Nesterenko & Drahinda, 2022; Pratama et al., 2024; Rachuri, 2024).

Moreover, reading literary texts and narratives encourages empathy, perspective-taking, and creativity, further enriching the critical thinking process (Rachuri, 2024; Nesterenko & Drahinda, 2022). Experimental and quasi-experimental studies consistently demonstrate that structured reading activities—such as intensive reading of expository texts, critical reading tasks, and project-based learning—significantly improve students' critical thinking skills across educational levels (Song et al., 2025; Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022; Sari & Prasetyo, 2021; Husna, 2019; Yildirim & Soylemez, 2018; Izzah, 2025).

For example, interventions using Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) and critical reading questions have been shown to enhance both reading comprehension and critical thinking, with students reporting increased ability to analyse, question, and interpret information 41013. The integration of reading corners, digital annotation tools, and collaborative reading strategies further supports the development of critical thinking by promoting active engagement and reflective learning (Rahmawati et al., 2025; Anggraeni et al., 2025).

While the positive impact of reading on critical thinking is well-established, research also highlights the importance of contextual and individual factors. The effectiveness of reading interventions can vary based on students' language proficiency, prior knowledge, and the relevance of reading materials to their experiences (Song et al., 2025; Din, 2020; Arifin, 2020). Differentiated instructional strategies and adaptive scaffolding are necessary to support learners at varying proficiency levels, ensuring that all students benefit from reading-based critical thinking development (Song et al., 2025; Omar & Mohamed, 2025)..

The evidence underscores the need for educators to intentionally design reading activities that promote critical engagement with texts. This includes selecting thought-provoking materials, incorporating critical reading strategies, and fostering classroom environments that encourage inquiry, discussion, and reflection 135911. Teacher preparation and ongoing professional development are also crucial for equipping educators with the skills to facilitate critical thinking through reading (Medranda-Morales et l., 2023).

Despite the strong correlation between reading and critical thinking, some studies note that the relationship may not be uniformly significant across all contexts, particularly where students lack concentration, motivation, or awareness of critical thinking strategies 1617. Future research should explore the long-term effects of reading interventions, the role of digital and multimodal texts, and the impact of cultural and linguistic diversity on the reading–critical thinking nexus (Rahmawati et al., 2025; Song et al., 2025; Van et al., 2022).

Reading is a foundational practice for cultivating critical thinking skills. Through deliberate engagement with diverse and challenging texts, individuals develop the cognitive, emotional, and social competencies necessary for critical analysis, informed decision-making, and lifelong learning. Educational systems should prioritize reading as a central component of curricula, leveraging its transformative potential to prepare students for the complexities of the

modern world (Yildirim & Soylemez, 2018; Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022; Husna, 2019; Yildirim & Soylemez, 2018; Charry et al.. 2024; Fazliddinovich, 2025; Izzah, 2025).

Reading activities, especially those carried out actively and reflectively, not only enrich one's knowledge, but also train systematic, analytical, and logical ways of thinking. Reading activities involve various cognitive processes such as understanding, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. When someone reads a complex text, such as an opinion article, scientific journal, or literary work, the reader is faced with the demand to understand the contents of the text, assess the quality of the argument, and compare points of view. This process directly trains critical thinking skills.

From a theoretical perspective, critical thinking skills as proposed by Bloom and Ennis consist of the ability to analyse, evaluate, and create. All three can be trained through reading habits. For example, when reading editorials, readers learn to analyse the structure of arguments; when reading fictional literature, readers learn to understand various perspectives and empathy; and when reading scientific journals, readers practice their ability to evaluate evidence and research methods. The results of various empirical studies that have been reviewed also strengthen that active readers tend to have higher critical thinking skills. Critical literacy education in schools and universities is an important factor that can strengthen this relationship. With proper reading coaching and guidance, students will not only become good readers, but also critical thinkers.

However, the effectiveness of reading in developing critical thinking is highly dependent on the quality of reading and the way of reading. Reading passively or just to memorize information will not have a significant impact. Therefore, reading strategies such as SQ3R, reflective note-taking, and discussion are needed to optimize the benefits of reading activities. Finally, reading is not just a tool to obtain information, but also a means to form intelligent, critical, and independent ways of thinking. In today's fast-paced and manipulative information era, critical thinking skills are needed so that individuals are able to filter information and make wise decisions. Therefore, cultivating a critical reading culture is an urgent need in every level of society, especially in the world of education.

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