



BLUE MOUNTAIN ARTS PRESENTS
COLORADO
SHAKESPEARE
FESTIVAL

2011 STUDY GUIDES

Philip C.Sneed, Producing Artistic Director

the little prince

Table of Contents

<u>Synopsis</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Character Descriptions</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Meet the Author</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Saint-Exupéry's Life</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Themes of the Play</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Critical Context</u>	<u>5-8</u>
Dramaturg's Note	
Director's Note	
Adaptations of <i>The Little Prince</i>	
Aviation in the 1930s-1940s	
Saint-Exupéry's Work	
<u>Discussion Questions</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Classroom Activities</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Sources</u>	<u>9</u>

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Character Descriptions

by Anne Sandoe

The Aviator a man who crashes his plane in the Sahara Desert

The Little Prince a child from a faraway planet

The Rose a beautiful flower with thorns

The Snake a beautiful and dangerous creature

The Fox a chicken thief who needs taming

King
Conceited Man
Tippler
Business Man
Lamplighter
Geographer
Desert Flower
Mountain Echo
Wall of Roses

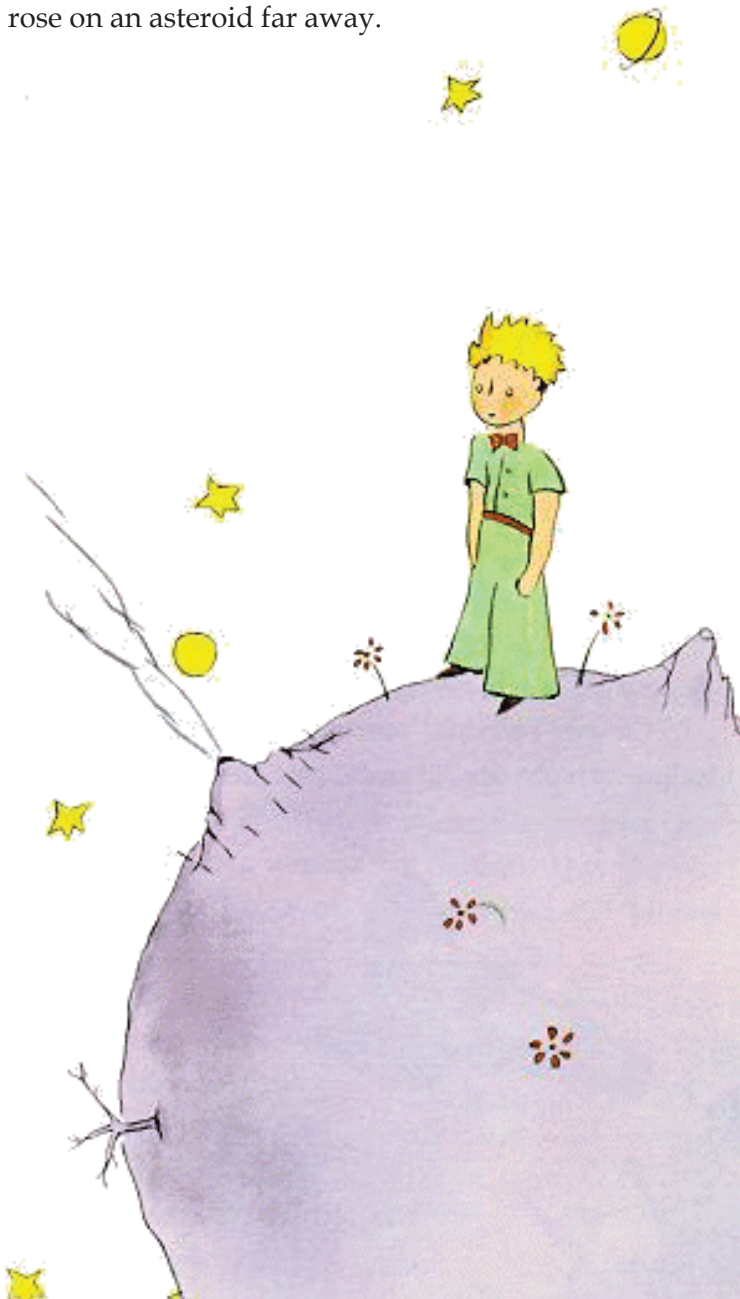
Other Creatures
the Little Prince
meets on his
journey

“And with that we knew ourselves to be lost in interplanetary space among a thousand inaccessible planets, we who sought only the one veritable planet, our own, that planet on which alone we should find our familiar countryside, the houses of our friends, our treasures.”
(*Wind, Sand and Stars*, p. 15-6)

Plot Synopsis

by Hadley Kamminga-peck

An experienced pilot crashes in the Sahara Desert. With limited food and water, and only his own expertise to fix his plane, he worries how long he can survive in the barren landscape, when suddenly the Little Prince appears. Despite being distracted by the boy's incessant questions and insistence that the aviator “draw [him] a sheep,” the man bonds with the Prince. The two of them learn of each other's lives, what makes us human, and the importance of a rose on an asteroid far away.



Antoine De Saint-Exupéry

by Hadley Kamminga-Peck

The Little Prince was one of the last works published during Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's life. Born in 1900 to an aristocratic family, he was the third of five children, and the oldest son. The young Saint-Ex (an affectionate nickname gained after he became a pilot) seems to have been an intelligent man, able to master any subject to which he applied himself. He tried to attend naval school, but failed his oral exams, only to then become an auditor at the École des Beaux-Arts, where he studied architecture. In 1921, Saint-Exupéry was mobilized for two years of military service, and was assigned to the air force regiment in Strasbourg. Here he gained his civilian and then military pilot's licenses, and had his first introduction to North Africa during training in Morocco.

The end of World War I left most aviators flightless, but Saint-Exupéry managed to stay in the air by signing on with an international postal service and helping to establish flight paths in Africa and South America, through the Andes. The ensuing years were split amongst France, South America and the United States. In 1935, attempting to break the record for flight between Paris and Saigon, Saint-Exupéry and his navigator/mechanic Prévot crashed in the Sahara Desert. For five days they were stranded, and were only saved when they crossed a Bedouin trail, and a passing caravan picked them up.

Saint-Exupéry was a prolific writer, publishing throughout his life in newspapers, books and magazines. As World War II approached, Saint-Exupéry was too old to fly, and his many peers and colleagues encouraged him to use his status to inform others about the war. However, Saint-Exupéry was happiest when flying, and he obtained a special permit to continue to fly and train on the new, faster planes. On July 31, 1944, the day before his friends planned to ground him, he took off on his final reconnaissance mission, only to vanish.

In 1998, a fisherman working south of the port of Marseille found a silver bracelet that allegedly belonged to Saint-Exupéry. In the following months, a diver discovered the wreckage of a plane in the same area. The French government and press and Saint-Exupéry's descendants all dismissed this information as a hoax, and closed the area off from further investigation. It was not until 2003 that the wreckage was examined and discovered to be Saint-Exupéry's plane. How his plane crashed into the Mediterranean 100 miles away from his plotted course is a mystery, but unlike his *Little Prince*, who vanished, the body of Saint-Exupéry had at last been found.



Saint-Exupéry's Life A Timeline

by Hadley Kamminga-Peck

June 29, 1900

Antoine Jean-Baptiste Marie Roger de Saint Exupéry is born in Lyon, France. He is the 3rd of 5 children, and the oldest son.

1904

Father inexplicably leaves the family.

1912

Saint-Ex has his first experience of flight on the airfield of Ambérieu

1917

Younger brother Francois dies.

1917

Takes the exams and fails the oral test to enter the naval academy at Brest. Studies architecture at the École des Beaux Arts instead.

1921

Obtains civilian, then military pilot's license. Stationed in Casablanca (first contact with Africa). Eventually chooses 34th aerial regiment at Le Bourget near Paris.

1922-23

Engaged to Louise de Vilmorin. After he sustains his first serious accident, her family expresses concerns over the safety of his profession. For the next 3 years, Saint-Ex takes a job in a tile factory to appease them, but he is unhappy. Louise eventually breaks off the engagement by disappearing.

October 12, 1926

Saint-Ex becomes a commercial pilot established in Cape Juby, flying to Africa and South America.

April, 1931

Marries Consuelo Suncin, fulfilling a fortune-teller's prophecy of 8 years earlier saying he would marry a young widow.

Dec. 30 1935

Attempts to break the record for flight from Paris to Saigon. Crash lands in the Sahara with mechanic/navigator Prevot. They wander for 5 days before they are picked up by a passing Bedouin caravan.

May 23, 1940

Carries out flight mission over Arras, becomes the book *Flight to Arras*. Is decorated with the Croix de guerre.

Dec. 31, 1940

Arrives in America where he will remain for 2 1/2 years. He sends for Consuelo, and she arrives in November. They live in separate apartments.

1942

"A Letter to Frenchmen Everywhere" is published. Apparent disagreement with Charles de Gaulle over French politics.

1943

Requests active duty again. He is expected to be a flight instructor, but Saint-Ex insists on flying, despite the fact that he does not fit in the newer, lighter, faster planes.

April 6, 1943

The Little Prince is published in America. It won't be published in France until 1945 (all Saint-Ex writings were out of print during the war in France). Saint-Ex embarks on Bethouard Mission.

July 31, 1944

Saint-Ex embarks on his final reconnaissance mission. His friends and colleagues have a plan to ground him the next day. He disappears.

1998

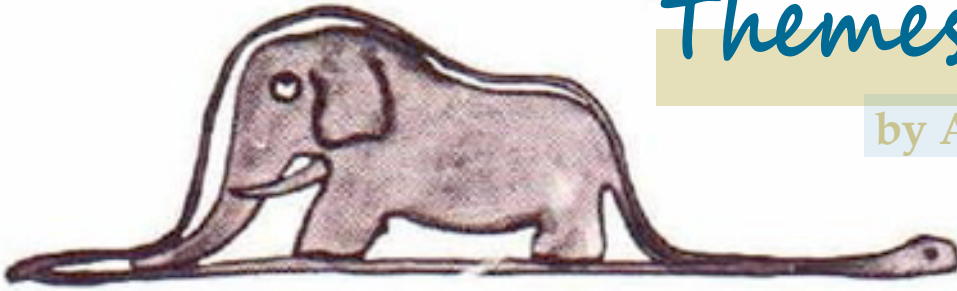
A diver discovers a bracelet off the coast of Marseille engraved with "Consuelo and Antoine", supposedly belonging to Saint-Ex. It is 100 miles from Saint-Ex's charted course; plane wreckage is found a mile from the bracelet. The French government prohibits all further excavation until 2003, when the wreckage is confirmed to be that of Saint-Ex's plane.

2003

In 2003, an asteroid moon was named *Petit Prince*. 2578 *Saint-Exupéry*, a main belt asteroid discovered in 1975.

Themes of the Play

by Amanda Giguere



Important Things

It is easy to get distracted by the everyday details of our lives, because they seem so incredibly important. But are they? This story teaches us “it is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye.” What does this mean? What kinds of things can you see with your heart? When you try to see with your heart, what seems most important?

Taming

The Fox teaches the Little Prince how to tame him, and in the process, they create a lasting bond. Once the Prince has tamed the Fox, he says “...now I have tamed him, and made him my friend and now he is unique in all the world.” What does it mean to tame someone, according to this story? Does it always imply a master/servant relationship, or is it possible that two people can equally tame each other? Perhaps the process of taming is about establishing ties with another person, and recognizing their uniqueness. When you make a new friend, is the experience similar to the taming process we witness between the Fox and the Little Prince?



Children vs. Adults

What does it mean when someone tells you to “grow up?” Is being a child (or childish) such a terrible trait? More often than not, children are able to see truths that adults cannot. The Little Prince discovers that the adults he meets on his journey tend to focus on unimportant matters, like counting the stars, when they should be doing important things, like listening to the sunset, or contemplating a rose. Do you consider yourself a child or an adult? What is the difference? According to this story, what are the benefits of the Little Prince’s approach to the world?

Perspective

The Little Prince comes from a tiny planet – tinier than we could possibly imagine. The size of his planet, however, does not necessarily mean that he is small-minded. In fact, he seems capable of understanding far more than the Aviator and the other characters he meets along the way. Because of the limited scope of his planet, however, he does have a unique perspective. This is important to remember as you encounter other people in your life. They all come from their own unique position in the world, and they therefore all have different experiences and beliefs. Coming from a tiny planet sometimes allows you to see the rest of the planets in a clearer way.

The novel version of *The Little Prince* begins with the following dedication to the author’s friend:

To Léon Werth

I ask the indulgence of the children who may read this book for dedicating it to a grown-up. I have a serious reason: he is the best friend I have in the world. I have another reason: this grown-up understands everything, even books about children. I have a third reason: he lives in France where he is hungry and cold, he needs cheering up. If all these reasons are not enough, I will dedicate the book to the child from whom this grown-up grew. All grown-ups were once children-although few of them remember it. And so I correct my dedication:

To Léon Werth
When he was a little boy

Roses, Foxes and Pilots, Oh My!

Autobiographical Elements Within The Little Prince

by Hadley Kamminga-Peck

Most people first encounter *The Little Prince* as a children's book, or perhaps in a beginning French class. It is an easy story to enjoy; it is simple, yet with elements recognizable from daily life. Who has not known the pleasure of cold water to quench extreme thirst, or the sadness of leaving a tamed animal? Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's poetry carries the reader along on an unforgettable journey, bringing to life his adventures in the desert.

What few realize is that Saint-Exupéry based *The Little Prince* on his real-life experiences as an aviator. When he became a pilot, aviation was in its infancy, and Saint-Exupéry pioneered many of the routes, practices and techniques. His initial training included fixing the planes, which led Saint-Exupéry to register patents for many inventions that are utilized in current plane models. Saint-Exupéry also test-flew new plane models, which makes it no surprise that he crashed several times, on land and over sea. His 1935 crash in

the desert informed much of the Aviator's story in *The Little Prince*, and many of the characters Saint-Exupéry encountered during his career as a pilot made their way into the book. During his crash in the Sahara he met the little desert foxes that would become the Prince's tamed fox, saw the desert roses and mountains, and heard the response of the echo. His fellow pilots and commanding officers in the military also make appearances in the personas found on the various planets.

However, the autobiographical details of the book are far more prevalent than Saint-Exupéry's profession. The character of the Rose was inspired by at least three women in the author's life: Louise de Vilmorin, Renée de Saussine and Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry. Each woman represents a different moment of Saint-Exupéry's romantic life. Louise was the first woman to whom he was engaged, and though he worked hard to appease her family and take care of her, even giving up flying, she eventually broke off their engagement. Renée represented a distant love, someone to whom he wrote constantly and therefore molded into his image of the ideal woman, though she never responded to his courtship. Consuelo eventually became his wife and wrote a novel entitled *The Tale of the Rose*, which told the story of how their love inspired the character of the Rose. Though their relationship was tumultuous, and they eventually lived apart, Saint-Exupéry always held great affection for his wife. Most likely it was a conglomeration of these women, as well as components from his mother, his three sisters and his imagined "ideal woman," that created the Prince's Rose.

The Little Prince himself is a reflection of Saint-Exupéry's younger brother François, who died in 1917. Saint-Exupéry (who bore the Prince's blond curls as a young child) was impressed with the calmness and dignity with which his brother accepted death, and immortalized this trait in the Prince. In his memoir, *Flight to Arras*, he says, "One does not die... There is no more death when one meets it... When the body breaks apart, the essential is revealed. Man is only a knot of relationships..."

The Little Prince is the distillation of the thoughts, ideas, relationships and people Saint-Exupéry had encountered throughout his life. Saint-Exupéry said it best in a letter to his mother: "You must look for me as I really am, in what I write, which is the scrupulous, meditated result of what I think and see."



Director's Note

by Philip C. Sneed

The Little Prince is one of the best-loved books of all times, read by children all over the world – and yet I came to it only as an adult. Although I knew it by reputation, I had no idea what a richly-layered and very grown-up work it was, despite its reputation as a “children’s” book. It spoke to me in ways I had not anticipated. It spoke to me of the loss of childhood innocence, of creativity stifled, of magic and joy and mystery. I came to realize that this was not just a story for children – this was a fable for everyone. I fell in love with *The Little Prince* when I was preparing that earlier production, and became more excited about a project than I had for quite a while. I’m delighted to be able to revisit it, some twelve years later – and to work with the same design team: set and lighting designer Trefoni (Tony) Rizzi, and costume designer Clare Henkel.

Tony had worked on an earlier stage adaptation, and offered his insight that the story all happens in mind of the Aviator, as he lies injured in the sand after crash-landing in the Sahara desert. I was skeptical at first, until I started to read more about the writer of the original novel, Antoine de Saint-Exupery. The more I learned about his life, the more I started to see that the story was, at least in part, autobiographical: Saint-Exupery had himself crash-landed in the Sahara, and had numerous hallucinations during the three days before he was rescued. In the 1939 book, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, he wrote about how little children are often prevented by the rules of the grown-up world from realizing their creative potential – which seems to me what this story is mostly about.

The designers and I decided early on that the look of the production would be taken directly from the delightful original illustrations in the book. Drawn by the author himself, and figuring prominently in a story about a man who loved to draw as a child (but was discouraged by the grownups), these illustrations seemed the perfect choice for bringing to life the Aviator’s hallucinations. The notion of “journeys” also figured prominently in our plans – the Aviator’s journey across the Sahara, the Little Prince’s journey from his home planet to the earth, and of course the Aviator’s inner journey. As with all great journeys of mythology, the hero has a transformative experience, learning important lessons in the process.

Lastly, I wanted to represent two distinct cultures through the music chosen for the production – the French culture of Saint-Exupery (and of the Aviator), and the culture of Northern Africa, where our hero finds himself stranded. Music thus became the other anchor for our approach to the story.

I believe that we all have a little prince (or little princess) inside us, and that the challenge is to learn how to listen to that voice within. The key, I suppose, is to heed the lesson imparted to the Aviator by the Fox: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly – what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

“We do not pray for
immortality, but only not to see
our acts and all things stripped
suddenly of all their meaning;
for then it is the utter emptiness
of everything reveals itself.”
(*Night Flight*, p. 78)

Adaptations of The Little Prince

by Sarah Brew

Not only was *The Little Prince* met with success in its original form as a book, but it has also triumphed as an adaptation in multiple forms and languages. Subsequent to its publication in 1943, *The Little Prince* was adapted into several film and television versions. In 1974, there was a film musical adaptation by the same title, which was unsuccessful at the time, but has since become a classic. In 1979 there came a claymation short film adaptation of the story, and in the 1980s a Japanese anime series based on the book. Several other films include elements of the original novel, such as Walt Disney's movie for television titled *Eloise at the Plaza*, whose story centers on a boy whose mother reads him the book. Most recently, a French animated television series began airing in 2010.



In the world of music, there have also been numerous adaptations of the story. Singer Regina Spektor has a song called "Baobabs" which refers to *The Little Prince*. Other songs that have been based on the story have been written by Chinese singer Laure Shang Wenjie, French singer Mylene Farmer, Slovakian singer Jana Kirschner, and the Russian rock band Mashina Vremeni, whose 1979-1980 concert tour was titled *The Little Prince*. Perhaps most famously, actor Richard Burton won a Grammy Award for his 1974 narration of the novel.

In addition to Rick Cummins and John Scoullar's stage version of the novel, (which the Colorado Shakespeare Festival is using for this production) *The Little Prince* has also enjoyed time on the stage as an opera. Russian composer Lev Knipper first composed an opera based on the novel that was titled *Malen'kiy prints (The Little Prince)* and which premiered in 1978. Following this, Rachel Portman and German composer Nikolaus Schapfl also created their own operatic adaptations of the story.

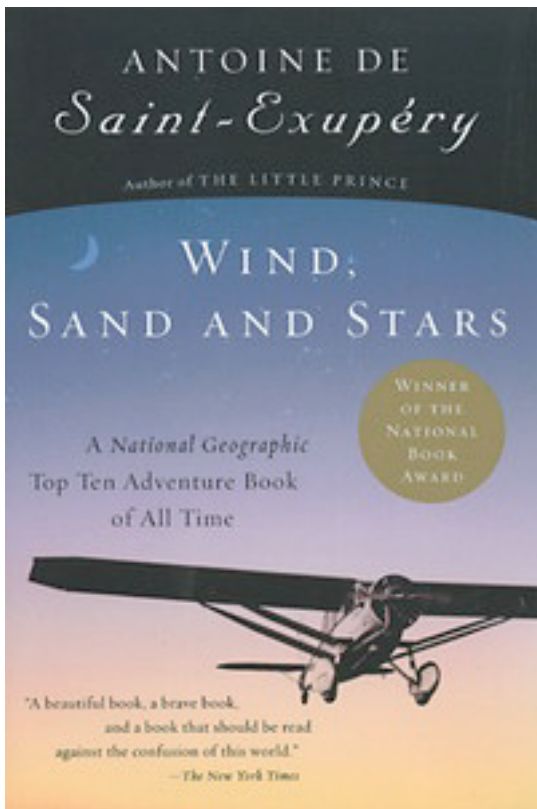
Aviation in the 1930-40's

by Sarah Brew

Called the "golden age" in flight, the post-World War I era was characterized by great innovation in aviation. Immediately following the war, there was an increase in flight, primarily from fighter pilots who were back from war and wanting to show off their flying skills. Among these many "barnstormers," who would fly through small towns to parade their flying abilities, was the famous Amelia Earhart who became the first woman to cross the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in flight. Though flying by this time had proven itself as a viable means of travel, this era was characterized by a desire to travel faster and farther, thus increasing the danger of flight travel. Coupled with this new danger was a long history of flying accidents, the most recent at the time being the 1935 crash of the airship USS Macon.



Though a dangerous time, this era in aviation also saw many innovations. In 1929, Jimmy Doolittle first developed "blind flying" with flight instrumentation. Later, in the 1930s, the jet engine was first being developed in Germany and England simultaneously, though without knowing the other was working on it. After the start of World War II, several countries began working even faster on aircraft development, most focusing on weapon delivery systems. The world's first operational jet aircraft, the Me 262, was developed during this time in 1942, followed by the world's first jet-powered bomber, the Arado Ar 234, in 1943. Also during the 1940s came the world's first helicopters.



Saint-Exupéry's Work

The Aviator (1926)
Southern Mail (1929)
Night Flight (1931)
Wind, Sand and Stars (1939)
Flight to Arras (1942)
The Little Prince (1943)
Letter to a Hostage (1944)
Wisdom of the Sands (1948)
published after his death

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 After reading the book and watching the play, do you think this is solely a children's story, or does it also relate to adults?
- 2 According to the book, what are "important things?"
- 3 What does the Little Prince learn from the different men he meets on the planets?
- 4 How does it change your experience of the play to know that the author actually experienced a crash in the desert? Does it matter that this was inspired by true events?

Classroom Activities

by Amanda Giguere

Children and Adults

Imagine that your childhood self is in a room with your adult self. What would they think of each other? How are they similar? Would they get along? Write a short scene of dialogue between the two versions of yourself, and imagine what they would discuss. Share with your class.



Becoming a Character

Once your class has read the story together, get the students up on their feet. Ask them to walk around the room in a “neutral” way. Then, ask the class to begin walking the way they imagine the Little Prince would walk. Invite them to explore changing speed, direction, and levels as they walk. What does the Little Prince look at as he walks? Let the class explore this movement for a while, and then introduce a new character. Allow them to explore one character at a time (the Aviator, the Fox, the Rose, and the Snake) until you have gone through all of the characters. Once the students have explored the various characters, invite them to improvise scenes between characters of their choice.

Unique in All the World

When the Little Prince travels to Earth, he encounters a wall of roses, and realizes that his rose is not one-of-a-kind. Think of something in your life that you believe is unique. Draw a picture of this unique thing (whether it’s a person, a place, an animal, or an object) and explain to your class why this “thing” is so special to you.

Sources for Teachers

From the Colorado Shakespeare Festival

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Full text of The Little Prince novella:

home.pacific.net.hk/~rebylee/text/prince/index.html



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Arts and Sciences Community Involvement (ASCI).

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