

Man Of The People

Chinua Achebe

Man of the People by Chinua Achebe: A Satirical Look at Corruption and Independence

A satirical novel exposing the corruption and hypocrisy of newly independent Africa, "Man of the People" by Chinua Achebe is a sharp critique of post-colonial power dynamics.

"Man of the People" by Chinua Achebe, published in 1966, stands as a powerful testament to the author's profound understanding of the complexities of post-colonial Africa. Set in an unnamed nation newly liberated from colonial rule, the novel delves into the stark realities of political corruption, societal hypocrisy, and the struggles for individual agency in a system rigged against them. Through the lens of satire and sharp social commentary, Achebe exposes the dangers of unbridled power and the detrimental effects of replacing one form of oppression with another.

A Satirical Masterpiece

Advantages of "Man of the People" as a satirical masterpiece:

- **Sharp Social Commentary:** The novel presents a scathing

critique of the newly independent African leadership, exposing their hypocrisy, greed, and abuse of power. • **Engaging Characters:** Characters like Chief the Honourable Nanga, the corrupt and self-serving politician, and Odili, the idealistic young man disillusioned by the political system, are both relatable and unforgettable. • **Rich Use of Language:** Achebe masterfully employs the English language to capture the nuances of African culture and thought, using wit and irony to expose the absurdity of the situation. • **Timeless Themes:** The novel's exploration of corruption, power dynamics, and the struggle for individual freedom resonates with readers across cultures and time periods.

Exploring the Themes of Corruption and Hypocrisy

At the heart of "Man of the People" lies the corrupting influence of power. Chief Nanga, the protagonist and a prominent politician, embodies the insidious nature of unchecked ambition. He uses his position for personal gain, manipulating the system and exploiting the people he is supposed to serve. Achebe paints a stark picture of how political power can corrupt even the most idealistic individuals, turning them into self-serving opportunists. The novel also explores the hypocrisy of the newly independent nation's leadership. They claim to champion democracy and freedom while perpetuating the same oppressive systems they fought against. Achebe highlights the irony of the situation, exposing the shallowness of their rhetoric and the disconnect between their words and actions.

The Struggle for Individual Agency

"Man of the People" also delves into the struggle for individual agency in a society rife with corruption and injustice. Odili, the young protagonist, embodies the ideals of a generation that believed in the promise of independence. However, he becomes disillusioned as he witnesses the hypocrisy and corruption of the ruling class. Odili's journey reflects the struggle of individuals to maintain their integrity and ideals in a corrupt system.

The Role of Tradition and Modernity

While "Man of the People" focuses on the challenges of post-colonial Africa, Achebe also explores the complex relationship between tradition and modernity. The novel highlights the tension between traditional values and the influence of Western ideas. The characters grapple with the contradictions of their identities, caught between the old and the new.

The Legacy of "Man of the People"

"Man of the People" has left a lasting legacy on African literature and beyond. It has been widely studied and analyzed, inspiring generations of writers and thinkers. The novel's themes of corruption, power, and social change continue to resonate with readers today, offering a valuable lens through which to understand the complexities of modern societies.

Advanced FAQs

1. How does "Man of the People" relate to Achebe's other works? "Man of the People" is a departure from Achebe's

earlier novels, which often focused on traditional Igbo culture. It reflects his growing concern with the political and social issues facing post-colonial Africa. However, the novel still draws on themes and characters from his earlier works, particularly his exploration of the tension between tradition and modernity. **2. What are the major critical interpretations of**

"Man of the People"? Critics have praised Achebe's sharp satire and his powerful depiction of the corrupting influence of power. Some interpretations focus on the novel's exploration of the African political landscape, while others highlight its broader themes of social change and the struggle for individual agency. **3. How does "Man of the People" reflect the**

realities of post-colonial Africa? The novel offers a critical and often humorous perspective on the challenges faced by newly independent African nations. It exposes the dangers of unchecked power and the potential for the new leaders to perpetuate the same systems of oppression they fought against.

4. What is the significance of the novel's ending? The ending of "Man of the People" is ambiguous, leaving readers to contemplate the future of the nation and its people. Some see it as a pessimistic reflection on the state of post-colonial Africa, while others view it as a call to action, urging readers to fight for a more just and equitable society. **5. How does "Man of the**

People" contribute to the global literary canon? "Man of the People" is a significant contribution to the global literary canon for its powerful social commentary, its insightful exploration of the complexities of post-colonial society, and its enduring

relevance to readers across cultures and time periods.

Chinua Achebe: The Man of the People Who Changed the World

When we talk about literary giants, names like Shakespeare, Dickens, and Hemingway often come to mind. But across continents and cultures, another name resonates with a profound and transformative power: Chinua Achebe. More than just a celebrated author, Achebe was, and remains, a true "man of the people." His words, born from the heart of Nigeria and echoing with universal truths, challenged colonial narratives, gave voice to the voiceless, and fundamentally reshaped how the world understood African literature and identity. If you've ever wondered about the enduring legacy of African storytelling or the impact one writer can have on global discourse, then diving into the life and work of Chinua Achebe is an essential journey.

Born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe in 1930, in the Igbo town of Ogidi, Nigeria, his life was a testament to resilience, intellectual prowess, and an unwavering commitment to truth. His literary career, spanning decades, gifted us with masterpieces that are not just books, but cultural touchstones. Let's explore what made Chinua Achebe such a remarkable "man of the people" and why his influence continues to shape literary landscapes and our understanding of history.

The Genesis of a Literary Icon:

Early Life and Influences

Achebe's early life was steeped in the rich tapestry of Igbo culture and traditions, existing in a Nigeria on the cusp of immense change. He grew up during the era of British colonial rule, a period that profoundly impacted his homeland and, subsequently, his literary vision. His parents, though educated Christians, maintained a deep respect for their ancestral customs, providing Achebe with a unique dual perspective. This early exposure to both indigenous heritage and Western influences would become a recurring theme in his writing.

His education played a pivotal role. Achebe attended the prestigious Government College in Umuahia, where he honed his intellectual abilities and was exposed to classical Western literature. However, it was his time at University College, Ibadan, that truly ignited his passion for writing and his critical understanding of the prevailing literary narratives. He began to question why African stories, told from an African perspective, were absent from the literary canon or, worse, misrepresented by colonial authors.

This period of questioning and discovery laid the groundwork for his groundbreaking work. He recognized a glaring omission: the lack of authentic African voices in literature that was widely read and respected. This realization wasn't just an academic observation; it was a deeply personal and political one. He saw the power of storytelling to shape perception, and he understood that for too long, the narrative of Africa had been dictated by outsiders. This fuels his drive to become a

literary ambassador for his continent.

'Things Fall Apart': A Revolution in Print

It's impossible to discuss Chinua Achebe without immediately bringing up his seminal novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Published in 1958, this novel wasn't just a literary success; it was a literary revolution. It marked a definitive moment when African literature began to assert its own identity on the global stage, challenging the prevailing colonial gaze that had long dominated literary representations of the continent.

The novel tells the story of Okonkwo, a proud and respected Igbo warrior, and the tragic impact of the arrival of British missionaries and colonial administrators on his community. Achebe's genius lies in his ability to portray the pre-colonial Igbo society with dignity, complexity, and nuance. He didn't shy away from depicting its strengths and weaknesses, its traditions and its internal conflicts, but he did so from an insider's perspective, using the Igbo language and proverbs to enrich the narrative. This was a radical departure from previous depictions, which often painted African societies as primitive or uncivilized.

Things Fall Apart immediately became a bestseller and has since been translated into over 60 languages, selling tens of millions of copies worldwide. Its impact is immeasurable. It provided a template for subsequent generations of African writers, demonstrating that African stories, told in their own voices, could resonate with readers everywhere. It became

required reading in schools and universities across the globe, offering a crucial counter-narrative to colonial history. The phrase "things fall apart," itself an allusion to W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming," became a poignant metaphor for cultural disintegration and the painful consequences of colonial intervention.

The Power of Authentic Voice

One of the most significant contributions of *Things Fall Apart*, and indeed Achebe's entire body of work, is the assertion of an authentic African voice. Achebe deliberately used English, the language of the colonizer, but he infused it with the rhythms, proverbs, and storytelling traditions of the Igbo people. This was a strategic and powerful act of reclaiming language and literature.

He famously stated, "English is the language of my own people now." This statement encapsulates his pragmatic approach. By mastering and adapting the colonizer's language, he could reach a wider audience and challenge the very structures that sought to silence African voices. He proved that English could be a tool for liberation and for telling stories that were distinctly African. This approach inspired countless writers not just in Nigeria, but across the African continent and in the diaspora.

Beyond 'Things Fall Apart': A Rich

Literary Legacy

While *Things Fall Apart* might be his most famous work, Achebe's literary output is far richer and more diverse. He continued to explore the complexities of African society, identity, and the lingering effects of colonialism in subsequent novels, short stories, and essays.

'No Longer at Ease' and 'Arrow of God'

His second novel, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), continues the narrative of post-colonial Nigeria, focusing on Obi Okonkwo, the grandson of Okonkwo from *Things Fall Apart*. Obi, educated in England, struggles to reconcile his Western education and aspirations with the traditional customs and expectations of his community. This novel delves into the challenges of navigating a rapidly changing society, the corruption that can accompany modernization, and the personal dilemmas faced by those caught between two worlds.

Arrow of God (1964) is another masterpiece that examines the complexities of leadership, religion, and the clash between traditional Igbo beliefs and the encroaching Christian faith. Set in the early 20th century, it tells the story of Ezeulu, a chief priest who faces immense pressure from both his people and the colonial authorities. The novel is lauded for its intricate plot, rich symbolism, and Achebe's profound understanding of the spiritual and political landscape of pre-colonial and early colonial Nigeria.

'A Man of the People' and Beyond

Achebe's 1966 novel, *A Man of the People*, offers a sharp and satirical critique of post-independence African politics. It portrays a corrupt and self-serving political elite who have replaced the colonial rulers. The novel, written with a biting wit, highlights the disillusionment that can follow independence when the promise of self-rule is betrayed by internal corruption. Its prescience was such that it was published just before a military coup in Nigeria, a stark reflection of the realities it depicted.

Beyond his novels, Achebe was a prolific essayist and critic. His essays, often collected in works like *Morning Yet on Creation Day* and *Hopes and Impediments*, provide invaluable insights into his literary philosophy, his views on African identity, and his unwavering critique of colonialism and its enduring legacies. He was a vocal advocate for African literature and played a crucial role in establishing Heinemann's African Writers Series, which published and promoted works by African authors to a global audience.

Chinua Achebe: The Intellectual and Activist

Achebe was not just a writer; he was an intellectual and a committed activist. He used his platform to advocate for social justice, political change, and the preservation of African cultural heritage. His uncompromising stance against injustice and his willingness to speak truth to power earned him

immense respect, but also made him a target for criticism and opposition.

Championing African Literature

His role as the founding editor of the African Writers Series at Heinemann was perhaps one of his most significant contributions to the literary world. This series provided a vital platform for African writers to share their stories with the world, fostering a sense of pride and solidarity among a generation of authors. It helped to demystify African literature and made it accessible to a global readership, challenging the Eurocentric biases that had long dominated the literary landscape.

He was a fierce critic of any attempt to romanticize or distort African history and culture. He believed that literature had a crucial role to play in correcting historical inaccuracies and in fostering a more nuanced understanding of Africa. His engagements with other writers, particularly his public criticisms of Joseph Conrad's portrayal of Africans in *Heart of Darkness*, are legendary and highlight his commitment to intellectual honesty and anti-racism.

A Voice for the Voiceless

Achebe's "man of the people" persona stemmed from his deep empathy and his commitment to representing the experiences of ordinary Africans. He wrote about their joys, their struggles, their traditions, and their resilience. His characters, whether villagers or educated elites, were complex and relatable,

reflecting the human condition in all its facets.

He understood the power of storytelling to empower marginalized communities and to challenge oppressive structures. By giving voice to the African experience, he challenged the dehumanizing narratives of colonialism and fostered a sense of pride and self-worth among Africans and people of African descent worldwide. His work served as a powerful antidote to the damaging stereotypes that had long been perpetuated.

The Enduring Legacy of a "Man of the People"

Chinua Achebe passed away in 2013, but his influence continues to resonate. He is remembered not just as a brilliant storyteller, but as a cultural icon, a moral compass, and a true "man of the people" who used his gifts to illuminate the human experience and to champion the dignity of his continent.

His works remain essential reading for anyone seeking to understand post-colonial Africa, the complexities of identity, and the enduring power of storytelling. They are testaments to the richness of African cultures, the resilience of its people, and the urgent need for authentic narratives to shape our collective understanding of the world.

The lessons from Achebe's life and writings are profound. He taught us the importance of knowing our history, of celebrating our heritage, and of speaking truth to power. He showed us that literature can be a powerful tool for social change, for

fostering understanding, and for bridging divides. Chinua Achebe wasn't just a writer; he was a beacon, a guide, and a true inspiration whose words continue to fall upon fertile ground, shaping minds and inspiring hearts across generations and continents.

The Enduring Legacy of Chinua Achebe: Man of the People

Chinua Achebe stands as one of the most influential literary figures of the 20th century, particularly celebrated for his role as a voice of the people in postcolonial Africa. Often referred to as the "man of the people," Achebe's work transcends mere storytelling; it embodies a profound cultural consciousness and a deep commitment to representing African identity with authenticity. Born in 1930 in Ogidi, Nigeria, Achebe witnessed firsthand the complexities of colonial rule and the struggle for national identity, experiences that profoundly shaped his writing and mission.

A Voice for the Marginalized

Achebe's most renowned novel, *Things Fall Apart*, revolutionized global literature by presenting African life not through the distorted lens of colonial narratives but from the intimate, lived realities of its people. His protagonist, Okonkwo, is more than a character—he is a symbol of dignity, resilience, and cultural integrity in the face of external upheaval. By centering African voices and worldviews, Achebe challenged

centuries of misrepresentation, offering readers a nuanced portrait of a society rich in tradition, spirituality, and human complexity. This deliberate focus on the people's perspective established him as a pioneer in reclaiming African narratives from the margins of history.

Literary Innovation and Cultural Reclamation

Achebe's genius lay not only in content but in form. He seamlessly blended oral storytelling traditions with the structure of the Western novel, creating a narrative style that honored indigenous expression while engaging universal themes of family, conflict, and change. His deliberate use of English—crafted to carry African idioms and proverbs—was an act of linguistic reclamation, transforming the colonizer's language into a vessel for authentic African storytelling. Through this innovation, Achebe demonstrated that African literature could stand on its own, rich with meaning and artistic depth, without compromise.

Impact and Enduring Relevance

The impact of Achebe's work extends far beyond the page. *Things Fall Apart* became a foundational text in African studies, used in classrooms worldwide to foster cross-cultural understanding and critical reflection on colonialism's legacy. His other works, including *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*, further deepened his exploration of cultural transition, moral responsibility, and the tensions between tradition and

modernity—issues that remain deeply relevant in contemporary African societies. Achebe’s unwavering commitment to truth-telling and his empathetic portrayal of everyday people have inspired generations of writers, thinkers, and activists across the continent and beyond.

Applications in Contemporary Discourse

Today, Achebe’s vision continues to resonate in ongoing conversations about identity, representation, and cultural ownership. His work informs debates on decolonizing education, rethinking historical narratives, and promoting inclusive literature that reflects diverse voices. In an era where media and power dynamics still shape public perception, Achebe’s example reminds us of the power of storytelling as a tool for empowerment and healing. His insistence on seeing people “as they are”—with complexity, dignity, and respect—offers a timeless blueprint for meaningful cultural engagement.

A Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, the legacy of the man of the people Achebe embodies holds profound promise. As global literature continues to diversify, his emphasis on authentic representation inspires emerging writers to tell their own stories without apology. In a world grappling with identity, inequality, and cultural preservation, Achebe’s life and work stand as a beacon—urging readers and creators alike to listen

deeply, speak truthfully, and honor the rich tapestry of human experience. His enduring relevance affirms that true literature is not just art; it is a vital act of connection, resistance, and renewal.

Conclusion: A Living Legacy

Chinua Achebe was more than an author—he was a cultural custodian, a moral voice, and a trailblazer who redefined African literature. As the man of the people he was, his work remains a powerful testament to the strength of narrative in shaping identity and fostering understanding. His legacy continues to inspire, challenge, and guide, ensuring that the stories of Africa's people are told with the truth, respect, and humanity they deserve.

Chinua Achebe: The Man of the People Who Redefined African Literature

Chinua Achebe. The name resonates with a powerful echo, a clarion call that shattered colonial narratives and gave authentic voice to a continent often misrepresented and misunderstood. More than just a literary giant, Achebe was, in the truest sense, a "man of the people." His writing wasn't confined to academic ivory towers; it was rooted in the soil of Nigeria, in the rhythms of its villages, and in the hearts of its diverse communities. His legacy is not merely a collection of

celebrated novels, but a profound reimagining of African identity and a testament to the power of storytelling in shaping collective consciousness.

Born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe in 1930 in Ogidi, Nigeria, Achebe's life and work were inextricably linked to the turbulent, transformative period of Nigerian history. He witnessed firsthand the arrival of British colonialism, the clash of traditional Igbo culture with Western values, and the eventual struggle for independence. These experiences, deeply personal yet universally relevant, would become the bedrock of his literary output, making him arguably the most important African novelist of the 20th century and a pivotal figure in postcolonial literature.

The Genesis of a Literary Revolution: *Things Fall Apart*

The publication of **Things Fall Apart** in 1958 was a watershed moment. Written in English, but imbued with the spirit and cadence of Igbo language and oral traditions, it was a direct challenge to the colonialist portrayal of Africa as a primitive, uncivilized land awaiting salvation. Achebe masterfully narrated the story of Okonkwo, a proud and respected warrior whose life unravels with the arrival of European missionaries and administrators. The novel didn't shy away from portraying the complexities and flaws within Igbo society, but it did so with an insider's perspective, humanizing the characters and demonstrating the devastating impact of external forces on a rich and intricate cultural tapestry.

Things Fall Apart achieved immediate acclaim and became an international bestseller, translated into over 50 languages. Its impact was profound, not only for its literary merit but for its crucial role in reclaiming African narratives. Before Achebe, literature about Africa was largely written by outsiders, often perpetuating stereotypes. Achebe flipped the script, offering an unvarnished, authentic depiction of African life, seen through African eyes. This seminal work is a cornerstone of African literature studies and a vital text for understanding the complexities of cultural collision and the enduring strength of indigenous traditions.

Beyond **Things Fall Apart: A Rich and Diverse Canon**

While **Things Fall Apart** remains his most celebrated work, Achebe's literary output is far richer and more diverse. His subsequent novels continued to explore the impact of colonialism, corruption, and the complexities of nation-building in post-independence Nigeria. **No Longer at Ease** (1960) explores the generational divide and the struggle for identity in a modernizing Nigeria, focusing on Obi Okonkwo, Okonkwo's grandson. **Arrow of God** (1964) delves into the spiritual and political struggles of a traditional Igbo priest caught between his ancestral beliefs and the encroaching colonial power.

In **A Man of the People** (1966), Achebe turned his sharp observational skills towards the corruption and disillusionment that began to plague independent African nations. This satirical novel, predating the Nigerian Civil War, offered a prescient critique of postcolonial leadership. **Anthills of the*

Savannah* (1987), his final novel, set in a fictional West African nation, grappled with issues of dictatorship, intellectualism, and the responsibility of writers in times of political turmoil. Through these novels, Achebe consistently presented nuanced portrayals of African characters, avoiding simplistic hero-villain dichotomies and instead focusing on the human condition amidst societal upheaval.

Achebe as a Public Intellectual and Advocate

Chinua Achebe was more than a novelist; he was a passionate public intellectual and a tireless advocate for African dignity and self-determination. His critical essays, particularly "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," remain seminal pieces in postcolonial literary criticism. In this groundbreaking essay, Achebe dissects Joseph Conrad's portrayal of Africa, exposing the ingrained racism and demonstrating how even a highly regarded literary work could perpetuate damaging stereotypes. This act of intellectual defiance was characteristic of Achebe's unwavering commitment to challenging Western hegemony and reasserting the validity of African perspectives.

His commitment extended beyond the literary sphere. Achebe was deeply involved in Nigerian politics, serving as a senator in the Eastern Region and later as a director of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. He was a vocal critic of corruption and a champion of education. Even after suffering a paralyzing accident in 1990, his voice remained powerful, amplified by his continued writing and public engagements. He became an

international figure, a respected elder statesman whose pronouncements on African affairs carried immense weight. His advocacy for African writers and the promotion of African languages were consistent themes throughout his life, underscoring his deep connection to his roots and his belief in the power of indigenous cultures.

The Enduring Relevance of the "Man of the People"

The label "man of the people" is not just a poetic flourish; it accurately encapsulates Achebe's ethos. His literary characters, whether common villagers or educated elites, were imbued with a palpable humanity. He wrote about their struggles, their joys, their triumphs, and their failures with an unflinching honesty that resonated with millions. He understood that for literature to truly connect, it must reflect the lived experiences of its audience, speaking in a language that is both accessible and resonant.

Achebe's influence on subsequent generations of African writers is immeasurable. He paved the way for countless authors to explore their own narratives, free from the constraints of colonial expectations. His legacy is not just in the books he wrote, but in the liberation he inspired. His work continues to be studied, debated, and celebrated, proving that the stories he told about the complexities of identity, culture, and history remain profoundly relevant in our interconnected yet often divided world. He taught us that to understand Africa, one must listen to its own voices, and Chinua Achebe's voice was, and remains, one of the most powerful and

authentic of all.

In an era where global narratives are still often dominated by dominant powers, the lessons embedded in Achebe's "man of the people" approach to writing and advocacy are more vital than ever. He demonstrated that authentic storytelling, rooted in community and cultural integrity, can not only entertain but also enlighten, challenge, and ultimately, empower. His literary journey is a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit and the profound importance of reclaiming one's narrative, a message that continues to inspire and resonate across continents and generations.

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As technology continues to evolve, digital books will remain a central component of modern education and research. The availability of *Man Of The People Chinua Achebe* in digital format reflects an adaptive approach to learning that aligns with current technological trends. Digital literacy is now an essential skill in both academic and professional contexts.

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sustainable and inclusive education. Digital downloads make knowledge acquisition seamless, efficient, and adaptable to the needs of today's learners.

Questions & Answers About man of the people chinua achebe

No	Question	Answer
1	What makes Chinua Achebe a 'man of the people'?	Achebe is often called a 'man of the people' because his writing championed the voices and experiences of ordinary Africans, particularly during a time when their stories were largely unheard or misrepresented in Western literature. He gave dignity and depth to Igbo culture and traditions, making complex societal issues accessible and relatable to a broad audience.
2	How did Achebe's novel 'Things Fall Apart' cement his 'man of the people' legacy?	'Things Fall Apart' became a global phenomenon because it presented African society from an African perspective, challenging colonial narratives. By focusing on the devastating impact of colonialism on a specific community and its deeply human characters, Achebe resonated with people worldwide who identified with themes of cultural loss, identity, and resilience.

3	Beyond literature, what other ways did Achebe embody the 'man of the people' ideal?	Achebe was also a vocal public intellectual and activist. He used his platform to critique neo-colonialism, advocate for social justice, and promote African scholarship. His willingness to speak truth to power and his commitment to empowering African voices solidified his image as a figure who truly represented and fought for the common person.
4	Why is Achebe's focus on everyday language and storytelling significant for the 'man of the people' label?	Achebe deliberately used clear, accessible language and traditional Igbo storytelling techniques, avoiding overly academic or Westernized styles. This approach made his powerful messages about African life and the complexities of colonialism understandable and engaging for a vast readership, ensuring his stories reached and impacted people from all walks of life.
5	In what ways does Achebe's work continue to empower people today, reinforcing his 'man of the people' status?	Achebe's enduring legacy lies in his creation of an authentic African literary tradition that inspires new generations of writers and readers. His emphasis on cultural pride, critical thinking, and the importance of self-representation empowers people to reclaim their narratives and understand their histories, a testament to his continued relevance as a 'man of the people'.

man of the people chinua achebe, chinua achebe people's voice, man of the people literary figure, achibe's common man representation, chinua achebe postcolonial perspective, achibe humanist writer, man of the people in african literature, chinua

achebe cultural identity, people-centered storytelling achebe,
achibe social realism in literature

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