

Collective worship resources for Easter

In 'Story Assemblies for the School Year' by Edward J Carter are a series of stories that could be useful during the period of Lent.

The stories can be found in section 4 of the book pages 111-143 and tell of The Witness Birds who relate the Easter story. There are 6 stories in the section with a concluding story that is important to tell so you'd need to allow for an extra assembly one week to fit the complete story in. Themes the stories explore are:

Being popular Serving others Non violence Betrayal
Bullying and persecution Who was Jesus?

The book gives all the information you'll need to in an almost 'pick up and go' way although you would need to make the 5 Witness birds, their perch and cross beforehand. Details and templates are on pages 211-217 of the book.

Included in this pack are some additional thoughts and assembly ideas you may want to use during this period of Lent.

Inclusions in the pack:

Introduction

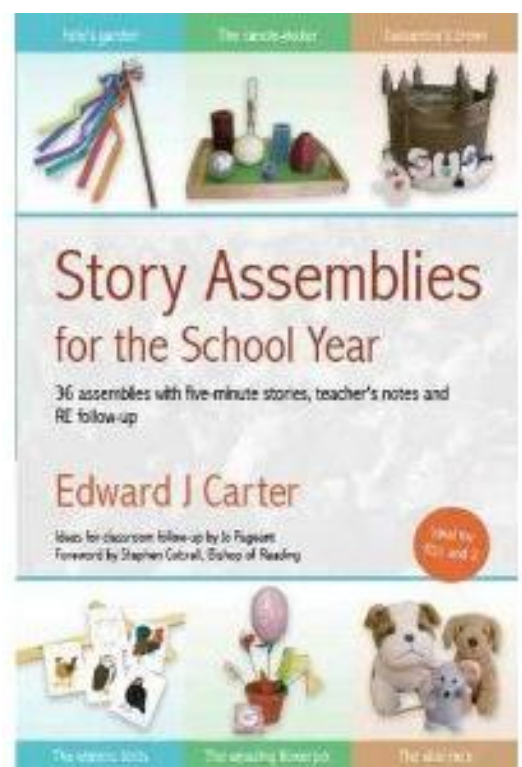
Resources you may find useful

Some additional ideas for Holy Week Assemblies

Other ideas for use in the classroom

Barnabas in Schools

- Crosses from around the world
- Lent: story of Jesus' temptations



Resources you may find useful

Story Assemblies for the School Year by Edward J Carter pub Barnabas

<http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/home/>

is an excellent website with free downloads as well as a source of good assembly books

The Tale of Three Trees retold by Angela Elwell Hunt pub Lion

This is a really good 'Easter' book and if you haven't a copy it would be well worth getting one.

Our book is retold by Angela Elwell Hunt but if you search on Amazon you'll find others.

Season to Season

A book written by Jane Brooke, Sue Glover and Nicola Preston and available from Chester Diocese.

Spirited Poetry by Lat Blaylock pub RMEP

Lat is editor of RE Today and is worth getting in for an INSET day if RE is ever a focus for your school. The book is a compilation of children's poetry and is good for teaching ideas as well as being a useful anthology.

Through the year with Timothy Bear pub Barnabas

See link above.

The excellent stories are for use with KS1. A really useful 'pick up and go' assembly book.

Lent people and places by Nick Harding pub Kevin Mayhew

www.kevinmayhew.com

Kevin Mayhew are a source of many good books and cds for use in assemblies.

This book focuses on the characters involved in the Easter story.

Weaving a Journey though Lent by Rachel Nicholls pub Kevin Mayhew

A-Cross the World by Marton Payne (who leads Easter and Christmas Journey and will be known to year 2 and 5 staff) pub Barnabas

Representations of the cross from churches all over the world – ideas for art lesson as well as the 'story' behind each style of cross.

Easter Cracked pub Scripture Union

Resource book of ideas for Easter including s=crafts, drama, assemblies, puzzles, songs.....

The Bible through Art by Margaret Cooling, Diane Walker and Jane Taylor pub ? available from Amazon – I can't find our copy to check the publisher...

The above titles are just a small snapshot of available resources for leading assemblies and RE.

Introduction

Although Easter is the most important festival of the year for the Christian church, it can be a confusing and difficult series of events to share with children. In many cases commercialism has reduced the story to hot cross buns, chocolate eggs and fluffy bunnies - all of which make the reality of the historical events hard to relate to the present day. Death is a subject which is rarely discussed in the home and school nowadays and although many children have experience of 'virtual' violent death on computer and TV screens, it is a topic which is often thought to be best avoided.

The miraculous events of that first Easter are profound and amazing to Christians who themselves struggle to understand the mystery of Christ's victory over death and his work of forgiveness on the cross. Artists, authors, musicians and actors have over the centuries tried to portray elements of the holy week story in paintings, choral works, plays, films and even modern day musical theatre.

The story is considered so central to the Christian faith that all the gospel writers proportionately devote more of their writing to the last few days of Jesus life than to his earlier ministry. The apostle Peter tells the dramatic story over and over again in Acts. If the resurrection had not happened, it is doubtful whether Christianity would have survived even the first century. Because it did, there is a tremendous story to tell and a hope which has enabled Christians to keep sharing their faith in the face of unimaginable difficulties and circumstances. The events of holy week have given rise to significant church traditions, celebration and sacrament, all of which make this a very important part of the school curriculum, as well as the life of the church.

During Holy Week and Easter children can be encouraged to travel with Jesus during the last few days of his life and to think about the significance of the Easter story and the pivotal part that it plays in the whole Christian journey today.

Some additional ideas for Holy Week Assemblies

Assembly 1

This is a simple idea from BRF's Martyn Payne that needs no preparation and could be used as part of an assembly.

1. In the story of Palm Sunday, the people tore down palm branches to welcome King Jesus into Jerusalem.

Splay out the fingers of your hands and then wave your palms high like palm leaves.

2. Palm Sunday begins Holy Week. This was Jesus' last week before he died. It was filled with special events.

Early on Jesus went into the temple and was angry about the way it was being used like a market and not as a place of prayer.

Clench your fingers tightly into your palms and wave them in anger; follow this by putting your palms together in an attitude of prayer.

3. At Bethany outside Jerusalem where Jesus stayed, only Mary seemed to understand that Jesus was about to die. She anointed his feet with perfume. Jesus praised and blessed her for what she did.

Open wide your hands and stretch them out to bless and then clap them together gently to show praise.

4. In the upper room Jesus used part of his last meal to show his friends that he was going to be broken and poured out for the sake of the whole world.

With both hands, mime breaking a piece of bread and pouring out the wine.

5. In Gethsemane Jesus went off on his own and prayed. He was facing the decision to take on the pain and the horror of death for us.

Clench your two palms together in an attitude of earnest prayer.

6. Before the High Priest and the Roman Governor, Jesus did not resist as they passed sentence of death on him.

Cross over your two hands in front of you at the wrists, as if they are tied together and with your palms spread out.

7. On a hill outside Jerusalem they stretched out Jesus' hands and nailed them to a cross, leaving him there to die.

Point to each wrist (the sign language for Jesus) then stretch out your open palms to either side.

8. Jesus' death was a shock to all his friends, who were frightened about what was going to happen next.

Open palms together across your mouth in amazement, horror and fear.

9. In despair they went into hiding, wondering what the next step would be.
Hold your head in the palms of both hands

10. On Easter Day Jesus was alive again, showing them his hands where the nail marks were.

Hold out both palms wide to be inspected.

11. And the disciples were filled with joy.

Lift high the palms of both hands in jubilation!

Craft idea

Using the ideas above, have the children trace round their hands in the various positions recorded, to create a hand and palm collage of the events of Holy Week (and if appropriate, beyond).

Assembly 2

Holy week

The Sounds of Holy Week by Martyn Payne – taken from Barnabas in churches website

It is important that children share in the experience of Holy Week, including Good Friday. Without entering into the events of these days, the victory of Easter morning will be robbed of its full significance for them. The following outline focuses on some key sounds from that momentous week and could be used as a group activity to be used anytime from Palm Sunday onwards, or as part of a workshop at a special Holy Week event, or perhaps as a presentation in a Good Friday service in church.

You will need to collect a series of items to make the following sound effects:

Two halves of a coconut for a donkey's hooves

A tray of gravel, deep enough to allow a child to stand in this and march vigorously on the spot

A collection of pieces of wood that can be thrown down noisily

A bag of coins that can be jangled and from which some can be tipped out

A wooden platter and spoon

A cup and some liquid to pour into it

Some pieces of matzo bread or cracker that will snap noisily

A bowl of water

A hammer and nail with a block of wood, into which to bang the nail

Some wooden dice

A piece of cloth to tear

A piece of card that can be wobbled to make the sound of thunder

A large candle and candlesnuffer

Other sound effects for this presentation will be made with voices and hands.

1. Collect the items above and place them on a central table. In the middle put the candle. When your group has gathered around in a circle, explain that between them, they are going to provide the soundtrack for the most important week of Jesus' life. These sounds will accompany the climax of God's rescue plan, which comes to fulfilment in what Christians call Holy Week.

2. As you talk through the sound effects and practise them, you need to distribute them to different children in your group thoughtfully. For example, the hammer and nail and block of wood need to be given to a responsible child! In addition to all the objects for sounds, some of the effects will need to be made with hands and voices, perhaps by the whole group or selected groups of children.

3. The leader of the group will provide a very simple commentary to link the sounds. This should be kept to a bare minimum (see below), especially if it is being presented in Church. However when you work through this as a group or in a workshop, talk through in much more detail the story behind the sounds through question-and-answer. The sounds represent:

Palm Sunday on the streets

The overturning of the tables in the Temple

The Roman soldiers marching and discussions with Judas about betrayal

The events of the Last Supper

The trials and judgement

The crucifixion outside the walls

4. Once each member of the group has their sound effect ready, arrange them to be sitting in the appropriate order so that the sequence of sounds is correct. There should be a short pause after each sound effect.

5. The Sounds of Holy Week

Leader: This is the week that turns all endings into new beginnings. These are the sounds of Holy Week.

Pause

(Light the candle, placed central to the group or centre stage for a presentation)

Leader: The streets of Jerusalem were filled with new sounds

The clip-clop of donkey's hooves

The cheering of the crowds

Some suspicious whispering behind hands

Leader: The temple in Jerusalem was filled with new sounds

The sounds of pigeons cooing, sheep bleating and coins being rattled

The sound of pieces of wood dropping to the ground and then some coins falling

The gasps of breath from the onlookers

Leader: The Jerusalem Passover was filled with new sounds

The crunch of marching feet made by soldiers on the move

The sound of people telling others to keep quiet, as secret deals are done

The sound of a moneybag being placed into someone else's hands

Leader: A Jerusalem house in the back streets was filled with new sounds

The noise of a spoon scraping a wooden platter during a meal

The sound of drink being pouring into a cup

The sound of Matzo being cracked

The sound of a door slamming shut

Leader: The Jerusalem courts were filled with new sounds

The sound of clenched fists thumping upon the tables

The sound of angry voices

The sound of hands being washed in water

The sound of feet dragged across gravel on a slow march to death

Leader: The hill outside Jerusalem was filled with new sounds

The banging in of a nail into wood

The sound of dice being rolled

The sound of some cloth being torn

The sound of thunder and of rain (the drumming of fingers on open palms)

Leader: And then there were no more sounds from Jerusalem

After a pause, snuff out the candle

Leader: This is the week that turns all endings into new beginnings... but not yet.

Before the sound that would go out into all the world, there was just silence. And the world held its breath.

Assembly 3

The Three Trees

Tell the story of the three trees, perhaps using some visual aids such as three different sized children to be the trees, a model of a wooden cradle, a boat and a wooden cross.

Story: The three trees

Once upon a time, three little trees stood on a hillside and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: 'I want to be a treasure chest, covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I'll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!'

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the sea. 'I want to be a mighty ship and carry powerful kings across the sea. I'll be the strongest ship in the world!'

The third little tree looked thoughtful. 'I want to stay on the hillside and grow so tall that when people stop to look at me, they'll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world!'

Years passed. The rain came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters arrived on the hillside.

The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, 'This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me!' With one swoop of his shining axe, he cut down the first tree. 'Now I shall be made into a beautiful treasure chest!' the first tree said.

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, 'This tree is strong. It is perfect for me!' With a swoop of his shining axe, he cut down the second tree. 'Now I shall be made in to a strong ship for mighty kings!' the second tree said.

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. 'Any kind of tree will do for me,' he muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe, he cut down the third tree.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter's shop. But the carpenter made the tree into a feeding trough for the animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, or not filled with treasure. She was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a

simple fishing boat. She was too small and weak to sail to on the sea, or even a river. Instead she was taken to a little lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a timber yard. 'What happened?' the once tall tree wondered. 'All I ever wanted was to stay on the hillside and point to God...'

Many days and nights passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams. But, one night, a golden star poured its light over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feeding trough. 'I wish I could make a cradle for him,' her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the star shone its light on the smooth and sturdy wood. 'This manger is beautiful,' she said. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening, a tired traveller and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveller fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She knew that she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through with the wind and the rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and ordered the wind and the waves to be quiet. The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the king of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were wrenched from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel. But, on Sunday morning when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

Traditional

Remind the children that Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross to make it possible for people to be friends with God. Three days after he died Jesus came back to life and Christians believe that he is able to be involved in their lives today.

Response and prayer

Show the children the wooden cross and tell them that it is now a very special symbol for Christians because it represents a new beginning. Because the cross is empty it reminds people that Jesus is alive and can help others to make new beginnings in their lives.

Ask the children to look at the cross and think about some things they might be sorry about and that they would like to change to make a new beginning. Explain that Christians believe that Jesus can help people to make a new start.

Prayer

- Thank you Jesus for coming to earth and dying on the cross to help us make a new start. Thank you that you are alive today and know about our sadness and

happiness. This Easter, help us to remember how your love can change lives and make our world a better place. Amen.

If time allows, have some seeds available and ask one child from each year group to come forward to plant them. Explain that as they grow, they represent new life and new beginnings from the darkness of the soil. From the darkness of Good Friday came the light of Easter Day.

Alternative suggestion:

If the children are familiar with the Narnia books by C.S.Lewis there could be scope for using part of the story or a film clip from 'Narnia' where the stone table cracks and Aslan comes back to life. This can be compared to the Easter story

Other ideas for use in the classroom

1. Palm Sunday and clearing the temple

Creative Arts	<p>There are numerous possibilities for work including drama, art work such as painting, drawing, collage and textile work.</p> <p>There are many famous musical works involving fanfares and entrance music, such as the Entrance of the Queen of Sheba by Handel, Fanfare for the common man by Aaron Copland. The children could listen to these and compose their own music in groups for the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem.</p>
Literacy	<p>Poetry and descriptive writing about the entrance of Jesus, the feelings of the crowd and so on.</p> <p>Vocabulary work on the anger of the traders.</p> <p>Write and perform a simple script for the happenings in the temple.</p>
R.E	<p>The temple in Jerusalem – how it worked, plans and ceremonies.</p>
P.S.H.E/Citizenship	<p>What makes a good leader.</p> <p>Moral choices – the choice between money and doing what is right.</p> <p>Doing the right thing even if it makes one unpopular.</p>

2. The Last Supper

Creative Arts	<p>There are numerous paintings depicting the Last Supper. One of the most famous is that of Leonardo Da Vinci. This picture could be used to explore the story through Renaissance art. Paintings from different periods and cultures can be compared.</p>
Literacy	<p>The story lends itself to drama, role-play, poetry and creative writing.</p>
R.E	<p>Most primary schools will study Judaism as part of the locally agreed syllabus. This story is useful when discussing the Jewish Festival of the Passover and the story behind this.</p> <p>It also leads to work on the sacraments in the Christian faith. The communion service is based on the events of the Last Supper.</p>
PSHE and Citizenship	<p>There are many elements to explore in the story. The moment when Jesus washes the feet of the disciples relates to servanthood and helping others. The betrayal of Judas begins at this point and a discussion on the theme of friendship versus wanting the perceived greater good could lead to interesting role-play.</p>

3. The Garden of Gethsemane

Again this is a difficult part of the whole story for children to think about. There are opportunities for discussion about doing the right thing even though it is going to be very hard. The idea of being let down or betrayed by friends can be explored. The idea of telling a story simply using sound effects and music could be translated to other stories.

4. The crucifixion

This is a difficult subject to approach with children and needs to be handled sensitively. Children may be aware of recent films showing the crucifixion in a very realistic way. Care should be taken not to frighten pupils but equally to help them to realise what a cruel and difficult death Jesus suffered.

Creative arts	There are numerous paintings of the crucifixion from all artistic schools and periods. Without dwelling on those which portray great suffering, styles and interpretations could be compared.
Literacy	Talk about the feelings of those watching the crucifixion and the conflicting emotions which they went through. Explore poetry and creative writing based on this experience.
R.E	Talk about the significance of the symbol of cross to the Christian faith. The book 'A-cross the world' by Martin Payne and Betty Pedley pub BRF, has a wealth of information about crosses .
PSHE and Citizenship	There are many issues to discuss about the crucifixion. Justice, betrayal, crowd pressure and so on. Following Peter's own journey through this time makes for an interesting exploration of different emotions.

5. The Resurrection

Once again there are numerous artistic interpretations of the resurrection which can be compared and contrasted. The idea of new beginnings, a new start and change can be explored.

Crosses from around the world

On your marks:

The intended learning outcomes for this piece of work would be that the children should be able:

- to recognise that the symbol of the cross has a variety of meanings
- to discuss the symbol of the cross for Christians
- to know that for Christians the empty cross is the sign that the crucifixion of Christ was not an end but a beginning
- to explore how different Christian groups around the world use the symbol of the cross to express faith within their culture

The focus for assessment should be:

- to discuss the symbol of a cross
- to discuss its meanings for Christians
- to produce their own response to crosses from different cultures
- to make their own personal cross

Get set:

You will find the following Barnabas in Schools books useful, in particular the first on the list:

[A-cross the World](#) by Martyn Payne and Betty Pedley - 40 crosses with Bible stories and background information including craft ideas, all connected to how the story of Easter is interpreted and celebrated in many different parts of the world

[The Gospels Unplugged](#) by Lucy Moore (p42-52). Here are 10 poems and stories to help explore events leading up to Easter with some thought-provoking comment and particularly suitable for creative writing and RE at Key Stage 2.

[Barnabas Make & Do Bible Crafts](#) contains a range of craft ideas to bring the story of Easter to life.

Go!

Here is a possible sequence of activities:

Step 1: What does a cross symbol mean?

Draw a cross on the board. What does it mean? Explore the use of a cross to mean a

variety of things. e.g.:

- a simple maths sum that someone has got wrong
- a birthday card from Granny with love
- an advert for an event that has been cancelled
- a signpost with a crossroads on it
- a voting form with a candidate chosen
- a island with the treasure marked

Children could draw and explain the use of a cross in these or other ways that they come up with.

Step 2: What does a cross symbol mean for Christians?

Show artefacts of crosses and pictures of crosses from the book [A-cross the World](#). Discuss: how each is made and of what material? Where would you find it? Who uses it? In what rituals is it used? What do they think is its significance to those who use it? Discuss the pictures. Read the story of the events of Good Friday through to Easter Sunday Morning, using the Bible or ideas from the books in the list above.

Step 3: How do different Christian groups around the world use the symbol of the cross to express their faith within their culture?

Choose four different crosses from A-cross the World. Read the story, show the picture and work on the activities in groups.

Suggested crosses:

- Central American Cross
- French (Taizé) Cross
- South Indian Cross
- Celtic Cross

Step 4: Application

Talk through with the children what sort of contemporary cross they would like to make that uses elements from their own culture and which can connect the story of Easter to their own lives.

[A-cross the World](#) from Barnabas has a wide range of further activities to explore this important Christian symbol, including more ideas for lessons and Key Stage assemblies. Sample pages from the book are available on this web site.

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Lent: story of Jesus' temptations

Introduction

The 40-day period of Lent is often linked to Jesus' experience in the desert following his baptism and before he began his preaching ministry (Mark 1:12-13). The story of the temptations (Matthew 4:1-11), and the idea of fasting for a long period, are both parts of the Lenten tradition. Here is an idea for an assembly to tell this story.

Preparation

You will need some large round stones and some large rolls of bread; a tall tower (made out of duplo, lego or building bricks) and a magic wand; a map of the world or globe and an imitation sword; an underlay of felt in a desert-like colour. You will also need the three Bible quotes used by Jesus printed onto three cards (or ready to be displayed on a screen).

Development

1. Lent is traditionally the time Christians get ready for the events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. This festival is so important that it needs preparation space so that they can think through what it really means. Lent is a time to pause and do this before they try and carry on as Christians throughout the rest of the year.
2. In the same way, Jesus went into the desert to pause and get ready for the work God wanted him to do. He was offered three other ways to bring God's Kingdom into this world but each one of them avoided the cross. Tell this story using the visuals.
3. Set out the desert-like underlay by unrolling it from right to left as you say the following words: *After Jesus was baptised, he went off alone into the desert. He spent a long time there praying and preparing for the work God had for him to do. He went without food for 40 days. At the end of this time God's enemy, Satan, tempted him with different ways that he could bring in God's Kingdom.*
4. Place the stones and rolls on to the underlay on your right (the children's left) as you say: *'Why not change stones to bread and feed everyone who is hungry?' he said. 'This will surely solve all the world's problems and bring in God's Kingdom.'*
5. Place the tower and the magic wand to the left of the stones and rolls on the underlay as you continue: *'Why not jump down from a high tower in Jerusalem and defy gravity by landing safely?' he said. 'This will surely guarantee that people will believe in you and bring in God's Kingdom.'*

6. Place the globe or map and the imitation sword on the underlay to the left of the tower and the wand, with the words: *'Why not crush all the bad in the world with my help so that everything is then ruled by you?' he said. 'This will surely bring in God's Kingdom.'*

7. Allow the children time to think about the symbols of the story in front of them and ask them what they think of these different ways of changing the world and making it more like heaven with questions like: *I wonder if full stomachs are really the way to a change people's hearts? I wonder if a miracle jump would really convert people? I wonder if crushing the opposition will really bring peace and security to the world?*

8. After wondering about this for a while, introduce the three ways in which Jesus responds to these temptations. He uses verses from the Bible. Print these on three separate cards to read out or project them onto a screen, and then let the children decide where they should be placed in the story.

'No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken.'

'Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.'

'Don't try to test the Lord your God.'

9. So what is the way that Jesus takes to bring in God's Kingdom?
Take the imitation sword and now turn it upside down (a sign of choosing not to fight) and, of course, the shape that it makes is that of a cross.

10. In a time of reflection put up the following question for the children to think about:

I wonder how the cross is the way to change the world, to draw people to believe and to create the kingdom of heaven in the midst of the kingdoms of the world?

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