

2021 MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide

Grade 7 English Language Arts

Question 13: Essay

Reporting Categories: Language and Writing

Standard: L.PK-12.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Standard: L.PK-12.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Standard: L.PK-12.3 - Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Standard: W.PK-12.2 - Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Standard: W.PK-12.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Item Description: Write an essay that explains how a specific event in two passages helps to reveal important traits of the main characters; use information from both passages to support your explanation.

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Essay Prompt

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on the passages, write an essay that explains how the storms help to reveal important character traits of Nadia in *The View from Saturday* and the narrator in *One Thing Stolen*. Be sure to use details from **both** passages to develop your essay.

Continue to the following page to see the scoring guides for this question. Sample student responses begin on page 3. The annotations that appear above each sample response describe elements of the response that contributed to its score for Idea Development and Standard English Conventions.

Scoring Guide for Idea Development

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is insightful and fully developed Skillful selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Skillful and/or subtle organization Rich expression of ideas Full awareness of the task and mode
5B	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is clear and well-developed Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Effective organization Clear expression of ideas Full awareness of the task and mode
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is general and moderately developed Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Moderate organization Adequate expression of ideas Sufficient awareness of the task and mode
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea may be present and is somewhat developed Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Limited organization Basic expression of ideas Partial awareness of the task and mode
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is not developed Insufficient evidence and/or details Minimal organization Poor expression of ideas Minimal awareness of the task and mode
0	The response shows evidence the student has read the text, but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

Scoring Guide for Standard English Conventions

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
3A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
3B	
3C	
3D	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
0	Sentences are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and/or insufficient length.

*In both Scoring Guides, letters are used to distinguish between sample student responses that earned the same score (e.g., 5A and 5B).

Idea Development—Score Point 5A

The essay presents a strong introduction that clearly relates to the task and focuses on the storms that occur in both passages. The idea that factors are “out of [the speaker’s] control” and that both Nadia and the speaker “have an urge to help” animals reveals a strong understanding of the task. Skillful organization continues throughout the essay. Each body paragraph navigates Nadia and the narrator’s interactions related to the storms and offers insight into their individual traits and a more universal explanation of “how they want to help . . . [and] want to be able to make a difference.” Supporting details are well chosen and contribute to development. The central idea of the third body paragraph, that “they are both hard workers,” is balanced with skillfully selected details about how the storm made Nadia insistent that her father help her save the turtles, whereas the speaker focused on protection. Analysis is included in the recognition that Nadia “fought for something she cared for . . . [with] persistence,” while the narrator “wants to do everything she can to protect Maggie’s garden.” The essay shows full awareness of the mode in its examination of three traits brought about by the dangers, damage, and overall “terrible conditions” of the storms.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3A

A variety of conventions skills are represented that show control for the grade level. Integration of quotes reveals consistent control of punctuation. The essay includes a variety of sentence structures relative to length, demonstrating command of grammar and usage relative to expectations for the grade level.

Nadia is a girl who is living with her father, and her grandfather needs help. The speaker in "One Thing Stolen" wants to help a mother bird, but it's out of her control. The storm brings out the best in both these characters. In the passages "The View from Saturday" by E.L. Konigsburg and "One Thing Stolen" by Beth Kephart, it reveals important traits of both girls, such as, Nadia and the narrator both care for these animals, they both have an urge to help and they both hard workers.

The first trait that is important to both Nadia and the narrator in "One Thing Stolen" is that they both really care for these animals. Nadia cares for the turtles, and the speaker in "One Thing Stolen" cares for the bird, and the eggs. For example, in "The View from Saturday" in paragraph 14 Nadia says "'The turtles will be easy to spot - so out of place, washed up on shore. The birds will eat them.'" This shows how Nadia cares for the turtles and is trying to explain to her father why they have to save them. She wouldn't have been trying to convince him if there was no storm. The storm brings out how much she truly cares for these turtles and how she really wants to save their lives. Similarly in "One Thing Stolen" the speaker also really cares for the bird. In paragraph 23 it says "I tiptoe down the hall, past Maggie's parent's room, and down the steps in the squish of still wet shoes. Pull open the door. Step out onto the porch. Feel Maggie behind me." This shows how the speaker was going to try and leave without anyone knowing to see how the birds were doing. She cared for them and wanted to make sure they were okay after the storm. This all shows how the storm brought out how Nadia and the narrator in "One Thing Stolen" are very caring towards animals.

Another trait that is brought out from Nadia and the speaker in "One Thing Stolen" is that they both have an urge to help. For example in "The View from Saturday" in paragraph 33 it says "Without another word, we returned to our rooms, Dad and I. We got dressed. When we ran out to the car, the rain was coming down in sheets, and the wind was blowing so hard that umbrellas were useless." This demonstrates how even in terrible weather conditions, Nadia still wanted to help. She still had the urge to help the turtles. The storm showed how even in terrible conditions she still wants to help as much as she can. Likewise, in "One Thing Stolen" the speaker says in paragraph 15-16 it says "*They'll*

have to ride out the storm, Maggie says. *The nest will have to save them*. But a nest is only twigs, I think. It's only leaves and fragile things." This shows how the speaker wants to help the birds because she knows the nest is so fragile and useless during a storm, but there is nothing she can do. She still wants to be able to help, but she can't. For both these characters, the storm helps show how they want to help, even if they can't they still want to be able to make a difference.

Lastly, another important trait the storm brought out in Nadia and the speaker in "One Thing Stolen" is that they are both hard workers. They both did a lot of work during and before the storm. For example in "The View from Saturday" in paragraph 27-28 it says "I paused in my narrative. I focused hard on Dad, and he focused hard on me. 'Are you with me?' I asked. My father nodded so I continued." This illustrates how Nadia had to work hard to get her dad to agree with her. It wasn't an easy task but she worked hard, and fought for something she cared for even if it meant giving a whole speech about what would happen to the turtles if her and her father didn't save them. The storm brought out the persistence in Nadia. Similarly in "One Thing Stolen" the speaker works hard trying to protect the garden before the storm. In paragraph 4 it says "We work side by side. We undig the signs. We flip the barrel, unplant the scarecrow, lay a thick sheet of plastic down over everything and now we have to anchor the tarp with the broken plates of the sidewalk concrete that sit across the street in an abandoned yard." This shows how the speaker is a hard worker and is doing everything she can to protect the garden. The storm is bringing out the hard worker in her because she wants to do everything she can to protect Maggie's garden.

In conclusion the storm brought out important traits both the speaker in "One Thing Stolen" and Nadia. Without the storm maybe the traits wouldn't have come out. It brought out an amazing side to them. Overall, Nadia in "The View from Saturday" and the speaker in "One Thing Stolen" had important character traits brought out of them because of the storm.

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Idea Development—Score Point 5B

The central idea of the essay, how storms help to reveal important character traits in Nadia and the narrator, is insightful and supports an analysis of each of three traits—determination, bravery, and selflessness. Each analysis is meaningfully developed with well-chosen details, showing an understanding of the passages and full awareness of the task. The conclusion presents a rich expression of ideas by reestablishing that these character traits were revealed “when a very dangerous storm hits their homes” and by emphasizing how the traits were interrelated because Nadia and the narrator were both acting on behalf of “someone else, not themselves.” Overall, the essay is well organized around the idea expressed in the introduction that “[b]oth girls had to face situations in which important decisions were made,” and the writer thoroughly develops the character traits that contribute to selflessly caring about animals in the face of a storm.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3B

Sentences are varied in the essay, and a variety of conventions skills are demonstrated in sentences such as “Nadia knows the storm is treacherous, but she still manages to run to the car and drive with her father through a storm to help the turtles.” The essay’s length relative to its complexity shows consistent control of standard English conventions for the grade level.

In *The View from Saturday* by E. L. Konigsburg and *One Thing Stolen* by Beth Kephart, the storms that occur reveal important character traits in Nadia (*The View from Saturday*) and the narrator (*One Thing Stolen*). Both girls had to face situations in which important decisions were made.

One character trait that the storm revealed in both girls is *determination*. In *The View from Saturday* by E. L. Konigsburg, Nadia is determined to save the turtles and persuade her father to help her. Nadia explains the importance of the mission to her father, “When Grandpa says that we must harvest the turtles, he means that we must gather them up and save them in buckets. Then we take them to Marineland. When the seas calm down, they will be taken fifty miles offshore and placed in the Sargasso Sea.’ Dad smiled. ‘They need a lift.’

Ginger rubbed herself against my legs. I stroked her back. ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘they do.’” This is a conversation that happened between Nadia and her father. Nadia didn’t stop trying to convince him and eventually they went to save the turtles with Nadia’s grandpa. The narrator in *One Thing Stolen* reveals her determination when the storm comes as well. When she finds a bird in a tree that is in danger from the storm, she tries very hard to convince her friend Maggie that they need to save it and the eggs. “*Nothing we can do. Three chicks, I say. And a mother. They’ll have to ride out the storm, Maggie says. The nest will have to save them.*

But a nest is only twigs, I think. It’s only leaves and fragile things. The nest is so small and the eggs are so tiny, and the wind is blowing hard...” Maggie doesn’t think that there is time to save the bird and her chicks, but the narrator is determined to help the endangered mother bird and her three unhatched chicks that could possibly not make it out of the storm alive.

Another character trait the storm reveals in both girls is *bravery*. Nadia knows that the storm is treacherous, but she still manages to run to the car and drive with her father through a storm to help the turtles. “The rain battered the car, and the wipers danced back and forth, never really clearing the windshield.” This shows the dangerous conditions of the storm, but Nadia is still brave enough to face it. The narrator in *One Thing Stolen* also shows bravery in the storm. Even with the ststae the storm left the town in, the narrator still goes outside to check on the bird. “The storm breaks before the dawn.

The candles run out of wicks. No clocks are ticking. Out in the street the big branches of trees are down and the loosened trash can lids are rolling around and pieces of wash that had been left out on backyard lines are lying on the ground like empty people. I tiptoe down the hall, past Maggie's parents' room, and down the steps in the squish of still wet shoes. Pull open the door. Step out onto the porch." This paragraph explains all the damage that had happened, yet the narrator still stepped outside.

The last character trait the storm brought out in both girls is *selflessness*. Nadia in *The View from Saturday* braves the storm for the turtles' sake. "That evening a northeaster hit the coast. The winds were thirty-five miles an hour with gales up to fifty. There was coastal flooding, which meant that the low lying highways and many side roads and ramps would be closed. That meant that the interstates that were normally bumper to bumper but moving would be bumper to bumper but not moving." This explains the terrible weather and the dangers of it but in the end Nadia faces it for the turtles. The narrator in *One Thing Stolen* is also selfless in the face of a terrible storm. She stayed up all night in her worry for the birds even when she couldn't do anything. "Maggie goes to sleep. I stay awake, afraid for the bird." This shows that she could have slept, but she didn't because she was worried about someone other than her self.

In conclusion, both Nadia from *The View from Saturday* by E. L. Konigsburg and the narrator in *One Thing Stolen* by Beth Kephart showed important character traits when a very dangerous storm hits their homes. They both showed determination, bravery, and selflessness in a time when they could have been in danger or hurt in a way. When they showed determination, they didn't give up. If they had given up, endangered animals could be in even more danger. When they showed bravery, they showed that they could have sat back and stayed out of the storms, but they both faced the storms. And in showing selflessness, they revealed that they were not only being determined and brave, but they were doing it for someone else, not themselves.

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Idea Development—Score Point 4

The essay's central idea is well developed and supported by effectively chosen details concerning the character traits of caring, bravery, and acceptance. Discussion of both passages involves a connection to the storm and the idea that the animals are in danger, demonstrates full awareness of the task, and includes effective explanations. The analysis focuses more on the traits the characters display in their concern for animals and less on those they reveal in their relationships with the human characters in the passages. Although the language of the essay lacks richness (e.g., "the storm was so bad" and "she got a new character trait"), it supports an explanation of the traits and contributes to a clear expression of ideas related to the task. Transitions effectively organize the body paragraphs, and the conclusion thoughtfully attempts to connect the reader to the character traits: "[Would you] have [chosen] to play it safe and [gotten] to cover, or [taken] a risk and [saved] the animals along with you?"

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3C

Minor errors are present in spelling (e.g., "careing," "choosen," "parragraph") and capitalization, but other mechanics are correct. Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures is apparent throughout, and grade-level control is evident, given the essay's length.

Imagine you are stuck in the middle of a horrible storm. There are baby rabbits that need your help, to survive the storm. Your only options are to run inside and play it safe, this way you will not be injured by the storm. You could also turn back and save the rabbits, from the horrific storm, putting yourself at risk. In the novel *The View from Saterday* by E. L. Koingsburg and the passage *One Thing Stolen* by Beth Kephart, show the reader how two other people in the same bad situation make their choice. In the novel and the passage the main characters will reveal character traits revealed from the storm. This is due to how much people care about animals that are in danger.

To begin with, in both *The View from Saterday* by E. L. Koingsburg and *One Thing Stolen* by Beth Kephart, the main characters are both very caring. In *The View from Saterday* by E. L. Koingsburg, Nadia is very caring about the turtle that may get stranded or lost at sea. She shows deep concern, and love for the turtle. As it states in paragraph 15, "... 'The turtles will be easy to spot—so out of place, washed up on shore. The birds will eat them.'" This portrays how Nadia is caring because she is so concerned some bad will happen to the turtles. In *One Thing Stolen* by Beth Kephart, the narrator is caring because she can not stop thinking about what could happen to the birds, in the fig tree. As Beth Kephart states in paragraph 22 "Maggie goes to sleep. I stay awake, afraid for the birds." This quote shows how the narrator could not even fall asleep because she was so concerned for the birds. This is important because in the passage and the novel the characters are both very caring by being concerned for life of animals in danger.

Furthermore, in *The View from Saterday* another characteristic that the storm revealed for Nadia was that she was very brave. Nadia wants to take action to help the turtle eggs during the storm, but first she has to convince her father that the turtle needs her help. In paragraph 19 and 20 it explains "'They will be lost at sea.' 'Lost at sea? The sea is their home.'" Also in paragraph 30 it states, "...we must harvest the turtle, he means that we must gather them up and save them in buckets.'" These two quotes portray how Nadia had to convince her dad that the turtle needed help because the storm was so bad, and this shows that she was brave enough to do so.

On the contrary, in *One Thing Stolen* by Beth Kephart the narrator was not as brave, but the storm brought out her character trait of being accepting. The narrator was very worried for the birds but she knew that they were beyond her control. The narrator accepted the fact that she could not save them. As the text states in paragraph 20, "We

had to leave the-bird, I say." This shows how that narrator had a pause before she could say bird because she was sad she left them out there, and worried for them. But she said "...had to leave..." which shows that she knew she could not save them and needed to get to a safe place. This is important because she couldn't be brave so she got a new character trait of acceptance.

In summary, it is not always easy to choose to be safe, or save an animal in need. Being put on the spot can bring out some of your unique, and own personal character traits. In the novel *The View from Saturday* by E. L. Koingsburg, a storm brings out that Nadia is caring and brave. In *One Thing Stolen* by Beth Kephart and a storm brings out that the narrator is caring and accepting. Would you have chosen to play it safe and get to cover, or take a risk and save the animals along with you?

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Idea Development—Score Point 3

The essay is moderately developed, using adequate details from the passages, and explaining how the storms help reveal Nadia and the narrator’s “similar character traits.” At times details are appropriate, but explanations like this one lack elaboration: “This shows that the narrator just wanted the mother bird to be safe in the storm. She could not sleep because of how much she cared for the bird’s safety.” The essay displays moderate organization but offers little explanation when a detail demonstrates a trait. While more could have been said about how the storms reveal the traits, the essay shows sufficient awareness that the “important character traits [were] revealed when the storm came and they saw the animals who [were] exposed to it.”

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3D

The essay’s length and inclusion of a variety of sentence structures demonstrate control for the grade level. There is an error involving the use of “where” instead of “were” and some minor misspellings, such as “charcter” and “determind,” but punctuation, particularly comma placement, is largely correct and varied. Overall complexity relative to length shows consistent control.

In both *"The View from Saturday"* and *"One Thing Stolen"*, both main characters have very similar character traits. These character traits are revealed when they both experience rough storms. In this essay, the character traits of both main characters from the passages will be explained.

First, both characters are very caring. Their caring nature is revealed when they speak about the animals who are going to be left out in the storm. In *"The View from Saturday"*, Nadia's caring nature is shown when she starts to realize that the baby turtles will die if her and her grandfather don't help them. For example, on paragraph 15, it says, "The turtles will be easy to spot - so out of place on shore. The birds will eat them." "As you can see, Nadia started to become worried for the baby turtles once she realized the danger that they are in. All she wants is for the baby turtles to get to where they need to be safely. Also, in *"One Thing Stolen"*, the narrator's caring nature is shown when they realize that the mother bird and her eggs will be left out in the storm. For example, in paragraph 22, it says, "Maggie goes to sleep. I stay awake, afraid for the bird." This shows that the narrator just wanted the mother bird to be safe in the storm. She could not sleep because of how much she cared for the bird's safety.

Next, both main characters were also very determined. Their determination was shown when they did something to make sure the animals were/going to be okay. First, in *"The View from Saturday"*, Nadia's determination was shown when she convinced her father to drive in the storm to go to give the turtles a lift to where they needed to be. For example, in paragraph 31-32, it says, "Dad smiled. "They need a lift" Ginger rubbed herself against my legs. I stroked her back. "Yes," I said "they do." " This evidence shows that Nadia helped her dad understand why the turtles needed help to get to the Sargasso Sea. At first, her father didn't want to help but now he does all because of Nadia's determination. Also, in *"One Thing Stolen"*, the narrator's determination is shown when she stays up all night to make sure the mother bird is okay. For example, on paragraph 23, it says, "The storm breaks before the dawn... I tiptoe down the hall, past Maggie's parents' room and down the steps... Step out onto the porch." This evidence shows you how determined the narrator was to know that the mother bird and her eggs were ok. She was willing to sneak out the house to find out if they were ok.

In conclusion, both the main characters are both caring and determined people the main characters were. These important character traits were revealed when the storm came and they saw the animals who were exposed to it. Those were their character traits that were revealed once the storm hit.

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Idea Development—Score Point 2

The essay includes some evidence from both passages with limited explanation about how the storms reveal that Nadia was “kind” and the narrator was “caring.” Some extraneous information indicates only partial awareness of the task: “Maggie and the narrator were so thankful that the birds stayed alive.” Similarly, the conclusion acknowledges the storms and indicates character traits but states that “[t]he storms were really tough... but they both survived and were thankful.” There is a basic expression of ideas about Nadia and the narrator’s traits, but the first sentence in the concluding paragraph that begins “[t]hat explains how the storms reveal character traits” does not further development. Each of the two body paragraphs focuses on a passage; organization is limited rather than moderate, also contributing to limited development of the central idea.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 2

The essay displays a limited variety of sentence structures as well as minor punctuation errors, some of which involve apostrophes (e.g., “Nadias” is used as a possessive, and “bird’s” is used as a plural). Given the length and amount of original writing, the essay demonstrates mostly consistent control of sentences and standard English conventions for the grade level.

The storms help reveal important character traits of Nadia in the passage *The View from Saturday* and the narrator in the passage *One Thing Stolen* in many ways.

In the passage *The View from Saturday* Nadia was a kind person. Nadia had a grandpa named Izzy and he loved turtles. He wanted Nadia to go to the beach and see if the turtles were okay because there was a huge storm coming. "... The turtles will be easy to spot- so out of place, washed up on shore. The birds will eat them"(Konigsburg 15). Nadias dad did not like that idea because he thought mother nature would take care of the turtles. I think Nadia cared about the turtles because she doesn't want them to die. So thats when she realised she had kindness in herself and convinced her dad to go check on the turtles, even during the horrible storm.

In the passage *One Thing Stolen* the narrator was caring. There was going to be a big storm and she doesn't want the bird nest to blow away. The narrator was very scared that the bird's nest was going to get wrecked and the three bird inside the eggs would die. " The rain first, and then the hail the size of the eggs, and always the wind" (Kephart 21.) The narrator had to leave the bird's and bird eggs outside during the terrible storm. Then some good news happend. " But under Maggie's tarp the plot is dry, her scarecrow and her signs are dry. Up in the tree, the nest is whole" (Kephart 29.) Maggie and the narrator were so thankful that the birds stayed alive.

That explains how the storms reveal character traits about the narrator in *One Thing Stolen* and the passage *The View from Saturday* with Nadia. The storms were really tough to get through but they both survived and were thankful the animals survived.

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Idea Development—Score Point 1

The central idea is not developed beyond implying that Nadia is determined, and the narrator is worried. The response is minimally organized and lacks a conclusion. Also, there is little sense that the narrator’s “thinking about how the nest is fragile and could break with all the wind” connects to a central idea about how the storms help reveal the character trait. A poor expression of ideas is evident in insufficient details and explanation, although the idea that “Nadia is [persistent]” is related to her repeating the words “[t]hey will be lost at sea.” This demonstrates minimal, rather than absent, awareness of the task.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 1

The response does not display consistent control of standard English conventions. There is a minor error in the spelling of “persist[e]nt,” and “Nadia” is not consistently capitalized, but punctuation is correct. While the sentences are also correct, the writing has neither the variety nor length to exhibit grade-level control.

The storm in both stories helped to show the character traits of nadia and the narrator. In *The View from Saturday* paragraph 21 it states: "'They will be lost at sea,' I repetaed," Nadia is persistant and is determined to help the helpless little sea turtles. Also, in *One Thing Stolen*, paragraph 16 hsows that the narrator is worrying about the mama bird and her eggs. She is thinking about how the nest is fragile and could break with all the wind.

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Idea Development—Score Point 0

The response comments on, but does not differentiate between, the plots of the two passages. The character traits of Nadia and the narrator as well as the storm's involvement are excluded, although there is evidence that the student has read the passages but neglected to respond to the prompt.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 0

The response is insufficient in length to demonstrate control, given its lack of complexity or variety in sentence structure and insufficient demonstration of mechanical skills.

Both of the stories are about to people who love nature and animals. Throughout the story they learn that nature has its own ways and that no one can control it. The animals need saving but not everyone can save them.

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