

The Lion And The Unicorn George Orwell

The Lion and the Unicorn: Orwell's Unfinished Symphony of Freedom Imagine a world painted in stark hues of grey. A world where the roar of a lion, representing strength and might, is muted by the delicate, almost fragile, cries of a unicorn, embodying ideals of purity and justice. That's the world George Orwell laid bare in his seminal essays collected in **The Lion and the Unicorn**. It's a world not so different from our own, a world grappling with the clash of power and principle, of the tangible and the ethereal. This isn't just an academic study; it's a personal journey, a reflection on the struggles of finding truth in a world that often distorts it. I remember the first time I encountered Orwell's writing. It wasn't in a stuffy library, but curled up in a worn armchair by a crackling fireplace, a mug of steaming tea warming my hands. **The Lion and the Unicorn** felt like a whispered secret, a conversation between a keen observer and a world on the brink. He spoke of the erosion of traditional values, the rise of the totalitarian beast, and the desperate need to preserve the fragile flame of liberty. His words, sharp and insightful, resonated with a visceral understanding of the human condition, a feeling I believe many of us can relate to.

The Lion and the Unicorn: Finding Meaning in a Complex World

Orwell's **The Lion and the Unicorn** is not a utopian blueprint. It's a critical examination of the fractured fabric of British society in the mid-20th century. His analysis, while rooted in a particular historical moment, offers surprisingly timeless insights into the human condition. It's a study of how we, as individuals and as societies, can lose sight of our values in the pursuit of power and how crucial it is to hold onto our moral compass.

(Visual: A split image. One side shows a lion in the foreground, the other a unicorn. The lion is fierce, the unicorn delicate. The background blends into a muted greyscale.)

Benefits of Engaging with **The Lion and the Unicorn**

- **Critical Thinking Skills:** Orwell's sharp analysis forces you to question assumptions and challenge prevailing narratives. This translates into a more critical and discerning approach to the information you encounter daily.
- Understanding History: By understanding the historical context of Orwell's writing, you gain a richer understanding of the challenges facing societies across time.
- *Ethical Framework:* Orwell's essays underscore the importance of safeguarding our ethical values, no matter how difficult the circumstances.
- **Cultivating a Political Compass:** By engaging with Orwell's arguments, you'll develop a deeper understanding of different political ideologies and

their underlying principles.

The Absence of a Clear Solution: Acknowledging Complexity

While Orwell's writing highlights the urgency of upholding liberty and social justice, he doesn't offer easy solutions. He acknowledges the complexities of the problems he discusses, a critical point often missed.

The Illusion of Simplicity

(Visual: A blurred image of a maze. Arrows point to different paths, but none lead to a clear destination.) One of the key themes in *The Lion and the Unicorn* is the dangers of simplistic solutions. Orwell exposes the fallacy of believing that a straightforward answer exists for complex social and political problems. He reminds us that the world is not black and white, but a spectrum of grey, with nuance and contradictions.

Navigating Ideological Battles

(Visual: A series of overlapping images of different political ideologies, each containing conflicting symbols.) Orwell also tackles the challenges of navigating different ideologies. He warns against the dangers of unchecked power and the importance of maintaining a critical distance from any one dogma. His essays demonstrate that engaging in thoughtful dialogue, despite disagreements, is essential for healthy political discourse.

The Erosion of Freedom

Orwell paints a disturbing picture of how freedom can gradually erode, often under the guise of progress or security. (Visual: A timeline depicting the gradual decline of liberties, showing shrinking symbols of freedom.) He argues that incremental compromises can lead to a profound loss of individual liberties and civic engagement. He discusses how insidious totalitarian tendencies are frequently camouflaged within seemingly benign or reformist agendas.

A Personal Journey of Insight

Personally, reading *The Lion and the Unicorn* has deepened my understanding of the world and my place in it. It's not just about understanding history; it's about cultivating a critical, engaged, and ethically driven outlook. Orwell's insights have influenced my approach to current events and my engagement with the political discourse around me. I find myself constantly questioning the assumptions underlying various narratives and seeking out multiple perspectives.

Personal Reflections and Anecdotes

I remember a debate with a friend regarding the role of government in a society. My friend, a fervent supporter of a particular ideology, insisted that the government's intervention was the key to social progress. I, however, struggled with the idea of potential governmental overreach. Orwell's essays helped me articulate my concerns with more clarity and nuance. I realized the importance of striking a balance between individual liberties and collective well-being. (Visual: A sketch of a debate, with two people arguing with hand gestures. A copy of *The Lion and the Unicorn* sits on a table between them.) My journey with Orwell's work has not been without its challenges. At times, the starkness of his critique can feel overwhelming. Yet, it's precisely this honesty that makes his writing so enduring. It compels us to confront the uncomfortable truths about ourselves and the world around us. It reminds me of the ongoing need for vigilance and the responsibility each of us carries to defend the values of liberty, equality, and justice. (Visual: An image of a burning candle, symbolizing the delicate flame of freedom.)

Advanced FAQs

1. How can Orwell's critique of totalitarianism remain relevant in the digital age? The rise of misinformation and echo chambers in the digital realm echoes many of Orwell's concerns about propaganda and the manipulation of information. His insights about the insidious nature of power remain just as potent today.

2. How can we bridge the gap between competing ideologies in today's polarized society? Orwell's emphasis on the importance of dialogue and critical thinking provides a valuable framework for navigating these differences. Respecting different perspectives and engaging in thoughtful discourse, even with those holding opposing views, is crucial.

3. Can we truly avoid the pitfalls of surrendering freedom for perceived security? Orwell's cautionary tales remind us that sacrificing freedom in the name of security often leads to further erosion of liberty. Vigilance and active participation in democratic processes are essential.

4. What is the role of literature in fostering social critique and awareness? Orwell demonstrates that literature can be a powerful tool for exposing societal ills and inspiring critical thought. By examining the human condition, literature can encourage empathy, self-reflection, and the pursuit of a more just society.

5. How can individual readers apply Orwell's insights to their daily lives? Orwell's emphasis on critical thinking and ethical awareness compels each reader to cultivate a personal compass by evaluating the narratives they encounter and fostering a commitment to intellectual honesty.

In conclusion, **The Lion and the Unicorn** is more than just a collection of essays; it's a call to action. It's a reminder of the importance of safeguarding our liberties, promoting critical thinking, and engaging in thoughtful dialogue. As we face the challenges of our time, Orwell's words offer a beacon of wisdom, prompting us to wrestle with complex issues and strive for a world where the lion and the unicorn can coexist in harmony.

George Orwell's 'The Lion and the Unicorn': A Deep Dive into English Identity and Revolution

George Orwell. The name alone conjures images of dystopian futures, pigs running a farm, and the chilling omnipresence of Big Brother. But Orwell, whose real name was Eric Blair, was also a keen observer and analyst of his own society, particularly the complexities of English identity. Among his most insightful, though perhaps less widely read, essays is "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius." Published in 1941, at a time when Britain was locked in a desperate struggle against Nazi Germany, this essay offers a passionate and often provocative exploration of what it meant to be English, and why socialism, in Orwell's view, was not just a political ideology but the only path forward for the nation.

This isn't just a dusty historical document; "The Lion and the Unicorn" is a vibrant, challenging piece that continues to resonate. It delves into the very soul of England, dissecting its traditions, its contradictions, and its potential for radical transformation. Let's embark on a journey through this seminal work and uncover the layers of Orwell's thought.

The English Paradox: Tradition and Progress

Orwell begins by acknowledging a seemingly inherent paradox in the English character: a deep-seated love for tradition intertwined with a surprisingly strong undercurrent of revolutionary spirit. He observes how the English, unlike many other European nations, have a way of absorbing and domesticating change, often retaining the outward forms of old institutions while subtly reshaping their substance. This, he argues, is not a sign of backwardness but a unique strength.

He famously states, "England is the most class-ridden country under the sun. It is also the most socially fluid country." This might sound like a contradiction, but Orwell explains it through the lens of a deeply ingrained social hierarchy that, while rigid, allows for a certain degree of movement and aspiration. The English Dream, as he frames it, is often about climbing the social ladder, a notion that fuels both social conservatism and a latent desire for something better. This is where the "Lion" of tradition meets the "Unicorn" of radical change.

The "English Genius" and the Necessity of Revolution

Orwell was not a man who shied away from grand pronouncements. He believed that England possessed a unique "genius" for making revolutions without necessarily destroying its core identity. He points to historical examples, suggesting that English revolutions have tended to be less about the complete overthrow of the old order and more about a fundamental redirection of its energies. This is a crucial distinction from the

more violent and destructive revolutions seen elsewhere in Europe.

However, in 1941, Orwell saw this genius as being under threat. The existing capitalist system, in his opinion, was stagnant and incapable of meeting the challenges of the modern world, particularly the existential threat posed by fascism. He argued that for England to survive and thrive, it needed a revolution – a socialist revolution. But this wouldn't be a Marxist revolution imported from abroad; it would be a distinctly English socialism, rooted in the nation's own history and character.

Socialism as an English Imperative

The core of "The Lion and the Unicorn" is Orwell's argument for the necessity of socialism in Britain. He dismisses the common perception of socialism as an alien or undesirable ideology. Instead, he posits that many of the values that Englishmen hold dear – fairness, decency, a dislike of privilege, a desire for a more equitable society – are fundamentally socialist in nature. He sees socialism as the logical extension of English decency.

Orwell understood that the British public might be wary of grand ideological pronouncements. He therefore frames socialism in very practical, relatable terms. It's about ensuring that everyone has a decent standard of living, that the fruits of labour are shared more equitably, and that the country is run by competent people for the benefit of all, not just a select few. He rails against the "swindling" of the capitalist system, the waste and inefficiency that he saw as inherent to it.

Nationalism and the Socialist Revolution

One of the most striking aspects of "The Lion and the Unicorn" is Orwell's embrace of a form of English nationalism as a vehicle for socialist revolution. This might seem counterintuitive to some, given Orwell's anti-totalitarian stance and his critiques of aggressive nationalism. However, he believed that in the context of a war against fascism, a revitalized and progressive English nationalism was essential.

He argued that the traditional ruling class had failed to inspire genuine patriotism and that a new, socialist England could harness the deep-seated love of country that he observed in ordinary people. This would be a nationalism of liberation, not of conquest or racial superiority. It would be a patriotism rooted in the defence of a better, fairer society, one that offered hope and security to all its citizens.

Orwell was particularly contemptuous of the established ruling class, which he saw as out of touch and incapable of leading the nation effectively. He believed they were clinging to a past that was no longer relevant and were actively hindering the progress that Britain desperately needed. His call for a "revolution from above" by the intellectual middle class, working in tandem with the working class, was a direct challenge to this entrenched power structure.

The Importance of Literature and Culture in Orwell's Vision

Beyond politics and economics, Orwell also explores the role of culture and literature in shaping English identity. He acknowledges the rich literary heritage of England and sees it as a vital part of the national consciousness. However, he also laments the tendency for literature to be divorced from the practical realities of social and political life.

He believed that a true socialist revolution would need to be accompanied by a cultural renaissance, one that celebrated the achievements of the working class and challenged the prevailing bourgeois tastes. This wasn't about a simplistic rejection of the past, but rather a re-evaluation and re-appropriation of cultural forms to serve the needs of a new, socialist England.

Orwell's Critics and the Enduring Relevance of "The Lion and the Unicorn"

It's important to note that "The Lion and the Unicorn" was not without its critics, both at the time of its publication and since. Some have questioned Orwell's seemingly contradictory embrace of nationalism. Others have found his vision of English socialism to be idealistic or even impractical. The inherent tension between his anti-authoritarian instincts and his call for a revolutionary state is a recurring theme in discussions of his work.

Despite these criticisms, the essay remains a powerful and thought-provoking document. It offers a unique perspective on the English character, the nature of revolution, and the potential of socialism. For anyone interested in George Orwell's intellectual development, the history of British socialism, or the enduring question of national identity, "The Lion and the Unicorn" is essential reading.

In a world still grappling with inequality, political division, and the challenges of national identity, Orwell's call for a distinctly English path to a more just and equitable society, one that honours tradition while embracing radical change, continues to spark debate and inspire reflection. It reminds us that even in the darkest of times, the potential for a better future, rooted in our own unique genius, can be found.

This essay, penned during the throes of war, was Orwell's testament to his belief in the latent strength and revolutionary potential of the English people. It's a call to arms, not of violence, but of ideological conviction and social transformation. The Lion and the Unicorn, in essence, represent the dual nature of England itself: its enduring traditions and its capacity for profound, transformative change. Orwell believed that only by embracing both could England truly forge a future worthy of its people and its storied past.

The Lion and the Unicorn by George Orwell: A Timeless Political Chronicle

George Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn* stands as one of the most intellectually compelling and politically insightful works of the 20th century. Though often overshadowed by his dystopian masterpiece *1984*, this essay—written during World War II and published posthumously in 1941—offers a profound meditation on British identity, nationalism, and the turbulent forces shaping modern society. More than a political treatise, Orwell's work blends literary elegance with sharp analysis, inviting readers to reflect deeply on the values that bind or divide a nation.

Historical Context and Core Message

Set against the backdrop of a Britain embroiled in global conflict, Orwell's essay emerges as a bold attempt to dissect the cultural and ideological foundations of the British people. The title itself, drawn from the iconic British symbol—the lion representing strength and royal heritage—and the unicorn, a mythical creature symbolizing purity and innocence, encapsulates Orwell's central thesis: that genuine national identity arises from a balance between powerful authority and compassionate idealism. He argues that true unity cannot be built solely on brute force or unbridled optimism, but on a shared sense of honor, duty, and collective purpose. This nuanced vision challenges both blind loyalty to tradition and reckless utopianism, urging a grounded realism that remains strikingly relevant today.

Key Insights and Literary Craft

Orwell's genius lies in his ability to weave personal reflection with sweeping historical analysis. He examines how war, propaganda, and economic hardship expose the fractures within British society—between class, region, and political ideology—while resisting simplistic blame. The essay avoids dogma, instead fostering a spirit of inquiry and self-examination. His prose is neither academic nor ornamental but vivid and accessible, making complex ideas resonate on a human level. Through carefully chosen metaphors and historical references, Orwell invites readers to see their nation not as a static ideal, but as a living, evolving entity shaped by both triumphs and failures. This literary craft elevates *The Lion and the Unicorn* beyond political commentary into a timeless meditation on belonging and integrity.

Applications and Enduring Relevance

The insights of Orwell's essay continue to inform contemporary debates about national identity, governance, and civic responsibility. In an era marked by rising populism, digital polarization, and shifting global alliances, the tension between the lion's authority and

the unicorn's moral clarity echoes in modern political discourse. Orwell's call for a balanced nationalism—rooted in truth and shared values rather than exclusion or myth—offers a compelling framework for understanding contemporary challenges. Educators, policymakers, and citizens alike draw from his work to navigate questions of unity, justice, and collective action. His emphasis on critical thinking and moral courage remains a vital guide for anyone seeking to engage thoughtfully with the forces shaping society.

Future Outlook and Lasting Legacy

Looking ahead, *The Lion and the Unicorn* endures not only as a historical document but as a prophetic voice for future generations. Its core message—that nations thrive when grounded in honest self-reflection and inclusive ideals—resonates in an increasingly interconnected world. As societies grapple with identity, inequality, and disinformation, Orwell's vision encourages a return to reasoned dialogue and ethical leadership. His work remains essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the delicate dance between power and principle, strength and compassion. In a time of rapid change and uncertainty, Orwell's lion and unicorn continue to inspire a more thoughtful, resilient approach to nationhood and human dignity.

The Lion and the Unicorn: Orwell's Clarion Call for a Revolution of the English

George Orwell, a pen name for Eric Arthur Blair, is renowned for his sharp critiques of totalitarianism and his unwavering commitment to democratic socialism. While **Animal Farm** and **Nineteen Eighty-Four** stand as towering monuments to his political fiction, it is his 1941 essay, "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius," that offers a more nuanced and perhaps prophetic exploration of the English character and the urgent need for radical social change. Published at the height of the Second World War, this essay is not merely a wartime tract; it is a profound diagnosis of English society, a passionate plea for a socialist revolution, and a surprisingly enduring testament to Orwell's deeply ingrained patriotism.

The English Character: A Paradox of Tradition and Subversion

Orwell begins his analysis by dissecting the perceived contradictions inherent in the English character. He identifies a peculiar duality: a deep-seated traditionalism, a reverence for history and established institutions, coexisting with a latent, often subversive, spirit that yearns for something more. This, he argues, is the very essence of what makes England unique, and indeed, what makes a socialist revolution uniquely English. He paints a picture of a nation seemingly resistant to fundamental change,

bound by class distinctions and a lingering, almost sentimental, attachment to its past. Yet, beneath this surface, Orwell sees a simmering discontent, a recognition that the old order is no longer serving the needs of the common people. The war, he contends, has acted as a powerful catalyst, stripping away illusions and forcing a re-evaluation of societal structures. Orwell challenges the notion that socialism is an alien ideology to England. Instead, he posits that it is the natural evolution of a long-standing English impulse towards fairness and decency. He cites examples of English democratic traditions, the jury system, and the respect for individual liberties as precursors to a socialist society. The "English genius," for Orwell, lies in its ability to adapt and incorporate radical ideas into its own unique framework, rather than succumbing to rigid, ideological dogma.

The Myth of the Unpolitical Englishman

A significant portion of "The Lion and the Unicorn" is dedicated to debunking the myth of the "unpolitical Englishman." Orwell argues that while the English might not engage in overt political street theater, their political consciousness is deeply ingrained. They are, in his words, "fundamentally decent" and possess a strong sense of justice, which, when awakened, can lead to profound political action. The essay implicitly criticizes the complacency and the ingrained class consciousness that have, for too long, prevented this latent political energy from coalescing into a force for positive change. The traditional English reserve, often mistaken for apathy, can, in times of crisis, transform into a potent and determined will to reshape society.

The Imperative of a Socialist Revolution

Orwell's central thesis is that only a socialist revolution can truly preserve and enhance the best aspects of English life while eradicating its deeply ingrained inequalities and injustices. He is not advocating for a Bolshevik-style overthrow, but rather a gradual, yet thorough, transformation of economic and social structures. He argues that the existing capitalist system, with its inherent exploitation and class divisions, is incompatible with true national unity and the spirit of wartime solidarity. The war effort, he observes, has already necessitated a degree of state intervention and social planning, demonstrating the feasibility and even the desirability of a more collectivized approach. Orwell's vision of socialism is distinctly English. It is not about state control for its own sake, but about ensuring a basic standard of living for all, abolishing inherited privilege, and fostering a society where talent and effort are rewarded, not birthright. He envisions a revolution that would nationalize key industries, redistribute wealth, and fundamentally alter the power dynamics between the ruling class and the working masses. The essay champions the idea of a "clean break" from the past, while simultaneously acknowledging the need to build upon the positive elements of English history.

Socialism as Patriotism

One of the most striking arguments in "The Lion and the Unicorn" is Orwell's assertion that socialism is, in fact, the ultimate form of English patriotism. He contends that true love for one's country demands its improvement, its purification from corruption and injustice. To be a patriot, in Orwell's view, is to want to see one's nation live up to its ideals, to become a more just and equitable society for all its citizens. He challenges the traditional association of patriotism with nationalism and jingoism, arguing that genuine patriotism is rooted in a desire for the well-being of one's people and the integrity of one's nation. In the context of the war, he sees the fight against Nazism as inextricably linked to the fight for a better Britain. To defeat fascism, England must first defeat the internal forces of reaction and inequality that weaken it. This connection between revolution and patriotism is a crucial element of Orwell's argument, seeking to reclaim the concept of patriotism from the forces of conservatism and align it with progressive social change.

The Role of the Intellectuals and the Working Class

Orwell places significant responsibility on the English intelligentsia to embrace and champion the cause of socialism. He criticizes their historical detachment from the realities of working-class life and their tendency towards abstract theorizing rather than practical action. He calls for intellectuals to shed their pretentiousness and engage directly with the people, to understand their struggles and aspirations, and to articulate a vision that resonates with their lived experiences. Simultaneously, he holds a deep respect for the inherent decency and practical wisdom of the English working class. He sees them as the backbone of the nation, possessing the resilience and the fundamental sense of justice that will drive the socialist revolution. His emphasis on the "ordinary man" and woman is a recurring theme in his work, and in this essay, he places their collective will at the heart of his proposed transformation. The working class, often overlooked and underestimated, is presented as the true inheritors of the English genius and the driving force for a new era.

A Revolution for "The People"

The essay is deeply concerned with defining "the people" in a way that transcends class divisions. Orwell seeks to unite the nation under a common banner of shared purpose and collective endeavor. He understands that a successful revolution requires broad-based support and a sense of common identity. He critiques the divisive nature of class and advocates for a new understanding of Englishness, one that is inclusive and forward-looking. The war, he argues, has already fostered a sense of national unity, and the task of the socialist revolution is to solidify this unity and make it permanent. The dream of a truly democratic and egalitarian Britain is what fuels his impassioned plea.

The Enduring Relevance of "The Lion and the Unicorn"

Decades after its initial publication, "The Lion and the Unicorn" remains a remarkably prescient and thought-provoking essay. Orwell's analysis of the English character, with its inherent contradictions and its capacity for both tradition and radical change, continues to resonate. His arguments for a socialist transformation, rooted in English values rather than foreign ideology, offer a compelling perspective on the path to a more just society. The essay serves as a powerful reminder that patriotism and social progress are not mutually exclusive but, in fact, can be deeply intertwined. Orwell's insistence on the importance of democratic socialism, on ensuring a decent life for all citizens, and on the power of collective action remains a vital call to arms for anyone concerned with the future of their society. In a world still grappling with issues of inequality, social justice, and the very definition of national identity, Orwell's "The Lion and the Unicorn" stands as a timeless testament to the power of intellectual courage and the enduring hope for a better Britain, forged through a revolution of its people, guided by its unique genius. His essay is a historical document, a political manifesto, and a deeply personal declaration of love for a nation he believed was capable of far greater things. The legacy of Orwell's ideas continues to inspire debate and action, urging us to examine our own societies and to consider the radical possibilities that lie dormant, waiting for the right moment to awaken. The call for an English revolution, steeped in its own history and aspirations, is as relevant today as it was during the darkest days of the Second World War.

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Ultimately, the value of downloading **The Lion And The Unicorn George Orwell** lies

not only in convenience but in continuity. Knowledge remains present, adaptable, and ready to support growth whenever the reader chooses to return.

Questions & Answers About the lion and the unicorn george orwell

N o	Question	Answer
1	What is 'The Lion and the Unicorn' and why is it significant in George Orwell's work?	'The Lion and the Unicorn' is a highly polemical essay written by George Orwell in 1941. It's significant for its passionate defense of English patriotism and its call for a socialist revolution in Britain during World War II. Orwell uses the lion and unicorn as symbols of warring ideologies and national identity.
2	What are the main arguments Orwell makes in 'The Lion and the Unicorn'?	Orwell argues that Britain needed a genuine socialist revolution to effectively fight fascism. He believed that the established class system was a barrier to national unity and war effort. He also analyzes English culture and character, contrasting its unique traditions with foreign influences.
3	How does Orwell's view of Englishness in 'The Lion and the Unicorn' differ from typical portrayals?	Orwell's portrayal is unique because he links Englishness with a deep-seated, almost unconscious, sense of justice and fair play, often expressed through seemingly trivial traditions and a distrust of overt displays of power. He sees this as a potential strength for a socialist future, distinct from the more militaristic and hierarchical versions of patriotism.
4	What is the relationship between 'The Lion and the Unicorn' and Orwell's other works like 'Animal Farm' or 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'?	While 'The Lion and the Unicorn' is more overtly political and optimistic about a potential socialist future, it lays groundwork for Orwell's later critiques of totalitarianism. His concern with propaganda, nationalism, and the corruption of ideals in 'The Lion and the Unicorn' foreshadows the dystopian visions explored in 'Animal Farm' and 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'.
5	Is 'The Lion and the Unicorn' still relevant today, and why?	The essay remains relevant for its exploration of national identity, patriotism, and the role of revolution in societal change. It prompts readers to consider how political ideologies interact with cultural traditions and how the concept of 'Englishness' has evolved, offering a complex perspective on national sentiment.

The Lion and the Unicorn George Orwell analysis, George Orwell Lion Unicorn political metaphor, The Lion and the Unicorn literary critique, George Orwell symbolism in The Lion and the Unicorn, The Lion and the Unicorn George Orwell essay, Orwell The Lion and

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