

# Model of Analytical Exposition (OpEd - media commentary)

## Introduction

On the following pages, you will find detailed information about the structural and language requirements of an analytical exposition (OpEd - media commentary). This includes:

- [information about the context in which you will be writing](#) (page 2)
- [a summary of the structure](#) (page 3)
- [a summary of significant language features](#) (page 4)
- [an example of the final product required](#) (page 5)
- [a detailed deconstruction of the exposition with specific features highlighted](#) (page 7)
- [comments about the example](#) (page 9)
- [scaffolding sheet for exposition](#) (page 10)
- [checklist for evaluating your own exposition](#) (page 11)
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This document is designed for electronic viewing or may be printed as a hard copy.

## Context in which you will write

The following gives information about the cultural and social contexts that you need to take into when writing a media commentary. Some details may change for specific topics.

Cultural context	
<p><b>Cultural 'club' (discourse)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what (broadly defined) cultural "club" does the writer of this text seem to belong?</li> <li>What values, attitudes and beliefs can you detect in this text?</li> </ul>	<p>Media criticism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value the role of the media in contemporary society</li> <li>Believe that the media influences the way we interpret and understand the world</li> <li>Believe the media has the power for good and bad in the world</li> </ul>
<p><b>Text type (genre) and purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What category of text is this, e.g. short story, romance feature film, report?</li> <li>What is the cultural purpose of this text type (genre)?</li> </ul>	<p>Analytical Exposition (OpEd* - media commentary) to analyse the elements and evaluate the impact of media texts; to argue a point of view</p> <p>* Opinion pieces found opposite the editorial page in a newspaper.</p>
<p><b>Subject matter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the writing, speaking or designing about? What's the topic?</li> </ul>	<p>Reporting about people and events, and the affects of that reporting on attitudes, behaviours and events in the world</p>
<p><b>Roles and relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is the writer/speaker/designer?</li> <li>Who appears to be the 'ideal' audience?</li> <li>What relationship is being developed between composer and audience in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <i>Power</i> - equal, unequal</li> <li>✓ <i>Distance</i> (physical &amp; psychological) – near (intimate), far (distant)</li> <li>✓ <i>Affect</i> (feelings) - positive, neutral, negative?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The student is a media critic (journalist) writing for others with a lay interest* in the media. The media critic is in a position of power (expert knowledge), is removed from the reader and is trying to encourage the reader to take up a strong positive or negative position* with regard to the media texts being analysed and evaluated.</p> <p>*While media commentary can be found in professional journals, the current model is meant to be an OpEd piece that may be found in general newspapers and on websites.</p>
<p><b>Mode</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is this piece written, spoken, audio, spatial, visual or gestural?</li> <li>Is it a combination of modes?</li> </ul>	<p>Written (with the possibility of support from visuals)</p>
<p><b>Medium</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the channel of communication, e.g. computer screen, Internet, A4 paper, book, face to face, television, radio, newspaper, CD/DVD?</li> </ul>	<p>A4 paper</p>

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## Summary of structure

*Outlined below is the structure of an OpEd - media commentary (analytical exposition). For more detail, see the [websites](#) listed at the end of this document.*

**Headline** – refers to thesis

### **Introduction**

- Attention raiser
- Background
- Thesis

### **Arguments and evidence one**

- Topic sentence establishing argument
- Elaboration
- Detailed evidence, including specific examples from news reports

### **Arguments and evidence two**

- Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph
- Elaboration
- Detailed evidence, including specific examples from news reports

### **Arguments and evidence three**

- Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph
- Elaboration
- Further detailed evidence

### **Arguments and evidence four**

- Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph
- Elaboration
- Further detailed evidence

### **Conclusion**

- Summarise arguments
- Restate thesis (in different words)
- Possible consequences
- Recommendation/s

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## Summary of significant language features

*Outlined below are **distinctive** language features of the OpEd - media commentary (analytical exposition) genre – the features that make it stand out from other genres (e.g. narratives or science reports). It is not meant as a comprehensive summary. For further information, you should also study the [deconstructed version](#) and read the advice on [various websites](#).*

### Cohesion

Use of:

- repetition, e.g. Thorpe
- pronoun reference, e.g. Thorpe-he-his
- related words, e.g. camera-journalists-reporting-media-articles-newspapers
- contrast words, e.g. yet, however, but
- addition words, e.g. furthermore, also,

### Vocabulary

- Selective use of wide and varied word choice (e.g. sycophantic, hyperbolically) to suit 'educated' readers
- Use of adjectivals and adverbials that load and add force to the meaning of the noun groups – see highlighted words on the text itself
- Use of intensifiers, e.g. best, fully, most, very, carefully, impossibly
- Use of word play, e.g. playful repetition and alliteration (e.g. two similar and similarly sycophantic); assonance (e.g. as much **brand** as **man**; **Thorpe** the **corporation**)

### Grammar

Use of:

- third person, e.g. the reader, the media – avoidance of the personal pronoun (I)
- present tense when analyzing and discussing the content of the articles
- statements
- active voice, e.g. Courier Mail writer Mike Coleman augmented this image; he uses his public image
- nominalizations to convert actions to things that can be discussed, e.g. The overwhelmingly positive **reporting** of Thorpe; his extended **comparison** of Thorpe
- topic sentences to link paragraphs
- a mixture of simple, compound and complex sentences
- modal verbs to add a definite, authoritative tone, (e.g. the media **must** scrutinize; she **doesn't** let readers forget) and to open possibilities (e.g. **Maybe** journalists need to...)

### Punctuation and paragraphing

Standard punctuation, especially:

- New paragraph for new stage of argument
- Use of punctuation associated with inclusion of quotations, including inverted commas
- Italics for newspaper titles
- Single inverted commas around names of articles
- Use of colon to add information

**Spelling:** standard

### Layout

Line break between paragraphs with no indentation

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## Example of final product

Following is an OpEd (media commentary) piece written as a model for Year 11 Senior English students. Here it is presented in the form in which you would submit it. Later, it is presented in a [deconstructed form](#) to show the structure and significant language features.

**Note well:** This is not a perfect example. [Comments about the piece](#) are included after the deconstruction (page 9).

### Ian Thorpe: Too much of a good thing?

Ian Thorpe is one of Australia's greatest and most popular swimmers. His youthful good looks and athletic physique have attracted the gaze of the camera and the attention of journalists. The overwhelmingly positive reporting of Thorpe is ironic given Australia's notorious tall poppy syndrome – those who are deemed too successful, whose success reminds us of our own inadequacies are usually cut down, denigrated, reviled. And yet, an uncritical media is not in the long-term interests of Ian Thorpe or the Australian public.

During the 2004 Olympics Games, Bronwyn Hurrell produced two very similar and similarly sycophantic articles that appeared on the same day (21/8/04) in two different, Murdoch-owned newspapers (*The Courier Mail* and *The Australian*). The articles reported that Thorpe had joined Michael Klim and further, unnamed swimmers to cheer for other Australians in the pool. The headlines said it all: 'Battle-hardened swimmers muscle in on cheer squads' and 'Ab-fab duo add muscle to cheer squad'. Dominating both articles were photos of Thorpe shirtless, tanned and pants slung fashionably low; the label of his own IT brand underwear can be seen clearly. The mid shots bring the viewer close to Thorpe and the lighting defines his muscles to best advantage. In the Courier Mail version, Thorpe is staring straight at the camera, smiling and there is a sense that he is posing, fully aware of 'an adoring lens' (Hurrell's words again). She also notes that 'Their every move resembled a cover of a men's magazine'.

Hurrell's gushing words endorse Thorpe's posing. The reader can imagine her drooling as she writes hyperbolically about Thorpe (and Klim) as if he is a classical Greek sculpture: 'the bodies of Greek gods' and 'a golden, muscle bound torso'. At times, the prose is pure *Cleo*. Paradoxically (aware of the tall poppy syndrome?), she is also at pains to emphasise Thorpe's normality: this 'show was more about relaxation than intimidation', Thorpe 'eased into party mode' and 'This time (they) were part of the crowd'. At the same time, she doesn't let readers forget that Thorpe and Klim 'were never going to be just another pair of fanatical fans...in the stands'.

*Courier Mail* writer, Mike Coleman, augmented this image in 'Thorpie the Great proves a risk taker' (CM 28/8/04): 'With his skin tanned dark by the Athens sun, long hair pulled back in a top knot and sporting the start of a beard, Ian Thorpe looked, if not like a Greek god, then at least like a Greek general'. His extended comparison of Thorpe, the swimmer, and Alexander the Great, well-known conqueror of the 'known world' is more ridiculous hyperbole. Furthermore, Coleman ignores Alexander the Great's (in)famous bisexuality and, thereby, silences persistent rumours about Thorpe's own sexuality. Or perhaps this was just Coleman's indirect, even cowardly, way of raising the issue.

Even when the *Sunday Mail* (17/11/02) tackles the rumours head-on, they remain circumspect. 'Gay rumours' emerge from anonymous 'speculation' about which Thorpe himself 'told' the ABC, not through the research of the newspaper's own journalists. Throughout, only Thorpe's words are quoted and the reader is informed early that he is an 'Olympic gold medalist and world champion swimmer', as if that is enough to prove his credibility and reliability.

The media presents readers with the carefully crafted, 'official' version of Ian Thorpe. However, genuinely balanced and varied reporting is in the long-term interests of everyone. Thorpe has a right to courtesy and a private life, but he uses his public image consciously to market products from underwear to health foods. As much brand as man, the media must scrutinize Thorpe the corporation as closely as any other business. There is also a danger that the public will tire of Thorpe's impossibly clean image. Maybe journalists need to re-acquaint themselves with another Greek story: Icarus who flew too close to the sun and plummeted back to earth.

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## Deconstructed model

*In this section, the sample OpEd piece is analysed for its structure and distinctive language features. You should not submit your assignment in this format – see the earlier sample (page 5) for that.*

Structure	Text	Language features
<p><b>Headline</b> – refers to thesis</p> <p><b>Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention raiser</li> <li>• Background</li> <li>• Thesis</li> </ul> <p><b>Arguments and evidence one</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence establishing argument</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Detailed evidence, including specific examples from news articles – note the emphasis on visual analysis of photographs</li> </ul> <p><b>Arguments and evidence two</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Detailed evidence, including specific examples from news articles</li> </ul> <p><b>Arguments and evidence three</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Further detailed evidence</li> </ul>	<p>Ian Thorpe: Too much of a good thing?</p> <p>Ian Thorpe is one of Australia's greatest and most popular swimmers. His youthful good looks and athletic physique have attracted the gaze of the camera and the attention of journalists. The overwhelmingly positive reporting of Thorpe is ironic given Australia's notorious tall poppy syndrome – those who are deemed too successful, whose success reminds us of our own inadequacies are usually cut down, denigrated, reviled. And yet, an uncritical media is not in the long-term interests of Ian Thorpe or the Australian public.</p> <p>During the 2004 Olympics Games, Bronwyn Hurrell produced two very similar and similarly sycophantic articles that appeared on the same day (21/8/04) in two different, Murdoch-owned newspapers (<i>The Courier Mail</i> and <i>The Australian</i>). The articles reported that Thorpe had joined Michael Klim and further, unnamed swimmers to cheer for other Australians in the pool. The headlines said it all: 'Battle-hardened swimmers muscle in on cheer squads' and 'Ab-fab duo add muscle to cheer squad'. Dominating both articles were photos of Thorpe shirtless, tanned and pants slung fashionably low; the label of his own IT brand underwear can be seen clearly. The mid shots bring the viewer close to Thorpe and the lighting defines his muscles to best advantage. In the Courier Mail version, Thorpe is staring straight at the camera, smiling and there is a sense that he is posing, fully aware of 'an adoring lens' (Hurrell's words again). She also notes that 'Their every move resembled a cover of a men's magazine'.</p> <p>Hurrell's gushing words endorse Thorpe's posing. The reader can imagine her drooling as she writes hyperbolically about Thorpe (and Klim) as if he is a classical Greek sculpture: 'the bodies of Greek gods' and 'a golden, muscle bound torso'. At times, the prose is pure Cleo. Paradoxically (aware of the tall poppy syndrome?), she is also at pains to emphasise Thorpe's normality: this 'show was more about relaxation than intimidation', Thorpe 'eased into party mode' and 'This time (they) were part of the crowd'. At the same time, she doesn't let readers forget that Thorpe and Klim 'were never going to be just another pair of fanatical fans...in the stands'.</p> <p><i>Courier Mail</i> writer, Mike Coleman, augmented this image in 'Thorpie the Great proves a risk taker' (CM 28/8/04): 'With his skin tanned dark by the Athens sun, long hair pulled back in a top knot and sporting the start of a beard, Ian Thorpe looked, if not like a Greek god, then at least like a Greek general'. His extended comparison of Thorpe, the swimmer, and Alexander the Great, well-known conqueror of the 'known world' is more ridiculous hyperbole. Furthermore, Coleman</p>	<p><b>Cohesion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of repetition, e.g. Thorpe</li> <li>• Use of pronoun reference, e.g. Thorpe-he-his</li> <li>• Use of related words, e.g. camera-journalists-reporting-media-articles-newspapers</li> <li>• use of contrast words, e.g. yet, however, but</li> <li>• use of addition words, e.g. furthermore, also,</li> </ul> <p><b>Vocabulary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selective use of wide and varied word choice (e.g. sycophantic, hyperbolically) to suit 'educated' readers</li> <li>• use of adjectivals and adverbials that load and add force to the meaning of the noun groups – see highlighted words on the text itself</li> <li>• use of intensifiers, e.g. best, fully, most, very, carefully, impossibly</li> <li>• use of word play, e.g. playful repetition and alliteration (e.g. two similar and similarly sycophantic); assonance (e.g. as much brand as man; Thorpe the corporation)</li> </ul>

Structure	Text	Language features
<p><b>Arguments and evidence four</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Further detailed evidence</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise arguments</li> <li>• restate thesis (in different words)</li> <li>• Possible consequences</li> <li>• Recommendation/s</li> </ul> <p>(Note the reference to Icarus in the last sentence. This provides a link to the Greek allusions in three of the four articles analysed. Balance or symmetry of this type is often very effective in a conclusion.)</p>	<p>ignores Alexander the Great's famous bisexuality and, thereby, silences persistent rumours about Thorpe's own sexuality. Or perhaps this was just Coleman's indirect, even cowardly, way of raising the issue.</p> <p>Even when the <i>Sunday Mail</i> (17/11/02) tackles the rumours head-on, they remain circumspect. 'Gay rumours' emerge from anonymous 'speculation' about which Thorpe himself 'told' the ABC, not through the research of the newspaper's own journalists. Throughout, only Thorpe's words are quoted and the reader is informed early that he is an 'Olympic gold medalist and world champion swimmer', as if that is enough to prove his credibility and reliability.</p> <p>The media presents readers with the carefully crafted, 'official' version of Ian Thorpe. However, <b>genuinely balanced and varied reporting is in the long-term interests of everyone</b>. Thorpe has a right to courtesy and a private life, but he uses his public image consciously to market products from underwear to health foods. As much brand as man, the media must scrutinize Thorpe the corporation as closely as any other business. There is also a danger that the public will tire of Thorpe's impossibly clean image. Maybe journalists need to re-acquaint themselves with another Greek story: Icarus who flew too close to the sun and plummeted back to earth.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Main persuasive techniques</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of facts – lots of evidence and examples from news articles</li> <li>• Use of opinions (presented as bare assertions), e.g. 'There is also a danger that the community will tire of Thorpe's impossibly clean image.'</li> <li>• Use of emotive language – see highlighted words above</li> <li>• Indirect use of argumentum ad hominum (attacking the person), e.g. 'Hurrell's gushing words' in combination with references to her 'sycophantic articles' and 'pure Cleo' prose are really an attack on Hurrell's abilities as a journalist.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> It is the use of various language features (see right hand column) which activates these techniques.</p>	<p><b>Grammar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of third person, e.g. the reader, the media – avoidance of the personal pronoun (I)</li> <li>• Use of present tense when analyzing and discussing the content of the articles</li> <li>• Use of statements</li> <li>• use of active voice, e.g. Courier Mail writer Mike Coleman augmented this image; he uses his public image</li> <li>• use of nominalizations to convert actions to things that can be discussed, e.g. The overwhelmingly positive reporting of Thorpe; his extended comparison of Thorpe</li> <li>• Use of topic sentences to link paragraphs</li> <li>• use of a mixture of simple, compound and complex sentences</li> <li>• use of modal verbs to add a definite, authoritative tone, (e.g. the media <b>must</b> scrutinize; she <b>doesn't</b> let readers forget) and to open possibilities (e.g. <b>Maybe</b> journalists need to...)</li> </ul> <p><b>Punctuation and paragraphing</b> Standard punctuation, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New paragraph for new stage of argument</li> <li>• Use of punctuation associated with inclusion of quotations, including inverted commas</li> <li>• Italics for newspaper titles</li> <li>• single inverted commas around names of articles</li> <li>• use of colon to add information</li> </ul> <p><b>Spelling:</b> standard</p> <p><b>Layout</b> Line break between paragraphs with no indentation</p>

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## Comments about the example

Although an example of a good report, this is not a perfect example. For example:

1. Does the introduction serve as an effective attention raiser? Is there a more effective way this piece could have started?
2. Could some areas have been expanded? At 641 words, is it a bit **too** concise?

What other improvements would you make to this piece?

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## Scaffolding sheet: OpEd (media commentary)

Stages	Planning notes - content
<b>Headline</b> – refers to thesis	
<b>Introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention raiser</li> <li>• Background</li> <li>• Thesis</li> </ul>	
<b>Arguments and evidence one</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence establishing argument</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Detailed evidence, including specific examples from news articles – note the emphasis on visual analysis of photographs</li> </ul>	
<b>Arguments and evidence two</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Detailed evidence, including specific examples from news articles</li> </ul>	
<b>Arguments and evidence three</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Further detailed evidence</li> </ul>	
<b>Arguments and evidence four</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic sentence with link back to previous paragraph</li> <li>• Elaboration</li> <li>• Further detailed evidence</li> </ul>	
<b>Conclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise arguments</li> <li>• restate thesis (in different words)</li> <li>• Possible consequences</li> <li>• Recommendation/s</li> </ul>	

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## Checklist for evaluating your own OpEd piece

*The checklist below can be used to check if you have met the structural and language requirements of the OpEd piece and it useful to give a trusted adult or friend a copy and ask them to provide feedback on your draft report.*

Student checklist		
How well have I met the criteria for the task?		
	Yes	No
(Place a tick in the appropriate column)		
<b>Cultural context (worldviews)</b>		
1. Did I write taking into account the values and beliefs of the media critic?		
<b>Cultural context (genre and purpose)</b>		
2. Did I produce an effective OpEd (media commentary) piece that analyses and evaluates media texts and argues a point of view?		
<b>Social context (subject matter)</b>		
3. Was the OpEd structured logically, that is: headline; introduction; argument one; argument two; argument three etc; conclusion?		
4. Was I able to use relevant, properly referenced evidence to support my ideas?		
<b>Social context (roles and relationships)</b>		
7. Did I take on the role of a media expert and critic?		
8. Did I take into account my audience, that is lay people with an interest in the media?		
<b>Social context (mode and medium)</b>		
9. Have I made effective use of the word processor?		
<b>Language features (written)</b>		
11. Did I use a range of cohesion to link my ideas, e.g. repetition, pronoun reference, condition/concession, additive words?		
12. Did I use formal terms associated with media and critique, and avoided slang?		
13. Did I use evaluative words, including intensifiers?		
14. Did I include some use of word play?		
15. Did I use third person?		
16. Did I combine sentences using a variety of techniques, including subordinate clauses?		
17. Did I use mainly present tense?		
18. Did I use statements?		
19. Did I use words to indicate modal verbs to indicate probability and obligation?		
20. Did I use topic sentences effectively to link paragraphs?		
21. Did I use active voice?		
22. Did I use nominalizations as appropriate?		
23. Was my punctuation (including for titles and quotations) and paragraphing accurate?		
24. Was my spelling accurate?		
25. Did I put a line break between paragraphs and didn't indent new paragraphs?		

Three things I am happy with: 1.

2.

3.

Three things I could improve: 1.

2.

3.

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## Links to further information

### General information on essay and Op-ed writing

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essay>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Op-ed>

<http://aboutpublicrelations.net/ucmclaina.htm>

<http://www.anthologiesonline.com/Write%20Op%20Ed.htm>

<http://www.mcall.com/news/opinion/all-hottooped,0,7724235.story>

<http://www.writing-world.com/freelance/oped.shtml>

[http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke\\_community/oped.html](http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke_community/oped.html)

### Information on critiquing the media

[http://books.google.com.au/books?id=Rot3obO0iRoC&pg=PA301&lpg=PA301&dq=critiquing+the+media&source=web&ots=ibyC-dB-DC&sig=KJ5bW1JOZA6g9WJkjR7hRSDB6vk&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&resnum=4&ct=result#PPA306,M1](http://books.google.com.au/books?id=Rot3obO0iRoC&pg=PA301&lpg=PA301&dq=critiquing+the+media&source=web&ots=ibyC-dB-DC&sig=KJ5bW1JOZA6g9WJkjR7hRSDB6vk&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=4&ct=result#PPA306,M1)

### Media commentary sites

<http://austhink.com/critical/pages/media.html>

<http://www.watchingthemediacom.com/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/>

<http://www.crikey.com.au/>

<http://www.chaser.com.au/>

<http://www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au/mediaWatch.php>

<http://www.mediawatch.com/>

<http://www.mediastudy.com/media.html#crit>

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