

STORIES FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

17–26 OCT 2025

Hastings Storytelling Festival

Axel Scheffler

Theresa Lola

Bev Lee Harling

Tolá Ogokwu

hotpencil press

Tricia Durdey

...and more!

Adult
events &
family
events



[hastingsstorytellingfestival](https://www.instagram.com/hastingsstorytellingfestival)



[hastingsstoryfest](https://www.facebook.com/hastingsstoryfest)

Festival Patron: Axel Scheffler



HASTINGS STORYTELLING FESTIVAL CHARITY NUMBER: 1168229

www.hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

Welcome to Hastings Storytelling Festival 2025

Storytelling for Adults

THIS YEAR Hastings Storytelling Festival celebrates openness, imagination and shared stories, following the theme of 'Welcome' chosen by our newest patron, **Axel Scheffler**. Experience original tales told through spoken word, music, talks, dance and song. Highlights include multi-talented artist **Bev Lee Harling** with her show-in-progress 'Hey Good Looking'; award-winning British Nigerian poet and artist **Theresa Lola**; the authors of 'Letter to My Little Trans Self' from



hotpencil press; an evening of music and dancing with

Swing Street Orchestra; plus a workshop with author and trainer **Tolá Okogwu**. Many more events await - don't miss the children's programme on the other side of the booklet.



Don't miss Axel Scheffler's free exhibition at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery – open until January 2026

hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

PROGRAMME SUBJECT TO CHANGE

#hsf2025

FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER

FREE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP
FOR TEACHERS, AUTHORS AND STORYTELLERS:
TOLÁ OKOGWU



Award-winning author and skilled facilitator **Tolá Okogwu** brings a wealth of experience to this workshop, a practical

and participatory insight into creating engaging writing and stories for children.

Tolá is a British-Nigerian journalist-turned-author of the **Onyeka, Daddy Do My Hair** and **Aziza's Secret Fairy Door** series.

Best known for her **Onyeka** book series, beginning with *Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun*, which has earned multiple awards, including being shortlisted for the British Book Awards and winning the 2023 Children's Africana Book Award for Older Readers.

1.30–3.30pm
Hastings Library
13 Claremont
TN34 1HE
FREE
Limited space – arrive early



SUNDAY 19 OCTOBER

TRICIA DURDEY:

UPSIDE DOWN IN A HOOP

What is it that keeps us going through tough times? The joys of dancing, as a child? Or the adventures we dare to take as adults?

Upside Down in a Hoop is an energising show about life, loss and letting go, based on dancer, choreographer and writer Tricia Durdey's memoir, published by Cinnamon Press.

Share in the joys of a childhood passion for dance, and the determination to follow dreams! And explore more recent adventures of mid-life, learning aerial hoop, embracing risks and facing fears, including how we integrate loss in our lives.

This unusual performance blends spoken word, movement and aerial hoop, in a powerful story of the drive to keep moving, through the unexpected challenges life throws our way.

7.30pm
Stade Hall,
Rock-A-Nore Rd
TN34 3FJ
£5
Book online:
hastingsstoryfest.org.uk



MONDAY 20 OCTOBER

BEV LEE HARLING:

'HEY GOOD LOOKING'

Step into a heartfelt evening of story and song as Bev Lee Harling weaves together touching memories of life with her father and the bittersweet reality of dementia.

From the cobbled yards of foundry life in Elephant and Castle to the salty shores of Hastings, this intimate solo performance explores the deep bonds between parent and child, the dignity of working-class life, and the power of music to connect us across time and memory.

Featuring original songs and the beloved country classics of Hank Williams, please join us for this special work in progress performance and become part of the making of the show as Bev shares her process so far and gets your vital feedback.

The full show will be part of next year's festival.



7pm
White Rock Studio,
White Rock Theatre
Hastings TN34 1JX
£12 + booking fee
Book online:
hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER

hotpencil press:

LETTER TO MY LITTLE TRANS SELF

A powerful new book of stories written across generations and geographies, bringing together letters, poems and reflections from trans and non-binary writers.

For one night only, invited writers will share their letters live on stage before joining hotpencil press and

local queer publishers Cipher Press in conversation about the importance of publishing trans voices.

Witty, moving, humble, scary and joyful – these are words of love, advice and truth across time. Don't miss the chance to hear them spoken live in the room.

NOME
LIVE
ART



Produced in
collaboration with
Home Live Art
& Trans Pride
Hastings

7pm
The Printworks
14 Claremont
TN34 1HA

£5 or £3
pay-what-you-can

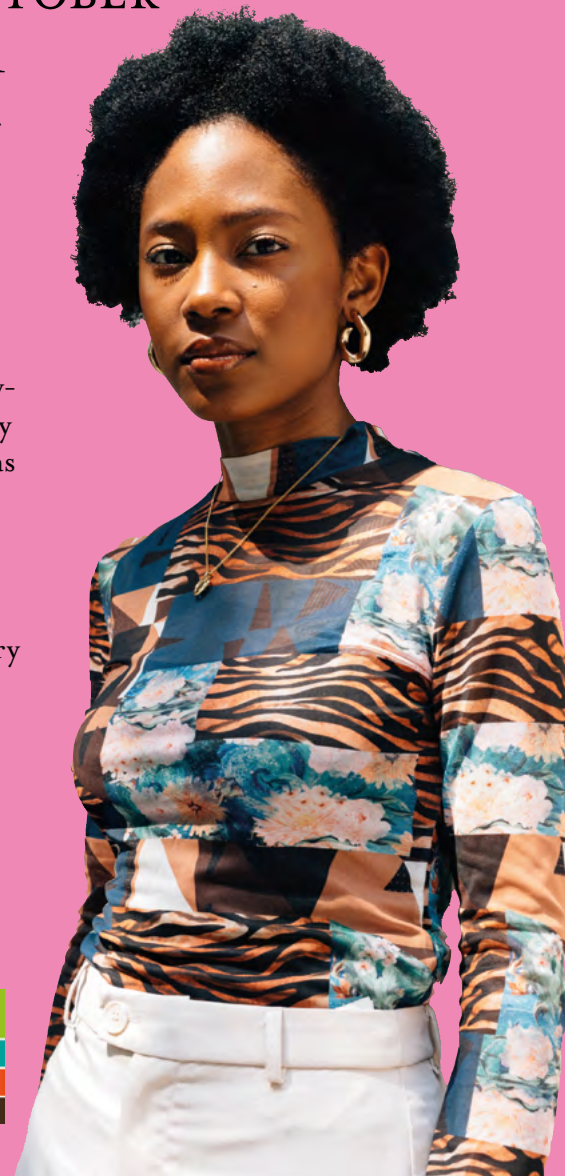
Book online:
[hastingsstoryfest.
org.uk](https://hastingsstoryfest.org.uk)



WEDNESDAY 22 OCTOBER THERESA LOLA

Theresa Lola is an award-winning British Nigerian poet and artist who uses poetry to enrich multidisciplinary work. A former Young People's Laureate for London, she is celebrated for her poetry collections, *In Search of Equilibrium* and her acclaimed follow-up *Ceremony for the Nameless*, praised by *The Guardian* as securing her place “as a trailblazer for a new wave of poets”. Join us at an unforgettable evening of spoken-word, where Theresa will read from her latest book and bring her evocative poetry to life.

7pm
Mama Putts
23 Kings Road,
Saint Leonards-on-Sea
TN37 6DU
£5
(plus £10
optional
tasting menu)



FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER

IMPOSSIBLE ARTS CODEX

Coming to Hastings Town Centre, do not miss 'Codex', an illuminated outdoor projection installation.

This giant 6m talking storybook with animated pages and narrated tales brings storytelling to life.

Codex has toured widely, drawing audiences in with its glowing visuals and interactive storytelling.

FREE

4-8pm

**Hastings Town Centre,
Harold Place TN34 1JA**



Volunteer!

Would you like to volunteer at one of our events? Contact us at: office@hastingsstoryfest.org.uk



STORIES FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

17–26 OCT 2025

Hastings Storytelling Festival

Axel Scheffler

Karen Arthur

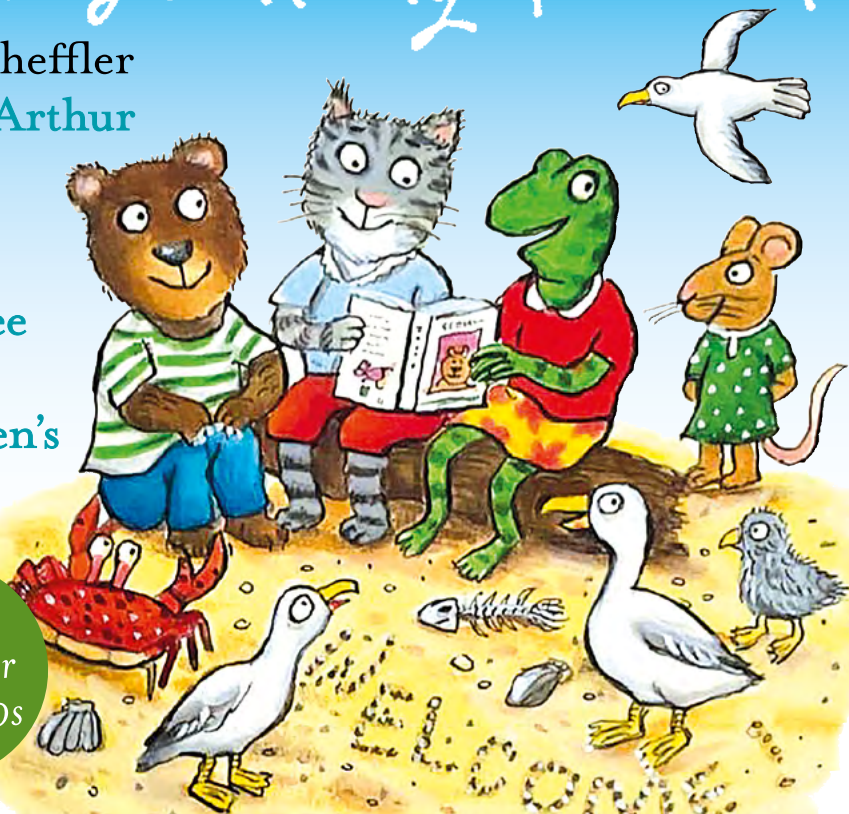
Dens &
Signals

Sujata
Banerjee

Codex

Children's
Day

FREE
Events for
Under-10s



#hsf2025

hastingsstoryfest.org.uk



Storytelling for Children and Families

Celebrate the theme of 'Welcome' this October as Hastings Storytelling Festival brings magical tales to life in schools and public events across the town. Join Festival Patron **Axel Scheffler**, creator of The Gruffalo, as he shares his illustrations in the book 'Welcome', then step into **Dens & Signals** participatory audio adventure Myth Monster, a factual, funny and thought-provoking journey with storytelling, original music and movement.

The ever-popular **Children's Day** on 26 October bursts with performances and workshops from **Ben Watson, Long Nose Puppets, Richard Storybeard, Hodman and Sally, Dolly Delicious, Out of the Bag Theatre** and **Xena Flame**.

Be sure to join the fun in costume for the 'toybox' parade with carnival costumer **Donna Fox**.

As well as a full public programme we offer free workshops for local schools including authors, storytellers, dance and a West African storytelling café.

hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

#hsf2025

PROGRAMME SUBJECT TO CHANGE



Don't miss Axel Scheffler's free exhibition at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery – open until January 2026



SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER

Karen Arthur

Grandma's Locs

Discover the magical bond between a loving grandma and her curious young grandson in 'Grandma's Locs'. This vibrant and joyful book celebrates the beauty of natural Black hair through playful adventures and heartwarming moments.

Join the fun as Grandma shares the stories woven into her locs, showing her grandson how each twist and turn is a celebration of their heritage and love.



Multi-talented author Karen Arthur shares this vibrant tale to inspire children to embrace their uniqueness and the magic of family.



11am
Hastings Library
13 Claremont
TN34 1HE
FREE, limited space –
arrive early

TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER

Dens and Signals

Myth Monster

Once upon a very-long-time-ago the Big Bang ignited the story of the world... and once upon a time quite a-lot-more-recently, a monster crept into the story, liked what it saw, and made itself at home.

After that, the story seemed to need the monster, which everyone thought was fine, until the monster started getting hungry.

Factual, funny and thought-provoking, Myth Monster is a participatory audio adventure about us, our ancestors, and how the stories we tell determine what kind of ancestors we'll become.

Part performance, part headphone experience, it features amazing sound, original music, and the chance for audiences to move, dance and get involved. Suitable for families with children from 7+

4.30pm

**Sandown School, The Ridge TN34 2AA
FREE**



THURSDAY 23 OCTOBER

Sujata Banerjee Dance Company

Indra – Dhanush Evening

Celebrate an evening of traditional Kathak dance, the grand finale of a six-week intergenerational workshop led by the Sujata Banerjee Dance Company with Sacred Heart School and the Hastings' Seniors groups. Experience the energy and artistry as dancers of all ages come together to showcase their dedication, creativity, and hard work in a powerful performance.

7pm

Sacred Heart School

Old London Road

TN35 5NA

Adults £7 /

Children Free

**Indian snacks
included**



FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER

Impossible Arts

CODEX

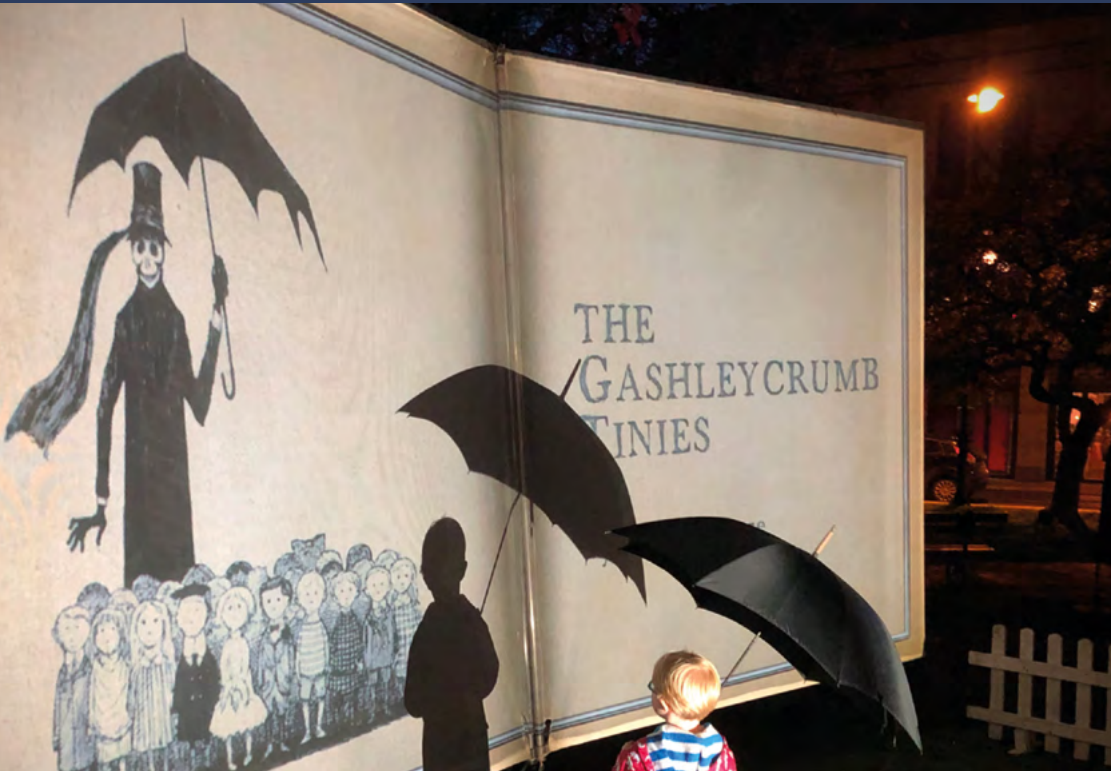
Coming to Hastings Town Centre, do not miss 'Codex', an illuminated outdoor projection installation. This giant 6m talking storybook with animated pages and narrated tales brings storytelling to life. Codex has toured widely, drawing

audiences in with its glowing visuals and interactive storytelling.

FREE

4-8pm

**Harold Place, Hastings Town Centre
TN34 1JA**



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SAT 25 OCT

Donna Fox

Carnival Arts Workshop

Come and join our family-friendly parade arts workshop with carnival costumier Donna Fox.

Create something colourful and carnivalesque to show off in the 'toybox' themed parade at 3pm on Children's Day, Sunday 26 October.

All ages welcome – bring your imagination and let your ideas run wild!

FREE

Drop-in Workshop

10am-1pm

**Isabel Blackman Centre
Hastings TN34 3AT**

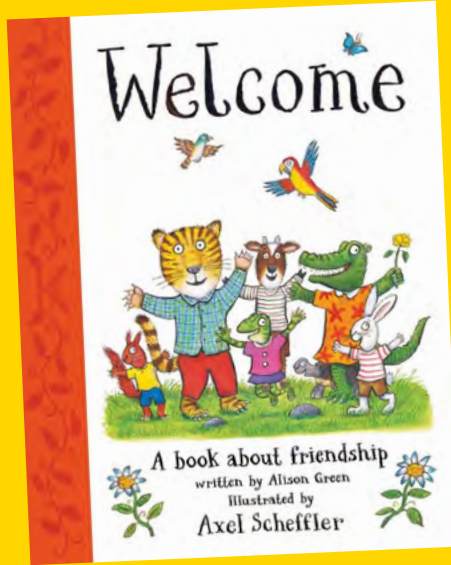


SAT 25 OCT

Axel Scheffler



Our newest Patron, **Axel Scheffler**, internationally acclaimed illustrator of some of the best-loved children's books, presents his picture book with Alison Green, 'Welcome'.



This joyful story celebrates friendship and togetherness, showing how everyone can be a good friend and help others feel included. With his fabulous, funny animal characters, Axel reminds us how to laugh and play together, and most importantly, how to make friends again after a quarrel.

Join us for stories, live drawings, and the chance to ask questions... and perhaps even spot a Gruffalo!



Don't miss
Axel Scheffler's
free exhibition at
Hastings Museum
and Art Gallery –
open until January
2026

Axel will offer book signing after his talk, with books available from our book stall.

2pm – doors open at 1.30pm

**White Rock Studio
White Rock Theatre
Hastings
TN34 1JX**

Tickets:

ADULT aged 17+: £10

**(comes with one free child ticket for
children aged 0–10, on request)**

Children aged 11–16: £5

and/or additional children aged 0–10

Book online:

hastingsstoryfest.org.uk



18 Hours is driven by
passion for fostering
global understanding
through education
and events

www.18hours.org.uk

SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER 12-4PM

Children's Day & Carnival

The Stade, Rock-a-Nore Road TN34 3DW

Join us for Children's Day 2025 and enjoy an array of live performances, puppet shows, storytelling and a lively 'toybox' themed parade.

FREE



Ben Watson

Above: Catch Ben Watson's full show 'Mind the Monsters' Welcome to Planet Brain



Above: Long Nose Puppets 'Flyaway Katy' – a magical storytelling and puppet show based on the book by Polly Dunbar



Xena Flame
hula hoop workshop



The story of Montserrat's Mermaid by **Alliouagana Pearl**

Out of the Bag Theatre
'The Story Collector' walkabout show



Dolly Delicious
stilt walker



Barefoot Opera



Hodman and Sally
beautiful, funny walkabout puppet act from the Flying Buttresses



Richard Storybeard
Enchanting stories told in a cosy yurt



See **Donna Fox's** costumes in the parade



Dress up or bring your favourite toy

Join our **Toybox** themed Parade at 3pm!



If it's wet, don't fret!
Most of our stories are under cover.

PROGRAMME SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

PROGRAMME SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Fri 17 Oct
Workshop 1.30–3.30pm
with Tolá Okogwu
 Hastings Library
 13 Claremont TN34 1HE
 FREE – arrive early
 limited space

Sat 18 Oct
Karen Arthur: 11am
Grandma's Locs
 Hastings Library
 13 Claremont TN34 1HE
 FREE – arrive early
 limited space



Sun 19 Oct
Tricia Durdey: 7.30pm
Upside Down in a Hoop
 Stade Hall
 Rock-a-Nore Rd TN34 3FJ
 £5
 Book: hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

Mon 20 Oct
Bev Lee Harling: 7pm
'Hey Good Looking'
 White Rock Studio
 White Rock Theatre
 Hastings TN34 1JX £12 +BF
 Book online:
hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

Tue 21 Oct
Dens & Signals: 4.30pm
'Myth Monster'
 Sandown School
 The Ridge TN34 2AA
 FREE – arrive early
 limited space

Tue 21 Oct
hotpencil press: 7pm
'Letter to my little Trans Self'
 The Printworks
 14 Claremont TN34 1HA £5/£3
 Book: hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

Wed 22 Oct
Theresa Lola, Poet 7pm
 Mama Putts
 23 Kings Road TN37 6DU £5
 Plus optional tasting menu

Thu 23 Oct 7pm
Sujata Banerjee Dance Co:
Indra – Danush Evening
 Sacred Heart School
 TN35 5NA Adults: £7
 Children: FREE

Fri 24 Oct
Impossible Arts: 4–8pm
CODEX
 Hastings Town Centre
 Harold Place TN34 1JA
 For adults & children FREE

Sat 25 Oct
Donna Fox: Drop-in
Carnival Arts 10am– 1pm
Workshop
 Isabel Blackman Centre
 Hastings TN34 3AT FREE

Sat 25 Oct
Axel Scheffler 2pm
 White Rock Theatre
 Hastings TN34 1JX £10
 (comes with a free ticket
 for children aged 0–10,
 on request) Children aged
 11–16and/or additional
 children 0–10: £5
 Book: hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

Sun 26 Oct
Children's Day 12–4pm
& Carnival
 The Stade,
 Rock-A-Nore Road
 TN34 3DW FREE



Volunteer!

Would you like to
 volunteer at one
 of our events?

Contact us at:
office@hastingsstoryfest.org.uk

HASTINGS STORYTELLING FESTIVAL CHARITY NUMBER: 1168229

SURVIVING CHRISTMAS

Would you like to sponsor a hamper for a family in need this Christmas?

Surviving Christmas are providing hampers for those in need, as referred by professional agencies. This is in order to relieve hardship and distress to residents in Hastings and Rother.

Scan the QR code to donate or use the BACS details below.

Reg. Charity No 1033117

Donate direct by BACS
Santander: 09-01-28
A/C no: 95875221
Account name: Surviving Christmas
Please put your name as reference for acknowledgement and let us know if you are eligible for Gift Aid.

survivingchristmas.co.uk

Surviving Christmas
 HVA
 Jackson Hall
 Portland Place
 Hastings
 TN34 1QN

THANK YOU!



Children's event



ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

The Hastings Storytelling Festival, established in 2011, has since become a registered charity and maintains a year-round presence at various events. The majority of festival events are free, and all are free for children under the age of 10 to attend.

MEET THE PATRONS

Founding Patron, author and illustrator **Sir Quentin Blake**, has supported the festival since it began.



Hastings Storytelling Festival also has three authors who are very active Patrons:



Multi-award-winning poet, playwright, performer and graphic artist **Inua Ellams** was born in Nigeria and lives in London.

Displacement and Destiny are reoccurring themes in his work.

Axel Scheffler, an award-winning, internationally acclaimed illustrator of some of the best loved children's books as our new Festival Patron. His work has been exhibited all around the world. Axel has already illustrated over two hundred books including the children's classic picture book, *The Gruffalo*, written by Julia Donaldson. Axel created the children's programme cover for us.



Local author **Thomas Taylor's** imaginary town, Eerie-on-Sea bears an uncanny resemblance to Hastings. This mysteriously chilling place, where strange stories wash up, features in his books *Gargantis*, *Shadowghast*, *Malamander*, *Festergrimm* and *Mermedusa*. Thomas will be working in school's during the festival.

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Wood carving of Merlin
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