

THE ADDING MACHINE A PLAY IN SEVEN SCENES Study Guide

Exploring **the Adding Machine: A Play in Seven Scenes**

"The Adding Machine" is a groundbreaking play by Elmer Rice that delves into themes of industrialization, dehumanization, and the struggles of the working class. Structured in seven vivid scenes, the play offers a powerful critique of modern society's mechanization and the loss of individual identity. This article explores the play's themes, structure, characters, and its significance within American theater, providing a comprehensive overview for enthusiasts and scholars alike.

Overview of the Play

Background and Historical Context

Published in 1923, "The Adding Machine" emerged during a period of rapid industrial growth in the United States. The play's narrative reflects anxieties about the increasing dominance of machines and the mechanization of human labor. Elmer Rice, the playwright, uses this story to critique the dehumanizing effects of capitalism and technological progress on the individual.

The Play's Structure: Seven Scenes

The play's seven-scene structure allows for a detailed exploration of Mr. Zero's life, his death, and his afterlife experiences. Each scene builds upon the previous, creating a layered narrative that emphasizes themes of despair, conformity, and liberation.

Detailed Breakdown of the Seven Scenes

Scene 1: Mr. Zero's Mundane Life

- Introduction to the protagonist, Mr. Zero, an accountant working in a monotonous office environment.
- Depicts his daily routine, emphasizing the repetitive nature of his work.
- Highlights his dissatisfaction and sense of alienation.

Key elements:

- The dull, mechanized office setting.
- Mr. Zero's longing for something more meaningful.
- The role of the adding machine as a symbol of his work.

Scene 2: The Purchase of the Adding Machine

- Mr. Zero purchases a mechanical adding machine to replace his labor.
- Represents the broader societal shift towards automation.
- Reflects his hope for efficiency and ease.

Key elements:

- Symbolism of technology as both a helper and a harbinger of dehumanization.
- The contrast between human labor and mechanical computation.
- The play's critique of reliance on machines.

Scene 3: The Death of Mr. Zero

- Mr. Zero's sudden death, possibly by a heart attack.
- His transition from the earthly realm to the afterlife.
- Sets the stage for his journey beyond life.

Key elements:

- The shock and tragedy of sudden death.
- The depiction of death as a transition rather than an end.
- Initial glimpses of the afterlife.

Scene 4: The Courtroom of the Afterlife

- Mr. Zero faces judgment in a surreal courtroom.
- Encounters representatives of the afterlife bureaucracy.
- Questions about his life, work, and moral choices.

Key elements:

- The dehumanizing nature of bureaucratic systems.
- The play's satirical critique of societal institutions.
- Mr. Zero's feelings of guilt and regret.

Scene 5: Reincarnation and the Cycle of Life

- Mr. Zero is offered a chance at reincarnation.
- Reflection on the repetitive cycle of life and death.
- Highlights themes of renewal and the inescapability of societal roles.

Key elements:

- The concept of reincarnation as a means of societal continuation.
- The persistent influence of industrialization on human existence.
- The inevitability of repeating societal patterns.

Scene 6: Liberation and Self-Realization

- Mr. Zero recognizes the futility of his previous life.
- Chooses to reject the cycle of mechanization.
- Seeks spiritual liberation or personal freedom.

Key elements:

- The contrast between conformity and individuality.
- The play's philosophical underpinnings about free will.
- The importance of self-awareness.

Scene 7: The Play's Final Reflection

- An open-ended conclusion with ambiguous symbolism.
- Emphasizes the ongoing struggle of individuals against societal forces.
- Invites the audience to reflect on their own relationship with technology and conformity.

Key elements:

- The unresolved ending as a call for societal change.
- The play's enduring relevance.
- The universal themes of human dignity and resistance.

Major Themes in "The Adding Machine"

Dehumanization in the Industrial Age

- The play vividly portrays how mechanization reduces humans to mere cogs in a machine.
- Mr. Zero's life and death symbolize the loss of individuality.

The Repetition and Cycles of Life

- The seven scenes mirror the repetitive nature of industrial work and societal roles.
- Reincarnation underscores the cyclical nature of human existence under capitalism.

Alienation and Isolation

- Mr. Zero's feelings of loneliness resonate with the alienation caused by modern work environments.
- The play emphasizes the need for genuine human connection.

Critique of Bureaucracy and Capitalism

- The courtroom and judgment scenes satirize societal institutions.
- Highlight the cold, impersonal nature of bureaucratic processes.

The Search for Meaning and Self-Realization

- Throughout the play, characters seek purpose beyond mechanized routines.
- The final scene encourages viewers to consider personal liberation.

Significance and Impact of the Play

Revolutionary Approach to Theater

- Combines elements of realism with expressionism and satire.
- Pioneered the use of symbolism to convey complex themes.

Influence on American Drama

- Inspired subsequent playwrights to explore social issues through innovative structures.
- Recognized as an early example of socially conscious theater.

Enduring Relevance

- Continues to resonate in discussions about technology's role in society.
- Raises questions about work, identity, and human dignity that remain pertinent today.

Conclusion

"The Adding Machine: A Play in Seven Scenes" stands as a powerful critique of the mechanization and dehumanization characteristic of modern society. Through its innovative structure and compelling characters, the play invites audiences to reflect on the profound implications of technological progress and societal conformity. Its themes remain relevant, making it a timeless piece that challenges viewers to consider their own roles within the larger societal machine. Whether viewed as a work of social commentary or theatrical innovation, "The Adding Machine" remains a seminal piece in American theater history, inspiring discussion, analysis, and reflection across generations.

An In-Depth Analysis of "The Adding Machine": A Play in Seven Scenes

When exploring the landscape of American theater in the early 20th century, few works stand out as compellingly as *The Adding Machine*. This groundbreaking play, structured in seven scenes, offers a profound critique of capitalism, dehumanization, and the mechanization of society. Its innovative approach to storytelling and symbolism has cemented its place as a classic of modernist theater. In this article, we will dissect *The Adding Machine* scene by scene, providing a comprehensive guide to its themes, characters, and theatrical techniques, helping both students and enthusiasts appreciate its enduring relevance.

Introduction to "The Adding Machine"

First performed in 1923 by Elmer Rice, *The Adding Machine* is a play rooted in expressionism, blending surreal visuals with stark social commentary. It reflects the anxieties of its time—post-World War I upheaval and the rise of industrialization—and themes that remain pertinent today. The play's

structure in seven scenes allows for a layered exploration of its protagonist, Mr. Zero, and the world he inhabits.

Scene 1: The Ordinary Life of Mr. Zero

Setting and Mood

- The scene opens in a mundane office environment, emphasizing monotony.
- Sparse, utilitarian set design with repetitive sounds enhances the feeling of routine.

Key Themes

- The dullness of clerical work.
- The dehumanizing nature of mechanized labor.
- The emotional disconnect between workers and their work.

Characters

- Mr. Zero: The protagonist, a meek and resigned office clerk.
- Co-workers: Portrayed as faceless, interchangeable figures, symbolizing conformity.

Analysis

This scene introduces us to Mr. Zero's monotonous existence, highlighting the play's critique of mechanized labor. Rice uses minimal dialogue and repetitive staging to evoke the dullness, setting the tone for the play's exploration of dehumanization.

Scene 2: The Death of Mr. Zero

Narrative Development

- Mr. Zero's life reaches a climax as he is replaced by an adding machine—a literal machine replacing human labor.
- The scene transitions from the office to a surreal afterlife.

Themes

- The devaluation of human life in favor of automation.
- The loss of individuality.

Visuals and Symbolism

- The scene uses stark, abstract visuals?machines and ghostly figures?to symbolize death and the mechanization of the soul.
- The transition underscores how automation renders human existence disposable.

Analysis

This pivotal scene uses symbolism to critique how industrial progress can strip humans of their identity, reducing them to replaceable units. Rice?s portrayal of death as a mechanical process underscores the play's dystopian outlook.

Scene 3: The Underworld and the Court of Justice

Setting and Mood

- A surreal, courtroom-like environment with exaggerated, expressionist design elements.
- Atmosphere is tense, with a sense of judgment.

Themes

- Judgment and guilt.
- The consequences of a mechanized society.

Characters

- Mr. Zero (now a ghostly figure).
- Justice figures and other spectral characters.

Analysis

Here, Rice examines accountability?whether the mechanical system itself is culpable or the individuals within it. The scene questions whether societal systems can or should be held responsible, emphasizing the play?s philosophical depth.

Scene 4: Mr. Zero's Encounter with the Wife

Narrative Focus

- Focuses on Mr. Zero's personal life, contrasting his work life.
- His wife is depicted as a symbol of traditional, emotional humanity.

Themes

- Domestic life versus industrial life.
- The neglect of personal relationships in a mechanized society.

Visuals

- Juxtaposition of the warm, domestic setting with cold, mechanical imagery.

Analysis

This scene highlights the emotional toll of Mr. Zero's life, illustrating how societal mechanization impacts personal identity and relationships. Rice employs contrast to reinforce this dissonance.

Scene 5: The Resurrection and Rebirth

Setting and Mood

- Surreal, dream-like environment.
- A sense of possibility and renewal.

Themes

- Rebirth and resistance.
- The potential for human transcendence beyond mechanization.

Characters

- Mr. Zero as a renewed, almost mythic figure.
- Symbols of hope and spiritual awakening.

Analysis

This scene offers a moment of catharsis, suggesting that despite dehumanization, there is a possibility for renewal. Rice's use of allegory and surrealism invites audiences to consider the resilience of human spirit.

Scene 6: The Final Confrontation

Narrative and Themes

- Mr. Zero confronts the forces of mechanization directly.
- Themes of rebellion and liberation surface.

Visuals

- Chaotic, dynamic staging with intense lighting.
- Symbolic representations of machinery and human defiance.

Analysis

This climactic scene underscores the play's call for individual agency. Rice emphasizes that resistance, even against overwhelming mechanical forces, is vital for human dignity.

Scene 7: The Tragic Ending

Setting

- The stage returns to the bleak office, now with a sense of finality.

Themes

- Inevitable dehumanization.
- The cyclical nature of industrial oppression.

Characters

- Mr. Zero's final moments, emphasizing his surrender.

Analysis

The ending is a stark commentary on the relentless machinery of capitalism, suggesting that without conscious effort, society risks falling into an unending cycle of dehumanization.

Key Takeaways and Critical Analysis

Symbolism and Expressionism

- The Adding Machine employs expressionist techniques?exaggerated visuals, distorted sets, and surreal imagery?to evoke emotional and psychological states.
- Machines symbolize societal forces that diminish human individuality.

Themes to Reflect On

- The conflict between human emotion and mechanical efficiency.
- The role of capitalism in shaping personal identity.
- The possibility of rebellion and spiritual renewal.

Relevance Today

- The play's critique of automation and dehumanization remains pertinent amid modern debates on technology and labor.
- Its exploration of personal alienation resonates with contemporary discussions about work-life balance and societal values.

Final Thoughts

The Adding Machine in its seven scenes offers a powerful, layered critique of industrial society through innovative theatrical techniques. Its blend of symbolism, surrealism, and social commentary makes it a timeless work that challenges audiences to reflect on the human cost of progress. Whether viewed as an allegory of early 20th-century America or as a broader meditation on technology's impact, the play continues to inspire and provoke thought long after its curtain falls.

Whether you're a theater student, a critic, or a casual enthusiast, understanding The Adding Machine scene by scene enriches your appreciation of its artistry and message. Its enduring relevance underscores the importance of balancing technological advancement with the preservation of human dignity.

Question What is the main theme of 'The Adding Machine' play? The main themes include the dehumanization of workers in modern society, the mechanization of life, and the struggle for individuality amidst conformity. Who is the protagonist in 'The Adding Machine' and what is his occupation? The protagonist is Mr. Zero, a bookkeeper who represents the average worker, and he is responsible for adding numbers at his job in a monotonous office setting. How does 'The Adding Machine' reflect the social and economic issues of its time? The play critiques the rise of automation and capitalism, highlighting how workers are reduced to mere machines, losing their humanity in the pursuit of efficiency and profit. What is the significance of the play's ending in 'The Adding Machine'? The ending, where Mr. Zero is executed by the machine, symbolizes the ultimate dehumanization and the tragic consequences of blindly accepting mechanization and industrialization. In what ways does 'The Adding Machine' employ symbolism and surrealism? The play uses symbolic characters, such as the Machine and the Boss, and surreal scenes to represent abstract concepts like dehumanization, alienation, and the mechanized world. How has 'The Adding Machine' influenced modern theater and social commentary plays? It is considered a pioneering work of expressionist theater that opened pathways for plays addressing social issues through symbolism, innovative staging, and psychological depth. What is the historical significance of 'The Adding Machine' in American theater? Written in 1923 by Elmer Rice, the play is a critical reflection of the industrial age and is regarded as an important work that challenged traditional theater with its experimental style and social critique.

Related keywords: the adding machine, play, Eugene O'Neill, seven scenes, theater, drama, stage play, 1920s, absurdism, modern tragedy

Picture Scenes For Wh Questions

picture scenes for wh questions are an essential tool in language learning and teaching, especially for young learners and individuals acquiring a new language. These visual aids help learners develop their questioning skills by providing contextual cues that stimulate curiosity and facilitate understanding. By integrating picture scenes into lessons, educators can create engaging, interactive experiences that promote active participation and improve comprehension. Whether used in classroom settings, therapy sessions, or self-study environments, picture scenes serve as powerful visual prompts that encourage learners to formulate and answer questions such as who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Understanding the Importance of Picture Scenes for WH Questions

The Role of Visual Aids in Language Development

Visual aids are proven to enhance language acquisition by making abstract concepts more concrete. Picture scenes, in particular, offer contextual information that helps learners grasp the meaning behind words and questions. They enable students to connect language with real-life situations, making learning more relevant and memorable.

Benefits of Using Picture Scenes for WH Questions

Using picture scenes to teach WH questions offers multiple advantages:

- Encourages active engagement and participation
- Develops critical thinking and observation skills
- Provides a fun and motivating learning environment
- Supports differentiation by adapting scenes to various proficiency levels
- Enhances vocabulary and sentence structure understanding

Types of Picture Scenes for Teaching WH Questions

Real-Life Situations

Real-life scenes depict everyday scenarios such as a park, a supermarket, or a classroom. These scenes help learners practice questions related to daily activities.

Story-Based Scenes

Scenes that illustrate short stories or events can be used to foster narrative skills and encourage learners to ask questions about the sequence of events, characters, and settings.

Fantasy and Imaginative Scenes

Creative scenes featuring fantasy elements or imaginary worlds stimulate curiosity and imagination, making questioning practice more engaging, especially for younger learners.

Photographs vs. Illustrations

Both photographs and illustrations have their merits:

- **Photographs:** Provide realistic visuals that enhance authenticity.
- **Illustrations:** Offer flexibility in depicting imaginary or exaggerated scenes, ideal for creative scenarios.

Designing Effective Picture Scenes for WH Questions

Key Elements of a Good Picture Scene

A well-designed picture scene should include:

- Clear focal points to direct attention
- Multiple elements and details to prompt diverse questions
- Contextual clues that support understanding
- Varied characters and objects to explore different question types

Creating Engaging and Age-Appropriate Scenes

Tailor scenes to match the age and proficiency level of learners:

- For young children: Bright colors, simple scenes, familiar settings
- For older students: Complex scenes with multiple layers of information
- For beginners: Focus on basic questions like who and what
- For advanced learners: Incorporate more nuanced questions like why and how

Incorporating Interactive Elements

Enhance the effectiveness of picture scenes by:

- Adding clickable or movable parts in digital scenes for interactive questioning
- Using prompts or captions to guide questioning
- Encouraging learners to create their own scenes or modify existing ones

Sample Activities Using Picture Scenes for WH Questions

Activity 1: Observation and Question Formation

Present learners with a picture scene and ask them to observe carefully. Then, prompt them to formulate questions starting with who, what, where, when, why, and how. For example:

- Who is the person in the scene?
- What are they doing?
- Where are they?
- When does this scene take place?
- Why are they doing that?
- How are they feeling?

Activity 2: Role-Playing and Dialogue Practice

Use the scene as a basis for role-playing exercises. Students take turns asking and answering questions based on the scene, practicing both question formation and conversational skills.

Activity 3: Creative Storytelling

Encourage learners to invent stories about the scene, asking questions to develop the narrative. This activity enhances their ability to use WH questions to gather information and expand their storytelling skills.

Activity 4: Group Discussion and Analysis

Display a complex picture scene and have small groups analyze it together, generating a list of questions they could ask each other. This promotes collaborative learning and critical thinking.

Tips for Teachers and Learners Using Picture Scenes

For Teachers

- Start with simple scenes and gradually increase complexity
- Use a variety of scenes to cover different themes and vocabulary
- Encourage open-ended questions to foster deeper thinking
- Provide model questions and responses to guide learners
- Incorporate technology by using digital scene creators and interactive tools

For Learners

- Practice observing scenes carefully before asking questions
- Use a variety of question words to explore different aspects of the scene
- Try to ask questions that go beyond surface details
- Engage in peer discussions to learn from others' questions

- Create your own scenes to challenge your questioning skills

Conclusion

Picture scenes for WH questions are a versatile and impactful resource in language education. They bridge the gap between visual stimuli and verbal expression, making the process of learning to ask and answer questions more natural and engaging. By carefully designing and utilizing diverse scenes, educators can foster curiosity, enhance vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills among learners. Whether in classrooms, therapy sessions, or self-directed study, integrating picture scenes into the curriculum can significantly improve learners' proficiency in using WH questions effectively and confidently. Embracing this visual approach not only makes learning more enjoyable but also lays a solid foundation for advanced language skills and effective communication.

Picture Scenes for Wh Questions are an essential resource in language teaching and therapy, especially for developing young learners' or language learners' ability to formulate and comprehend questions. These visual aids provide context-rich scenarios that stimulate curiosity, dialogue, and critical thinking. By integrating engaging images into lessons, educators can facilitate meaningful conversations around "who," "what," "where," "when," "why," and "how" questions, making abstract language concepts concrete and accessible. In this comprehensive review, we will explore the significance of picture scenes for wh questions, their types, benefits, limitations, and practical applications.

Understanding the Role of Picture Scenes in Teaching Wh Questions

What Are Picture Scenes?

Picture scenes are visual representations depicting specific situations, everyday activities, or imaginary scenarios. These images serve as prompts for learners to observe, analyze, and generate questions based on what they see. They can vary from simple illustrations of a family at the park to detailed scenes like a busy marketplace or a classroom setting.

Why Use Picture Scenes for Wh Questions?

Using picture scenes in teaching offers several pedagogical benefits:

- Contextual Learning: Visual scenes provide context, making language learning more meaningful.
- Engagement: Colorful and detailed images capture learners' attention.
- Critical Thinking: Learners analyze scenes to formulate questions, fostering higher-order thinking.

- Vocabulary Building: Exposure to diverse scenarios introduces new vocabulary.
- Pragmatic Skills: Encourages learners to practice real-life questioning skills.

Types of Picture Scenes for Wh Questions

Different types of picture scenes can be used depending on learning objectives, age groups, or the complexity of language skills.

1. Photographic Scenes

Photographs depict real-world scenes, such as a park, a supermarket, or a classroom. They are effective in teaching practical vocabulary and questions related to everyday life.

- Features:
 - Realistic visuals
 - Rich details
 - Suitable for older learners
- Pros:
 - Enhance real-life language application
 - Improve observation skills
- Cons:
 - May be complex for very young or beginner learners
 - Possible variability in interpretation

2. Illustrative Scenes

Drawn illustrations or cartoons often simplify complex scenes, making them ideal for young children or beginners.

- Features:
 - Simplified, colorful images
 - Emphasize specific elements
- Pros:

- Less cluttered, easier to focus
- Engaging for young learners
- Cons:
- Less realistic, may limit contextual understanding
- Potentially oversimplify scenarios

3. Scenario-Based Scenes

Scenes depicting specific situations like a doctor's appointment, a birthday party, or a market transaction. These are designed to target particular question words.

- Features:
- Context-specific
- Often accompanied by prompts
- Pros:
- Focused practice on certain question types
- Facilitates role-play activities
- Cons:
- Limited scope; may need multiple scenes for comprehensive coverage
- May require additional explanation

4. Interactive Digital Scenes

Interactive scenes are digital or computer-based, allowing learners to click or manipulate elements within the scene.

- Features:
- Interactive elements
- Usually multimedia-enhanced
- Pros:
- Highly engaging

- Immediate feedback possible
- Cons:
 - Requires technological resources
 - May be less accessible in some settings

Designing Effective Picture Scenes for Wh Questions

Key Features to Consider

Creating effective picture scenes involves careful design to maximize educational value:

- Clarity: Scenes should be clear without unnecessary clutter.
- Relevance: Content should align with learners' interests and language level.
- Diversity: Incorporate a variety of scenes to cover different contexts and question types.
- Detail: Include enough detail to generate multiple questions but avoid overwhelming the learner.
- Cultural Sensitivity: Use culturally appropriate images to ensure relatability.

Strategies for Using Picture Scenes

- Pre-Viewing Activities: Activate prior knowledge by discussing related themes.
- Observation Tasks: Encourage learners to describe what they see.
- Question Formulation: Have learners generate wh questions based on the scene.
- Role-Play: Use scenes for simulated conversations.
- Follow-Up Activities: Extend learning with writing or storytelling based on the scene.

Benefits of Using Picture Scenes for Wh Questions

Adopting picture scenes in teaching provides multiple advantages:

- Enhances Comprehension: Visual context helps learners understand and interpret language better.
- Encourages Active Participation: Learners are more motivated when engaging with vivid images.
- Supports Differentiated Instruction: Scenes can be adapted for different skill levels.
- Facilitates Natural Language Use: Mimics real-life situations, promoting authentic communication.

- Improves Critical Thinking: Learners analyze scenes to formulate relevant questions.

Limitations and Challenges

Despite their numerous advantages, picture scenes also pose certain challenges:

- Overstimulation: Highly detailed images may distract or overwhelm some learners.
- Cultural Bias: Images may unintentionally reflect cultural stereotypes or biases.
- Resource Intensive: High-quality images or interactive scenes require access to technology and materials.
- Limited Scope: Scenes may not cover all vocabulary or question types unless carefully selected.
- Potential for Misinterpretation: Learners might interpret images differently, leading to confusion.

Practical Applications and Best Practices

In Classroom Settings

- Use a variety of scenes to target specific question words.
- Incorporate group activities where students observe and ask questions collaboratively.
- Utilize flashcards with pictures for quick drills.

In Language Therapy

- Tailor scenes to individual needs, focusing on relevant vocabulary and question types.
- Use scenes as part of storytelling or role-play exercises.
- Integrate technology for interactive scene exploration.

In Self-Study or Online Learning

- Provide downloadable or online interactive scenes.
- Encourage learners to create their own scenes and question prompts.
- Use forums or chat platforms for question-answer exchanges based on scenes.

Best Practices

- Start with simple scenes and gradually increase complexity.

- Encourage open-ended questions to promote richer language use.
- Provide models or examples of wh questions.
- Offer feedback to guide correct question formation.

Conclusion

Picture scenes for wh questions are a dynamic and effective pedagogical tool that bridges visual stimuli with language development. Their versatility allows educators and therapists to tailor lessons that are engaging, contextually rich, and conducive to active learning. While considerations around resource availability and cultural sensitivity are necessary, the overall impact of using visual scenes to teach question words is overwhelmingly positive. When thoughtfully integrated into curricula, picture scenes can significantly enhance learners' ability to observe, inquire, and communicate confidently in diverse contexts. As technology advances, the potential for interactive and multimedia scenes only expands, promising even more innovative ways to support language learning through visual storytelling.

QuestionAnswer What are picture scenes for wh questions used for in language learning? They are used to help learners practice forming and answering questions beginning with who, what, where, when, why, and how by providing visual prompts that illustrate specific scenarios. How can picture scenes improve a child's understanding of wh questions? By visually depicting situations, picture scenes help children associate questions with context, making it easier to understand and respond appropriately to wh questions. What are some effective ways to create picture scenes for teaching wh questions? Effective methods include using real photographs, illustrated scenes, or digital images that depict everyday settings, then asking targeted wh questions related to the scene to encourage critical thinking and language skills. Why is it important to include diverse and relatable scenes in wh question activities? Including diverse and relatable scenes ensures that learners can connect questions to real-life experiences, enhancing engagement and the practical application of language skills. Can picture scenes for wh questions be used with different age groups? Yes, they can be adapted for various age groups by adjusting the complexity of the scenes and the depth of questions, making them suitable for young children, older students, or language learners at different levels.

Related keywords: photo prompts, image scenes, visual questions, picture-based queries, scene illustrations, visual prompt design, imagery for questions, picture storytelling, scene descriptions, visual cue examples

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