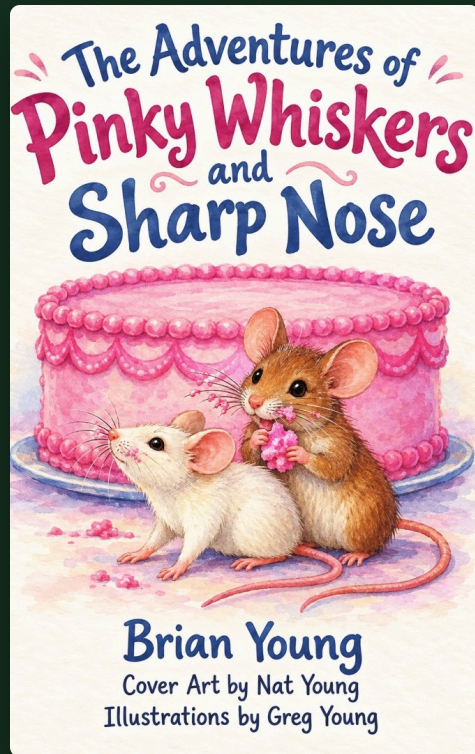


CLASSROOM GUIDE

The Adventures of Pinky Whiskers and Sharp Nose

A read-aloud and discussion guide for grades K to 4: chapter questions, vocabulary, activities, writing prompts, and two handouts



ILLUSTRATED BY GREG
YOUNG

AUTHOR

Brian Young

BASED ON

Stories by William Laursen

FORMAT

Illustrated chapter book, 11 chapters, about 25,000 words

AGES

Read-aloud for ages 4 to 8; independent reading for about grades 2 to 4

THEMES

Family, home, courage, curiosity and consequences, kindness, helping

Free to copy and share for classroom, library, and homeschool use.

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About This Guide

This guide is for teachers, reading specialists, librarians, and homeschool families sharing *The Adventures of Pinky Whiskers and Sharp Nose* with children in kindergarten through fourth grade. It works whether you are reading the book aloud to a circle of five-year-olds or handing it to a third grader who wants a chapter book with pictures. The synopsis and the Before Reading pages are spoiler-free; the chapter guide and the After Reading questions discuss the whole plot, including the ending.

Inside: a spoiler-free synopsis, a standards table, before-reading activities, a chapter-by-chapter read-aloud guide with questions and a vocabulary word for each of the eleven chapters, themes in plain language, six activity cards, writing prompts with sentence starters, two handouts (a Story Map and a Character Web), whole-book questions, and ways to reach the author. Everything may be photocopied for educational use.

The Book at a Glance

Ages 4 to 8 read-aloud

Grades 2 to 4 independent

11 chapters

About 25,000 words

Illustrated

Animal adventure

Third-person narrator who talks to the reader

Synopsis. Sharp Nose is a young mouse with the best nose in the mountains. She can smell a piece of cheese from half a mile away, which is useful when the family needs food and a problem the rest of the time, because her nose keeps leading her to places she has been told not to go. When it leads her into a woodsman's pantry, the family has to leave the only home she has ever known. So Mother, who is expecting a baby, Father, and Sharp Nose float down a river on a boat made of twigs and a maple leaf, headed for a mining camp where the chipmunks say the crumbs are excellent. A baby brother arrives, and soon earns a name he will never live down. Then the family is on the move again, through a dark field, into a green valley that smells like every mouse's dream, and past an owl, a very large cat, and a snake, looking for the one thing they cannot seem to find: a safe place to stay.

Why it works in the classroom. The chapters end on hooks and run from about seven to twenty-five minutes out loud (the cake chapter is the long one), and the narrator talks straight to the listener ("You'd never seen such a happy family of mice!"). Every child with a brother or sister will recognize Sharp Nose and Pinky Whiskers. Sharp Nose keeps making the same mistake, which gives young readers a safe way to talk about impulses, rules, and consequences without anyone in the room being the one in trouble. The journey structure makes the book easy to map and retell. And the dangers are real but survivable: nobody dies, and every chase ends at home.

About the Author

Brian Young grew up in Utah hiking the High Uintas, spent eight years in Seattle, and now lives in Chicago. *The Adventures of Pinky Whiskers and Sharp Nose* is based on stories told by his great-grandfather, William Laursen. The book, written in 2000, is dedicated to William and Lulu Laursen and their descendants, to Brian's grandmother Doris Laursen Jorgensen, and to his children Kaylie, Owen,

and Kara. It is illustrated by Greg Young, with cover art by Nat Young. Brian is also the author of the Sophia Sprite series for older readers, a YA fantasy that begins with *Sophia Sprite and the Sasquatch Secret*. He welcomes mail from readers and classrooms at hello@brianyoungauthor.com.

A NOTE FROM BRIAN

My great-grandfather, William Laursen, told stories about a family of mice. I wrote this one down in 2000 for my own kids, and I tried to keep what I think made his stories work: a nose that gets everyone into trouble, a little brother who ends up being the sensible one, and parents who are tired and still never give up.

If you teach it, I hope you spend a little time on the quiet parts too. Pinky holding Mother's hand across the field. Father admitting, more or less, that Mother was right about the cow. The rabbits making room for four strangers. The chases are the fun parts to read out loud, but the quiet parts are the ones I wanted my kids to remember.

Teachers and librarians can reach me at hello@brianyoungauthor.com. I do free short virtual visits when my schedule allows, and if your class sends drawings of the boat, I will keep them.

Brian

Standards Connections

The questions and activities support the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts in grades K through 3 (and extend easily to grade 4), plus science and social-emotional learning.

STRAND	STANDARDS AND WHERE THIS GUIDE MEETS THEM
Reading: Literature	RL.K-3.1, key details (while-reading questions); RL.K-3.2, retelling and the lesson (summaries, Story Map); RL.K-3.3, characters, settings, events (Character Web, journey map); RL.K-3.7, illustrations and words (picture walk, draw a scene)
Speaking and Listening	SL.K-3.1, collaborative conversations ("talk about it" questions, reader's theater); SL.K-3.2, understanding a text read aloud (retell after each chapter)
Writing	W.K-3.3, narrative writing (the prompts and sentence starters)
Science	Animal needs and habitats: what living things need and how the places they live provide it ("What does a mouse need?"; NGSS K-LS1-1 and K-ESS3-1)
Social-emotional learning	Self-management (Sharp Nose and the cheese), responsible decision-making (rules, honesty, asking for help), relationship skills (siblings, helpful strangers), in the CASEL frame
Math (optional)	Nonstandard units, counting to fifty, simple addition ("Measure like a mouse")

Before Reading

Picture Walk and Prediction 10 MIN

Show the cover without reading the title. Ask what students see (two mice, a very large pink cake, frosting on whiskers) and what is happening. Then read the title and ask why a mouse might be named Sharp Nose, and what “Pinky Whiskers” has to do with the cake. Page through Greg Young’s illustrations without reading and list what students notice: where the mice are, what other animals appear, whether the mice look safe or scared. Finish with a three-column prediction chart: *What we think will happen*, *Why we think so*, and *What really happened*, to fill in as you read.

Three “I wonder” questions

Post these on chart paper and return to them after each chapter.

- I wonder why a family of mice would need to find a new home.
- I wonder what a mouse’s nose can do that mine cannot.
- I wonder what happens to a mouse who gets caught eating a cake.

Build Background: Mice as Animals

Ask what students already know about mice, then add these general facts. Keep the list posted and have students check off each one when the book shows it.

- Mice are small mammals with fur, long tails, and whiskers that help them feel their way in the dark.
- They have a strong sense of smell and good hearing, and they are mostly active at night.
- They eat seeds, grains, and crumbs, and they will nibble on almost anything people leave out.
- Many animals hunt mice (owls, hawks, snakes, cats), so mice stay hidden and move along walls.
- They build nests out of soft things like straw, leaves, and bits of cloth, in small, hidden spaces.
- They can squeeze through very small openings.

For a mouse’s-eye view, have students lie on the floor and look up at a desk. The narrator says a rose, to a mouse, is three times as big as you are (Chapter 3). Where would a mouse hide in this room?

Chapter-by-Chapter Read-Aloud Guide

Each chapter has a two-sentence summary for the teacher, two or three “while reading” questions (the first is literal, the rest ask students to infer), a “talk about it” question about feelings and choices, and a vocabulary word with a kid-friendly definition. Introduce the word before you read and listen for it.

Chapter 1: The River

For the teacher. Mother (expecting a baby), Father, and their daughter Sharp Nose drift down a river on a twig boat with a maple-leaf sail, after Sharp Nose's nose led her into a woodsman's pantry and the family had to leave the cabin by the lake. Father asks her to promise to go out only at night and stay away from humans, and they land at the mining camp the chipmunks told them about.

- 1 Why did the family have to leave the cabin by the lake? What is their boat made of?
- 2 Father asks Sharp Nose to promise three things. What are they? Do you think she will keep her promises, and what makes you think so?
- 3 The narrator says Sharp Nose's nose has led the family into trouble as many times as it has led them away from it. What does that tell you about the adventures ahead?

Talk about it. Sharp Nose says a few more hours is “like an eternity.” When have you had to wait for something exciting? What helps you wait?

Word to know: *eternity.* A time so long it never ends. To Sharp Nose, a few hours is one.

Chapter 2: The Mining Camp

For the teacher. Father finds an empty squirrel hole behind the mess hall fire pit and builds beds, a sofa, curtains, and a cradle out of sticks, straw, and scraps of cloth. Sent out to play while the baby is born, Sharp Nose wanders to the mine, climbs into an empty ore cart, is chased by two miners, and comes home dirty to find a baby brother.

- 1 What does Father build for the new home, and what does he use to build it?
- 2 Father tells Sharp Nose to stay away from the humans. Why does she walk toward the mine anyway?
- 3 When Father asks if she got into trouble, Sharp Nose says, “Trouble? Me?” Why doesn't she tell him the truth?

Talk about it. Sharp Nose keeps a secret from her parents. Is it ever okay to hide something from a grown-up? What might happen later because of this secret?

Word to know: *famished.* Very, very hungry, like Sharp Nose when Father brings the crumbs.

Chapter 3: Baby Takes the Cake

For the teacher. Sharp Nose teaches her week-old brother hide and seek in a pine clearing, and that night, while the miners dance, her nose leads the two of them up a broom handle to a giant cake with pink frosting. A miner's wife screams and faints, Mother laughs and names the frosting-covered baby Pinky Whiskers, and the next morning the miners set out traps and poison, so the family decides to leave.

- 1 How does the baby get his name? Who thinks it is funny, and who does not?

- 2 Baby says, “But I AM a baby...” as Sharp Nose drags him out the door. Who is making the choice here? Is that fair to him?
- 3 Father says that if the children had waited, they could have had all the cake they wanted. What does he mean? Why is waiting so hard for Sharp Nose?

Talk about it. Father says, “We give you rules because we love you very much.” Do the rules at your house come from love? Which rule do you understand better now than you used to?

Word to know: *mesmerized*. So interested you cannot look away, like Baby watching the dancers.

We give you rules because we love you very much and we don’t want anything to happen to you.

FATHER, CHAPTER 3

Chapter 4: On the Move

For the teacher. The family slips out of the mining camp at night, afraid of the unknown, and starts across a big open field, where an owl swoops down and nearly carries off Pinky Whiskers. Father shrieks and throws a pebble, Mother pulls Pinky free, they sleep in a hole in the ground, and in the morning Sharp Nose announces that she can smell their new home over the hill.

- 1 During the owl attack, what does each member of the family do?
- 2 Pinky Whiskers says the animals are the ones on safari, and the mice are the ones being hunted. What does he mean? Is he right?
- 3 Pinky’s words “stung Sharp Nose like a bee sting.” What did he say to her, and why did it hurt?

Talk about it. Both mice are scared, but Sharp Nose calls it an adventure and Pinky says, “I’m scared.” Which one are you more like when something is frightening? Is one way better?

Word to know: *cautious*. Careful and watching for trouble, like the mice crossing the field.

Chapter 5: Every Mouse’s Dream

For the teacher. Over the hill is a cheese factory in a green valley full of black-and-white cows, but the building is cement and Father cannot find a way in. While he searches, Mother asks a kind cow, who explains that the doors open every morning for the cheese carts; the family runs inside, builds a home behind an old storeroom wall, and Father finds the cutting room, where cheese scraps cover the floor.

- 1 How does the family finally get inside the cheese factory?
- 2 Father says, “We don’t need to ask for directions.” Why doesn’t he want help? How does he feel when Mother tells him what she did?
- 3 Why does Father take cheese only from the cutting-room floor, and never from the shelves?

Talk about it. Mother says asking for help is better than letting pride get the best of you. When is it hard for you to ask for help? Who do you ask?

Word to know: determined. Not giving up, like Father hunting for a way into the factory.

Chapter 6: The Expedition

For the teacher. Pinky Whiskers wakes his sister with a flying “POUNCE,” and within minutes her nose has talked them both into sneaking out for fresh cheese from the shelves, which they eat until they are sick. They come home to Father’s folded arms and Mother’s tears, the grounding doubles to two weeks, and after Father draws a map on cheesecloth and leads a tour, the night crew finds nibble marks and brings in the meanest barn cat on the farm.

- 1 What rule does Father give about cheese during the tour?
- 2 Pinky tells his sister, “Your nose just makes you more curious.” What is the difference between a nose and a curiosity? Is Pinky right that curiosity is the real curse?
- 3 The humans find nibble marks on the cheese. How do the children’s choice and the cat connect? What do you think happens next?

Talk about it. Mother cries and asks, “Where did I go wrong as a mother?” How do Sharp Nose and Pinky feel when they see her like that? What could they say to her?

Word to know: expedition. A trip to explore a new place. To Sharp Nose, sneaking out counts.

Chapter 7: Nice Kitty

For the teacher. Grounding over, the siblings explore every room and, in the last one, find a huge gray cat with black stripes asleep in a crate; Pinky begs to leave, Sharp Nose insists on peeking, and the cat chases them home so fast it crashes headfirst into the wall. Pinky tells Father the truth about the shelf cheese, and the family agrees to hide quietly until the humans decide the mice are gone and send the cat back to the barn.

- 1 Pinky says, “I have a bad feeling about this room.” What clue tells him something is in the crate?
- 2 Sharp Nose tells Pinky to stop acting like a baby, and he goes along anyway. Why? What else could he have done?
- 3 Father figures out why the cat is there. How does he connect the shelf cheese to the cat?

Talk about it. Pinky tells the truth even though it gets his sister in trouble. Was that the right thing to do? What would you have done?

Word to know: agile. Quick and nimble. The cat is fat but agile, bad news for a mouse.

Chapter 8: The Escape

For the teacher. Weeks of hiding wear Sharp Nose down until one night her cheese cravings win and she sneaks out, with Pinky following to guard the door. The cat pounces, Pinky sprains his leg in a fall, Sharp Nose lures the cat away from him and tips a shelf of cheese onto it, and at dawn the family escapes through the loading doors, which slam on the cat’s face.

- 1 How do Sharp Nose and Pinky get away from the cat?
- 2 Sharp Nose tells Father, “I try and I try, but no matter what I do, I just can’t seem to do it.” Is she sorry? How can you tell?
- 3 Father says that when things seem too good to be true, they probably are. What was too good to be true about the cheese factory?

Talk about it. Sharp Nose got her brother into danger, and then she was the one who saved him. Can someone be the problem and the hero on the same night?

Word to know: *craving*. Wanting something so badly you can’t think of anything else.

Chapter 9: On the Road Again

For the teacher. The family rests in the tall grass, then climbs a steep mountain with Father leading and Sharp Nose on watch at the back, and comes down into a quiet valley with a stream. A rabbit family with seven bunnies invites them to sleep over in their cozy hole and tells Father about a kind woman in a forest cottage who takes care of small animals and allows no cats.

- 1 What job does Sharp Nose take during the journey? What do the rabbits say about the cottage?
- 2 The narrator says, “there’s no place like home.” But the mice don’t have a home right now. What does the sentence mean?
- 3 Sharp Nose is sad to leave the cheese, but the narrator says she loved her family much more than any cheese. Where in the book has she already shown that?

Talk about it. The rabbits share their home and their food with four strangers. Has someone ever welcomed you somewhere new? How did it feel?

Word to know: *hospitality*. Being kind and welcoming to guests, like the rabbits.

Chapter 10: Search for Paradise

For the teacher. Mother wakes with the sniffles and gets sicker with every field, so Pinky holds her hand, and Father carries her when a green snake comes rippling through the grass, until a hawk snatches the snake out of the air. They reach the forest at sundown but cannot find the cottage, and Mother collapses under a tree as the family falls asleep around her.

- 1 How does the family escape the snake?
- 2 Father starts a scary story about mice hearing a strange noise, and then a real noise interrupts. Why do you think the author did that?
- 3 Pinky takes Mother’s hand and helps her walk. How has Pinky changed since the first chapters of the book?

Talk about it. Mother says she is fine and never complains, but she is very sick. Why might someone pretend to be okay? How can you tell when someone needs help?

Word to know: *discouraged*. Ready to give up, like the family when the cottage won't turn up.

Chapter 11: Home Sweet Home

For the teacher. The family wakes on a bed of hay under a knitted blanket, and a neighbor mouse named Squeaker explains that Lulu, the kind old woman who owns the cottage, found them shivering under a tree and nursed Mother with soup and a warm bed. Everyone gets a job (Father gathers food, Mother tells bedtime stories), the children go to mouse school and play hide and seek with new friends, and they all live happily ever after.

- 1 Who found the family in the forest, and how did she help?
- 2 Squeaker says every mouse at the cottage has a job. What are Father's and Mother's jobs, and why are they good fits?
- 3 Father asks, "Did we die? Are we in heaven?" Why would he think that?

Talk about it. The cottage has no cats, owls, or snakes. Which matters more at the end, being safe or being together? Can you have one without the other?

Word to know: *paradise*. A perfect place with everything you need, like the cottage.

Themes in Plain Language

Family sticks together

Father builds the beds. Mother asks the cow. Sharp Nose guards the back of the line. Pinky holds Mother's hand. When Pinky's little legs cannot keep up, nobody leaves him behind. Who in this family helps whom?

Home is more than a place

The mice live in a cabin, a wall in a mess hall, a cheese factory, a rabbit hole, and a cottage. Some had plenty of food and no safety. One had both. The narrator says there's no place like home. What makes a place a home?

Being brave while being scared

Father throws a pebble at an owl. Pinky stands guard at the door with a shaky voice. Sharp Nose shouts at the cat to leave her hurt brother alone. None of them stops being scared. What does brave look like in this book?

Curiosity has consequences

Sharp Nose's nose finds the pantry, the ore cart, the pink cake, the shelf cheese, and the cat's crate. Every time, something happens next: a move, traps, a cat. Pinky says her curiosity is the curse. Is curiosity bad, or is it what you do with it?

Kindness from strangers

A cow gives directions. A rabbit family shares its hole and its carrots. An old woman named Lulu finds a shivering family under a tree and takes them in. The mice could not have made it without animals and people who did not have to help. Who has helped you when they did not have to?

Helping is how you show love

At the cottage every mouse has a job, and the family is happiest there. Pinky packs Sharp Nose's things, guards the door, and helps Mother walk. Father gathers food. Mother tells stories. What is your job at home, and what job would you choose?

LESSON OF THE BOOK, IN STUDENTS' WORDS

Ask: "If Sharp Nose could tell a younger mouse one thing she learned, what would she say?" Write every answer on the board and vote on the one that fits the whole book best. Then compare it to the narrator's last page: a story of courage, adventure, and unconditional love.

Activities

Story map of the journey

On a long strip of paper, draw the stops in order: the cabin by the lake, the river, the mining camp, the big field, the cheese factory, the rabbit hole, the forest, Lulu's cottage. Add the dangers in between (miners, owl, cat, snake). Younger students draw; older students write one sentence per stop. Hang it along the wall so the class can walk the journey.

Draw the boat, or a scene

Chapter 1 describes the boat exactly: twigs tied with orange twine, a stick for a mast, a giant maple leaf for a sail. Draw it from the words alone, then compare with the illustrations. Or draw the pink cake, the cat in its crate, or the bunny sleepover. Add a caption.

My perfect home

Squeaker lists what makes the cottage a dream home for a mouse: a room for each family, meals together, school, jobs, and no cats. Students draw their own perfect home and complete the sentence: "My perfect home has ____ and no ____." Share in a circle.

Measure like a mouse (math)

Cut a paper mouse about three inches long and use it as a unit: how many mice long is your desk, a book, the door? Pinky counts to fifty in hide and seek; count to fifty by ones, fives, and tens. Sleepover math: seven bunnies, two rabbit parents, four mice. How many in the hole? Fold a paper cheese wheel into halves and quarters.

What does a mouse need? (science)

Make a chart with four needs: food, water, shelter, and safety from predators. For each place the family lives, check which needs were met. The mining camp had food but traps. The factory had cheese but a cat. Which place met all four? Extend: what does the cat need? The owl? Why do predator and prey want different things from the same field?

Reader's theater: Asking the Cow

Chapter 5, from "Excuse me..." to Father learning what Mother did. Roles: Narrator, Mother, the Cow, Father, Sharp Nose, Pinky Whiskers (the children can add the hoofbeats). Mark the lines in the book, practice the cow's voice, and perform for another class. Alternate scene: the pink cake in Chapter 3, with a Miner's Wife who gets exactly one line.

Writing Prompts for Early Writers

Kindergartners can dictate or draw and label; older students write a paragraph or a page.

1. **A name that fits.** Sharp Nose and Pinky Whiskers were named for something about them. *If I were named for something I do, my name would be _____ because _____.*
2. **Dear Sharp Nose.** Write her a letter about the cheese. *Dear Sharp Nose, the next time you smell cheese, you should _____. I know it is hard because _____.*
3. **The best hiding spot.** Pinky memorizes every hiding place in the factory. *The best hiding spot I know is _____. To get there, you _____. Nobody has ever found me because _____.*
4. **Finish Father's story.** In Chapter 10, Father never gets to finish his campfire story. *The mice around the campfire heard a strange noise. It was _____. Then _____.*
5. **Where I feel safe.** The family searches the whole book for a safe place. *I feel safe when _____. The people who keep me safe are _____. One thing I do to help keep my family safe is _____.*

The Journey of Pinky Whiskers and Sharp Nose

Name: _____ Date: _____

A story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Draw or write what happens in each part. Then answer the last question.

Beginning (Chapters 1 to 3). Where does the family start, and why do they leave? Who is born?

Middle (Chapters 4 to 8). Where do they go next? What goes wrong there? Draw or name the animal that chases them.

End (Chapters 9 to 11). Who helps the family? Where do they live at the end?

What did Sharp Nose learn?

Character Web

Name: _____ Date: _____

Circle one: **Sharp Nose** or **Pinky Whiskers** Fill in the four parts of the web. Draw your mouse on the back of this page.

What my mouse is like (three words that describe them, with one example from the book):

What my mouse wants more than anything:

What my mouse does (one brave thing, one mistake):

How my mouse changes from Chapter 1 to Chapter 11:

If this mouse came to my school, we would

After Reading

Whole-book questions

- 1 The mice live in five different places in this book. Which one was the real home, and how do you know? Check the “I wonder” chart to see what the class guessed.
- 2 Sharp Nose says, “I always give in.” By the end of the book, has she changed? What about Pinky Whiskers? Find one moment for each that shows it.
- 3 Who was the kindest character in the book, and who was the bravest? Could one character be both? Vote, then let each side give one reason.
- 4 Father says there are some things you just have to learn the hard way. What did Sharp Nose learn the hard way? Was there an easier way she could have learned it?
- 5 The last line says they all lived happily ever after. What do you think happens the next morning at Lulu’s cottage? Does Sharp Nose smell something?

Resources and Contact

Get the book



Paperback and hardcover on Amazon (the ebook is in Kindle Unlimited); paperback by order from any bookstore, ISBN 978-1-7341794-4-6. Ask your librarian to add it to the collection.
brianyoungauthor.com

More free guides



A Reading Club Kit for this book (read-alouds, storytimes, a quiz, games, trivia) and guides for Brian’s other books, free to download.
brianyoungauthor.com

Author visits

Brian offers free short virtual visits for classrooms, libraries, and reading clubs as his schedule allows: a short reading, how his great-grandfather’s mice became a book, and time for questions. Write to hello@brianyoungauthor.com with your dates, grade level, and group size. For readers ten and up, his Sophia Sprite series has its own free classroom guide at the website.

THANK YOU

Thank you for reading this book out loud. If your students have questions for me, or strong opinions about whether Sharp Nose should have eaten the cake, I want to hear them. Brian Young, hello@brianyoungauthor.com

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