

# barbara kingsolver the bean trees

Barbara Kingsolver and The Bean Trees: A Journey Through Compassion and Growth

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees** is a phrase that immediately brings to mind a novel rich with warmth, humor, and social insight. Published in 1988, *The Bean Trees* marked Kingsolver's debut in the literary world and set the tone for her career as a writer deeply attuned to human stories and environmental consciousness. This novel not only reflects Kingsolver's signature style but also invites readers into a compelling narrative about resilience, friendship, and the unanticipated paths life can take.

## Understanding The Bean Trees: A Story of Unexpected Motherhood and Community

Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* tells the story of Taylor Greer, a woman who leaves her small Kentucky hometown with dreams of a better life and unexpectedly finds herself caring for a young Native American girl named Turtle. This novel explores themes of family, identity, and survival, all wrapped in the compassionate storytelling that has come to define Kingsolver's work.

## The Plot and Its Emotional Core

The narrative follows Taylor's journey westward, initially focused on escaping her past and finding stability. The story takes a turn when she becomes the guardian of Turtle, a mute child with a traumatic history. Taylor's evolving relationship with Turtle and the community she builds in Tucson, Arizona, form the emotional backbone of the book. Kingsolver's portrayal of these characters highlights the strength found in unexpected connections.

## Character Development and Symbolism

Taylor Greer stands out as a relatable and resilient protagonist. Her growth throughout the novel is mirrored by her interactions with other characters, including Lou Ann Ruiz, a single mother neighbor, and Mattie, who runs a tire shop and provides unwavering support. The bean trees themselves symbolize growth and nurture—an apt metaphor for Taylor's new life and the community she fosters.

## Thematic Depths in Barbara Kingsolver's The

# **Bean Trees**

What makes *The Bean Trees* more than just a coming-of-age story is its rich thematic layers. Kingsolver uses her narrative to touch on broader social issues while maintaining a focus on individual stories.

## **Exploration of Social Issues**

The book gently but effectively addresses topics such as immigration, domestic abuse, and the struggles faced by marginalized communities. Through Turtle's background and Taylor's encounters, readers gain insight into the challenges of fostering and adopting children with difficult pasts. Kingsolver doesn't preach; instead, she weaves these themes naturally into the storyline, encouraging empathy and understanding.

## **Environmental and Regional Influences**

Kingsolver's love for nature and the environment shines through in her vivid descriptions of the American South and Southwest. The landscapes are not just backdrops but integral to the story's mood and symbolism. This connection to place adds an extra layer of authenticity and depth, inviting readers to appreciate the setting as much as the characters.

## **Barbara Kingsolver's Writing Style in *The Bean Trees***

Kingsolver's writing in *The Bean Trees* is characterized by its accessibility, warmth, and subtle humor. Her prose strikes a balance between simplicity and lyrical beauty, making the novel approachable for a wide audience.

## **A Voice That Resonates**

One of the reasons *The Bean Trees* remains beloved is Kingsolver's ability to craft a narrative voice that feels genuine and engaging. Taylor's perspective offers a candid and often witty take on life's unpredictability. This voice helps readers connect deeply with the story and its themes.

## **Use of Dialogue and Local Vernacular**

Kingsolver's skillful use of dialogue adds authenticity to the characters and their

interactions. The incorporation of colloquial language and regional dialects enriches the reading experience by grounding the story in its cultural context without alienating readers unfamiliar with the region.

## Why The Bean Trees Endures as a Literary Favorite

Decades after its publication, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* continues to be studied and cherished by readers and educators alike. Its enduring appeal lies in the novel's heartfelt exploration of human resilience and kindness.

## Relatable Themes for Modern Readers

In an era where conversations about family structures, adoption, and social justice are more prominent than ever, *The Bean Trees* offers a compassionate lens through which to explore these issues. Taylor's journey resonates with anyone who has faced uncertainty or sought to build a chosen family.

## Inspiration for Writers and Readers

Aspiring writers often look to Kingsolver's debut as an example of how to weave social commentary into compelling storytelling without sacrificing narrative flow. Readers find inspiration in the book's message of hope and community, making it a frequent recommendation across book clubs and educational settings.

## Exploring Related Works and Further Reading

For those intrigued by Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*, diving into her other novels can provide a broader understanding of her literary voice and thematic interests.

- **Prodigal Summer** – A novel that blends ecology and human relationships in the Appalachian Mountains.
- **The Poisonwood Bible** – A multi-generational story set in the Congo that examines cultural clashes and personal transformation.
- **Animal, Vegetable, Miracle** – A non-fiction work focusing on sustainable agriculture and eating locally.

These works complement the themes introduced in *The Bean Trees* and showcase Kingsolver's commitment to exploring the intersections of human and environmental narratives.

## Tips for Reading and Teaching *The Bean Trees*

If you're considering reading *The Bean Trees* for pleasure or study, here are some tips to enhance your experience:

1. **Pay attention to character relationships:** Notice how Taylor's connections evolve and the role community plays in healing and support.
2. **Reflect on social issues:** Think about how the novel addresses topics like immigration and adoption, and discuss these themes with others.
3. **Appreciate the setting:** Use the vivid descriptions of the American Southwest to imagine the atmosphere and mood of the story.
4. **Explore symbolism:** Consider what the bean trees represent within the narrative and how this symbolism relates to growth and nurturing.

Engaging with the novel on these levels can deepen your appreciation and open up meaningful conversations.

Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* is more than just a story about a young woman and a child; it is a celebration of humanity's capacity for kindness, adaptability, and hope. Through its memorable characters and heartfelt narrative, the novel continues to inspire readers to embrace life's unpredictability with courage and compassion.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is Barbara Kingsolver in relation to *The Bean Trees*?

Barbara Kingsolver is the author of *The Bean Trees*, a novel published in 1988.

### What is the main theme of *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver?

The main themes include motherhood, resilience, and the search for identity and belonging.

## **Who is the protagonist in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*?**

The protagonist is Taylor Greer, a young woman who leaves her hometown to start a new life.

## **How does Barbara Kingsolver portray community in *The Bean Trees*?**

Kingsolver portrays community as a source of support and healing, emphasizing the importance of chosen families.

## **What role does the character Turtle play in *The Bean Trees*?**

Turtle is a young Native American girl whom Taylor adopts, representing themes of protection and unconventional motherhood.

## **How does Barbara Kingsolver incorporate environmental themes in *The Bean Trees*?**

Kingsolver subtly includes environmental concerns through descriptions of nature and the settings, reflecting her broader advocacy.

## **What narrative style does Barbara Kingsolver use in *The Bean Trees*?**

The novel is written in a first-person narrative from Taylor Greer's perspective, providing an intimate and personal view.

## **How does *The Bean Trees* address issues of immigration and cultural identity?**

The novel explores these issues through characters like Lou Ann and the struggles faced by Native Americans, highlighting cultural challenges.

## **Why is *The Bean Trees* considered an important work in Barbara Kingsolver's career?**

It is Kingsolver's debut novel and established her reputation for blending social issues with engaging storytelling.

## **What is the significance of the title '*The Bean Trees*' in**

# Barbara Kingsolver's novel?

The title symbolizes growth and resilience, drawing from a story about a bean tree that grows in difficult conditions, mirroring the characters' experiences.

## Additional Resources

Barbara Kingsolver *The Bean Trees*: An In-Depth Literary Exploration

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees** stands as a seminal work in contemporary American literature, reflecting the intricate interplay of human resilience, cultural identity, and social justice. Since its publication in 1988, Kingsolver's debut novel has captivated readers and critics alike with its vivid storytelling and profound thematic concerns. This article delves into the multidimensional aspects of *The Bean Trees*, unpacking its narrative structure, character development, and the socio-political context that shapes its enduring relevance.

## Contextual Background and Authorial Insight

Barbara Kingsolver is renowned for her keen environmental consciousness and commitment to social issues, traits that permeate *The Bean Trees*. Set predominantly in the American South and Southwest, the novel mirrors Kingsolver's own upbringing in rural Kentucky and her deep interest in ecology and human rights. The novel's title, *The Bean Trees*, metaphorically references growth and sustenance, themes central to Kingsolver's narrative.

The story follows Taylor Greer, a young, determined woman who escapes her small-town life in Kentucky to forge a new path in Tucson, Arizona. The unexpected responsibility of caring for an abandoned Native American child catalyzes Taylor's journey, both physically and emotionally. Kingsolver's choice to position a female protagonist in this context underlines the novel's feminist undertones and its exploration of non-traditional family dynamics.

## Thematic Exploration in *The Bean Trees*

### Identity and Transformation

One of the foremost themes in Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* is identity—both personal and cultural. Taylor's evolution from a directionless teenager to a responsible guardian exemplifies the quest for self-definition. Moreover, the novel interrogates the intersectionality of identity, especially through the portrayal of Turtle, the Native American child, whose presence exposes issues of displacement and cultural survival.

The novel critiques societal structures that marginalize indigenous communities, highlighting themes of adoption and guardianship through a compassionate lens. This focus on cross-cultural empathy advances a broader discourse on belonging and the redefinition of family beyond biological ties.

## **Environmental and Social Justice**

True to Kingsolver's environmental activism, *The Bean Trees* subtly incorporates concerns about ecological stewardship and community resilience. The rural settings and descriptions of the American landscape function as more than backdrops; they serve as living entities influencing the characters' lives. The novel advocates for a harmonious coexistence with nature, contrasting starkly with the human-induced hardships faced by marginalized groups.

Social justice emerges through the characters' interactions with immigration issues and Native American rights. The narrative critiques the bureaucratic indifference and systemic inequalities that complicate the lives of immigrants and indigenous peoples alike. Kingsolver's nuanced portrayal avoids didacticism, instead fostering empathy and understanding through intimate storytelling.

## **Character Development and Narrative Style**

Kingsolver employs a first-person narrative that offers immediacy and authenticity. Taylor's voice is candid, infused with humor and resilience, which invites readers to engage deeply with her perspective. This narrative choice effectively captures the complexities of navigating a world marked by unpredictability and injustice.

## **Taylor Greer: A Portrait of Resilience**

Taylor's character arc is a study in empowerment. Her pragmatic optimism and evolving maternal instincts challenge traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Kingsolver crafts Taylor as an emblem of self-reliance tempered by compassion, illustrating how adversity can catalyze growth.

## **Supporting Characters: A Tapestry of Community**

The supporting cast, including Lou Ann Ruiz and Mattie, enriches the narrative by embodying diverse experiences of womanhood and survival. Lou Ann's struggles with single motherhood and Mattie's activism highlight the multiplicity of female strength. These characters collectively underscore the novel's emphasis on chosen family and communal support systems.

# Comparative Literary Significance

In the canon of late 20th-century American fiction, *The Bean Trees* occupies a unique position. It shares thematic affinities with works like Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, particularly regarding female identity and cultural hybridity. However, Kingsolver's integration of environmental and socio-political concerns lends the novel a distinctive voice.

Unlike more overtly political novels, *The Bean Trees* balances activism with storytelling, allowing readers to engage with complex issues through relatable characters. This narrative strategy enhances its accessibility and impact, contributing to its frequent inclusion in academic curricula focused on multicultural literature and women's studies.

## Critical Reception and Legacy

Upon release, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* was lauded for its fresh perspective and compassionate storytelling. Critics praised the novel's warmth and humor, as well as its capacity to address serious social issues without sacrificing narrative engagement. Over three decades later, it continues to resonate, particularly in discussions about intersectionality and community resilience.

The novel's legacy extends beyond literary circles; it has inspired adaptations and educational programs aimed at fostering awareness of adoption, immigration, and indigenous rights. Kingsolver's deft blend of character-driven narrative and social commentary ensures that *The Bean Trees* remains a touchstone in exploring the complexities of human connection.

## Pros and Cons of *The Bean Trees*

- **Pros:** Engaging first-person narrative, strong character development, nuanced exploration of social issues, and environmental themes.
- **Cons:** Some readers may find the pacing uneven, and the resolution of certain plotlines somewhat idealistic.

## Conclusion: Enduring Relevance in Contemporary Literature

Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* is more than a coming-of-age novel; it is a multifaceted exploration of identity, community, and justice. Its enduring appeal lies in its

ability to weave personal narratives with broader societal themes, encouraging readers to reflect on the nature of family and belonging. As contemporary discourse increasingly values intersectional perspectives, Kingsolver's work remains a vital contribution to American literature, continuing to inspire dialogue and empathy across generations.

## **Barbara Kingsolver The Bean Trees**

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**barbara kingsolver the bean trees:** *Reading, Learning, Teaching Barbara Kingsolver* Paul Lee Thomas, 2005 Our English classrooms are often only as vibrant as the literature that we teach. This book explores the writing of contemporary American author, Barbara Kingsolver, who offers readers and students engaging fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that confront the reader and the world. Here, teachers will find an introduction to the works of Kingsolver and an opportunity to explore how to bring those works into the classroom as a part of the reading and writing curriculum. This volume attempts to confront what we teach and how we teach as English teachers through the vivid texts Kingsolver offers her readers.

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: The Bean Trees** Barbara Kingsolver, 2009-03-17 "The Bean Trees is the work of a visionary. . . . It leaves you open-mouthed and smiling." — Los Angeles Times A bestseller that has come to be regarded as an American classic, *The Bean Trees* is the novel that launched Barbara Kingsolver's remarkable literary career. It is the charming, engrossing tale of rural Kentucky native Taylor Greer, who only wants to get away from her roots and avoid getting pregnant. She succeeds, but inherits a three-year-old Native American girl named Turtle along the way, and together, from Oklahoma to Arizona, half-Cherokee Taylor and her charge search for a new life in the West. Hers is a story about love and friendship, abandonment and belonging, and the discovery of surprising resources in seemingly empty places. This edition includes a P.S. section with additional insights from the author, background material, suggestions for further reading, and more.

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees:** Barbara Kingsolver's World Linda Wagner-Martin, 2024-05-16 A revised edition of Linda Wagner-Martin's comprehensive study of the novels, stories, essays and poetry of American author Barbara Kingsolver. Now updated so that coverage runs from Kingsolver's first novel, *The Bean Trees*, through to her most recent, *Demon Copperhead*. Author of the only biography of Barbara Kingsolver and of a reader's guide to *The Poisonwood Bible*, Wagner-Martin has become the leading authority on this Pulitzer-prize-winning author. Here she covers every work in Kingsolver's oeuvre, emphasizing the writer's blend of the scientific method in which she was formally trained with her convincing understanding of the human characters that fill her books. What Kingsolver achieves throughout all her writing is a seamless blending of the various parts of human existence. She melds important themes through parts and pieces of the natural world—the African snakes, the Monarch butterflies, the coyotes in Deanna Wolfe's existence. Repeatedly Kingsolver writes to create both characters and the characters' worlds, bringing all these pieces into masterful, and whole, realities. This edition includes two new chapters - one on her 2018 novel, *Unsheltered*, and the second on her 2022 novel, *Demon Copperhead* - and is the first study of Kingsolver to publish since she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2023.

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees:** Barbara Kingsolver's The Bean Trees , 2012

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees:** Maternal Conditions Melissa A. Schoeffel, 2008 Maternal

Conditions analyzes the depiction of motherhood in the works of Barbara Kingsolver, Ana Castillo, Louise Erdrich, and Ruth Ozeki. The book examines the politics underlying and engendered by ethnically diverse representations of the maternal, interrogating the dominant cultural understanding of the good mother. This analysis then moves to a study of how the subjective experience of mothers is portrayed in these writings, ending with an exploration of the relationship between motherhood and ethics.

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: New Visions of Community in Contemporary American Fiction** Magali Cornier Michael, 2008-04 In this engaging, optimistic close reading of five late twentieth-century novels by American women, Magali Cornier Michael illuminates the ways in which their authors engage with ideas of communal activism, common commitment, and social transformation. The fictions she examines imagine coalition building as a means of moving toward new forms of nonhierarchical justice; for ethnic cultures that, as a result of racist attitudes, have not been assimilated, power with each other rather than power over each other is a collective goal. Michael argues that much contemporary American fiction by women offers models of care and nurturing that move away from the private sphere toward the public and political. Specifically, texts by women from such racially marked ethnic groups as African American, Asian American, Native American, and Mexican American draw from the rich systems of thought, histories, and experiences of these hybrid cultures and thus offer feminist and ethical revisions of traditional concepts of community, coalition, subjectivity, and agency. Focusing on Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven*, Ana Castillo's *So Far from God*, and Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, Michael shows that each writer emphasizes the positive, liberating effects of kinship and community. These hybrid versions of community, which draw from other-than-dominant culturally specific ideas and histories, have something to offer Americans as the United States moves into an increasingly diverse twenty-first century. Michael provides a rich lens through which to view both contemporary fiction and contemporary life.

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: Roads of Her Own** Alexandra Ganser, 2009 Reading Jack Kerouac's classic *On the Road* through Virginia Woolf's canonical *A Room of One's Own*, the author of this book examines a genre in North American literature which, despite its popularity, has received little attention in literary and cultural criticism: women's road narratives. The study shows how women's literature has inscribed itself into the American discourse of the Whitmanesque open road, or, more generally, the freedom of the road. Women writers have participated in this powerful American myth, yet at the same time also have rejected that myth as fundamentally based on gendered and racial/ethnic hierarchies and power structures, and modified it in the process of writing back to it. The book analyzes stories about female runaways, outlaws, questers, adventurers, kidnappees, biker chicks, travelling saleswomen, and picas and makes theoretical observations on the debates regarding discourses of spatiality and mobility--debates which have defined the so-called spatial turn in the humanities. The analytical concept of transdifference is introduced to theorize the dissonant plurality of social and cultural affiliations as well as the narrative tensions produced by such pluralities in order to better understand the textual worlds of women's multiple belongings as they are present in these writings. *Roads of Her Own* is thus not only situated in the broader context of a constructivist cultural studies, but also, by discussing narrative mobility under the sign of gender, combines insights from social theory and philosophy, feminist cultural geography, and literary studies. Key names and concepts: Doreen Massey - Rosi Braidotti - Literary Studies - Spatial Turn - Gendered Space and Mobility - Nomadism - Road writing - Transdifference - American Culture - Popular Culture - Women's Literature after the Second Wave - Quest - Picaresque.

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: The Bean Trees** Barbara Kingsolver, 2005-05-12 *The Secret Supper*

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: Encyclopedia of Feminist Literature** Mary Ellen Snodgrass, 2014-05-14 An accessible one-volume encyclopedia, this addition to the *Literary Movements* series is a comprehensive reference guide to the history and development of feminist literature, from early fairy tales to works by great women writers of today. Hundred

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**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: The Secret Lives of Booksellers & Librarians** James Patterson, 2024-04-11 Available now in paperback from the world's bestselling author - A collection of passionate, true stories about the power of reading. 'No one gets this big without amazing natural storytelling talent - which is what Jim has, in spades.' LEE CHILD

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**barbara kingsolver the bean trees:** Twentieth-Century and Contemporary American

Literature in Context Linda De Roche, 2021-06-04 This four-volume reference work surveys American literature from the early 20th century to the present day, featuring a diverse range of American works and authors and an expansive selection of primary source materials. Bringing useful and engaging material into the classroom, this four-volume set covers more than a century of American literary history—from 1900 to the present. Twentieth-Century and Contemporary American Literature in Context profiles authors and their works and provides overviews of literary movements and genres through which readers will understand the historical, cultural, and political contexts that have shaped American writing. Twentieth-Century and Contemporary American Literature in Context provides wide coverage of authors, works, genres, and movements that are emblematic of the diversity of modern America. Not only are major literary movements represented, such as the Beats, but this work also highlights the emergence and development of modern Native American literature, African American literature, and other representative groups that showcase the diversity of American letters. A rich selection of primary documents and background material provides indispensable information for student research.

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: Reading Adoption** Marianne Novy, 2005 A literary scholar who is an adult adoptee delves into one of the enduring themes of literature--the child raised by other parents

**barbara kingsolver the bean trees: Home Matters** R. Rubenstein, 2001-02-23 Despite its typically regressive associations with homesickness, the longing associated with nostalgia may also function progressively as a vehicle for imaginatively 'fixing' the past in two senses: securing and mending or repairing. Considering fiction by two British and six American women writers of different generations and ethnicities, this study explores tensions between home and exile, insider and outsider, longing and belonging, loss and recovery. Rubenstein argues that nostalgia functions narratively as a strategy for interrogating not only notions of home, homesickness, and homeland but also cultural historical dislocation, aging, and moral responsibility. These narratives re-frame a significant locus of concern in contemporary (female) experience: personal and/or cultural displacement and longing for home are ultimately transmuted - imaginatively, at least - by a restorative vision that enables healing and emotional repair.

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**RAL 9001 Cremeweiß (RAL Classic)** | Diese Seite zeigt RAL Farbe 9001 mit dem Farbnamen Cremeweiß. Diese RAL Farbe gehört zur Kategorie Weiß- und Schwarztöne und ist Teil des RAL Classic -Farbsystems

**RAL 9016 oder 9010: Welcher Farbton passt besser zu Ihrem** In diesem Artikel vergleichen wir zwei beliebte Weißtöne: RAL 9016, bekannt als Verkehrsweiß, und RAL 9010, bekannt als Reinweiß, um Ihnen bei der Entscheidung zu

**RAL 9001 en RAL 9010: dit is het verschil! | Praxis** RAL 9001 is een populaire verfkleur en wordt veel gebruikt voor kozijnen, deuren en voor buitenschilderwerk. In vergelijking met RAL kleuren 9010 en 9016, de wat hardere tinten wit,

**RAL 9010 of RAL 9001: wat is het verschil? -** RAL 9010 is helderder van kleur dan RAL 9001. Het heeft een neutrale ondertoon en geeft een frisse uitstraling, terwijl RAL 9001 een warme en klassieke sfeer geeft

**Altweiß oder Reinweiß streichen: So finden Sie den perfekten Ton** Die Wahl des richtigen Weißtons hängt von verschiedenen Faktoren wie Raumgröße, Tageslicht und Einrichtungsstil ab. Jedes Weiß hat eine spezifische Wirkung, die

**RAL 9010 | RAL Farben** Nutzen Sie das Zusammenspiel aus 216 intensiven und zurückgenommenen Farbtönen für die Entwicklung von Farbharmonien und nuancenreichen Kontrasten

**RAL 9010 2K Lack inkl. Härter und Verdünnung** Im Farbton: RAL 9010 Reinweiß Dieser Lack zeichnet sich durch seine leichte Verarbeitung, schnelle Trocknung, glänzende Oberfläche und hohen Witterungsschutz aus

**The differences between whites - RAL 9010, 9016, 9001, - Tintrio** RAL 9001, RAL 9010, RAL 9016: where lies the difference? RAL 9001, RAL 9010 and RAL 9016 are three of the most popular whites in paint. Many people mistake RAL 9010 for the brightest

**Welche RAL-Farbe für weiße Wände und Decken wählen?** RAL 9001 ist immer noch weit verbreitet in Bau und Veredelung, aber seit einigen Jahren wird diese Farbe weniger für Innenwände und -decken verwendet. RAL 9001 wirkt etwas gelblich

**Wie findet man den passenden Weißton? - Immoportal** RAL 9010 Reinweiß ist das am weitesten verbreitetste Weiß. Viele Möbelhersteller bedienen sich dieses Farbtons. Er ist etwas dunkler als Verkehrsweiß (RAL 9016), aber

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