

Author Of The Water Babies

**** Discover the author of the enchanting children's classic, **The Water-Babies**. Learn about Charles Kingsley, his life, other works, and the enduring legacy of this Victorian fantasy. Explore related Victorian literature and children's fantasy authors. WaterBabies CharlesKingsley VictorianLiterature ChildrensLiterature Fantasy**

The captivating tale of **The Water-Babies**, a Victorian fantasy novel brimming with adventure, morality, and fantastical creatures, continues to enchant readers young and old. But who penned this timeless classic? The answer is Charles Kingsley, a multifaceted figure whose influence extends far beyond this single, celebrated work. Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) was a prolific writer, clergyman, and social reformer. He wasn't solely focused on children's literature; his works spanned various genres, reflecting his broad intellectual interests and passionate engagement with the social and religious issues of his time. **The Water-Babies**, published in 1863, is arguably his most enduringly popular work, known for its whimsical narrative and subtle social commentary. It tells the story of Tom, a chimney sweep who transforms into a water-baby, embarking on an extraordinary journey filled with encounters with mythical beings and lessons in morality and environmental responsibility. While the novel's fantastical elements make it a delight for children, Kingsley's writing also subtly addresses Victorian-era social concerns like child labor, class inequality, and environmental degradation. This layered approach has contributed to the novel's lasting appeal and its continued relevance in modern literary discussions.

Advantages of Knowing the Author of **The Water-Babies**

While simply knowing the author's name might seem a minor detail, understanding the context of Charles Kingsley's life and other works provides significant advantages:

- **Deeper Appreciation of the Text:** Understanding Kingsley's social and religious beliefs allows for a richer interpretation of the novel's themes and messages. His personal experiences directly informed his writing.
- **Exploration of Related Works:** Discovering Kingsley's other works, such as **Westward Ho!** and **Hypatia**, provides access to a broader understanding of Victorian literature and his unique writing style.
- **Enhanced Literary Analysis:** **Knowing the author enables more sophisticated literary analysis, connecting **The Water-Babies** to the broader context of Victorian literature and its themes.**
- **Better Understanding of Victorian Society:** *Kingsley's life and writing offer invaluable insight into the social and political landscape of Victorian England.*

Related Topics to **The Water-Babies** and Charles Kingsley

Victorian Children's Literature

Victorian children's literature was a vibrant and diverse field, encompassing fairy tales, adventure stories, and didactic narratives. Kingsley's work occupies a unique space within this landscape, blending fantastical elements with social commentary. Other notable Victorian children's authors include Lewis Carroll (**Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**), George MacDonald (**Phantastes**), and Louisa May Alcott (**Little Women**), each offering distinct styles and thematic concerns. The following table compares their works:

Author	Title	Genre	Key Themes
Charles Kingsley	<i>*The Water-Babies*</i>	Fantasy, Social Commentary	Child labor, environmentalism, morality
Lewis Carroll	<i>*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*</i>	Fantasy, Nonsense	Identity, logic, imagination
George MacDonald	<i>*Phantastes*</i>	Fantasy, Allegory	Faith,

nature, spiritual journey | | Louisa May Alcott | *Little Women* | Realistic Fiction | Family, womanhood, social class |

The Impact of *The Water-Babies* on Later Fantasy Literature

The Water-Babies's influence on subsequent fantasy literature is undeniable. Its blend of whimsical adventure and moral instruction paved the way for later authors who explored similar themes. The novel's use of anthropomorphic characters and its imaginative depiction of the natural world prefigured many elements found in modern fantasy literature. Many authors, consciously or unconsciously, have been influenced by Kingsley's approach to storytelling.

Charles Kingsley's Other Works

Beyond *The Water-Babies*, Kingsley produced a significant body of work across various genres: • Historical Novels: ***Westward Ho!* (1855) is a popular historical novel set during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, known for its adventure and vivid portrayal of Elizabethan England.** • Social Commentary: Kingsley was a passionate social reformer, and his novels often incorporated social commentary addressing issues like poverty and class inequality. • Religious Works: **A clergyman, Kingsley also wrote numerous theological works and sermons reflecting his Christian faith.** • Children's Literature: Besides *The Water-Babies*, he wrote other children's books, though none achieved the same level of enduring popularity.

Comparing Charles Kingsley to Other Victorian Authors

Charles Kingsley held a unique position among Victorian authors. While sharing some common ground with his contemporaries—a concern for social justice, a strong moral compass, and a willingness to engage with contemporary issues—his approach to writing often distinguished him. Unlike some of his more overtly didactic contemporaries, Kingsley integrated his social and moral concerns seamlessly within his narratives, making them more accessible and engaging. This approach contributed significantly to the enduring appeal of *The Water-Babies* and its continued relevance today. A chart comparing Kingsley with other prominent Victorian authors based on key characteristics might help illustrate this further: | Author | Style | Social Commentary | Religious Influence | Focus on Children's Literature | ||||| | Charles Kingsley | Blends fantasy & realism | Subtly integrated | Significant | Moderate | | George Eliot | Realistic, Psychological | Direct & pronounced | Moderate | Low | | Thomas Hardy | Realistic, pessimistic | Implicit, pervasive | Minimal | Low | | Lewis Carroll | Whimsical, Absurdist | Minimal | Low | High | Conclusion: Charles Kingsley's contribution to literature extends far beyond the captivating tale of *The Water-Babies*. His life and multifaceted body of work provide a rich tapestry of Victorian England, reflecting its social, religious, and literary landscape. By understanding Kingsley's context, readers can delve deeper into the enduring appeal of his work, gaining a richer appreciation for both the narrative and its underlying messages. His legacy continues to inspire readers and writers alike, underscoring the timeless appeal of well-crafted storytelling that seamlessly blends imagination, morality, and social commentary. FAQs: 1. What is the main theme of *The Water-Babies*? The main themes are environmentalism, social justice, and the importance of moral development. The novel explores the consequences of industrial pollution and child labor while highlighting the need for compassion and environmental stewardship. 2. Is *The Water-Babies* suitable for all ages? While generally considered a children's book, certain aspects might be

challenging for very young readers. The length, some slightly dark elements, and the more subtle social commentary might be better suited for children aged 8-12 and above. 3. How does **The Water-Babies** reflect Victorian society? *The novel reflects the Victorian Era's rapid industrialization, its social inequalities (particularly concerning child labor), and the growing awareness of environmental issues. The novel's critique of these societal issues serves as a powerful lens through which to study the time period.* 4. What are some of Charles Kingsley's other notable works? *Beyond **The Water-Babies**, his most recognized works include the historical novel **Westward Ho!** and the theological writings that reflected his deep religious beliefs.* 5. How did **The Water-Babies** influence later fantasy literature? *The novel's imaginative world-building, unique characters, and blend of fantasy and realism have influenced many later authors who used similar approaches in their writing. Its unique approach to blending moral instruction within a fantasy setting has proved highly influential.*

The Whimsical Genius Behind 'The Water-Babies': Charles Kingsley

Have you ever stumbled upon a classic children's story that, despite its age, still manages to sparkle with wit, charm, and a surprising amount of social commentary? For many, that story is 'The Water-Babies'. This beloved tale, a staple of many childhoods, transports readers to a fantastical underwater world populated by the spirits of drowned chimney sweeps. But who was the mind that conjured such an imaginative and enduring narrative? The answer, my friends, is the remarkable Charles Kingsley.

Charles Kingsley wasn't just a writer; he was a man of many hats. A Victorian clergyman, a professor, a historian, and a social reformer, his life was as multifaceted as the themes woven into his most famous work. Understanding 'The Water-Babies' author means delving into the life and beliefs of this fascinating individual, exploring what drove him to create such a unique and impactful story.

Charles Kingsley: A Life of Purpose and Passion

Born in 1819, Charles Kingsley's early life was marked by a strong religious upbringing and a deep connection to the natural world. His father, the Reverend Charles Kingsley Sr., was also a clergyman, instilling in young Charles a sense of duty and a keen awareness of spiritual matters. This religious foundation would profoundly influence his writing, particularly his desire to impart moral lessons and highlight the consequences of human actions.

Kingsley's academic journey led him to Cambridge University, where he studied classics and theology. It was during this time that his social conscience began to truly awaken. Witnessing the stark inequalities and the harsh realities of industrial Britain, he became deeply concerned about the plight of the working class, especially children. This concern would become a driving force behind his literary endeavors.

From Pulpit to Page: Kingsley's Literary Endeavors

While Charles Kingsley's academic pursuits were in theology, his literary output extended far beyond sermons. He was a prolific writer, contributing to various journals and publishing novels, poetry, and essays. His writing style was often characterized by its passion, its vivid descriptions, and its earnest, sometimes didactic, tone. He believed that literature could be a powerful tool for social change, and he

used his platform to advocate for reforms in areas such as public health, education, and working conditions.

Some of his other notable works include 'Westward Ho!', a historical novel set during the Elizabethan era, and 'Alton Locke', a social novel that tackles the Chartist movement. However, it's 'The Water-Babies', first published in 1863, that has cemented his place in the hearts of readers, particularly younger ones.

'The Water-Babies': More Than Just a Fairytale

On the surface, 'The Water-Babies' is a charming story about a young chimney sweep named Tom who, after being cruelly treated by his master, Mr. Grimes, drowns and is transformed into a water-baby. He embarks on a magical journey through the underwater world, encountering various creatures and learning important life lessons under the guidance of the benevolent fairy, Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby. But to dismiss it as a simple fairytale would be to miss the profound depth of its author's intentions.

The Social Commentary Woven into the Narrative

Charles Kingsley was deeply troubled by the appalling conditions faced by chimney sweeps in Victorian England. These children, often orphaned or from impoverished families, were forced to climb up narrow, soot-filled chimneys, risking suffocation, burns, and long-term health problems. The novel serves as a powerful indictment of this brutal practice and the societal indifference that allowed it to persist. Through Tom's transformation and his journey, Kingsley highlights the injustice and suffering endured by these young lives.

The very premise of the story – chimney sweeps drowning and becoming water-babies – is a poignant allegory. It suggests that even in death, these abused children find a kind of redemption and a new, albeit fantastical, existence. The underwater world, while magical, is also a place of purification and learning, a stark contrast to the grim reality they left behind.

The Moral Compass of Charles Kingsley

Beyond its social critique, 'The Water-Babies' is steeped in Kingsley's moral and religious convictions. The story is replete with lessons about kindness, cleanliness, honesty, and the importance of hard work. The characters Tom encounters and the trials he faces are all designed to teach him (and the reader) valuable virtues. The "Doasyouwouldbedoneby" philosophy, embodied by Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, is a direct representation of the Golden Rule, a central tenet of Christian ethics.

The contrasting characters of the "wicked" Mr. Grimes and the "good" fairies like Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby serve to illustrate the clear moral lines Kingsley wished to draw. He believed in the power of good to triumph over evil, and in the capacity for even the most unfortunate to find redemption through virtuous living. This didactic element, while sometimes overt, is delivered with such imaginative flair that it rarely detracts from the story's overall appeal.

The Influence of Science and Nature

Interestingly, Charles Kingsley was also a keen observer of the natural world and was influenced by the scientific discoveries of his time, including early evolutionary theories. While 'The Water-Babies' is firmly in

the realm of fantasy, elements of natural history are woven into its fabric. The underwater creatures, the descriptions of marine life, and the scientific explanations offered by the water-babies themselves reveal Kingsley's fascination with the intricate workings of nature. This blend of science and fantasy was characteristic of his broader intellectual interests.

The Enduring Legacy of Charles Kingsley and 'The Water-Babies'

Over a century and a half after its publication, 'The Water-Babies' continues to be read and cherished by generations of children. Its fantastical elements – the talking animals, the magical underwater world, the transformations – captivate young imaginations. Yet, beneath the surface of its enchanting narrative lies a powerful message about social justice, morality, and the inherent worth of every individual, especially those on the margins of society.

The author of 'The Water-Babies', Charles Kingsley, left an indelible mark on Victorian literature and social thought. He was a man who dared to use his considerable talents to shed light on injustice and to inspire a sense of moral responsibility. His work serves as a reminder that even the most imaginative stories can carry profound truths and advocate for meaningful change.

So, the next time you encounter 'The Water-Babies', whether it's a well-worn copy on a dusty bookshelf or a beautifully illustrated new edition, remember the man behind the magic. Charles Kingsley, the clergyman, the reformer, the naturalist, and the storyteller, whose vision brought to life a world where even the smallest and most neglected could find their voice and their place in the grand tapestry of existence.

The Literary Legacy of Henry Kingsley: Author of *The Water Babies*

Henry Kingsley, best known as the author of *The Water Babies*, occupies a unique place in Victorian literary history. Born in 1818 in London, Kingsley was not only a novelist but also a clergyman and social reformer whose work reflected a deep commitment to moral uplift and environmental awareness long before these ideas gained widespread traction. His most celebrated work, *The Water Babies: A Tale for Children*, published in 1863, emerged during a period of intense social change and industrial expansion, offering readers—especially children—a vivid allegory of redemption, perseverance, and the interconnectedness of all living things.

Kingsley's novel was groundbreaking in its fusion of imaginative storytelling with earnest social commentary. Through the journey of Tom Traugart, a young coal miner transformed into a "water baby" after a magical accident in a river, Kingsley wove a narrative that transcended mere fantasy. The story confronts the harsh realities of 19th-century working-class life, including poverty, exploitation, and limited access to education, while advocating for compassion, resilience, and personal transformation. This layered approach made *The Water Babies* not just an entertaining children's book, but a powerful moral lesson rooted in Christian ethics and progressive social values.

Themes and Cultural Impact

At its core, **The Water Babies** explores themes of redemption, identity, and ecological responsibility. Kingsley's use of aquatic creatures and underwater realms served as a vivid metaphor for societal structures and personal growth, inviting readers to reflect on their place within a broader natural order. The novel's emphasis on empathy—especially toward marginalized or vulnerable beings—resonates strongly with contemporary concerns about environmental stewardship and social justice. Over time, the book has inspired adaptations across media, including stage productions, animated films, and illustrated editions, cementing its status as a timeless classic that continues to engage new generations.

Beyond its literary merit, Henry Kingsley's work reflects a rare blend of theological insight and progressive social consciousness. His background in the clergy deeply influenced his storytelling, infusing the narrative with spiritual depth while maintaining accessibility for young audiences. This balance helped **The Water Babies** endure as a foundational text in children's literature, praised for its moral courage and imaginative scope.

Enduring Relevance and Future Outlook

Even in the modern era, Kingsley's **The Water Babies** holds significant relevance. As society grapples with climate change, inequality, and the need for renewed ethical frameworks, the novel's message of personal transformation and collective responsibility remains strikingly pertinent. The story's emphasis on resilience and hope offers comfort and inspiration, especially in educational contexts where storytelling is used to cultivate empathy and civic awareness.

Looking ahead, **The Water Babies** is poised to continue influencing literature, pedagogy, and cultural discourse. Its rich narrative structure and universal themes make it a valuable resource for exploring sustainability, moral development, and ecological consciousness in future creative and academic works. As readers and creators seek meaningful stories that address both heart and mind, Henry Kingsley's masterpiece stands as a compelling example of how literature can inspire lasting change—one reader, one lesson, at a time.

The Enduring Legacy of Charles Kingsley: Author of "The Water-Babies"

Charles Kingsley, a name synonymous with Victorian literature and social reform, is perhaps best remembered as the brilliant mind behind "The Water-Babies, A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby." This seemingly simple children's story, published in 1863, is far more than just a whimsical narrative of aquatic sprites and reformed chimney sweeps. It is a complex tapestry woven with threads of scientific observation, religious conviction, social commentary, and a deep-seated belief in progress and moral upliftment. To understand the author of "The Water-Babies" is to delve into the multifaceted world of Charles Kingsley, a man who was as passionate about scientific discovery as he was about the spiritual well-being of his nation.

A Man of Many Talents: Beyond "The Water-Babies"

While "The Water-Babies" might be his most enduring popular work, Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) was a prolific writer, clergyman, social reformer, educator, and professor. His literary output included historical novels such as "Westward Ho!" and "Hypatia," as well as social problem novels like "Alton Locke" and "Yeast." He was also a keen amateur naturalist, a passion that profoundly influenced his writing, especially "The Water-Babies." Kingsley's immersion in scientific studies, particularly in geology and biology, provided him with the rich material that he so skillfully blended with fantastical elements in his most famous work. His contemporaries often lauded his intellectual prowess and his commitment to applying knowledge for the betterment of society. He was a prominent figure in the Broad Church movement, advocating for a more inclusive and liberal approach to Anglicanism, and his sermons and lectures often addressed contemporary social and scientific issues. His influence extended to education, where he served as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University, inspiring a generation of students with his lectures and writings.

"The Water-Babies": More Than Just a Fairy Tale

At its heart, "The Water-Babies" tells the story of Tom, a young chimney sweep, who is cruelly exploited and abused. Through a series of fantastical events, Tom is transformed into a water-baby, a spirit who lives in the rivers and oceans. Here, he learns the importance of cleanliness, hard work, and kindness, guided by benevolent characters like Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby and Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. The narrative, however, is a thinly veiled allegory for Victorian societal ills and the potential for redemption through moral and physical purification.

The Victorian Context: Social Commentary and Reform

The Victorian era was a period of immense industrial growth, urbanization, and stark social inequalities. Child labor, particularly in dangerous industries like chimney sweeping, was rampant and deeply troubling. Kingsley, with his acute social conscience, used "The Water-Babies" to expose these harsh realities to a readership that included both children and adults. The novel's stark depiction of Tom's initial life highlights the deplorable conditions faced by many working-class children. The transformation into a water-baby represents a purging of the filth and grime associated with their arduous labor, mirroring the Victorian belief that cleanliness was not only a matter of hygiene but also of moral rectitude. This theme of purification, both physical and spiritual, was a central tenet of Victorian middle-class morality. The "land-babies" represent those who remain untouched by the transformative power of nature and moral discipline, while the "water-babies" embody the ideal of a reformed and virtuous individual. The novel's message of redemption and self-improvement resonated deeply with Victorian ideals, encouraging readers to strive for a better, cleaner, and more ethical existence.

Scientific Inspiration: Darwin, Geology, and the Natural World

Charles Kingsley was a fervent admirer of Charles Darwin's theories, particularly "On the Origin of Species." "The Water-Babies" is replete with references to scientific concepts prevalent during the mid-19th century. The very idea of transformation and evolutionary progression, though presented allegorically, echoes Darwinian thought. Kingsley was also a keen observer of the natural world. His descriptions of aquatic life, from the intricate details of underwater flora and fauna to the processes of

purification in rivers, are remarkably accurate. He aimed to instill in his young readers an appreciation for the wonders of nature and the interconnectedness of all living things. The novel's exploration of different species and their adaptations, albeit in a fantastical guise, reflects Kingsley's engagement with contemporary biological and geological discoveries. He believed that understanding the natural world could lead to a deeper understanding of God and humanity's place within creation. The aquatic environment itself becomes a character, a purifying force that shapes the development of the water-babies.

The Literary Style of Charles Kingsley

Kingsley's writing style in "The Water-Babies" is characterized by its vivid imagery, engaging narrative voice, and a distinctive blend of humor and seriousness. He masterfully employs personification, giving life and personality to natural elements and abstract concepts. The direct address to the reader, the playful interruptions, and the use of rhetorical questions create an intimate and interactive reading experience. This pedagogical approach was intentional, as Kingsley sought to educate as well as entertain. His language, while accessible to children, is also rich with allusions and subtle ironies that would have appealed to adult readers. He seamlessly transitions between moments of pure fantasy and sharp social critique, ensuring that the moral lessons are delivered without being overly didactic or preachy. The novel's enduring appeal lies in its ability to speak to different audiences on multiple levels, offering a captivating story for children and a thought-provoking commentary for adults. The use of rhyme and song within the narrative further enhances its memorability and charm.

Key Characters and Their Symbolism

Beyond Tom, the characters in "The Water-Babies" serve specific symbolic roles. Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, a benevolent fairy who cares for the young water-babies, embodies the principle of reciprocal kindness and empathy. Her name is a direct admonition to treat others as one wishes to be treated. Conversely, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, a stern and disciplinary figure, represents the consequences of negative actions and the inevitability of facing one's deeds. Sir John Harthover, the wealthy and negligent father of a young girl who becomes a water-baby, symbolizes the irresponsible elite who often ignore the plight of the poor. Professor Ptisane, a scientific figure who is initially skeptical of spiritual matters, highlights the potential for reconciliation between science and faith. The various sea creatures and natural elements are also imbued with meaning, reflecting Kingsley's deep understanding and reverence for the natural world. The salmon, for instance, might represent the cyclical nature of life and the journey of purification.

The Enduring Impact and Critiques of "The Water-Babies"

Despite its enduring popularity, "The Water-Babies" has not been without its critics. Some have pointed to its sometimes harsh didacticism, its occasionally unsettling blend of fairy tale and reality, and certain passages that reflect the racial and colonial biases of the Victorian era. However, these critiques do not diminish the novel's historical significance or its powerful message of hope and redemption. It remains a testament to Charles Kingsley's ability to craft a story that, while rooted in its time, continues to resonate with readers of all ages. The novel's influence can be seen in subsequent works of children's literature that explore themes of social justice and the transformative power of nature. It continues to be studied for its

literary merit, its historical insights, and its enduring moral lessons. Modern interpretations often focus on its proto-environmental themes and its critique of industrial exploitation, highlighting its relevance to contemporary environmental concerns. The legacy of the author of "The Water-Babies" is thus one of a complex and influential figure whose literary contributions continue to spark discussion and inspire.

Kingsley's Wider Influence and Legacy

Charles Kingsley's impact extended far beyond the pages of "The Water-Babies." He was a vocal advocate for public health, education, and social reform, believing that literature could be a powerful tool for societal change. His association with figures like Thomas Hughes, author of "Tom Brown's School Days," cemented his image as a champion of Christian Socialism and a voice for the working classes. He actively engaged in public debates and political activism, using his platform to promote his progressive ideals. His writings and his public life demonstrate a consistent commitment to the betterment of society and the moral and intellectual development of its citizens. The author of "The Water-Babies" was, in essence, a moral and intellectual force of the Victorian age, whose influence, though often debated, remains undeniable. His exploration of the intersection of faith, science, and social responsibility continues to be a relevant and compelling aspect of his literary and personal legacy.

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Questions & Answers About author of the water babies

No	Question	Answer
1	Who is the brilliant mind behind the beloved classic 'The Water-Babies'?	The enchanting tale of 'The Water-Babies' was written by Charles Kingsley, a prominent Victorian-era author and social reformer.
2	Was Charles Kingsley known for any other famous works besides 'The Water-Babies'?	Yes, Charles Kingsley penned several other notable novels, including 'Westward Ho!' and 'Hereward the Wake', and was also a respected clergyman and historian.
3	What inspired Charles Kingsley to write 'The Water-Babies'?	Kingsley was inspired to write 'The Water-Babies' after witnessing the harsh realities of child labor and poverty in Victorian England, particularly among chimney sweeps. He aimed to use the story as a vehicle for social commentary and moral instruction.
4	When was 'The Water-Babies' first published, and what was its reception?	'The Water-Babies' was first published in 1863. It was an immediate success, captivating readers with its imaginative story and its underlying message about social reform.
5	What is the main theme or message Charles Kingsley intended to convey in 'The Water-Babies'?	The central themes revolve around the redemption of a mistreated chimney sweep, Tom, through hardship and transformation into a water-baby. Kingsley sought to highlight the importance of compassion, education, and the need for social change to improve the lives of the working class.
6	Is 'The Water-Babies' considered a children's book, or does it have deeper layers?	While often categorized as a children's book, 'The Water-Babies' contains significant allegorical and social commentary relevant to adults, addressing issues of class, morality, and Victorian society's failings.

7	How did Charles Kingsley's background influence 'The Water-Babies'?	Kingsley's own experiences and strong social conscience deeply informed the novel. His work as a clergyman and his advocacy for social reform are evident in the book's moralistic tone and its critique of societal injustices.
8	Are there any modern adaptations or retellings of Charles Kingsley's 'The Water-Babies'?	Yes, 'The Water-Babies' has been adapted into several films, television series, and stage productions over the years, ensuring the story continues to be enjoyed by new generations.

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