

Figurative Language Used in the "Forever Young" Song Lyric by Alphaville

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Abstract: Figurative language is widely used in literary works such as poems, short stories, and novels, enabling authors to convey their ideas in imaginative and creative ways. It goes beyond the literal meaning of words, encouraging readers to use their imagination to uncover deeper interpretations. This research aims to analyze the type of figurative language and to find out the dominant figurative language that is used in the song lyric "Forever Young" by Alphaville. The research method uses a descriptive qualitative method. The data analysis process involves several steps; listening to the song, identifying and categorizing the types of figurative language based on relevant theories, interpreting their meanings through contextual analysis, and finally drawing conclusions. The results are 6 types of figurative language. They are simile (11%), metaphor (32%), personification (14%), hyperbole (21%), alliteration (14%), and idiom (8%). The most dominant type used in the song is metaphor (32%). By understanding and using figurative language appropriately, readers can improve their ability to communicate in English more effectively and attractively.

Keywords: figurative language, Forever Young, song lyrics

Abstrak: Bahasa kiasan banyak digunakan dalam karya sastra seperti puisi, cerita pendek, dan novel, yang memungkinkan pengarang menyampaikan gagasan mereka dengan cara yang imajinatif dan kreatif. Bahasa kiasan melampaui makna harfiah kata-kata, mendorong pembaca untuk menggunakan imajinasi mereka untuk mengungkap interpretasi yang lebih dalam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis bahasa kiasan dan mengetahui bahasa kiasan yang dominan digunakan dalam lirik lagu "Forever Young" karya Alphaville. Metode penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Proses analisis data melibatkan beberapa langkah; mendengarkan lagu, mengidentifikasi dan mengategorikan jenis bahasa kiasan berdasarkan teori yang relevan, menafsirkan maknanya melalui analisis kontekstual, dan akhirnya menarik kesimpulan. Hasilnya adalah 6 jenis bahasa kiasan. Yaitu simile (11%), metafora (32%), personifikasi (14%), hiperbola (21%), aliterasi (14%), dan idiom (8%). Jenis yang paling dominan digunakan dalam lagu tersebut adalah metafora (32%). Dengan memahami dan menggunakan bahasa kiasan dengan tepat, pembaca dapat meningkatkan kemampuannya untuk berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris dengan lebih efektif dan menarik.

Kata kunci: bahasa kiasan, Forever Young, lirik lagu

1. INTRODUCTION

A song lyric is more like a poetry because it uses more figurative language. According to Fitriyah (2021) words in poetry

not only serve as a means of conveying ideas or expressing feelings but also serve as material.

Authors usually select words or diction very carefully based on various factors, such as meaning, image strength, rhymes, and symbolic

range. In poetry, language is arranged creatively and relatively denser than prose.

Figurative language is widely used in literary works such as poems, short stories, and novels, enabling authors to convey their ideas in imaginative and creative ways (Karimah et al., 2022). It goes beyond the literal meaning of words, encouraging readers to use their imagination to uncover deeper interpretations. By incorporating metaphors and other literary devices, figurative language enhances communication, emphasizes the intended message, and adds richness to the text. This approach brings depth and vibrancy to the narrative, inviting readers to explore meanings that extend beyond the surface (Bahing, Meilantina, & Fadhly, 2024).

Figurative language enables individuals to convey meanings that go beyond the literal, offering a richer and more nuanced means of communication (Sari & Syaputri, 2024). As a result, people may use figurative expressions to articulate their thoughts in ways that require careful interpretation to uncover the intended message (Janah, Retnaningdyah, & Mustofa, 2022).

Figurative language serves as a powerful communication tool in both written and spoken forms. It enriches and enhances the meaning of literary works while offering depth and creativity to language (Harun, Yusuf, & Karnafi, 2020). From a semantic perspective, figurative language can be analyzed to uncover deeper meanings based on semantic theories. Its versatility allows it to be applied across various fields of language study. Moreover, learning figurative language is essential not only for

literary appreciation but also for its application in diverse areas such as politics, business, culture, and education (Sudar, 2024).

Kumala, Nur'aini, & Ambarini (2021) provides a useful definition of figurative language, describing it as the use of words or expressions that diverge from their literal meanings to evoke a different or deeper significance. Understanding figurative language is therefore vital, as interpreting these expressions literally may result in missing the intended message. Figurative language can take many forms, such as metaphors, similes, personification, and symbolism. Each device serves to enhance the expressiveness of the text, offering new perspectives and emotional resonance for the reader or listener.

One medium through which figurative language plays a significant role is music. Songs are an immensely popular form of artistic expression, enjoyed by people worldwide for their ability to evoke emotions and connect with listeners on a personal level. According to Fajrul Falah et al. (2023), incorporating songs into the classroom environment is an effective way to engage students and enhance their learning experience. This is because music not only captures attention through its rhythm and melody but also through the powerful messages conveyed in the lyrics. Song lyrics are often layered with meaning, providing deeper insights into the song's themes and emotional undertones. As Damardjati & Hardiany (2023) suggest, figurative language in literature and music allows for the conveyance of complex ideas and emotions that go beyond the literal meanings of words.

Songs are musical compositions created for vocal performance, whether with instrumental accompaniment or not, and can be performed solo or by multiple individuals. They hold a special place in society, being widely loved and deeply cherished by people. Songs do more than entertain; they establish personal and meaningful connections with life, often reflecting emotions and experiences (Dewi, Hidayat, & Alek, 2020). Figurative language is particularly crucial in this regard, as it allows songwriters to communicate complex themes in a way that resonates emotionally with their audience. One exemplary song that makes extensive use of figurative language to explore profound and universal themes is Alphaville's "Forever Young." Released in 1984, the song remains a classic, resonating with listeners of all generations. Its haunting melody and reflective lyrics focus on themes of youth, mortality, and the desire for eternal life. The song's lyrics express a deep longing for the preservation of youth and the fear of growing old, resonating with a common human desire for immortality. By using figurative language, the song transforms these existential concerns into a poetic, emotionally charged narrative.

By examining these figurative languages, the researchers intend to offer insights into how Alphaville's lyrics resonate across generations, connecting listeners to universal themes of longing, fear of aging, and the desire for immortality.

This study aims to analyze (1) what types of figurative language used in the lyrics of "Forever Young" by Alphaville? (2) what kind

of figurative language used dominantly in the lyrics of "Forever Young" by Alphaville?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is a method used to explore behaviors, attitudes, motivations, perceptions, and actions of subjects in depth (Emzir, 2009). This research aims to analyze the figurative language in the song "Forever Young" and interpret its meaning.

Perrine in Ratna & Rosa (2013)) defines figurative language as language that cannot be taken literally (or should not be taken literally) and say something in a different way than the usual way or say one thing and mean another. There are 16 kinds of figurative language. But in this study the analyzing will be focus in 6 types of figurative language in this song. They are simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, and idiom.

The data analysis process involves several steps: listening to the song, identifying and categorizing the types of figurative language based on relevant theories, interpreting their meanings through contextual analysis, and finally drawing conclusions.

The song lyric

"Forever Young" by Alphaville

*Let's dance in style, let's dance for a while
Heaven can wait, we're only watching the skies
Hoping for the best but expecting the worst
Are you gonna drop the bomb or not?*

Let us die young or let us live forever

*We don't have the power but we never say never
Sitting in a sandpit, life is a short trip
The music's for the sad men*

*Can you imagine when this race is won
Turn our golden faces into the sun
Praising our leaders, we're getting in tune
The music's played by the, the mad man*

*[Chorus]
Forever young, I want to be forever young
Do you really want to live forever?
Forever, and ever
Forever young, I want to be forever young
Do you really want to live forever?
Forever young*

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The figurative language that are found in the song "Forever Young" by Alphaville are simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, and idiom. The findings are follows.

Table 1. The Occurrence of Figurative Language in the song lyric

No.	Figurative Language	amount	Percentage
1	Simile	3	11 %
2	Metaphor	9	32 %
3	Personification	4	14 %
4	Hyperbole	6	21 %
5	Alliteration	4	14 %
6	Idiom	2	8 %
	Total	28	100%

Based on the table 1 above, metaphor is the most dominantly used in this song lyric, the amount is 32.14% of the total findings, with 9 occurrences. Furthermore, hyperbole is found 6 times (21%). Simile appears 3 times (11%). Personification and alliteration were found 4 times each (14%), Meanwhile, idioms were found only 2 times, or around 8%.

3.1 Simile

A simile is a form of figurative language used to compare two distinct things by stating that one is "like" or "as if" the other. This comparison often employs words such as like, as, similar to, as if, and others to highlight similarities. It is found 3 phrases or sentences that use simile. The examples are follows.

The following identifies the simile in the song:

1. *'Some are like water; some are like the heat'* - Using the word 'like' to compare 'some' to 'water' and 'heat.' This is a simile that describes the different traits or characters of people, where 'water' can symbolize gentleness or calmness, while 'heat' symbolizes intensity or strength.
2. *'Some are a melody and some are the beat'* - Again using 'like' implicitly in this comparison to show two different types of characters. 'Melody' symbolizes something harmonious and beautiful, while 'beat' symbolizes a more regular and steady rhythm or force.

Essentially, a simile creates an explicit comparison between two objects or ideas, making the relationship clear and vivid through descriptive language (Saud, Tiwery, & Agnesiana, 2023). In the lyrics of "Forever Young," the use of simile is a significant stylistic feature that enhances the emotional and thematic depth of the song. A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two different things using "like" or "as." In Verse 4, the lyrics "Some are like water, some are like the heat" employ simile to illustrate the contrasting characteristics of different people. Water symbolizes calmness, fluidity, and

gentleness, while heat represents intensity, passion, and energy. This comparison highlights the diversity of human traits, suggesting that individuals possess distinct qualities, much like the contrasting elements of water and heat. Similarly, the line "Youth's like diamonds in the sun" in this song uses a simile to emphasize the preciousness and brilliance of youth, likening it to the rarity and sparkle of diamonds when exposed to sunlight. Both similes in these verses effectively draw vivid, relatable imagery that enhances the listener's emotional connection to the song's themes of youth, change, and the passage of time.

Similes, in these instances, are not merely decorative but are crucial in conveying the song's reflective and nostalgic mood. By comparing abstract concepts like "youth" and "personality" to tangible, familiar objects such as "diamonds" and "heat," the song creates a deeper understanding of the transient nature of life and the preciousness of youth. Thus, the similes in "Forever Young" not only provide poetic imagery but also contribute to the broader message of the song—embracing youth and its fleeting moments while recognizing the diversity and impermanence of life.

3.2 Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things by stating that one is the other, without using comparison words such as "like" or "as" (Indarti, Fikri, & Manar, 2023). In this song, it is found 9 sentences that use metaphor.

The following identifies the metaphors in the song.

1. Heaven can wait, we're only *watching the skies*. Describes someone waiting or observing something big and uncertain, without saying it literally.
2. '*Life is a short trip*' - Describes life as a short journey without using words of comparison such as 'like' or 'as.' This highlights the concept of limited time in life.
3. '*Sitting in a sandpit*' - The sandpit here can be interpreted as a metaphor for childhood games or temporary and limited conditions, which represents the fleeting and sometimes game-like nature of life.
4. '*When this race is won*' - 'Race' here is a metaphor for life or the journey of life, as if life is a race that must be won.
5. '*Some are a melody and some are the beat*' - Mentioning 'melody' and 'beat' as metaphorical representations of individual characters or traits. This is not a direct comparison, but a depiction of people's character through musical elements.
6. '*I don't want to perish like a fading horse*' - Uses a comparison that expresses the desire not to die or be lost like a 'fading horse'. 'Fading horse' here is a metaphor describing a loss of strength or value, showing a fear of meaningless ageing.
7. '*Diamonds are forever*' - This phrase is a metaphor that describes the permanence of diamonds as a symbol of something eternal and immovable, in this case describing how precious and eternal youth is.
8. '*So many dreams swinging out of the blue*' - Describing dreams that come deeply and suddenly like 'swinging out of the blue.' This is a metaphor that describes dreams or

hopes that come in an unexpected way, as if emerging from a void.

The use of metaphor in the lyrics of "Forever Young" is a powerful tool for conveying complex themes and emotions. A metaphor directly compares two unrelated things without using "like" or "as," creating a deeper understanding of abstract concepts by relating them to more tangible or familiar images. In Verse 3, the line "When this race is won" uses the metaphor of a "race" to represent life or the journey of human existence. The idea of life as a race conveys the urgency, competition, and inevitable end that we all face, subtly emphasizing the notion that life is something to be won or completed before it ends. Similarly, the phrase "Turn our golden faces into the sun" from the same verse uses the metaphor of "golden faces" to symbolize youth, achievement, or hope. The "sun" here stands for aspirations, positivity, or a bright future, suggesting that the youth's potential should be directed towards a hopeful future, much like turning towards the sun for warmth and light.

In this song, the metaphor "Life is a short trip" compares life to a brief journey, highlighting the fleeting nature of human existence. This metaphor underscores the transient nature of life and encourages the listener to appreciate the present, knowing that time is limited. Additionally, the line "Diamonds are forever" is another metaphor that symbolizes something precious and eternal. By associating youth with diamonds, the song suggests that youth, like diamonds, is valuable and should be cherished, even though it is ultimately temporary.

3.3 Personification

Personification is a figure of speech where an abstract concept, inanimate object, or element of nature is portrayed as having human characteristics or actions. Through personification, non-human things are described as performing tasks or displaying behaviors typically associated with humans (Swarniti, 2022). In this song, there are 4 sentences that use personification.

The following identifies the personification in the song.

1. *'Heaven can wait'* - Heaven is perceived as if it has the ability to 'wait,' even though it is an abstract object that has no will.
2. *'We don't have the power but we never say never'* - This sentence gives human nature in the form of constancy to the subject 'we' who seems to always have hope despite not having the power to change fate.
3. *'The music's played by the, the mad man'* - Music is perceived as something played by a person (the mad man), as if to depict chaos or something out of control in life.
4. *'So many songs we forgot to play'* - 'Songs' here are regarded as if they have the ability to be 'forgotten,' which gives songs a human nature, something that they can't actually forget on their own.

In "Forever Young," personification is used strategically to breathe life into abstract concepts, making them more relatable and emotionally charged. Personification is the act of attributing human traits, characteristics, or emotions to a concept, animal, or inanimate object. Simply put, it involves giving human qualities or feelings to non-human entities or

abstract ideas (Nabila, Azwandi, & Sujarwati, 2024). Personification involves giving human attributes or qualities to non-human entities or abstract ideas, which deepens the listener's connection to the song's themes. One notable example is found in Verse 1 with the line "Heaven can wait." Here, heaven is personified as if it has the ability to "wait," implying that the desires and pursuits of the present moment take precedence over the afterlife. By attributing human-like qualities to heaven, the lyrics suggest a carefree attitude toward time and an emphasis on enjoying the present without worrying about what comes after life. This use of personification creates a sense of urgency, where the listener is encouraged to seize the moment and live fully, free from the constraints of future concerns.

Another instance of personification appears in this song with the phrase "So many songs we forgot to play." In this line, "songs" are given the ability to "forget," which suggests that songs, like people, can be neglected or left behind. By personifying songs in this way, the song emphasizes the lost opportunities and unfulfilled potential that come with the passage of time. It evokes a feeling of regret for things left undone, particularly those that were once cherished but now forgotten or overlooked.

Through personification, the song's lyrics invite the listener to reflect on the human experience in a more visceral way. By attributing human qualities to concepts like heaven and songs, the lyrics make these ideas more tangible and relatable, reinforcing the song's exploration of time, youth, and the fleeting nature of life. This literary device

serves to deepen the emotional resonance of the song, encouraging listeners to confront the inevitability of time while cherishing the present.

3.4 Hyperbole

Hyperbole, an exaggerated form of expression, is used throughout "Forever Young" to intensify the song's themes of desire, youth, and immortality. Hyperbole is a figure of speech that uses extreme or excessive exaggeration for emphasis or dramatic effect. In this song, it is found 6 sentences that use hyperbole.

The following identifies the hyperbole in the song.

1. *'Are you gonna drop the bomb or not?'* - This is hyperbole because it implies an extreme situation or the threat of great destruction, even though the context may refer to a major life or relationship change.
2. *'Let us die young or let us live forever'* - This is hyperbole because humans cannot live forever, but the lyrics express the desire to live forever or die young, with a dramatic feel.
3. *'Forever young' and "I want to be forever young"* - This is hyperbole because the desire to stay young forever is impossible but is used to show a great desire or eternal hope.
4. *'Diamonds are forever'* - This can also be considered hyperbole as it expresses the idea of the immortality of diamonds which is not entirely true but is used to denote something extremely valuable and indelible.

5. *'Forever young, I wanna be forever young'*
- This is a hyperbole that expresses the desire to stay young forever, which is certainly not possible. This phrase is used to emphasize the strong desire for immortality at a young age.

Unlike ordinary exaggeration, hyperbole amplifies reality to an extraordinary degree, creating a striking and often memorable impression (Rahman, 2023). This literary device amplifies emotions and creates a heightened sense of urgency or longing that resonates with the listener. One clear example of hyperbole in the song is found in the line, "Let us die young or let us live forever" from Verse 2. The idea of living forever or dying young is an exaggerated expression of the wish to escape the inevitability of aging or death. The concept of immortality or premature death is physically impossible, yet the hyperbole emphasizes the strength of the desire to either hold onto youth or avoid the limitations of time altogether. This use of hyperbole highlights the song's central message: the yearning for eternal youth and the emotional extremes people experience in their desire to escape the passage of time.

Another example of hyperbole appears in the chorus with the repeated line, "Forever young, I want to be forever young." The hyperbole here conveys an unrealistic, yet poignant, wish to remain young eternally. The repetition reinforces the intensity of this longing, turning it into a recurring dream or ideal that transcends the boundaries of possibility. By exaggerating the desire to stay forever young, the song taps into the universal

fear of aging and the desire to maintain vitality, energy, and innocence.

Hyperbole also manifests in this song, "Diamonds are forever." While diamonds are not truly immortal, this exaggerated claim conveys their lasting value and rarity, drawing a parallel between diamonds and the preciousness of youth. This hyperbole heightens the perceived significance of youth, elevating it to something rare and eternal, just like diamonds.

Through hyperbole, "Forever Young" underscores the intensity of its themes—youth, immortality, and the passage of time. By exaggerating these concepts, the song evokes powerful emotional responses from the listener, encouraging reflection on the fleeting nature of life and the universal desire to preserve youth and vitality.

3.5 Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words or within stressed syllables in a phrase or sentence. Alliteration is effectively employed in "Forever Young" to enhance the musicality and rhythmic flow of the lyrics. There are 4 sentences that use alliteration.

The following identifies the alliteration in the song.

1. *'Let's dance in style, let's dance for a while'*
- The repetition of the consonant sound 'd' in the words 'dance' and 'style' creates an alliteration that strengthens the rhythm of the lyrics.
2. *'The music's for the sad men'* - The repetition of the consonant sound 's' in the

words 'sad' and 'men' adds rhythm and melancholic feeling to the lyrics.

3. *'Praising our leaders, we're getting in tune'* - The repetition of the 'p' sound in 'praising' and 'leaders' and the 't' in 'getting in tune' gives rhythm to the lyrics.
4. *'So many dreams swinging'* - The repetition of the 's' sound in the words 'so,' 'many,' and 'swinging' gives the lyrics a more harmonious rhythm.

This figurative language is often used to create rhythm, enhance mood, or emphasize certain themes or ideas (Marpaung, 2024). This literary device not only contributes to the song's overall aesthetic but also reinforces the mood and themes of the song. In the first verse, the phrase "Let's dance in style, let's dance for a while" uses alliteration with the repeated "d" sound in "dance" and "style." This repetition adds a playful and fluid rhythm, mirroring the carefree and celebratory tone of the lyrics. The use of alliteration here reinforces the song's focus on living in the moment, emphasizing the act of dancing and enjoying the present without worry.

In the line "The music's for the sad men" utilizes alliteration through the repetition of the "s" sound in "sad" and "men." This repetition creates a subtle melancholic undertone, adding depth to the song's theme of the bittersweet nature of life. The alliteration here helps draw attention to the contrast between the joyous and carefree desires expressed elsewhere in the song and the underlying sadness or melancholy felt by certain individuals, symbolized by "sad men."

Additionally, in line "Praising our leaders, we're getting in tune" repeats the "p" and "t" sounds, creating a smooth rhythm that enhances the overall flow of the lyrics. This alliteration contributes to the song's reflective nature, suggesting harmony or alignment with leadership and purpose, but also offering a subtle commentary on societal or political aspects.

Overall, alliteration in "Forever Young" serves multiple functions—it adds a musical quality to the lyrics, emphasizes key themes, and reinforces the emotional impact of the song. By repeating consonant sounds, the song's lyrics flow more smoothly and rhythmically, making them memorable and enhancing the emotional tone of the themes of youth, time, and longing.

3.6 Idiom

An idiom is a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood by interpreting the individual words literally. Instead, the phrase has a figurative meaning that is commonly understood within a particular language or culture. In this song, there are only 2 sentences or phrases that use idiom.

The following identifies the idiom in the song

1. *'Forever young'* - This phrase has become an idiom that represents the desire to stay young at heart or retain a youthful essence in spirit and life.
2. *'We let them come true'* - This phrase is an idiom that means realizing dreams or hopes, indicating that they let their dreams come true.

In "Forever Young," the use of idiomatic expressions adds depth and resonance to the song's themes of youth, longing, and the passage of time. One significant idiom in the lyrics is the phrase "Forever young." While this phrase literally suggests a desire to remain young for eternity, it has taken on an idiomatic meaning over time, symbolizing the aspiration to preserve the vitality, spirit, and energy of youth regardless of age. This expression taps into a universal desire to hold onto the positive qualities associated with youth—such as vigor, hope, and optimism—while resisting the inevitable aging process.

The idiom "Forever young" is repeated throughout the song, emphasizing the speaker's deep yearning for a life that defies the limitations of time. It reflects not just a desire for physical youth but also for an eternal state of mind or spirit—one that remains free from the burdens or disillusionments that often come with growing older. The song's use of this idiom serves as a timeless message, connecting with listeners across generations who share similar feelings of wanting to retain their youthful energy and enthusiasm for life.

Additionally, the idiomatic use of "Forever young" becomes a central, memorable phrase that encapsulates the song's core theme. It acts as both a literal and figurative expression of hope and defiance against the inevitability of aging. The idiom is impactful because it conveys more than just the surface meaning; it taps into the emotional and existential desire to escape the passage of time, making it a powerful tool in the song's narrative. Through this idiomatic expression, the song resonates

with anyone who has experienced the tension between youthful dreams and the realities of aging, creating a poignant connection to the listeners' own experiences.

Overall, the most dominant type of figurative language in the song lyric "Forever Young" is metaphor. Metaphor serves to enrich the song's thematic exploration of time, youth, and the desire for immortality. Through metaphors, the lyrics evoke a sense of urgency, value, and reflection, encouraging the listener to reflect on the fleeting nature of life and the preciousness of youth. The metaphors effectively communicate the song's deeper message, making it resonate emotionally with audiences.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the result above, there are 6 types of figurative language that used in the song lyric "Forever Young" by Alphaville. Those are metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, and idiom. The most dominant type of figurative language in the song lyric "Forever Young" is metaphor. Metaphor serves to enrich the song's thematic exploration of time, youth, and the desire for immortality. Through metaphors, the lyrics evoke a sense of urgency, value, and reflection, encouraging the listener to reflect on the fleeting nature of life and the preciousness of youth. The metaphors effectively communicate the song's deeper message, making it resonate emotionally with audiences. The song lyrics uses figurative language to deepen the

connection between the listener and the themes of life, change, and aspirations, fostering a nostalgic yet hopeful mood.

For further research, it is suggested to expand the analysis of figurative language in other songs with similar themes, such as youth or time, to explore how different artists use these devices to communicate universal messages. Additionally, a comparative study could be conducted between "Forever Young" and songs from different genres or eras, focusing on how figurative language varies across musical styles and cultural contexts. Educators could also incorporate figurative language analysis in music into language learning curricula, as it can engage students in deeper linguistic and thematic analysis, making the process more dynamic and relatable.

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