Diff Styling Brief

This document is meant to serve as a brief for outlining learnings, considerations, and decisions in regards to diff styling.

Learnings

- In the past, diffs have been styled as yellow/green, red/green, and yellow/blue for removed/added content.
- At this time (May 2025), Wikitext diffs use yellow/blue while Visual diffs use red/green.
- Since mobile apps don't have Visual Editor, they do not have Visual diffs, and therefore use yellow/blue.
- The common understanding of why we have leaned into using yellow/blue boils down to two sentiments:
    - Yellow and blue do not necessarily denote negative or positive connotations, while red and green can.
    - Red and green are problematic with certain types of color blindness.
- The most common styling of diffs in the wild uses red/green.
- Links can be shown within the highlighted diff, and need to remain feeling like a link and having enough contrast on the highlighted background (this is only necessarily in Visual diffs).
- There is another diff style, specifically in Visual diffs, when a link destination is changed but the link text itself remains the same. Currently, this style is blue, as it exists within Visual diffs, where the current colors used are yellow/blue.

Considerations

- Changing diffs in any direction is an impactful change that some people will not be happy with.
- Documenting thought processes and research will be crucial with making such a change.
    - Share on a project page to enable talk page discussions.
    - Prioritize an FAQ at the top of the page.

    - Share a way to customize these colors using CSS variable overrides instead of making another preference. That being said, proceed with caution that people override more UI, causing potential future issues with more user customizations.
- While red/green can have negative/positive connotations, the pattern for using these colors for diffs is so familiar, that considering red/green feels appropriate.
- Color blindness is a wide spectrum, dependent on everyones individual personal color receptors, types and degrees of color blindness, not to mention personal preferences and environment parameters (screen color calibration, screen brightness and temperature settings, ambient light, and context). That being said, when depending on color alone to distinguish any type of status, there is no perfect color or combination of colors. Therefore, other visual means must be used, such as icons or graphics, position, weight, etc.
    - Pink/lime are the most polarizing.
    - Red/green feel the most “right”.
- Another way to show the Wikitext inline diffs are stacked vertically, with each line being repeated—essentially, the non-inline version, but vertical, line after line.

Decisions

- Use red/green/blue (blue being the link destination changed style).
    - For now, the border color can be the same as the background highlight color, as it currently is in default Wikitext diff styling.
    - In a new design, we will need new `background-highlight` tokens.
- Use strikethrough and add space between removals/additions to Wikitext inline.
- Create a project page to document decisions.
- Share update in TechNews.
- Provide CSS and instructions for overriding, with the default being yellow/blue.

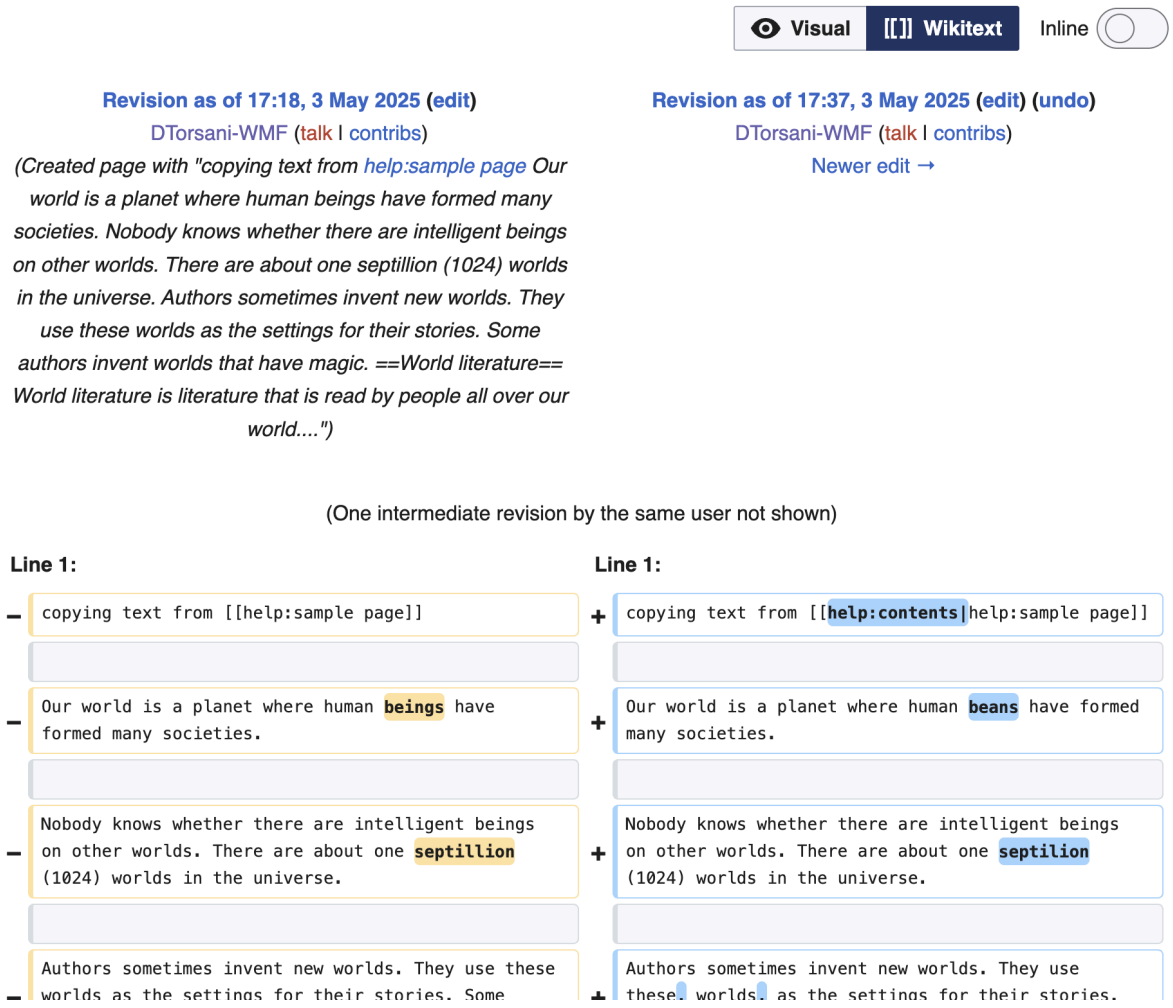
- We should explore how to improve the diff styling outside of the primary colors.
    - In the default Visual diff styling, there are a lot of containers and shades of gray. This can be simplified and reduce the overall visual load.
    - The titles on the Visual diffs do not need to also serve as the legend. A legend should be added, similarly to Wikitext inline styling.
    - Additionally, a legend should be added to Wikitext as well for consistency.
    - Are “Visual/Wikitext” and a toggle called “Inline” the best names and ways to control these different views?
        - Could there be three names set as a ToggleButtonGroup for the three different views? Something like “Visual/Split/Inline” or something?
- This work can be done in phases:
    - 1a. Update colors used in tokens, work with Editing team to update.
    - 1b. Work with Editing team to update styles (line-through, bold, legends) in various diff renderings.
    - 1c. Prepare documentation project page with customize code snippet for both light and dark modes.
        - Update/link to (“See also”) additional docs pages:
            - https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Help:Diff
            - https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Help:Diff&oldid=413103189#How_it_looks
            - https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/VisualEditor/Diffs
            - https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Visual_diffs
            - https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:VisualDiff
            - https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Requests_for_comment/Inline_diffs
            - https://phabricator.wikimedia.org/T361717
            - https://phabricator.wikimedia.org/T90948
            - https://phabricator.wikimedia.org/T343582
            - https://phabricator.wikimedia.org/T335579
            - https://phabricator.wikimedia.org/T13374
            - https://phabricator.wikimedia.org/tag/mediawiki-page-diffs/

- 1d. Add to TechNews.
- 2. Make general diff improvements listed in previous bullet.

[Slide preview]

Before

Wikitext



Wikitext inline

Content deleted Content added

Visual [[]] Wikitext Inline

Revision as of 17:18, 3 May 2025 (edit)
DTorsani-WMF (talk | contribs)
(Created page with "copying text from help:sample page Our world is a planet where human beings have formed many societies. Nobody knows whether there are intelligent beings on other worlds. There are about one septillion (1024) worlds in the universe. Authors sometimes invent new worlds. They use these worlds as the settings for their stories. Some authors invent worlds that have magic. ==World literature== World literature is literature that is read by people all over our world....")

Revision as of 17:37, 3 May 2025 (edit) (undo)
DTorsani-WMF (talk | contribs)
Newer edit →

(One intermediate revision by the same user not shown)

Line 1:

```
copying text from [[help:contents|help:sample page]]

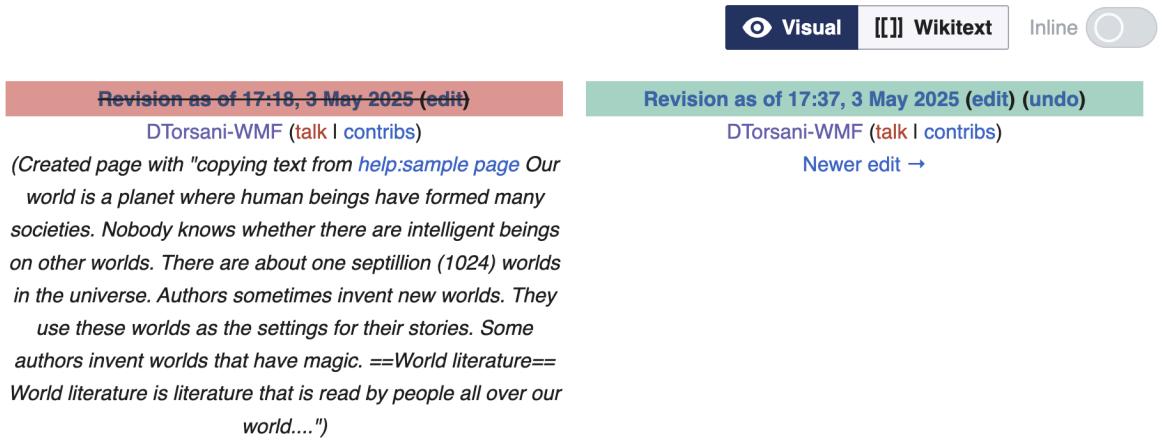
Our world is a planet where human beingsbeans have formed many societies.

Nobody knows whether there are intelligent beings on other worlds. There are about one septillionseptilion
(1024) worlds in the universe.

Authors sometimes invent new worlds. They use these, worlds, as the settings for their stories. Some authors
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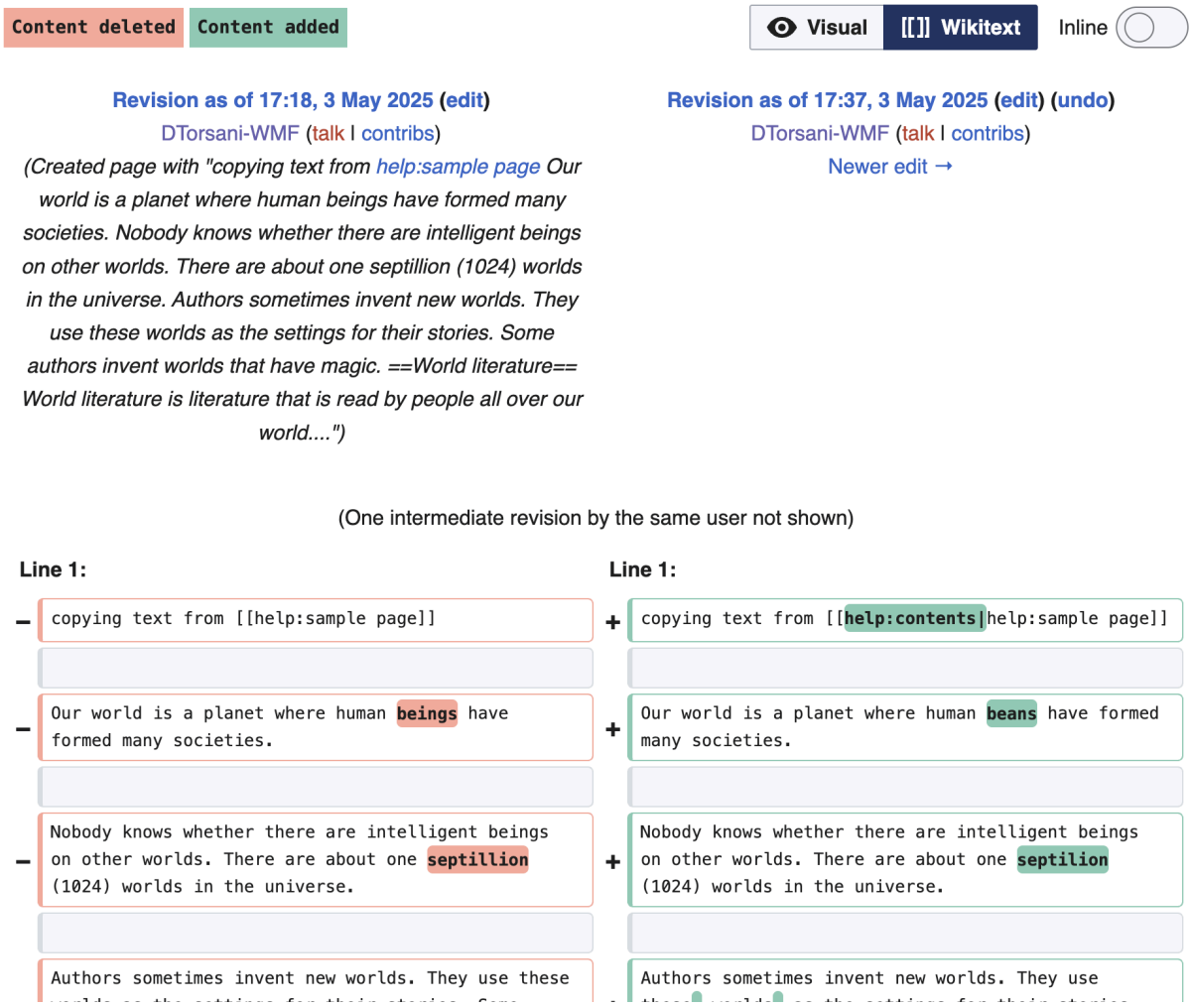
==World literature==
↲ newline
I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankindpersonkind, revealing itself
everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. . . . I therefore like to look about me in foreign
```

Visual



After

Wikitext



Wikitext inline

~~Content deleted~~ **Content added**

Visual | [[]] Wikitext | Inline

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DTorsani-WMF (talk | contribs)	DTorsani-WMF (talk | contribs)
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(One intermediate revision by the same user not shown)

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==World literature==
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everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. . . . I therefore like to look about me in foreign
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Visual

~~Content deleted~~ Content added Link changed

Visual [[]] Wikitext Inline

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Link target changed from ~~Help:Sample page~~ to Help:Contents

World literature

I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of ~~mankind~~ personkind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. . . . I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand. – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1827

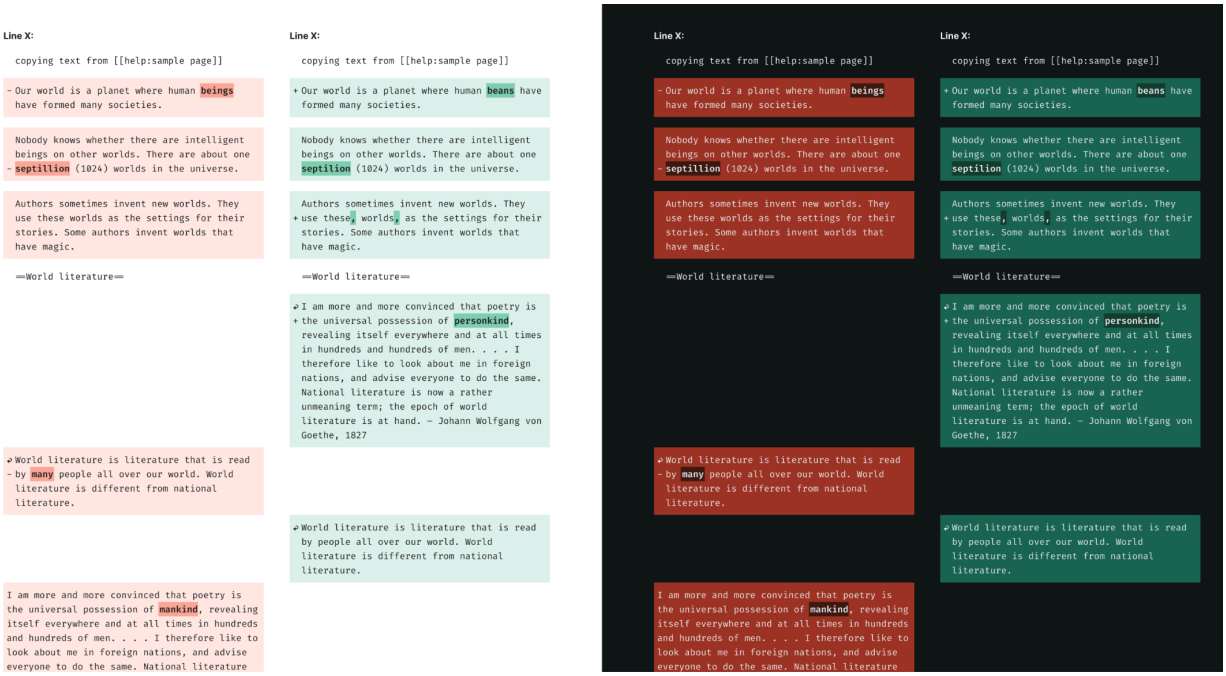
↑ Moved up

World literature is literature that is read by people all over our world. World literature is different from national literature.

Worlds in literature

Future

Wikitext


Line X:
copying text from [[help:sample page]]
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==World literature==
- World literature is literature that is read by many people all over our world. World literature is different from national literature.
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copying text from [[help:sample page]]
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