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7 **In silico  $\lambda$ -dynamics predicts protein binding specificities to modified RNAs**  
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36 **Abstract**

37 RNA modifications shape gene expression through a smorgasbord of chemical changes to  
38 canonical RNA bases. Although numbering in the hundreds, only a few RNA modifications are  
39 well characterized, in part due to the absence of methods to identify modification sites. Antibodies  
40 remain a common tool to identify modified RNA and infer modification sites through  
41 straightforward applications. However, specificity issues can result in off-target binding and  
42 confound conclusions. This work utilizes in silico  $\lambda$ -dynamics to efficiently estimate binding free  
43 energy differences of modification-targeting antibodies between a variety of naturally occurring  
44 RNA modifications. Crystal structures of inosine and N6-methyladenosine ( $m^6A$ ) targeting  
45 antibodies bound to their modified ribonucleosides were determined and served as structural  
46 starting points.  $\lambda$ -Dynamics was utilized to predict RNA modifications that permit or inhibit binding  
47 to these antibodies. In vitro RNA-antibody binding assays supported the accuracy of these in silico  
48 results. High agreement between experimental and computed binding propensities demonstrated  
49 that  $\lambda$ -dynamics can serve as a predictive screen for antibody specificity against libraries of RNA  
50 modifications. More importantly, this strategy is an innovative way to elucidate how hundreds of  
51 known RNA modifications interact with biological molecules without the limitations imposed by in  
52 vitro or in vivo methodologies.

53 **Introduction**

54 Biology has an RNA complexity problem. Cells must make sense of a vast sea of RNAs that  
55 function as protein code, regulatory molecules, enzymes, scaffolds, and other biological tools.  
56 Furthermore, the 4 canonical RNA bases can be enzymatically modified into new chemical  
57 structures that change their ability to base pair, form secondary structure, and interact with RNA-  
58 binding proteins (1). These chemical additions can be as small as a single methyl group or as  
59 large as a sugar moiety. Over 140 RNA modifications have been identified across all three  
60 kingdoms of life (1). RNA modifications are prevalent in biology and function as an epigenetic  
61 code to regulate development (2), respond to infectious diseases (3), and are involved in cancer  
62 progression (4). Their combinatorial complexity highlights how individual or collections of RNA  
63 modifications may alter an RNA's fate or function. A current challenge is the development of  
64 methods to identify all modification sites to decipher the roles of these RNA modifications in  
65 biology.

66  
67 A variety of methods can identify a few RNA modification sites. For example, chemical treatment  
68 can identify  $m^6A$  (e.g. GLORI (5)) and pseudouridine (e.g. pseudo-seq (6)) by taking advantage  
69 of chemistries that affect a modified base differently than an unmodified base. Direct RNA  
70 nanopore sequencing can also identify specific modifications like  $m^6A$  (7-17) through differences  
71 in electrical current perturbations as the modified RNA transverses the sequencing pore. Both  
72 strategies, however, require tailor-made approaches to accommodate each RNA modification's  
73 unique biochemical characteristics. Furthermore, without employing enrichment strategies, low  
74 abundance modifications remain difficult to detect. Adaptable methods are needed to elucidate  
75 the full breadth of modified RNAs found in living organisms.

76  
77 A common, versatile identification strategy uses antibodies to immunoprecipitate modified RNAs  
78 (18). These enriched RNAs are then sequenced to identify RNA targets and infer modification  
79 sites. Immunoprecipitation and sequencing methods are well established with straightforward  
80 workflows, and enrichment permits identification of less prevalent modification sites. Indeed,  
81 much of the work determining the modification sites of N6-methyladenosine ( $m^6A$ , e.g. (19,20)),  
82 N1-methyladenosine ( $m^1A$ , e.g. (21-24)), 5-methylcytosine ( $m^5C$ , e.g. (25,26)), and others have  
83 relied on antibodies.

84  
85 Antibodies can become de novo RNA-binding proteins through adaptive immunity.

87 Immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibodies are comprised of two heavy and two light polypeptide chains  
88 that assemble a pair of six hypervariable complementary-determining region (CDR) loops at their  
89 antigen recognition interface (27-29). Antibodies recognize a variety of antigens through CDRs  
90 that vary in amino acid length and composition. How antibodies recognize proteins is well studied  
91 (30), but how antibodies recognize modified RNAs is less clear. A polyinosine-antibody crystal  
92 structure was determined bound to various nucleotides (31). Closer inspection of the structure  
93 reveals a large, suitably configured pocket adjacent to the bound nucleotide (**Fig S1**), suggesting  
94 that the antibody may have specificity toward nucleic acid, not single bases. Regardless, the lack  
95 of antibody structures targeting other modified bases limits insights into how antibodies recognize  
96 RNA modifications.  
97

98 The success of using antibodies for RNA modification site identification depends on the quality of  
99 the antibody (32,33). Antibodies with low specificity have assigned erroneous biochemical  
100 functions to RNA modifications. For example, published studies reached differing conclusions  
101 regarding the mechanism of the m<sup>1</sup>A modification. Two studies found m<sup>1</sup>A prevalent in the 5' ends  
102 of mRNA (23,24), suggesting that the modification enhances translation (24), while contrasting  
103 studies reported it as rare in mRNA (21,22). In the former studies, it was later discovered that the  
104 antibody used for m<sup>1</sup>A RNA enrichment also had affinity towards 7-methylguanosine (m<sup>7</sup>G, (21)),  
105 an abundant mRNA 5' cap modification crucial for cap-dependent translation (34). These false  
106 positive site identifications led to incorrect conclusions regarding m<sup>1</sup>A function. Because the  
107 identification of RNA targets and their specific modification sites gives insight into their biological  
108 and biochemical mechanisms, the development of antibodies with high affinity and high specificity  
109 is a key to successfully discovering the biological roles of the many RNA modifications. However,  
110 given the large number of RNA modifications and the subtle chemical differences between them,  
111 off-targets of RNA modification antibodies will be a continuous, inevitable problem. The current  
112 state of RNA chemistry prevents *in vitro* testing of all known RNA modifications, and thus new  
113 methods are required to predict the specificity of RNA modification-targeting antibodies.  
114

115 Computational approaches have the potential to screen antibodies for their predicted ability to  
116 bind modified RNA bases. Physics-based, alchemical free energy calculations are an accurate,  
117 rigorous, and cost-effective means to quantify chemical probe interactions with protein structures  
118 in silico (35-37). These calculations compute relative binding free energies ( $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ ) between two  
119 or more molecules by transforming between alternate chemical groups in silico. Because they are  
120 at the heart of molecular dynamics simulations, these calculations also provide dynamic structural  
121 characterization of macromolecular complexes. With these methods, changes in RNA-protein  
122 binding affinities can be monitored as a function of the chemical differences between modified or  
123 unmodified RNAs. Hence, modeling different RNA modifications can predict binding selectivity.  
124

125  $\lambda$ -Dynamics is an efficient alchemical free energy method that can accurately and rapidly screen  
126 hundreds of modified RNAs bound to a protein host. This method holds a key advantage over  
127 other *in silico* strategies in that it can model multiple chemical variations simultaneously within a  
128 single simulation (38,39), making it more efficient and higher throughput. In a  $\lambda$ -dynamics  
129 calculation, a variable  $\lambda$  parameter allows chemical groups to dynamically scale between "on" and  
130 "off" states during a molecular dynamics simulation. Akin to selection in an *in vitro* competitive  
131 binding assay, this dynamic behavior effectively differentiates the varying affinities of target  
132 molecules, providing insights into their binding characteristics. Thus,  $\lambda$ -dynamics can rapidly  
133 select for the best binders from a library of chemical modifications (40,41). To date,  $\lambda$ -dynamics  
134 has accurately measured the relative binding free energy differences of large chemical inhibitor  
135 libraries targeting the HIV reverse transcriptase (42-44) and  $\beta$ -secretase 1 (45,46), of mutations  
136 at various protein-protein interfaces (47,48), as well as of the folding free energies of mutant T4  
137 lysozyme proteins (49). Notably, chemical probe binding studies with  $\lambda$ -dynamics demonstrated

138 8- to 30-fold efficiency gains over other conventional free energy calculations (42,45). This  
139 equates to months of computational time savings.  
140

141 The following investigation tested whether  $\lambda$ -dynamics could accurately predict how RNA  
142 modifications affected RNA-protein interactions. This work determined the structures of two  
143 modified RNA-targeting antibodies bound to inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A, revealing that these antibodies  
144 recognize their target ligands similar to other modified RNA binding proteins. The structural  
145 models permitted the use of  $\lambda$ -dynamics to perform a computational screen of RNA base  
146 modifications bound to inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A antibodies to predict their binding specificities. These in  
147 silico binding predictions were verified with in vitro binding assays. Collectively, the results  
148 demonstrate how structural biology can be combined with  $\lambda$ -dynamics to predict modified RNA-  
149 protein interactions without the limitations imposed by biochemical experiment methodologies.  
150

## 151 **Results**

152 The goal was to test whether  $\lambda$ -dynamics could be used as an in silico strategy to accurately probe  
153 modified RNA-protein interactions. Antibodies can serve as modified RNA-binding proteins. They  
154 are commonly used as reagents to enrich for modified RNAs and determine modification sites in  
155 biology (18). Currently, RNA modification targeting antibodies are relatively few in number, have  
156 modest affinity toward their targets (32,33), and can have specificity issues that confound  
157 biological conclusions (21). An antibody specificity screening method for known RNA  
158 modifications will enable a comprehensive view of the RNAs enriched and provide insight into  
159 how to improve antibody design.  
160

161 High-resolution structures of antibodies targeting single modified RNA bases have not been  
162 published. An inosine-targeting antibody structure is available (31), but an open pocket adjacent  
163 to the nucleoside binding site potentiates the chance of the antibody binding to a dinucleotide  
164 substrate (**Fig S1**). To avoid this confounder, additional antibody structures bound to modified  
165 ribonucleosides were pursued. The protein sequences of available antibodies were predicted by  
166 mass spectrometry and sequencing (see Methods). Recombinant antibodies were produced in  
167 cell culture and used to generate antibody fragments (Fabs). Fabs were screened in crystallizing  
168 conditions, and crystals were soaked or grown with target nucleoside ligands (see Methods).  
169 These efforts lead to the determination of three modified RNA-targeting antibody crystal structures  
170 (**Table S1**): one targeting inosine at 1.94 Å and two targeting m<sup>6</sup>A at 2.02 Å and 3.06 Å.  
171

172 IgG antibodies are composed of heavy and light protein chains, forming 6 variable loops on each  
173 arm, or antibody binding fragment (Fab), that typically dictate binding affinity to its target substrate  
174 (27-29). In the 1.94 Å inosine and 3.06 Å m<sup>6</sup>A antibody structures, a large, discontinuous density  
175 was observed at these variable loop regions where a modified purine target nucleoside could be  
176 adequately modeled (**Fig 1A,B**). Rather than binding to loops on the periphery, the modified  
177 nucleosides bound to a central cavity created by the 6 variable loops between the heavy and light  
178 chains (**Fig 1A,B**). Binding of small molecules at this location has been observed in other antibody  
179 structures (50). In the third 2.02 Å m<sup>6</sup>A targeting antibody structure, density in this binding pocket  
180 was not observed (**Fig S2**). Thus, two structures yielded high-resolution models of how purine  
181 modified bases bind to antibodies.  
182

183 Small molecule antibodies are selected through adaptive immunity to target a particular hapten  
184 (51). Thus, antibodies become RNA-binding proteins through adaptation and can inform on how  
185 biology designs a protein to bind an RNA modification *de novo*. Modified RNA-binding proteins  
186 provide exemplary examples of potential binding architecture. For example, the YTH domains  
187 bind to m<sup>6</sup>A with high specificity (52). This domain arranges its side chains to 1) create a specificity  
188 pocket for the parent base and modification, 2) bind the nucleobase through  $\pi$ - $\pi$  stacking, and 3)

189 line the pocket periphery with positively charged side chains to accommodate the negatively  
190 charged RNA phosphate backbone (**Fig 1C**). Antibodies targeting modified RNAs might also  
191 mimic this strategy. Alternatively, they might use a collection of novel binding strategies, each  
192 selected randomly through adaptive immune selection.  
193

194 The inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A antibody structures both bound to their modified ribonucleoside ligands  
195 similarly to other RNA-binding proteins. To specify the modified base, the inosine targeting  
196 antibody used an asparagine to select for the O6 oxygen and N1 nitrogen of the inosine  
197 nucleobase (**Fig 1A**). The m<sup>6</sup>A-targeting antibody created a hydrophobic pocket to accommodate  
198 the methyl group (**Fig 1B**) and a glutamate side chain to hydrogen bond with the adenosine  
199 nucleobase N1 nitrogen (**Fig 1B**). Interestingly, glutamate side chain coordination is also  
200 observed in some YTH domains that bind m<sup>6</sup>A (**Fig 1C**, (53)). Both antibodies used paired  
201 tryptophans to create a slot for favorable π-π stacking and a tyrosine for ribose ring interactions  
202 (**Fig 1A,B**). However, these tryptophans and tyrosine came from differing variable loops in each  
203 antibody and are organized differently in their central antibody binding pocket (**Fig 1A,B**). The  
204 difference in binding pocket organization potentially reflects how these two antibodies were  
205 isolated from different animals with separate adaptive immune responses. In sum, the antibody-  
206 ligand structures revealed that these two antibodies use similar strategies to bind their modified  
207 base targets that may permit differentiation between unmodified base counterparts.  
208

209 The quality of the structures enabled predicting in silico how these antibodies may interact with  
210 other RNA nucleobases. There are over 140 different RNA modifications identified in biology,  
211 many of which are not available as commercial reagents or lack protocols to synthesize in vitro.  
212 A library of 44 modified and 4 unmodified nucleobases was selected based on published  
213 thermodynamic parameters for RNA modifications in the CHARMM force field (54) and their  
214 commercial availability for experimental testing in vitro (**Fig S3**). λ-Dynamics was used to assess  
215 differences in relative binding free energies between inosine or m<sup>6</sup>A versus each library  
216 nucleobase when bound to their respective antibodies (see Methods, **Fig 2**, and **Fig S4**). During  
217 the simulations, some of the modified nucleosides unbound from the antibody (**Fig S5**),  
218 presumably due to having poor binding affinity or steric clashes, and were removed from further  
219 study (**Table S2** and **S3**). Similar to previously performed studies (42-44,47-49), relative binding  
220 free energies ( $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ ) were calculated for the nucleosides that remained antibody bound.  
221 Examples of the results obtained are shown (**Fig 3** and **4**) with full results reported in the  
222 Supplement (**Table S2** and **S3**). A positive  $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$  value indicates poorer binding and a negative  
223 value suggests enhanced binding when compared to the native inosine or m<sup>6</sup>A base. As a control,  
224 inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A modified bases were perturbed into an identical but distinct copy of themselves  
225 within their respective antibody complexes. These free energy differences were near zero (**Fig**  
226 **3A and 4**), as expected of a base replacing itself, and indicated that the λ-dynamics calculations  
227 were working correctly.  
228

229 λ-Dynamics predicted differing specificities and off-targets for these two antibodies. The inosine  
230 antibody had many predicted off-targets that included uridine (**Fig 3A**) and uridine modifications  
231 (**Fig 3B**). Inspection of the models revealed that hydrogen bonding of the asparagine side chain  
232 to the O6 oxygen in inosine could be satisfied by the O4 oxygen in uridine (**Fig S6A**). Many uridine  
233 modifications had an O4 oxygen available for hydrogen bonding, potentially explaining why  
234 related molecules all had higher predicted binding affinities in the λ-dynamics calculations. In  
235 contrast, cytidine and adenosine were not predicted to enhance binding (**Fig 3A** and **Table S2**).  
236 Both nucleosides have nitrogens at similar positions, potentially making the pocket less favorable  
237 for these bases to interact by removing hydrogen bonding. Finally, a further inspection of the  
238 structures revealed a larger binding pocket in the inosine versus the m<sup>6</sup>A antibody binding pocket  
239 (**Fig 1A,B**). This larger pocket may accommodate a greater variety of shapes and sizes,

240 increasing the propensity for off-targets. Thus,  $\lambda$ -dynamics predicted the inosine antibody to have  
241 many off-targets in this modestly sized ribonucleoside library.  
242

243 In contrast to the inosine antibody,  $\lambda$ -dynamics predicted that the m<sup>6</sup>A antibody had relatively few  
244 off-targets (**Table S3**). As discussed previously, the binding pocket was smaller (**Fig 1A,B**) and  
245 required a N1 nitrogen on the nucleobase for hydrogen bonding (**Fig 1B**). Along with m<sup>6</sup>A, a few  
246 adenosine bases were predicted to bind (**Fig 4** and **Table S3**), including adenosine and N6,N6-  
247 dimethyladenosine (m<sup>6</sup><sub>2</sub>A), a dimethyl modification at the N6 nitrogen position (**Fig S6B,C**). Closer  
248 inspection of the structure revealed that the hydrophobic pocket had enough space to  
249 accommodate a second methyl group (**Fig S6C**). Similar to the inosine antibody, cytidine was  
250 predicted to be a poor binder with a high, positive free energy difference (**Fig 4**). In summary, the  
251 m<sup>6</sup>A antibody had fewer off-targets compared to the inosine antibody but still was predicted to  
252 bind to nucleosides other than m<sup>6</sup>A.  
253

254 While  $\lambda$ -dynamics has demonstrated accuracy with modeling protein-protein and protein-small  
255 molecule binding interactions (42-48), it has so far been untested with respect to reproducing  
256 protein-RNA interactions. To evaluate our in silico predictions in vitro, Enzyme-Linked  
257 Immunosorbent Assays (ELISAs) were used to probe the binding of inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A antibodies  
258 to target and off-target RNA bases. RNAs were synthesized through solid-state chemistry (see  
259 Methods) to create biotin-labeled oligomers of inosine, adenosine, uridine, and cytidine to test the  
260 inosine antibody binding. Cytidine oligos with single base changes of adenosine, m<sup>6</sup>A, and m<sup>6</sup><sub>2</sub>A  
261 were synthesized to test the m<sup>6</sup>A antibody binding. The biotin-labeled oligos were bound to wells  
262 coated with a streptavidin derivative. Wells without oligo served as a background control. After  
263 oligo incubation and washing, the inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A antibodies were incubated at varying  
264 concentrations. Bound inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A antibodies were detected with a secondary horseradish  
265 peroxidase (HRP) conjugated antibody that targeted mouse IgG. No inosine or m<sup>6</sup>A antibody wells  
266 were used to control for secondary antibody background. The presence of secondary antibody  
267 was detected with an HRP chromogenic substrate, with the absorbance measured as an indirect  
268 reading for inosine or m<sup>6</sup>A antibody binding.  
269

270 The inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A antibody in vitro binding results agreed with the  $\lambda$ -dynamics predictions (**Fig**  
271 **5**). The inosine antibody bound to inosine and uridine oligos (**Fig 5A**), although inosine binding  
272 was observed at much lower antibody concentrations. In contrast, the inosine antibody did not  
273 bind to adenosine or cytosine oligos (**Fig 5A**). Likewise, the m<sup>6</sup>A antibody bound to m<sup>6</sup>A containing  
274 cytidine oligos but bound poorly to cytidine only (**Fig 5B**), as expected. As  $\lambda$ -dynamics predicted,  
275 the m<sup>6</sup>A antibody bound to an m<sup>6</sup><sub>2</sub>A-containing oligo (**Fig 5B**). The antibody also bound to an  
276 adenosine-containing oligo (**Fig 5B**) but to a lesser degree than m<sup>6</sup>A. Regardless, the in vitro  
277 binding results matched the predictions of  $\lambda$ -dynamics, supporting the accuracy of this in silico  
278 method to identify modified RNA-protein interactions.  
279

## 280 Discussion

281 With hundreds of RNA modifications identified in biology, new methods are required to determine  
282 the sites of each of these chemical changes to determine their functions. Antibodies targeting  
283 RNA modifications are a versatile tool to enrich and determine modification sites, but their  
284 reliability hinges upon their accuracy. To this end, inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A antibody structures bound to  
285 their modified ribonucleoside targets were determined to high resolution. These structures then  
286 facilitated the use of  $\lambda$ -dynamics, an in silico free energy calculation, to estimate how the  
287 antibodies may bind other unmodified and modified RNA bases, with worsened, neutral, or  
288 enhanced binding affinities.  $\lambda$ -Dynamics predictions matched well with in vitro binding assay  
289 results, supporting the accuracy of using this computational approach to measure untested RNA-  
290 protein interactions. In its simplest application and as performed in this work, the method can be

291 used to determine off-target RNA base interactions with antibodies used for modified RNA  
292 enrichment and site identification. But the strategy holds greater promise to inject insight into the  
293 biochemical mechanisms of RNA modifications by determining how any modified RNA,  
294 commercially available for biochemical investigation or not, may interact with proteins and other  
295 molecules (**Fig 6**).  
296

297 The determined antibody structures targeting modified purines revealed identical binding  
298 strategies toward their respective modified RNA bases, reminiscent of modified RNA-binding  
299 proteins. Each antibody had a specificity pocket and used tryptophans to create a slot for  $\pi$ -  $\pi$   
300 stacking with the nucleobase. Only one of these tryptophans had a similar sequence position  
301 between the two antibodies. The other came from a separate loop, leading to RNA binding in  
302 completely different orientations. These antibodies were created through adaptive immunity,  
303 supporting the notion that mimicking modified base RNA-binding proteins by creating a specificity  
304 pocket and using  $\pi$ - $\pi$  stacking for nucleobase interactions is a competent way to bind a modified  
305 nucleobase. Thus, convergent adaption may have led both purine-targeting antibodies to follow  
306 a similar binding strategy as modified RNA-binding proteins. The results lead to the speculation  
307 that all modified RNA-targeting antibodies bind to their targets similarly. Examples of pyrimidine-  
308 targeting antibody structures will be necessary to further probe this concept.  
309

310 Antibodies are heavily used reagents to enrich modified RNA for sequencing and site  
311 identification. This strategy has been used to identify sites of many different RNA modifications to  
312 deduce their biological and biochemical mechanisms. Regardless of new methodologies to  
313 determine RNA modification sites, antibodies will continue to be used to enrich for less abundant  
314 modifications. Thus, antibody binding to off-target RNA modifications will continue to be a problem  
315 in research. The chemical similarities between many RNA modifications make antibody specificity  
316 an expected complication. This work demonstrates how  $\lambda$ -dynamics is a viable in silico tool to  
317 determine potential RNA off-targets of antibodies. The method does not require the availability of  
318 modified nucleosides, RNA oligomers, or other in vitro reagents that are currently unavailable.  
319 With an accurate, high-resolution structural model,  $\lambda$ -dynamics can test the full breadth of RNA  
320 modifications in biology. Additionally,  $\lambda$ -dynamics has previously investigated the effects of protein  
321 mutations on binding (47,48). The method can thus be used to rationally design antibodies for  
322 improved binding specificity and affinity.  
323

324 This is the first study to use  $\lambda$ -dynamics to probe nucleic acid-protein interactions via nucleic base  
325 perturbations. Other in silico molecular modeling and free energy methods have been employed  
326 to study nucleic acid-protein interactions, including predictions of DNA binding to proteins (55)  
327 and probing mutations in DNA-protein complexes (56,57).  $\lambda$ -Dynamics has several key attributes  
328 that make it advantageous over other in silico calculations. First,  $\lambda$ -dynamics enables multiple  
329 modified bases to be calculated within a single simulation. This can drastically improve efficiency  
330 over other free energy methods that can only investigate a single perturbation at a time, therefore  
331 requiring many simulations to study multiple perturbations. Second,  $\lambda$ -dynamics can  
332 simultaneously sample modifications at multiple sites within a chemical system. This enables  
333 base changes at different RNA sequence positions to yield free energy results for multiple  
334 modification combinations. There are limitations to  $\lambda$ -dynamics as well. Many of the calculated  
335 free energy differences, such as with uridine bound to the inosine antibody (**Fig 3A**) or with  $m^6A$   
336 bound to the  $m^6A$  antibody (**Fig 4**), predicted greater enhancement of binding than what was  
337 observed in vitro (**Fig 5**). The starting models for the  $\lambda$ -dynamics calculations were based on the  
338 crystal structures of antibody fragments bound to nucleosides, but binding was tested in vitro with  
339 RNA oligos. This omission of the RNA phosphate backbone from the model, as well as the  
340 potential for sporadic self-associations or secondary structures in the unbound oligo, may have  
341 impacted the true binding values. Additional work probing RNA-protein interactions with  $\lambda$ -

342 dynamics will undoubtedly improve the simulations. Moreover, the refinement of molecular  
343 dynamics force fields, particularly with respect to nucleic acids, is a bustling area of research, and  
344 future advancements promise to further enhance the accuracy of these classical simulations.

345  
346 While hundreds of RNA modifications have been identified, only a few dozen are available for  
347 experimental testing *in vitro*. Novel methods must be developed to examine how all modifications  
348 affect molecular interactions to decipher their biological mechanisms. This study establishes a  
349 workflow for using  $\lambda$ -dynamics to probe nucleic acid-protein interactions *in silico* (Fig 6). The  
350 combinatorial efficiency of  $\lambda$ -dynamics enables rapid *in silico* examination of currently known and  
351 newly discovered RNA modifications. With high-resolution structures of nucleic acid-protein  
352 complexes, modified and unmodified nucleoside bases can be probed to explore how chemical  
353 changes to RNA affect protein binding interactions. This computational approach can be used for  
354 DNA or RNA and is not limited by available chemistry. The work presented demonstrates how  
355 this strategy can probe for the specificity of antibodies. Future work can utilize this method to test  
356 how hundreds of RNA modifications affect their molecular interactions with any RNA-binding  
357 protein or other nucleic acids, delivering novel insights into their molecular functions.

358  
359 **Materials and Methods**

360 **Recombinant antibodies.** Commercial antibodies targeting inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A were sequenced by  
361 Abterra Biosciences (San Diego, CA) (58-60). Briefly, the antibodies were fragmented and  
362 submitted for MS/MS mass spectrometry. The data was then analyzed to predict the probable  
363 antibody sequence. Full-length monoclonal antibodies (mAb) and antibody fragments (Fab) were  
364 produced recombinantly in human cells by Sino Biological (Wayne, PA). Fabs were made from  
365 mAbs by papain protease digestion, Fc removal by protein A, and size exclusion chromatography.  
366 All mAbs and Fabs were shipped and stored in phosphate buffered saline (PBS; 137 mM NaCl,  
367 2.7 mM KCl, 10 mM Na<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>, 1.8 mM KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>).

368  
369 **Crystallography.** Recombinant Fabs were concentrated to approximately 3-5 mg/ml and sitting  
370 drop crystal trays were set with an Oryx4 (Douglas Instruments; Hungerford, United Kingdom).  
371 The m<sup>6</sup>A Fab was set up without and with 1 mM m<sup>6</sup>A nucleoside (MedChemExpress, HY-N0086).  
372 Crystals were observed by 4 weeks in the following conditions: 1) the inosine Fab in 50 mM Tris  
373 pH 8.3, 15% PEG 4000, 0.1 mM EDTA; 2) the m<sup>6</sup>A Fab only in 20% (v/v) PEG 2K, 0.2 M MgCl<sub>2</sub>,  
374 100 mM Tris pH 8.0; and 3) m<sup>6</sup>A Fab with 1 mM m<sup>6</sup>A nucleoside in 0.17 M ammonium sulfate,  
375 25.5% (w/v) PEG 4000. The inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A Fab only crystals were incubated in freezing  
376 conditions (inosine: 21% PEG 4K, 50 mM Tris pH 8.3, 0.1 mM EDTA, 20% glycerol, 0.2 mM  
377 inosine nucleoside (Sigma, I4125-1G); m<sup>6</sup>A: 20% (v/v) PEG 2K, 0.2 M MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 100 mM Tris pH  
378 8.0, 5-15% (v/v) glycerol, 1 mM m<sup>6</sup>A nucleoside) with addition of 10 mM inosine and 10 mM m<sup>6</sup>A  
379 nucleoside for 30-60 minutes prior to freezing, respectively. X-ray diffraction data was collected  
380 at Lilly Research Laboratories Collaborative Access Team (LRL-CAT; Argonne National  
381 Laboratory; Argonne, IL) and ESRF ID30B (Life Sciences Collaborative Access Team (LS-CAT)  
382 operating at the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF); Grenoble, France). Data was  
383 collected and processed by Lilly, UW-Madison Crystallography Core, and the authors. All data  
384 was indexed, merged, and scaled in XDS/Aimless (61). Space groups were determined in  
385 XDS/pointless (61). Model building and refinement were performed in Coot (62) and Phenix (63),  
386 respectively. In some of the inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A Fab density maps, a large density was observed at  
387 the Fab antigen binding site. The respective modified RNA nucleosides used in crystallization and  
388 in freezing modeled well into these densities (Fig 1A,B). The final structures and merged  
389 reflection files are deposited at wwPDB (wwpdb.org; PDB IDs: 8SIP, 8TCA, 8VEV). Unmerged  
390 reflection data were deposited at Integrated Resource for Reproducibility in Macromolecular  
391 Crystallography (proteindiffraction.org).

392

393 **System setup for molecular modeling.** Coordinates for the inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A Fabs were  
394 obtained from our Protein Data Bank (PDB) entries 8SIP and 8VEV. Residue flips for His, Glu,  
395 and Asn were assessed using the MolProbity webserver (64). Protonation states of titratable  
396 residues were assigned based on their predicted pKa values at pH 7.0 using PROPKA (65,66).  
397 The protein-nucleoside complexes were then solvated using the CHARMM-GUI Solution Builder  
398 (67), requiring a minimum of 10 Å of solvent padding from each face. The resulting cubic water  
399 box dimensions were 101 Å per edge for the inosine system and 98 Å per edge for the m<sup>6</sup>A  
400 system. Sufficient K<sup>+</sup> or Cl<sup>-</sup> ions were added to neutralize the net charge of each system.  
401 Additional K<sup>+</sup>, Mg<sup>2+</sup>, and Cl<sup>-</sup> ions were then added to achieve a final ionic strength of 150 mM KCl  
402 and 0–5 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>. This process was repeated to solvate the individual nucleosides without their  
403 respective Fabs, yielding unbound model systems with cubic box dimensions of 30 Å per edge  
404 for inosine and 32 Å per edge for m<sup>6</sup>A.  
405

406 All simulations were performed using the CHARMM molecular simulation package ((68,69),  
407 developmental version c47a2) with the Basic  $\lambda$ -Dynamics Engine (BLaDE) on graphics  
408 processing units (GPUs) (70). Prior to running molecular dynamics, each system was subjected  
409 to 250 steps of steepest descent minimization. Molecular dynamics (MD) simulations were then  
410 run in the isothermal-isobaric (NPT) ensemble at 25°C and 1 atm using a Langevin thermostat  
411 and Monte Carlo barostat (70-72). The g-BAOAB integrator was used with an integration timestep  
412 of 2 fs and trajectory frames were saved every 1000 steps (70,73). Bond lengths between  
413 hydrogens and heavy atoms were constrained using the SHAKE algorithm (74-77). Periodic  
414 boundary conditions were employed in conjunction with Particle Mesh Ewald (PME) electrostatics  
415 (78-80), to compute long-range electrostatic forces, and force-switched van der Waals (vdW)  
416 interactions (81). Nonbonded cutoffs were set to 10 Å, with force switching taking effect starting  
417 at 9 Å.  
418

419 All explicit solvent calculations were conducted using the TIP3P water model (82). The  
420 CHARMM36 protein force field was used to represent the inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A Fabs, and the  
421 CHARMM36 nucleic acid force field was used to represent the RNA oligos (83-87). Modified  
422 ribonucleobase parameters were used to model noncanonical bases in the ribonucleoside (54).  
423 For the alchemical perturbations performed with  $\lambda$ -dynamics, ribonucleoside base mutations were  
424 represented using a hybrid multiple-topology approach (88). In the case of purine-to-purine  
425 mutations, analogous atoms in the shared core were harmonically restrained to one another using  
426 the Scaling of Constrained Atoms (SCAT) interface described previously (89).  
427

428  **$\lambda$ -Dynamics calculations.** From 112 parameterized modified ribonucleobases available (54), a  
429 library of 48 bases, comprising 44 modified and 4 unmodified base candidates, were selected for  
430 *in silico* screening with  $\lambda$ -dynamics. Those with charged functional groups, bulky side chains, or  
431 modifications to the ribose sugar were excluded. Simulations were conducted for each of the 48  
432 ribonucleosides with  $\lambda$ -dynamics to alchemically transform wild-type nucleoside bases (inosine or  
433 m<sup>6</sup>A) into a corresponding mutant base and compute relative differences in binding affinities. Prior  
434 to initiating  $\lambda$ -dynamics production sampling, appropriate biasing potentials must first be identified.  
435 The Adaptive Landscape Flattening (ALF) (49,90) algorithm was used to identify optimal biasing  
436 potentials to facilitate dynamic and frequent alchemical transitions between the perturbed bases.  
437 For each perturbation, ALF identified initial biases by first conducting one hundred simulations of  
438 100 ps MD sampling, followed by 13 simulations of 1 ns each. These biases were then further  
439 refined via five replicate simulations of 5 ns each. With optimal biases identified, five independent  
440 production simulations of 25 ns were conducted, with an initial 5 ns of sampling removed from  
441 free energy determinations for equilibration. Ribonucleosides that unbound from the Fab binding  
442 site during  $\lambda$ -dynamics production sampling were labeled as unfavorable and were not pursued  
443 further. In all other cases, final  $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$  values were calculated by Boltzmann reweighting the end-

444 state populations to the original biases with WHAM (49,91). Uncertainties ( $\sigma$ ) were calculated by  
445 bootstrapping the standard deviation of the mean across each of the five independent trials. From  
446 these results, modified oligonucleotides were selected for synthesis based on commercial  
447 availability.

448

449 **RNA oligonucleotide preparation.** RNA oligonucleotides used for binding affinity  
450 measurements and crystallographic studies were synthesized on an ABI 394 DNA/RNA  
451 synthesizer (Applied Biosystems (ABI); Waltham, MA). m<sup>6</sup>A (10-3005-90; Glen Research;  
452 Sterline, VA), m<sup>6</sup>2A (ANP-8626; Chemgene; Wilmington, MA), and inosine (ANP-5680;  
453 Chemgene) modified RNA phosphoramidites; Biotin phosphoramidite (CLP-1517; Chemgene);  
454 and canonical RNA (A, ANP-5671; U, ANP-5674; C, ANP-6676; Chemgene) phosphoramidites  
455 were purchased from commercial sources. The canonical and modified phosphoramidites were  
456 concentrated to 0.1 M in acetonitrile. Coupling was carried out using a 5-benzylthio-1H-tetrazole  
457 (5-BTT) solution (0.25 M) as the catalyst. The coupling time was 650 seconds. 3% trichloroacetic  
458 acid in methylene chloride was used for the detritylation. Syntheses were performed on control  
459 pore glass (CPG-1000) immobilized with the appropriate nucleosides. All L-oligonucleotides were  
460 prepared with DMTr-on and in-house deprotected using AMA (1:1 v/v aqueous mixture of 30%  
461 w/v ammonium hydroxide and 40% w/v methylamine) for 15 minutes at 65°C. The RNA strands  
462 were additionally desilylated with Et<sub>3</sub>N•3HF solution to remove TBDMS groups. The 5'-DMTr  
463 deprotection was carried out using the commercial Glen-Pak purification cartridge (Glen  
464 Research). Purification was initially performed by the commercial Glen-Pak purification cartridge,  
465 followed by further purification with a 15% denaturing PAGE gel. The oligonucleotides were  
466 collected, lyophilized, desalted, re-dissolved in water, and then concentrated as appropriate for  
467 downstream experiments. Concentrations of the aqueous RNA samples were determined by their  
468 UV absorption at 260 nm, using the Thermo Scientific Nanodrop One Spectrophotometer. The  
469 theoretical molar extinction coefficients of these samples at 260 nm were provided by Integrated  
470 DNA Technologies.

471

472 **ELISA.** Biotin-labeled, RNA oligos were diluted to 100 nM in ELISA blocking buffer (PBS, 0.05%  
473 Tween-20, 0.2 mg/ml bovine serum albumin (BSA, BP9706100; Fisher Scientific; Hampton, NH)),  
474 and 100  $\mu$ l were incubated in clear, 96-well NeutrAvidin™ Coated Plates (PI15217; Pierce;  
475 Waltham, MA) overnight at 4°C. Two technical replicates were set for each RNA oligo. ELISA  
476 blocking buffer without oligo condition was used as a negative control. The plates were washed  
477 with PBS-T (PBS with 0.05% Tween-20) 3 times, and varying concentrations of recombinant mAb  
478 incubated in each well for 1 hour at room temperature (approximately 20°C). A no-mAb condition  
479 was used as a no primary antibody control. Plates were washed 3 times again with PBS-T and  
480 incubated with goat anti-mouse IgG conjugated to horseradish peroxidase (HRP, NBP2-30347H;  
481 Novus Biologicals; Centennial, CO) at 0.05  $\mu$ g/ml in ELISA blocking buffer for 1 hour at room  
482 temperature (approximately 20°C). The plates were washed again with PBS-T and incubated with  
483 50  $\mu$ l of room temperature 1-Step Ultra TMB-ELISA Substrate Solution (PI34028; Pierce). After  
484 15 minutes, the reaction was stopped with 50  $\mu$ l of 2M Sulfuric Acid (A300S-500, Fisher Scientific).  
485 The plates were analyzed by 450 nm absorbance with a Synergy H1 microplate reader (BioTek  
486 Instruments; Winooski, VT). All ELISA experiments were replicated at least 3 times. The 3  
487 cleanest runs were reported. Averages, standard deviations, and graphs were performed and  
488 made in GraphPad Prism version 10.1.1 for MacOS (GraphPad Software, Boston, MA).

489

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509

510 **Figure Captions**  
511

512 **Fig 1.** Binding of inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A targeting antibodies mimics RNA-binding proteins. **(A)** Crystal  
513 structure of the inosine targeting antibody fragment to 1.94 Å (PDB ID: 8SIP). Overview (left) and  
514 magnified (right) rendition of the antibody bound to inosine nucleoside. 1F<sub>o</sub>F<sub>c</sub> density without  
515 ligand in green mesh. Heavy chain (H) in dark blue, light chain (L) in light blue, and inosine in  
516 orange. Interacting amino acids include heavy chain residues Asn35, Trp40, Trp50, Gly99,  
517 Tyr104, and Leu106 and light chain residues Ser97 and Trp101. Those discussed in the main text  
518 are labeled. **(B)** Crystal structure of the m<sup>6</sup>A-targeting antibody fragment to 3.06 Å (PDB ID:  
519 8VEV). Labeling same as in (A), except m<sup>6</sup>A nucleoside in orange. Interacting amino acids include  
520 heavy chain residues Trp33, Asn35, Glu50, Tyr61, Trp101, and Phe105 and light chain residues  
521 Tyr34, Trp93, and Leu98. Those discussed in the main text are labeled. **(C)** Structure of a YTH  
522 bound to m<sup>6</sup>A (YTHF1, PDB ID: 4RCJ). Residues in dark blue. m<sup>6</sup>A in orange. Interacting amino  
523 acids include Tyr397, Asp401, Trp411, Cys412, Asn441, Trp465, Lys469, Trp470, and Asp507.  
524 Those discussed in the main text are labeled.  
525

526 **Fig 2.** In silico  $\lambda$ -dynamics workflow for screening potential binders to the inosine and m<sup>6</sup>A  
527 antibodies. A three-step process was used to filter candidates from a library of 48 ribonucleosides  
528 for in vitro antibody binding validation. (1) For each mutant library candidate, a  $\lambda$ -dynamics  
529 simulation was conducted to calculate a relative binding free energy between the mutant and its  
530 respective native ribonucleoside ligand (inosine or m<sup>6</sup>A). (2) All ribonucleosides that unbound  
531 during these simulations were deemed unfavorable and excluded from further processing. (3)  
532 Mutant bases with relative binding free energies deemed favorable ( $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}} \leq -0.7$  kcal/mol) were  
533 selected for *in vitro* validation with binding assays based on commercial availability.  
534

535 **Fig 3.** Highlighted binding trends from the inosine antibody  $\lambda$ -dynamics screen. **(A)**  $\lambda$ -Dynamics  
536 predicts loss of binding (red) for cytidine (C), no change in binding (grey) for inosine and  
537 adenosine (A), and enhancement of binding (green) for uridine (U). Estimated relative binding  
538 free energies ( $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ ) and uncertainties ( $\pm\sigma$ ) are listed. **(B)** The predicted inosine antibody  
539 promiscuity for U generalizes to many of its derivatives. Estimated relative binding free energies  
540 and uncertainties are listed in green. The thickness of each equilibrium arrow is proportional to  
541 the favorability of the corresponding transition. Seven other uridine derivatives (Ux7) showed  
542 enhanced binding but are not depicted. See **Table S2** for a complete list.  
543

544 **Fig 4.** Highlighted binding trends from the m<sup>6</sup>A antibody  $\lambda$ -dynamics screen.  $\lambda$ -Dynamics predicts  
545 loss of binding (red) for cytidine (C), no change in binding (grey) for m<sup>6</sup>A and adenosine (A), and  
546 enhancement of binding (green) for m<sup>6</sup><sub>2</sub>A. Estimated relative binding free energies ( $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ ) and  
547 uncertainties ( $\pm\sigma$ ) are listed. See **Table S3** for a complete list.  
548

549 **Fig 5.** ELISA binding assay results confirmed  $\lambda$ -dynamics predictions of antibody off-targets. **(A)**  
550 Absorbance units reported by ELISA indicating the binding affinity of inosine antibody to inosine  
551 (I), uridine (U), adenosine (A), and cytidine (C) over varying protein concentrations. Double  
552 asterisks (\*\*) denote a p-value < 0.01. Inosine serves as a positive control. In line with  $\lambda$ -dynamics  
553 predictions, U identified as an off-target while A and C demonstrated negligible binding. **(B)**  
554 Absorbance units reported by ELISA indicating the binding affinity of m<sup>6</sup>A antibody to m<sup>6</sup>A, m<sup>6</sup><sub>2</sub>A,  
555 adenosine (A), and cytidine (C) at varying protein concentrations. Double asterisks (\*\*) denote a  
556 p-value < 0.01. m<sup>6</sup>A serves as a positive control. Again, matching  $\lambda$ -dynamics predictions, m<sup>6</sup><sub>2</sub>A  
557 and A are identified as off-targets while C demonstrated negligible binding. All p-values calculated  
558 are available in **Fig S6D,E**.  
559

560 **Fig 6.** Proposed strategy to predict how proteins bind canonical and modified RNA. (1) Starting  
561 with an RNA-protein structural model, (2) an in silico  $\lambda$ -dynamics screen can be conducted to  
562 assess the favorability of the protein's interactions with a complete range of RNA bases. (3) This  
563 approach provides an economical and effective means to explore the full extent of a protein's  
564 RNA-binding capabilities that can be tested further in vitro.

565

## 566 **Supplemental Figure Captions**

567 **Table S1.** Data collection and refinement statistics for the inosine and  $m^6A$  antibody crystal  
568 structures.

569

570 **Table S2.** Complete table of  $\lambda$ -dynamics results for inosine antibody screening with the RNA  
571 library. RNA chemical structures available in **Fig S3**. Relative binding free energy,  $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ .  
572 Standard deviation,  $\pm\sigma$ . Unbound, u.b. Not specified due to bad sampling, n.s. Entries  
573 corresponding to favorable modifications ( $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}} \leq -0.7$  kcal/mol) are emphasized in bold italics.  
574 Patch name from Xu et al., 2016.

575

576 **Table S3.** Complete table of  $\lambda$ -dynamics results for  $m^6A$  antibody screening with the RNA library.  
577 RNA chemical structures available in **Fig S3**. Relative binding free energy,  $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ . Standard  
578 deviation,  $\pm\sigma$ . Unbound, u.b. Not specified due to bad sampling, n.s. Entries corresponding to  
579 favorable modifications ( $\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}} \leq -0.7$  kcal/mol) are emphasized in bold italics. Patch name from  
580 Xu et al., 2016.

581

582 **Fig S1.** A previously published poly-inosine antibody has a large binding pocket that may  
583 accommodate multiple nucleobases. Overview (left) and magnified image (right) of the poly-  
584 inosine antibody fragment (PDB ID: 1MRD) binding pocket. An inosine mononucleotide (orange)  
585 was modeled into the missing ligand density (green). Heavy chain residues (H) in dark blue and  
586 light chain residues (L) in light blue. Water molecules substituting for the potential second  
587 mononucleotide are depicted as red spheres, indicating the potential space to bind a second  
588 nucleobase. Interacting amino acids include heavy chain residue Arg96 and light chain residues  
589 Asn28, Asn30, Tyr32, Lys50, and Ser91. The extended binding pocket (red arrow) includes light  
590 chain residue Arg96 and heavy chain residues Gln35, Trp47, Glu50, and Asn58.

591

592 **Fig S2.** Crystal structure of the  $m^6A$  Fab apo- form to 2.05 Å (PDB ID: 8TCA). Critical binding  
593 pocket amino acids discussed in the main text are labeled. Heavy chain residues (H) are  
594 represented in dark blue, light chain residues (L) in light blue, and waters as red spheres. Depicted  
595 binding pocket amino acids match those of the  $m^6A$  Fab holo- form (**Fig 1A**).

596

597 **Fig S3.** Chemical library of ribonucleoside bases. The library includes the 4 canonical  
598 ribonucleobases (A, C, G, and U) and 44 naturally occurring modified derivatives (12 As, 6 Cs, 8  
599 Gs, and 18 Us). Differences between each modification and its respective canonical base are  
600 highlighted in green.

601

602 **Fig S4.** Molecular dynamics simulation movie example of the  $m^6A$  antibody with a bound  
603 nucleoside target. The  $m^6A$  Fab binds tightly to  $m^6_2A$ . Movie made in Pymol (Schrödinger, Inc.).

604

605 **Fig S5.** Molecular dynamics simulation movie example of the  $m^6A$  antibody with an unbinding  
606 nucleoside target. The  $m^6A$  Fab unbinds from uridine. Movie made in Pymol (Schrödinger, Inc.).

607

608 **Fig S6.** Structural models of inosine and  $m^6A$  antibodies bound to representative off-target RNAs.  
609 (A) Magnified binding site of the inosine antibody fragment in complex with uridine. (B-C)  
610 Magnified binding site of the  $m^6A$  antibody fragment in complex with (B)  $m^6_2A$  or (C) adenosine

611 (A). Heavy chain residues (H) are represented in dark blue, light chain residues (L) in light blue,  
612 and the off-target nucleoside in orange. Critical amino acid contacts labeled. (D-E) Table of t-test  
613 p-value statistics for (D) inosine and (E) m<sup>6</sup>A antibody ELISA binding assay results reported in  
614 **Fig 5**. p-values < 0.01 in bold.

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Figure 1

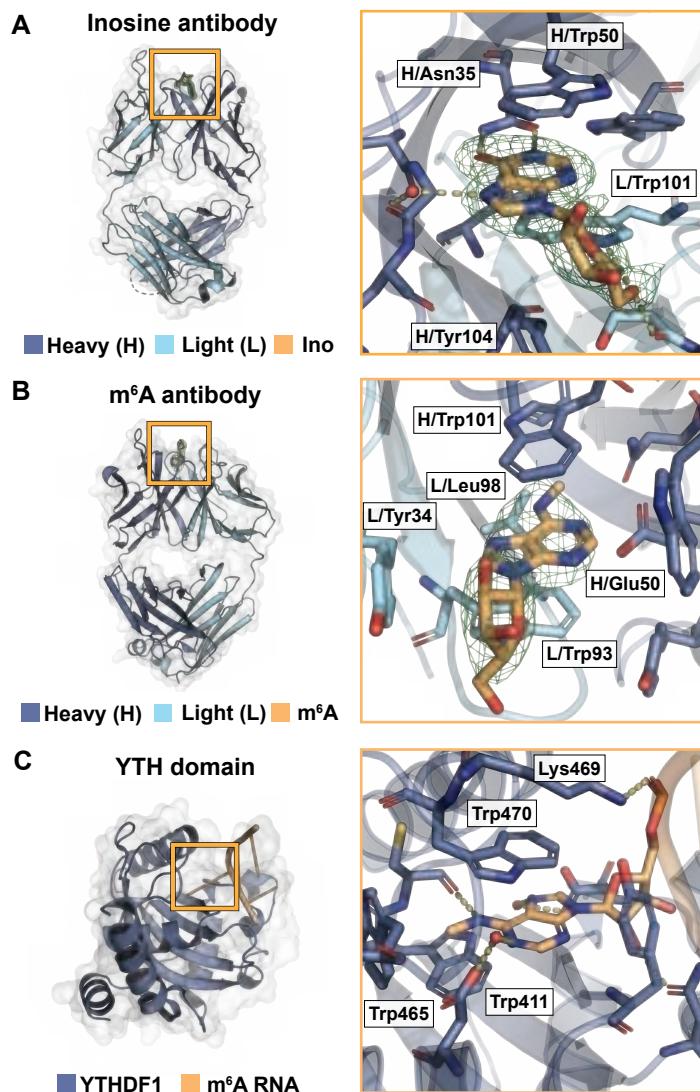


Figure 2

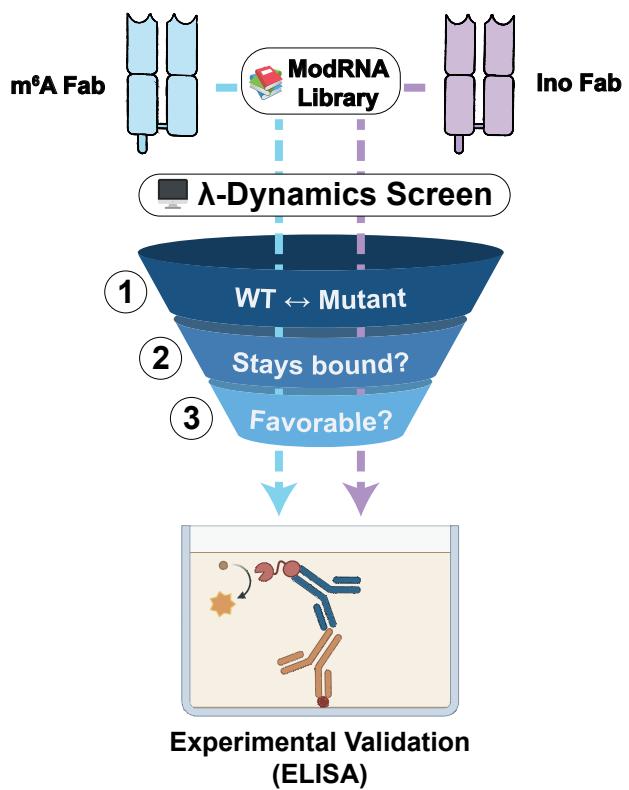


Figure 3

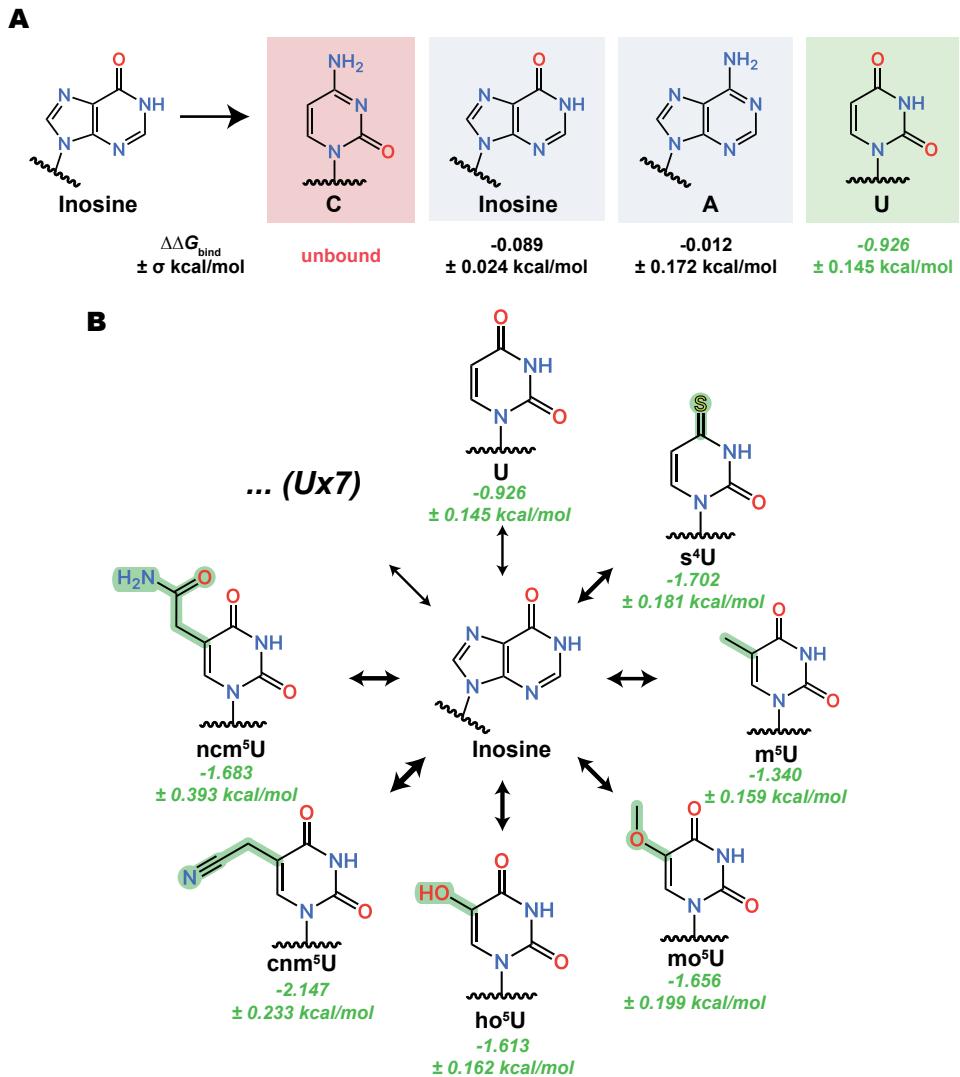


Figure 4

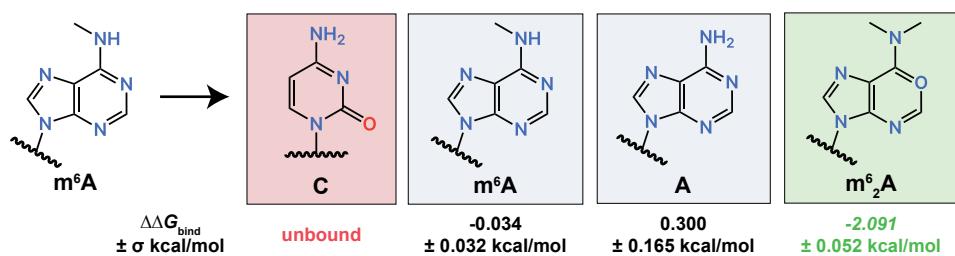


Figure 5

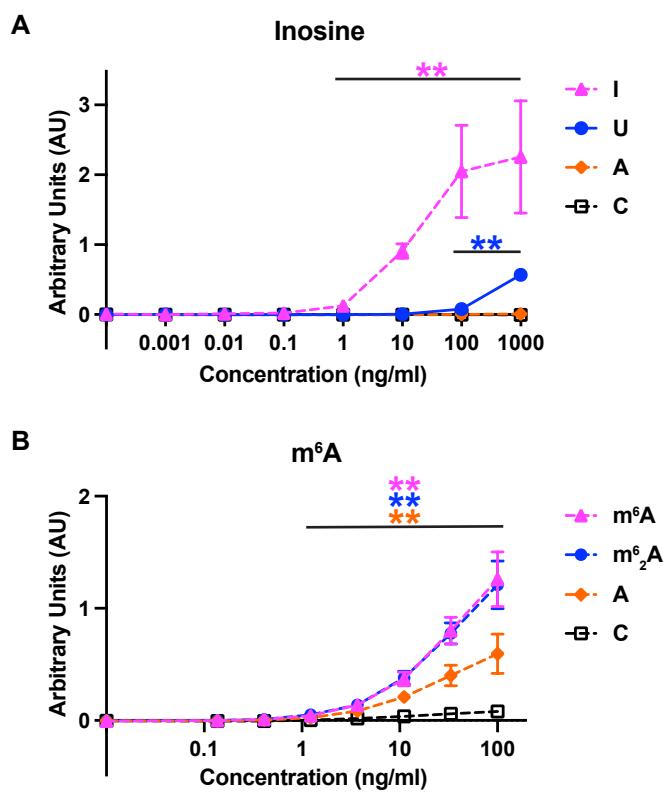


Figure 6



**Table S1. Data collection and refinement statistics.**

	Inosine Fab w/ Inosine (PDB ID: 8SIP)	m6A Fab only (PDB ID: 8TCA)	m6A Fab w/ ligand (PDB ID: 8VEV)
<b>Wavelength</b>	0.9793	0.9793	0.8731
<b>Resolution range</b>	57.04 - 1.94 (2.009 - 1.94)	70 - 2.02 (2.092 - 2.02)	48.23 - 3.06 (3.18 - 3.06)
<b>Space group</b>	P 1	P 43 21 2	P 21 21 21
<b>Unit cell</b>	39.8174 49.0903 57.3853 83.8419 88.8169 89.6813	79.906 79.906 145.127 90 90 90	83.64 128.377 150.476 90 90 90
<b>Total reflections</b>	218254 (14586)	230543 (22581)	203373 (23011)
<b>Unique reflections</b>	30888 (2931)	31198 (2999)	31244 (3399)
<b>Multiplicity</b>	7.1 (4.9)	7.4 (7.3)	6.5 (6.8)
<b>Completeness (%)</b>	96.20 (91.25)	98.24 (96.71)	99.90 (100.00)
<b>Mean I/sigma(I)</b>	6.33 (3.17)	9.71 (1.08)	16.80 (4.00)
<b>Wilson B-factor</b>	26.61	27.17	78.19
<b>R-merge</b>	0.1901 (1.506)	0.2183 (2.290)	0.078 (0.416)
<b>R-meas</b>	0.2027 (1.642)	0.2341 (2.466)	0.085 (0.451)
<b>R-pim</b>	0.06938 (0.6427)	0.08188 (0.8885)	0.0330 (0.1720)
<b>CC1/2</b>	0.991 (0.586)	0.996 (0.546)	0.998 (0.963)
<b>CC*</b>	0.998 (0.86)	0.999 (0.84)	1.000 (0.990)
<b>Reflections used in refinement</b>	30804 (2931)	31042 (2999)	31207 (3391)
<b>Reflections used for R-free</b>	1554 (154)	1543 (162)	1307 (142)
<b>R-work</b>	0.2043 (0.2460)	0.1807 (0.3043)	0.2238 (0.3156)
<b>R-free</b>	0.2454 (0.2914)	0.2238 (0.3201)	0.2531 (0.3100)

	CC(free)	0.929 (0.494)	0.952 (0.735)	0.896 (0.865)
<b>Number of non-hydrogen atoms</b>	3531	3562	9807	
<b>macromolecules</b>	3277	3239	9649	
<b>ligands</b>	19	36	108	
<b>solvent</b>	235	287	50	
<b>Protein residues</b>	426	425	1267	
<b>RMS(bonds)</b>	0.008	0.009	0.002	
<b>RMS(angles)</b>	1.10	1.18	0.56	
<b>Ramachandran favored (%)</b>	97.62	97.61	95.34	
<b>Ramachandran allowed (%)</b>	2.38	2.39	4.58	
<b>Ramachandran outliers (%)</b>	0.00	0.00	0.08	
<b>Rotamer outliers (%)</b>	0.80	0.54	0.09	
<b>Clashscore</b>	6.46	1.70	2.09	
<b>Average B-factor</b>	32.66	33.80	91.07	
<b>macromolecules</b>	32.19	33.22	91.26	
<b>ligands</b>	32.70	53.08	81.28	
<b>solvent</b>	39.15	37.94	75.58	
<b>Number of TLS groups</b>	1	9	6	

Statistics for the highest-resolution shell are shown in parentheses.

Table S2

Table S2: Relative binding free energies for inosine Fab screening.

Modified Base	Patch Name	$\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$	$\pm \sigma$
<i>A</i>	ADE	-0.112	0.172
<i>m</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>A</i>	2MA	u.b.	u.b.
<i>m</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>A</i>	6MA	1.726	0.186
<i>m</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>A</i>	M6A	0.605	0.231
<i>m</i> <sup>8</sup> <i>A</i>	8MA	2.721	0.389
<i>m</i> <sup>1</sup> <i>I</i>	1MI	0.783	0.138
<i>I</i>	INO	0.089	0.024
<i>ms</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>m</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>A</i>	SMA	-0.037	0.335
<i>ac</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>A</i>	6AA	u.b.	u.b.
<i>i</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>A</i>	6IA	n.s.	n.s.
<i>ms</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>i</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>A</i>	MIA	0.598	0.352
<i>ms</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>io</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>A</i>	SIA	u.b.	u.b.
<i>io</i> <sup>6</sup> <i>A</i>	HIA	1.868	0.389
<i>G</i>	GUA	-0.642	0.134
<i>m</i> <sup>1</sup> <i>G</i>	1MG	u.b.	u.b.
<i>m</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>G</i>	2MG	0.286	0.168
<i>m</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>2</i> <i>G</i>	M2G	1.057	0.262
<b><i>preQ0</i></b>	<b>DCG</b>	<b>-1.737</b>	<b>0.187</b>
<i>imG-14</i>	DWG	-0.005	0.319
<i>imG</i>	IMG	u.b.	u.b.
<b><i>imG2</i></b>	<b>IWG</b>	<b>-1.164</b>	<b>0.331</b>
<i>mimG</i>	MWG	u.b.	u.b.
<b><i>U</i></b>	<b>URA</b>	<b>-0.926</b>	<b>0.145</b>
<i>D</i>	H2U	u.b.	u.b.
<b><i>mo</i><sup>5</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>MOU</b>	<b>-1.656</b>	<b>0.199</b>
<i>m</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>s</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>U</i>	52U	u.b.	u.b.
<i>m</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>D</i>	MDU	0.707	0.161
<b><i>ψ</i></b>	<b>PSU</b>	<b>-1.985</b>	<b>0.490</b>
<b><i>m</i><sup>3</sup><i>ψ</i></b>	<b>3MP</b>	<b>-1.174</b>	<b>0.446</b>
<i>m</i> <sup>3</sup> <i>U</i>	3MU	-0.146	0.320
<b><i>s</i><sup>4</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>4SU</b>	<b>-1.702</b>	<b>0.181</b>
<b><i>m</i><sup>5</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>5MU</b>	<b>-1.340</b>	<b>0.159</b>
<b><i>ho</i><sup>5</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>5HU</b>	<b>-1.613</b>	<b>0.162</b>
<i>s</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>U</i>	2SU	-0.644	0.233
<b><i>m</i><sup>1</sup><i>ψ</i></b>	<b>1MP</b>	<b>-0.896</b>	<b>0.112</b>
<b><i>cnm</i><sup>5</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>CYU</b>	<b>-2.147</b>	<b>0.233</b>
<b><i>mcm</i><sup>5</sup><i>s</i><sup>2</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>70U</b>	<b>-1.379</b>	<b>0.330</b>
<i>mchm</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	CMU	-0.612	0.381
<b><i>ncm</i><sup>5</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>BCU</b>	<b>-1.683</b>	<b>0.393</b>
<b><i>mcm</i><sup>5</sup><i>U</i></b>	<b>OCU</b>	<b>-1.307</b>	<b>0.312</b>
<i>mcmo</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	OEU	-0.491	0.396
<i>C</i>	CYT	u.b.	u.b.
<i>m</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>C</i>	5MC	u.b.	u.b.
<i>ac</i> <sup>4</sup> <i>C</i>	4AC	u.b.	u.b.
<i>m</i> <sup>4</sup> <i>C</i>	4MC	u.b.	u.b.
<i>f</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>C</i>	5FC	0.596	0.265
<i>hm</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>C</i>	HMC	u.b.	u.b.
<i>s</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>C</i>	2SC	u.b.	u.b.

"Patch Name" = 3-letter name assigned by Xu et al. (2016)

Modifications with  $\Delta\Delta G \leq -0.7$  kcal/mol in bold italics.

Table S3

Modified Base	Patch Name	$\Delta\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$	$\pm \sigma$
A	ADE	0.300	0.165
<i>m</i> <sup>2</sup> A	2MA	3.084	0.156
<i>m</i> <sup>6</sup> A	6MA	-0.034	0.032
<b><i>m</i><sup>6</sup><sub>2</sub>A</b>	<b>M6A</b>	<b>-2.091</b>	<b>0.052</b>
<i>m</i> <sup>8</sup> A	8MA	4.432	0.337
<i>m</i> <sup>1</sup> I	1MI	n.s.	n.s.
I	INO	6.247	0.301
<i>ms</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>m</i> <sup>6</sup> A	SMA	2.634	0.209
<b><i>ac</i><sup>6</sup>A</b>	<b>6AA</b>	<b>-1.156</b>	<b>0.197</b>
<i>i</i> <sup>6</sup> A	6IA	1.624	0.491
<i>ms</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>i</i> <sup>6</sup> A	MIA	3.587	0.434
<i>ms</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>io</i> <sup>6</sup> A	SIA	n.s.	n.s.
<i>io</i> <sup>6</sup> A	HIA	n.s.	n.s.
G	GUA	4.881	0.471
<i>m</i> <sup>1</sup> G	1MG	3.029	0.521
<i>m</i> <sup>2</sup> G	2MG	u.b.	u.b.
<i>m</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub> G	M2G	n.s.	n.s.
<i>preQ0</i>	DCG	4.229	0.283
<i>imG-14</i>	DWG	u.b.	u.b.
<i>imG</i>	IMG	n.s.	n.s.
<i>imG2</i>	IWG	u.b.	u.b.
<b><i>mimG</i></b>	<b>MWG</b>	<b>-2.437</b>	<b>0.441</b>
<i>U</i>	URA	u.b.	u.b.
<i>D</i>	H2U	2.841	0.242
<i>mo</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	MOU	1.861	0.459
<i>m</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>s</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>U</i>	52U	3.817	0.504
<i>m</i> <sup>5</sup> D	MDU	1.520	0.25
<i>ψ</i>	PSU	3.564	0.531
<i>m</i> <sup>3</sup> <i>ψ</i>	3MP	n.s.	n.s.
<i>m</i> <sup>3</sup> <i>U</i>	3MU	n.s.	n.s.
<i>s</i> <sup>4</sup> <i>U</i>	4SU	n.s.	n.s.
<i>m</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	5MU	1.270	0.519
<i>ho</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	5HU	0.965	0.305
<i>s</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>U</i>	2SU	2.830	0.705
<i>m</i> <sup>1</sup> <i>ψ</i>	1MP	3.044	0.663
<i>cnm</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	CYU	2.396	0.282
<i>mcm</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>s</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>U</i>	70U	n.s.	n.s.
<i>mchm</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	CMU	2.686	0.235
<i>ncm</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	BCU	n.s.	n.s.
<i>mcm</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	OCU	1.113	0.402
<i>mcmo</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>U</i>	OEU	3.469	0.527
<i>C</i>	CYT	5.033	0.708
<i>m</i> <sup>5</sup> C	5MC	n.s.	n.s.
<b><i>ac</i><sup>4</sup>C</b>	<b>4AC</b>	<b>-1.199</b>	<b>0.325</b>
<i>m</i> <sup>4</sup> C	4MC	2.159	0.287
<i>f</i> <sup>5</sup> C	5FC	2.275	0.422
<i>hm</i> <sup>5</sup> C	HMC	u.b.	u.b.
<i>s</i> <sup>2</sup> C	2SC	u.b.	u.b.

"Patch Name" = 3-letter name assigned by Xu et al. (2016)

Modifications with  $\Delta\Delta G \leq -0.7$  kcal/mol in bold italics.

Figure S1

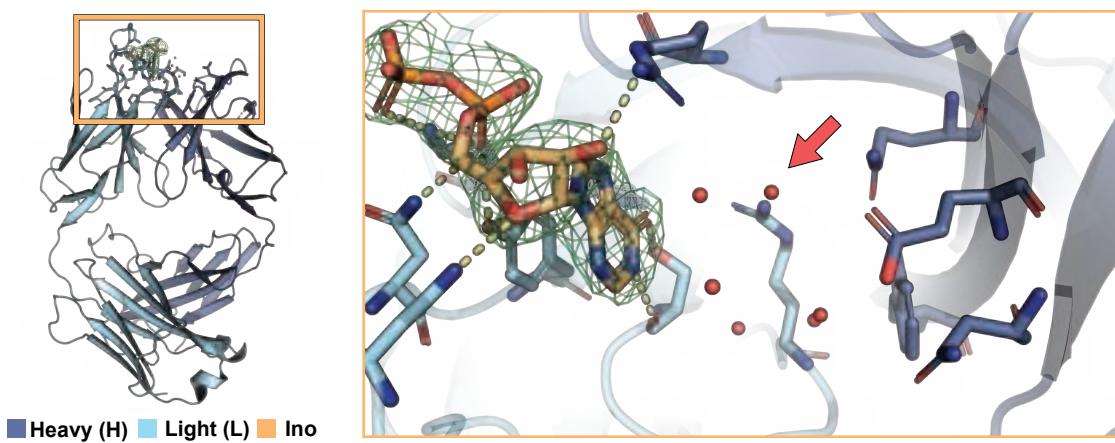


Figure S1

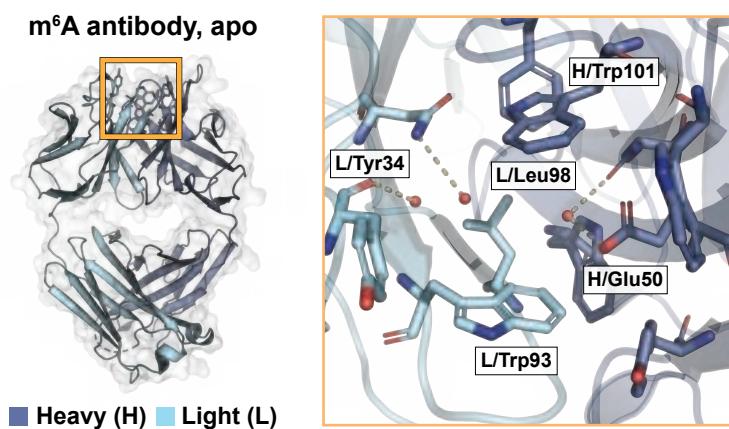


Figure S3

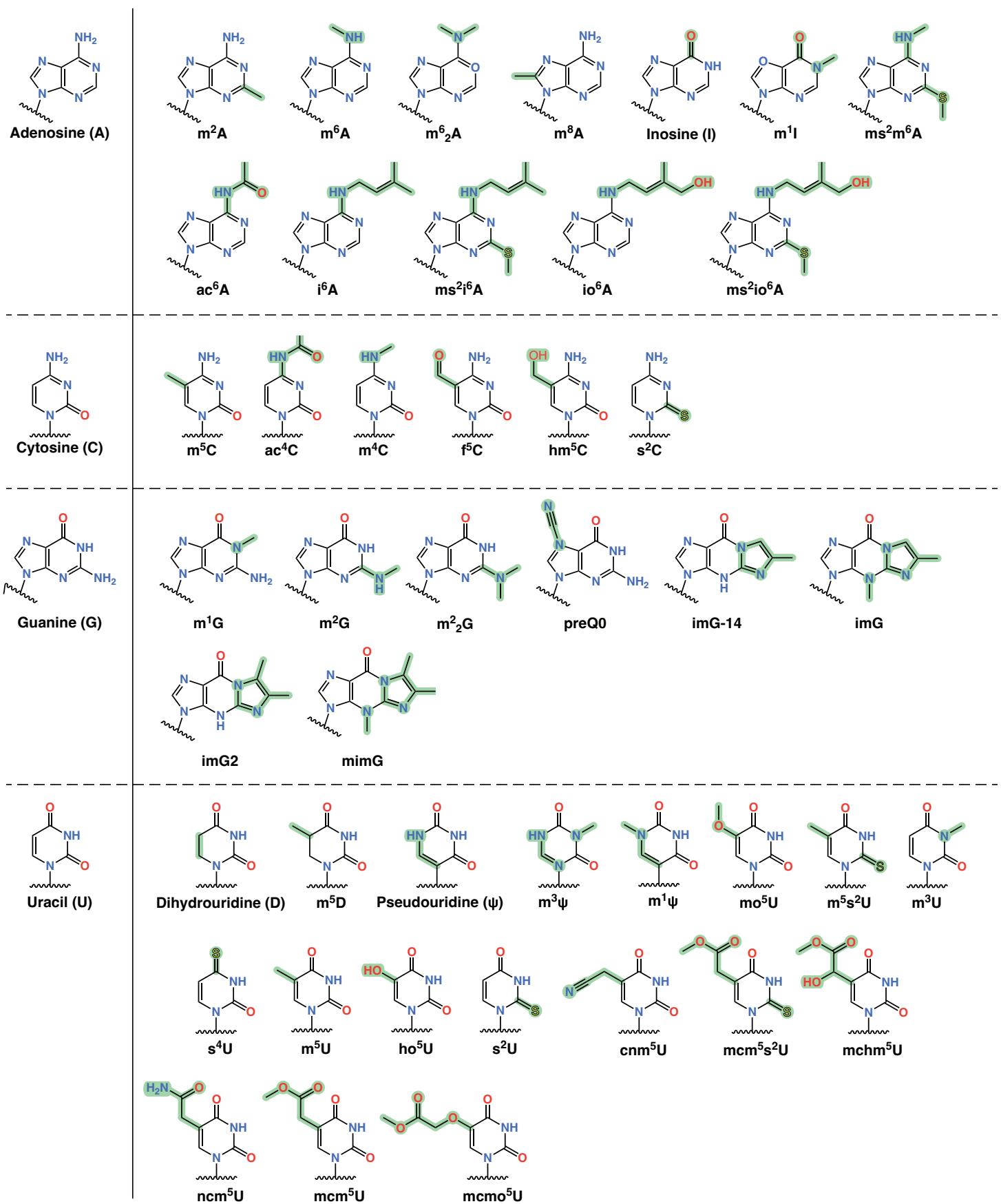
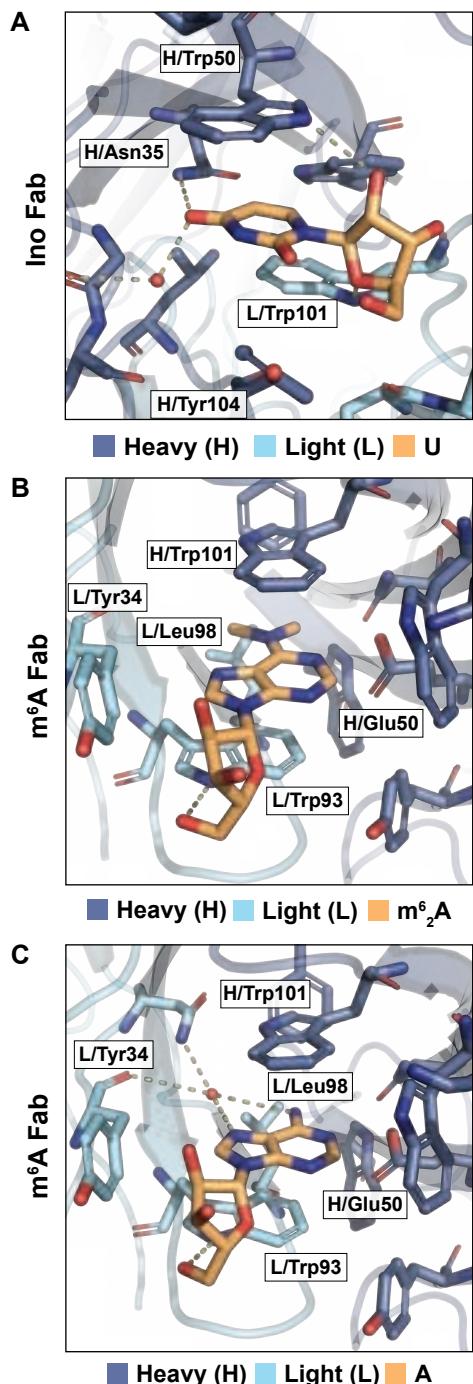


Figure S6



**D** Inosine antibody ELISA results, t-test p values.  $p < 0.01$  in bold italics.

Concentration (ng/ml)	I vs. C	U vs. C	A vs. C	I vs. U
1000	<b>0.008176</b>	<b>0.000068</b>	0.231657	0.022235
100	<b>0.005824</b>	<b>0.000199</b>	0.371234	<b>0.006713</b>
10	<b>0.000112</b>	0.079051	0.703358	<b>0.000115</b>
1	<b>0.000376</b>	0.828319	0.872158	<b>0.000401</b>
0.1000	0.030556	0.608653	0.650652	0.032961
0.0100	0.289681	0.795255	>0.999999	0.284906
0.0010	0.390739	0.366411	0.421648	0.507010
0	0.593139	0.350393	0.507644	0.440630

**E**  $\text{m}^6\text{A}$  antibody ELISA results, t-test p values.  $p < 0.01$  in bold italics.

Concentration (ng/ml)	$\text{m}^6\text{A}$ vs. C	A vs. C	$\text{m}^6_2\text{A}$ vs. C	$\text{m}^6\text{A}$ vs. A
100	<b>0.000007</b>	<b>0.001121</b>	<b>0.000043</b>	<b>0.004438</b>
33.300	<b>0.000017</b>	<b>0.000294</b>	<b>0.000005</b>	<b>0.001808</b>
11.100	<b>0.000034</b>	<b>0.000209</b>	<b>0.000024</b>	<b>0.005227</b>
3.700	<b>0.000009</b>	<b>0.000072</b>	<b>0.000017</b>	<b>0.002905</b>
1.230	<b>0.000055</b>	<b>0.001183</b>	<b>0.001946</b>	<b>0.000026</b>
0.412	0.086944	0.342808	0.080748	0.239781
0.137	0.723367	0.72624	0.506021	0.974438
0	0.799706	0.959434	0.884815	0.781924