

## Language is More Than a Tool

by Carolina Navor

English is important to me, and so is Spanish. It is important to me because it is more than just a tool; it is part of my culture and affirms who I am. *Molly's Pilgrim* and *Home at Last* have one thing in common, the importance of learning English. English is an important tool for the main characters because they use it to prove themselves capable of fitting in here America, but they do not want to shed their own language.

Molly learned English, but her classmates thought she spoke it very poorly. One day Molly's teacher instructed the class to make Pilgrim dolls for Thanksgiving. Molly's teacher said her doll wasn't a Pilgrim. So Molly bravely explained, "My mother is a Pilgrim; my father is a Pilgrim; and I am a Pilgrim. We came from Russia for freedom." In English, Molly defended herself to make her teacher understand!

Like Molly, Ana came to America from Mexico with her family, which is much like my own family. Soon Ana learned many new English words each day at school from her classmates. One day Ana went with her mom to the store since her mom didn't speak any English. She needed chicken. The clerk charged her a lot more than what it was worth, even though it was a special! Ana told her mom, "Mom, you should learn English." She enrolled in ESL classes, took an oral English test, and passed it. About a month later, she went back to the same store to claim her rights with the same clerk. "Chicken on sale! Chicken on sale!" she kept saying, pointing to the sign. The clerk could cheat her no longer! Ana was very proud of her mother. Her actions show she refused to let people treat her unfairly just because her English was not perfect.

In both stories, English was an important tool for Molly and Ana. They used it wisely, and valued it very much. They learned English quickly, but they never forgot their own language and culture, just as I have never forgotten my own language and culture.

In my family's case, English is a very important tool, as well. My mom and dad both need it to work at their jobs, just as my brother and I need it for our education. I use English to think, learn, and state my opinions. I also use English to problem-solve. And I use it for academic learning, too.

Although I value English as a learning tool, I still value my Spanish language because it is the language of who I am, the language of my parents. In my mother tongue, I pray to God and express my love to my family. When I watch Spanish television with my family, I am more connected to the world because I can find out what's going on in two languages. Being bilingual and using both languages as important tools makes me feel proud of having two ways of communicating to my family and to the world.

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