

The Importance of Two Languages

by Krystal Zamarripa

Molly's Pilgrim and *Home at Last* are two stories that tell how immigrants may feel when they are made to feel like they don't belong here in America. Each story also focuses on how two families struggled to learn English to communicate with others for real-life purposes. Not knowing English made it hard for them to live with dignity. Like the characters in these stories, my Grandmother had the same challenge.

In both stories, the characters feel like they don't belong. They feel helpless, left out, unwanted, and as if they were nothing. No one.

In *Molly's Pilgrim*, Molly uses English to defend why she made her Pilgrim doll differently. She explains to her teacher, "My mother is a Pilgrim. My father is a Pilgrim, and I am a Pilgrim, too. We came to America for religious freedom." She says this because her teacher and classmates think her doll is an ordinary doll. But the doll is an example of Molly's mother dressed as a Russian Pilgrim. This is who she was!

Like Molly, Ana's mother has to defend herself, too. When she goes to a store to buy chicken, she is an easy target because she doesn't speak English. At the end of the story, Ana's mother returns to the same store where she was cheated. When she goes to pay, the price is wrong again. She argues, "Chicken on sale. Chicken on sale!" She then gets the price she was supposed to pay. That proves that she was not going to be overcharged again!

Both characters' experiences remind me of when I was seven years old; and I went with my Grandma Maura to a bank in Seal Beach, California. We drove up to the parking lot and met a security guard. We had to tell him where we were going. My Grandma tried to pronounce the word BANK correctly, but she couldn't. "BAK, BAN, BAEK," she said. I tried to tell the security guard that we were going to the BANK, but he didn't listen to me. So he didn't let us into the parking lot that led to the bank and stores. But then he thought a moment, and he finally realized what my Grandma was trying to say.

This experience proves why it is important to know English in America. Now I'm nine years old, and my English is a lot better than before. In the future, I plan to attend a university here in California because I can read, speak, and write English.

Like Molly and Ana's mother, I can use English to stand up for myself. But still, I know I am forgetting my own language, Spanish. I realize I am losing my Spanish, but I'll try my best to not lose it because it's important for me to speak to my family, especially my Grandmother. Now I understand why both languages are equally important to me, why being bilingual is important.

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