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“A Different Kind of love”

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When i was four years old, I fell in love. It was not a transient love-one that stayed by my side during the good times and vanished during the bad-but rather a love so deep that few would understand. It was not the love for a person, but the love for a language. It was the love for Spanish. Having been born and raised behind the Iron Curtain, in a country where Western influence was limited and the official and only language was Romanian, I was on my own. Everyone around me, especially my family, had trouble understanding what could possibly draw me to such a foreign and, in their opinion, unattractive language. But as they say, love is blind, and the truth of the matter is that I wasn't even sure what it was exactly that made Spanish so fascinating to me. The only thing I knew was that I absolutely adored hearing its perfectly articulated phrases, and trying to make sense of its sweet and tender words: serenades to my innocent ear. Spanish entered through my door on June 16th, 1994, when a man from the local cable company came to connect our living room to the rest of the world. That day, I was introduced to “Acasa,” a romanian cable network dedicated to broadcasting Spanish language telenovelas (soap operas) to romanian audiences. As I learned to read, I started associating the romanian subtitles with the Spanish dialogue, and little by little, I began understanding the language. For a little girl who had yet to discover new aspects of her own language, this was quite an accomplishment, but no one around me felt the same way. My father, enraged at my apparent “obsession” with the language, scolded me incessantly, declaring that: “We are immigrating to the United States, not to Mexico! You should spend your time learning English instead of watching that nonsense!”



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Sadly, my family's objection was only the first of many hardships I was bound to encounter. When I was nine, my immigration to the US forced me to say goodbye to what had become a huge and indispensable part of me. I needed to hear Spanish, to listen to it daily, and although Los Angeles could be considered a Spanish speaker's paradise, my largely romanian neighborhood allowed for little interaction with the language. For six years, destiny kept us apart and the feelings that Spanish had evoked in me soon faded away. But high school brought about a new era in my life, an era in which my love for Spanish was revived and greatly amplified. For an hour a day, life was put on hold and I was able to speak and read Spanish more actively than ever. After two years of Advanced Placement Spanish, I not only understood the language to perfection, but spoke it flawlessly as well. There are no words that can describe how proud and greatly accomplished I feel today at my ability to speak Spanish. During a recent trip to Mexico, I was mistaken more than once for one of the natives. One man, after seeing my romanian last name, asked me if it was my husband's, for undoubtedly, he believed, I was Mexican. given to a romanian girl, whose family members were oblivious to the language, and who had learned it on her own despite their objections, this was the greatest compliment of all. In the United States, Spanish is the second most spoken language and a great asset for anyone who speaks it. It is not "nonsense," as my father had dubbed it, and being able to prove this to him has made me even prouder for loving Spanish. My love of Spanish has influenced much of who I am today. The fight that I led against family objections and immigration to a new land has allowed me to develop an ambitious and aggressive spirit in the face of adversity. It has made me stronger, and taught me that I must always fight with unstoppable perseverance for all that is important to me. I am determined to use my love and passion for Spanish to make an impact on the world. Currently, Spanish is the primary language of 21



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nations around the globe, and one of the six official languages of the Un. I want to be the link that connects these nations to the United States, and to the 40 million Americans whose native language is Spanish. I want to use my ability to speak Spanish to learn more about the people of these nations, both on a professional and personal level. no matter where the path of life takes me, I wish for Spanish to always be a part of me.

Through the years, Spanish has evolved into one of my most remarkable accomplishments. Today, I am prouder than ever of loving Spanish-of having something that distinguishes me from the rest, something that makes me unique. It is not often the case for a romanianAmerican girl living in Los Angeles to exhibit such passion and devotion towards a language that is foreign to both her native and adoptive countries. nevertheless, Spanish is a big part of whom I am today, and an even bigger part of who I will be in the future.



ANALYSIS

Oana's essay opens with a fresh perspective on a theme that is often overused and can easily become hackneyed—love. The first sentence surprises us: “When I was four years old, I fell in love.” Her young age piques our curiosity, and she holds our suspense until the last sentence. Like many of the excellent essays in this book, the strength of this essay lies in its originality. Oana describes a love for the language of Spanish. Learning Spanish in itself may not seem particularly exceptional, but Oana's background as a Romanian provides an unusual and memorable juxtaposition to her Spanish-speaking abilities. In her descriptions, Oana playfully and effectively uses terms relating to love. For example, she notes that “love is blind” and personifies Spanish as it “entered through [her] door on June 16th, 1994.” The sentence, “for six years, destiny kept us apart” continues to perpetuate a personified sense of Spanish, the language, being a “lover” to Oana. These examples show the power of artfully expanding on a metaphor to provide richness and coherence to one's essays. Oana's love for Spanish's sweet serenades contrasts with her family's feelings towards this foreign and “unattractive” language. She uses her father's comment to capture these negative sentiments with powerful dramatic effect: “We are immigrating to the United States, not to Mexico! You should spend your time learning English instead of watching that nonsense!” His criticisms only make Oana's accomplishments all the more admirable and memorable—how many other Romanian girls teach themselves Spanish through watching telenovelas while their family looks on disapprovingly? Oana writes frankly of the “hardships” she encountered, first in the form of family resistance to learning Spanish and later in the form of lacking an



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environment for communicating in Spanish in her predominantly Romanian Los Angeles neighborhood. However, she demonstrates her dedication to Spanish during the “new era” of high school, when she studied actively for two years and astonishingly became fluent in the language. Oana relates several amusing anecdotes from her trip to Mexico to corroborate her fluency in Spanish. We learn that she “was mistaken more than once for one of the natives.” She might have chosen to tell us more from this trip in order to show ways in which she was able to “prove” to her father that Spanish was “not ‘nonsense’.” In her penultimate paragraph, Oana relates her long process of learning Spanish to her “ambitious and aggressive spirit in the face of adversity” as well as to her further plans “to use [her] love and passion for Spanish to make an impact on the world.” Oana could have ended her essay with this paragraph, since her final paragraph mostly reiterates what she has already said. While it can be tempting to use concluding paragraphs to recap what you have already written, it is best to end in a way that seems fresh, rather than regurgitating what has already been said.