Woodpecker or Rapunzel?

Marina Catalan

A woodpecker. Photo by James St. John, Wikimedia.

A woodpecker. Photo by James St. John, Wikimedia.

Rapunzel, a character in a folk tale by the Brothers Grimm. Photo by Loren Javier, Flickr.

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Talk about a time you were able to change your perspective—or your point of view—about something.

2. A simile is when you compare two things using “like” or “as.” For example: I looked like a woodpecker. Try making your own similes.

Life Is All About Your Point of View

When I was seven years old, I was really excited about my future. I was going into elementary school, ready to make new friends and to start a new chapter of my life. However, everything almost changed after I had the worst haircut ever. But let me tell you: Life is all about your point of view. Although the haircut left me looking awful, like a woodpecker, my mother said something that changed my life.

From Excitement to Despair

I was looking forward to having my new haircut to start elementary school. I had a new life ahead in a new school, with new friends and new teachers, and all of this deserved a new look. But I never imagined what could happen with a simple haircut.

After a long wait, the haircut day finally arrived. My mother and I went to a new, fancy salon in our neighborhood. It was the most beautiful place I had ever been. It looked like Cinderella’s castle at Disney World. It was decorated with ten big pink chairs, an enormous mirror, and five crystal light fixtures. It looked luxurious. In addition, it had a lot of flowers which made me feel like I was in the middle of a palace garden, and a stereo was playing princess songs. Everything was just too perfect to be true.
Hair

I sat on the chair feeling like a princess. The hair stylist was a cool funny guy. My mother was talking to him, explaining how my haircut should be. I wasn’t seeing anything because my back was facing the mirror. I could just see that he was cutting a bit more that I expected. As time went by, my hair was falling to the ground like leaves falling from the trees in autumn. After a few more minutes, my hair was falling on my lap, forming a hill, like a sand castle.

And after a long time, he was still cutting my hair even faster and in all directions. I was wondering what he was doing.

Suddenly, the hairdresser said he was done.

I was in shock. I felt as if someone had punched my stomach. I couldn’t wait anymore. I had butterflies in my belly. When he turned the chair and I was able to see myself in the mirror, I could not breathe. I was in shock. I felt as if someone had punched my stomach. My shoulders were heavy like bricks, and my legs were shaking like a tree in the storm. Instead of looking pretty, I looked like a woodpecker! Where was my long and straight hair? How did I end up looking like a punk rock star with Elvis Presley sideburns?

From Despair to Excitement Again

I was almost crying, thinking about how I would be bullied by my new friends at school. But then my mother said some precious words. She said I looked like Luciana Vendramini, a pretty Brazilian actress who was playing Rapunzel at the theater. Suddenly, I felt better and not like a punk boy anymore.

A week later, my mother took me to the theater to watch Rapunzel. She bought me a beautiful purple silk dress, brilliant silver pantyhose, and white ballerina shoes. I felt like a princess. While I was waiting for the play to start, I started dreaming: what if the director needed to choose someone from the audience to replace the actress playing Rapunzel? Of course, he would pick me because I looked just like Rapunzel! My mom had said it a week before, and I was feeling like her in my imagination.

Thanks, Mom!

Finally, the play started, and it was amazing. Even if I didn’t replace her, my dreams came true in my imagination. Thanks to my mom, I was able to change my perspective. I wasn’t feeling awful anymore. I was feeling good and ready to face the new chapter of my life. Because, as I said at the beginning of this story: Life is all about your point of view.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What did Marina’s mother do to help Marina change her point of view?

2. In the first paragraph, the author hints at what the ending of her story will be. This is called foreshadowing. How does foreshadowing work as a writing technique? Does it make you want to keep reading? Why or why not?

3. What do you think about the author’s claim that life is all about your point of view?

4. Moms play a big role in several articles in this issue. Look at the articles on pp. 22, 33, and 43-45. Discuss the different things moms do related to their child’s hair. Sometimes they seem harsh, sometimes loving, and sometimes a combination of the two. What pressures are moms under that help explain how they are in these situations?

Marina Pazikas Catalan is from Brazil, and she is a student at Portland Community College in Oregon. She studied Education in Brazil and worked as a kindergarten teacher. She is married and expecting her third child.