

The Sadness of My Hair

Melvin Reyes

This is a story about a guy from Nicaragua.

He was born in 1986 during the war in a little state called Estelí. His father was a soldier, and his mamá took care of him and his siblings.

The war ended in 1990.

In the middle of his childhood, in 1995, his parents decided to go live in the capital, Managua. His father started studying, and his mamá worked a lot to provide them with food. Life was hard. They lived in a little house and didn't have electricity or much money for food and clothing. His father got his PhD in Nicaraguan history, but he then abandoned his family.

It was a hard time for his mamá because he and his siblings were going through adolescence. His mamá worked really hard to pay for their education. They were growing up, and he and his siblings started at the University. But his sister got pregnant, and his little brother didn't like to work.

The guy worked for a company that delivered propane, and he helped his mamá with the bills. But, it was not enough. He had a couple of uncles in the U.S. With their help, he could emigrate to

the U.S. He stopped his studies at the University and started enjoying a little bit of life because he and his mamá knew it would be dangerous to take the train across Mexico. When he left, the guy promised his mamá that he would not cut his hair until he saw her again.

That's me. I live in Vermont. I haven't seen my mamá in eight years. My hair is so long. When I look at it and touch it, the sadness is entangled in my hair.

NOTE ABOUT ACCENTS: How do the accents in Estelí and mamá affect pronunciation?



Melvin Reyes was born in Nicaragua and is currently a student at Central Vermont Adult Basic Education in Montpelier. He has been writing poetry in Spanish and English for the last two years.

What is the Main Idea?

Which of the following sentences captures the main idea of this essay? Explain why the one you pick succeeds when the others do not. (See p. 12 for more “main idea” practice.)

1. This is a story about a guy from Nicaragua.
2. He delivered propane, his mamá worked hard, and his sister got pregnant.
3. In this story, Melvin Reyes describes the symbolic act of not cutting his hair to convey the sadness he feels at leaving his mother behind in Nicaragua, where economic hardship forced him to migrate to the U.S.
4. The author, Melvin Reyes, had a hard life in Nicaragua, and now he feels very sad because he hasn't seen his mother or cut his hair for eight years.

Answers: 1. No. This gives little information about what the story is about. 2. No. These are details from the story, but they do not convey the main idea. 3. Yes. This captures the main idea. 4. No. This almost captures the main idea, but it leaves out Melvin's immigration to the U.S., which is a key part of the story.