

50 essays: a portable anthology essay sample

[Family](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Does the language you speak reflect your personal and cultural identity? The United States of America is one of the most diverse countries in the world and for that reason there are many different languages spoken. Most people who move to this land of opportunities are required to learn the primary language, English. By learning the language of the new world they have entered, they are slowly giving up the culture and language from which they came from. People who have trouble learning English and changing according to the American culture are often looked down upon. In Richard Rodriguez's, "Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood" we see how the author struggles to find his public identity and in Gloria Anzaldúa's, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" we see how the writer shows that a person should not be viewed any less of because of the language they speak. In the end, a bilingual person often loses part of their identity when coming to a new country because they are slowly losing their form of communication.

Often the language you speak can bring people together. Rodriguez, in his essay, talks about how speaking Spanish made him feel like an important and included part of his family. We can see the author struggle with his private identity, Spanish and his public identity which is English. In the beginning of the essay we see how Rodriguez has problems fitting in with other people and sees himself as "socially disadvantaged." The author describes how his parents felt the people of the public to be very distant from his family and slowly he associated English with the people he saw in public. In one part Rodriguez describes the sounds of the middle class American people to be a high, nasal sound. So here we can see that he is judging the people around him by the way that they speak.

When hearing his parents English, Rodriguez lost trust in his parents ability take care of him but when they speak in Spanish that trust is restored. The language his parents spoke, influenced what he thought of them. When the author talks about his experiences doing errands, he says how hearing the people around him speaking English always reminded him that he was a foreigner. This shows that language influences your private identity. When Rodriguez's family is visited by the nuns from his school we can see this as a turning point in his life. The nuns tell his parents that they should speak English at home and his parents agree. We slowly see a change in his family as everyone transitions into English.

His mother being better at English than his father, became the voice of his family in public. Notice that with the change of language Rodriguez's father slowly loses his public identity. After Rodriguez and his siblings become fluent in English we can see a distance between them and their parents. He slowly started forgetting his Spanish and becoming less confident when he spoke Spanish with relatives. His relatives would often tease him on the fact that he had lost all of his Spanish. The author shows his disapproval of bilingual education because he thinks it will just delay the process of developing a person's public identity. Language is the way you express your feelings and thoughts to the people around you. In Gloria Anzaldúa's, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" discusses education, different dialects, music and other topics regarding communication. throughout the essay Anzaldua expresses how she feels looked down upon because of her language and feels as though her identity is slowly being stripped away.

The author talks about how people think her language, Chicano, is poor Spanish for the uneducated because it is a language formed by the combination of several variant forms of Spanish. As she gets older she starts to appreciate her language more, discovering Chicano writers and watching Mexican movies. She starts to feel like she belongs to a community and sticks up for her language because it is a part of her. It is interesting how Anzaldúa's suddenly starts writing in Spanish. According to me she addresses this when she says "and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate." When saying this and writing in the broken way that she has, she is making her language legitimate and relevant. Her teachers try to take her accent away but she talks about how that would be taking a part of her away.

People are different around their family and in public meaning that they have dual identities. Anzaldua says that bilingual people cannot completely identify to their native people's culture and they cannot identify to the American culture completely so they develop two identities. Another main idea in this essay is that even though she is adopting the American culture she does not believe that it requires her to forget her own culture. She shows how closely tied her language and identity are when she says 'I am my language'. Both of these essays are about people who move to America at a young age and struggle with finding their public identity and keeping their individual identity alive. They both slowly lose their Spanish but do not fail to keep their culture from burning within them. Although Anzaldua believes in bilingual education and Rodriguez is against it they both believe that

language is a direct reflection of someone. It is always hard for any person to come to a new country and adjust.

There are different cultural views and it is just a completely different way of life. Both these authors show a sort of balance between their language and English and we can see this balance in their identity also. There are many interesting points in these essays regarding intimacy. Although Rodriguez says that his loss of the Spanish language did not affect the intimacy between him and his family we can defiantly see the closeness of the family decrease. He does support his point though by saying that he still felt especially close with his grandmother who only spoke Spanish. There are also many differences between these two essays. In Anzaldua's essay she wants her language to become an official language but in Rodriguez he is okay with the loss of his language.

I think Rodriguez is also saying that in order to achieve the American Dream, you have to know the language unlike Anzaldua who says the opposite. I personally think that language and public identity are closely related. When you first listen to a person speak, most people are judge them by the way that they speak and the accent they have. America is a melting pot of cultures. Often the people who come to this country lose touch from the place they came from in order to fit in and be considered a true American but your culture and identity will always be with you. Language does effect many things like personal views and even success but there should never be any shame in knowing a particular language.

Works Cited

Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." 50 Essays: A Portable Anthology. Ed. Samuel Cohen. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. 22-34. PDF file. Rodriguez, Richard. "Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood." American Scholar 50 (1981): 25-42. PDF file. .

Essay 2

In Michael Levin's, "The Case for Torture" he argues that torture, where it can save the lives of many innocent people, is justifiable. He is trying to convince his readers that violating the constitutional rights of terrible people is okay, if they have put innocent people in danger. Levin is able to present his argument by using emotional appeal in his essay.

It is interesting how Levin wrote this essay before any of the terrorist attacks had happen in America. At the time this was written having a atomic bomb go off in Manhattan was an unimaginable scenario so he picked every detail he wrote, carefully. 4th of July is a holiday representing our country's freedom and is a day where everyone is celebrating with their family. Innocent children will be playing and people will be cooking and having a good time. A bomb going off in that moment would be completely unexpected and while a reader is reading this they will think about all the children killed and all the families torn apart. Levin writing this indirectly paints a picture in the readers mind of people dying agonizing deaths, invoking real emotion in them. He also mentions a 'informal study' where four mothers were asked if their baby was kidnapped by a terrorist, whether they would approve of torture to get their newborn back. All mothers said they would.

<https://assignbuster.com/50-essays-a-portable-anthology-essay-sample/>

We have to think of why Levin picked a newborn baby instead of a older child. A newborn is innocent and has done no wrong yet. They still have their entire life ahead of them and the thought of cutting it short brings about strong emotions in people. The bond between a baby and mother is like no other and the thought of one's child being hurt is unbearable, making readers who are parents feel that Levin's argument is a just one. Levin's comparison of assassinating Hitler and torturing terrorists was smart because he made a connection between the two and the public had a undeniable hatred towards Hitler which brought about strong negative emotions towards terrorists too. He specifically says that all the victims are innocent, but that need not be the case. By saying this he is making the reader feel sad and want to do anything to save these 'innocent' people. I think Levin's target audience when writing this essay was woman and people with families. Mainly because these people would do anything to keep their families safe.