

Student Model Essay

Jorje

The first day of school is always tough. New teachers and new classmates can make anyone a little nervous. As the teacher begins calling roll, I brace myself for the inevitable. And then it happens, a chill goes up my spine as the teacher calls out, “Is Jorje Chica present?” What’s wrong with that, you may ask? Well, if you heard the brutal mispronunciation, you would understand. I find myself saying, “It’s just George, with a G.” In elementary school, giggles and laughter would follow. This laughter hurt me inside. At that moment, I would wish that I had a normal name. As school went on, my name would take the brunt of much teasing. “George Porgy pudding pie,” the other kids would say. And, of course, there’s the famous “George of the Jungle, watch out for that tree!”

It’s been said that people like to hear their names. Personally, I think it depends on who is saying it. In school and in public, I play it safe by using George. Only at home or with my Hispanic friends am I comfortable with Jorje. Why is this so? I shouldn’t have to do this, but hearing my name distorted, accidentally or purposely, hurts inside. I shield myself by settling with the Anglo “George.” However, I do like to hear my true name. When my mother or grandmother calls me, my name sounds beautiful. I feel pride for my name, as well as my heritage. However, when someone really screws up on the pronunciation it sounds like a needle being dragged across a record. When this happens, I retreat into my American persona.

I am proud of my name. Either way you say it, it has a long and great history. Jorje comes from the Greek name George. The name George originated from the Georgics, a poetic treatise on agriculture by the Roman poet Virgil. Thus comes the meaning “farmer.” In Biblical times, a Roman soldier named George converted a Lybian village to Christianity, after slaying a dragon which victimized the town. He was made a saint, and in the 14th century he was made patron saint of England. This proclamation led to seven British monarchs named George. The name George is also important on American soil. Our first president, George Washington, has been a favorite of Americans for the last 200 years. His popularity will no doubt, ensure the longevity of the name George in the United States.

My name may have a long and celebrated history, but it has more personal meaning to me. It represents a new beginning and a positive future. I’m the first in my family to have the name Jorje, so it’s a fresh and unused name. I don’t have to live up to the achievements of someone else, just because we share a name. My name is also unique. It differs in spelling from the Spanish Jorge. Another positive aspect of my name is the reason my mother chose it. In Cuba, my parents’ homeland, my mother had a friend named Jorje. He had certain qualities that she wanted in her children. She said to me, “He was very noble, and was a good friend.” She went on to say, “The name Jorje brings to mind great men and grand achievements. I guess had great expectations for you.”

What use do names have for us? Names perform the public task of separating us from others. But, a number could do the same thing. There has to be more to a name than just a means of differentiating us from our fellow man. Names have to fulfill personal needs, too. My name is a part of who I am. Jorje is a reflection of my heritage. My name influences how I look at myself, and is a part of what I want to be, my own person. My name helps me keep one foot in the past, and the other in the future. By having a Hispanic name, I connect myself with my ancestry, while moving forward in life. Names may have literal meanings, and great histories. But, the personal definitions and histories are usually more interesting, and always more special. I hope to carve out my own personal history, one just as worthy as that of the famous Georges the world has seen.

Jorje Chica

From Borron, B. (1996). My name, my self: Using name to explore identity. In C.B. Olson (Ed.), *Reading, thinking and writing about multicultural literature* (pp. 596-615). Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman. Reprinted with permission.