

## Contest: My nationality has a story

### Mariana's first day

One morning in March at 7:40 am exactly, Mariana was ready to go to school but she had a problem. She could not avert her gaze which was stuck at the wall of her room. She was concerned about many things that she thought about, sitting in her bed after waking up. Because she had rushed she made it to school on time but she felt a thunderstorm inside of her, it was like feeling cold and warm at the same time, or something worse, like a very strange combination of emotions. Finally, guided by a teaching assistant, it passed and together with the professor she went to introduce herself, remembering the advice of her mother: "Be respectful and friendly, remember how we are", so she came closer and gave the teacher a kiss on her cheek. Afterwards the teacher welcomed her and assigned her a seat next to a girl who looked nice. When she sat down she took a deep breath and with it she told herself that after all her first school year in a new country was not that hard. Until she heard the voice of the teacher mentioning her name and asking her to get up in order to come forward and to introduce herself in front of the class. How embarrassing! She turned red, had cold hands and a burning sensation in the stomach as she got up from her seat and stood up straight in front of whole the class. She just felt the weight of the looks of each one of the kids and she thought of the short time she dedicated to her hair this morning. "Here I am" she whispered, cleared her throat and began to say shyly:

- Hello, my name is Mariana González, I recently arrived, I am Venezuelan and I lived in Cagua, a small town in the north of my country... and well, I don't know what else to say.
- Tell us how you feel in Chile, do you like it? – Her teacher asked.
- Well, to be honest, I find it really *chévere* (Venezuelan word for "cool") – And right when she said this last word she felt horns growing out of her forehead, terrible and big, which scared everybody, even the teacher.
- Ok good Mariana, welcome, you can sit down again.

Nobody understood, it was very strange, but afterwards the art class began and Mariana searched for a chance to speak to her classmate. With a smile on her face she said: "Look how beautiful the colour of your folder is Foamy". The girl looked surprised and Mariana felt that a third eye was growing on her forehead. Uncomfortable and without knowing what was going on she asked herself: "Did the *arepa* with cheese of last night make me sick?" The hours passed slowly but Mariana, managed to finish her first day in class. Arriving at home her mom asked her:

- How did it go my love?

- Well, looks like I have got horns, a third eye, I think there are warts growing on my nose, and besides, neither do I have an identity card nor a student identification card, because I was in a rush I left my "Bip" behind and I don't understand much of what the people are telling me. So, in short, it was very bad, mom!

- You will have to learn to talk how they are talking here so that you don't feel so different.

- But mom, I am Venezuelan and I don't want to change.

- I am not asking you to change, you will always be Venezuelan, but learn how to communicate.

Mariana looked at her sadly and after some time she said: How *fome* Mom (Chilean word for "boring") - and both broke out laughing and they embraced each other.

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Sixth grade

THIRD PLACE