The author Rudolfo A. Anaya grew up in rural New Mexico. In this memoir, he recalls his grandfather and other old people from his childhood. A simple farmer, Anaya’s grandfather shared his wisdom and values with his grandson. Anaya wonders whether such values can be kept alive in the world of today.

"Buenos días le de Dios, abuelo." God give you a good day, grandfather. This is how I was taught as a child to greet my grandfather, or any grown person. It was a greeting of respect, a cultural value to be passed on from generation to generation, this respect for the old ones.

They had something important to share with the young, and when they spoke, the young listened. These old abuelos and abuelitas had worked the earth all their lives, and so they knew the value of nurturing, they knew the sensitivity of the earth. They knew the rhythms and cycles of time, from the preparation of the earth in the spring to the digging of the acequias that brought the water to the dance of harvest in the

1. abuelos (a-bwé-lō’s) abuelitas (a-bwé-le’täs) Spanish: grandfathers grannies.
2. acequias (a-se’kyäs) Spanish: irrigation ditches.
fall. They shared good times and hard times. They helped each other through the epidemics and the personal tragedies, and they shared what little they had when the hot winds burned the land and no rain came. They learned that to survive one had to share in the process of life.

My grandfather was a plain man, a farmer from the valley called Puerto de Luna on the Pecos River. He was probably a descendant of those people who spilled over the mountain from Taos, following the Pecos River in search of farmland. There in that river valley he settled and raised a large family.

Bearded and walrus-mustached, he stood five feet tall, but to me as a child he was a giant. I remember him most for his silence. In the summers my parents sent me to live with him on his farm, for I was to learn the ways of a farmer. My uncles also lived in that valley, there where only the flow of the river and the whispering of the wind marked time. For me it was a magical place.

I remember once, while out hoeing the fields, I came upon an anthill, and before I knew it I was badly bitten. After he had covered my welts with the cool mud from the irrigation ditch, my grandfather calmly said: “Know where you stand.” That is the way he spoke, in short phrases, to the point.

One very dry summer, the river dried to a trickle; there was no water for the fields. The young plants withered and died. In my sadness and with the impulse of youth I said, “I wish it would rain!” My grandfather touched me, looked up into the sky and whispered, “Pray for rain.” In his language there was a difference. He felt connected to the cycles that brought the rain or kept it from us. His prayer was a meaningful action, because he was a participant with the forces that filled our world; he was not a bystander.

A young man died at the village one summer. A very tragic death. He was dragged by his horse. When he was found, I cried, for the boy was my friend. I did not understand why death had come to one so young. My grandfather took me aside and said: “Think of the death of the trees and the fields in the fall. The leaves fall, and everything rests, as if dead. But they bloom again in the spring. Death is only this small transformation in life.”

These are the things I remember, these fleeting images, few words. I remember him driving his horse-drawn wagon into Santa Rosa in the fall when he brought his harvest.
produce to sell in the town. What a tower of strength seemed to come in that small man huddled on the seat of the giant wagon. One click of his tongue and the horses obeyed, stopped or turned as he wished. He never raised his whip. How unlike today, when so much teaching is done with loud words and threatening hands.

I would run to greet the wagon, and the wagon would stop. “Buenos días le de Dios, abuelo,” I would say. . . . “Buenos días te de Dios, mi hijo,” he would answer and smile, and then I could jump up on the wagon and sit at his side. Then I, too, became a king as I rode next to the old man who smelled of earth and sweat and the other deep aromas from the orchards and fields of Puerto de Luna.

**Pause & Reflect**

*FOCUS*

Anaya offers his thoughts about the values of his grandfather’s generation. Read to learn more about what Anaya learned from his grandfather.

We were all sons and daughters to him. But today the sons and daughters are breaking with the past, putting aside los abuelitos. The old values are threatened, and threatened most where it comes to these relationships with the old people. If we don’t take the time to watch and feel the years of their final transformation, a part of our humanity will be lessened.

I grew up speaking Spanish, and oh! how difficult it was to learn English. Sometimes I would give up and cry out that I couldn’t learn. Then he would say, “Ten paciencia.” Have patience. Paciencia, a word with the strength of centuries, a word that said that someday we would overcome. . . . “You have to learn the language of the Americanos,” he said. “Me, I will live my last days in my valley. You will live in a new time.”

A new time did come; a new time is here. How will we form it so it is fruitful? We need to know where we stand. We need to speak softly and respect others, and to share what we have. We need to pray not for material gain, but for rain for the fields, for the sun to nurture growth, for nights in which we can sleep in peace, and for a harvest in which everyone can share. Simple lessons from a simple man. These lessons he

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learned from his past, which was as deep and strong as the currents of the river of life.

He was a man; he died. Not in his valley but nevertheless cared for by his sons and daughters and flocks of grandchildren. At the end, I would enter his room, which carried the smell of medications and Vicks. Gone were the aroma of the fields, the strength of his young manhood. Gone also was his patience in the face of crippling old age. Small things bothered him; he shouted or turned sour when his expectations were not met. It was because he could not care for himself, because he was returning to that state of childhood, and all those wishes and desires were now wrapped in a crumbling, old body.

"Ten paciencia," I once said to him, and he smiled. "I didn't know I would grow this old," he said.

I would sit and look at him and remember what was said of him when he was a young man. He could mount a wild horse and break it, and he could ride as far as any man. He could dance all night at a dance, then work the acequia the following day. He helped the neighbors; they helped him. He married, raised children. Small legends, the kind that make up Anaya describes the end of his grandfather's life to show that old people get cranky.

to provide a complete and honest portrait of his grandfather.
to show that he lost respect for his grandfather.

(Author's Purpose)

Pause & Reflect

1. Reread the boxed passage on page 123. Which of the "simple lessons from a simple man" do you think is most important? Explain. (Evaluate)

2. What does Anaya remember about his grandfather's last years? (Summarize)

3. Circle the best ending to the following sentence:
Anaya describes the end of his grandfather's life to show that old people get cranky.
to provide a complete and honest portrait of his grandfather.
to show that he lost respect for his grandfather.

(Author's Purpose)

4. romanticize: view in an unrealistic or sentimental way.
I returned to Puerto de Luna last summer to join the community in a celebration of the founding of the church. I drove by my grandfather's home, my uncles' ranches, the neglected adobe washing down into the earth from whence it came. And I wondered, how might the values of my grandfather's generation live in our own? What can we retain to see us through these hard times? I was to become a farmer, and I became a writer. As I plow and plant my words, do I nurture as my grandfather did in his fields and orchards? The answers are not simple.

"They don't make men like that anymore," is a phrase we hear when one does honor to a man. I am glad I knew my grandfather. I am glad there are still times when I can see him in my dreams, hear him in my reverie. Sometimes I think I catch a whiff of that earthy aroma that was his smell. Then I smile. How strong these people were to leave such a lasting impression.

So, as I would greet my abuelo long ago, it would help us all to greet the old ones we know with this kind and respectful greeting: "Buenos días le de Dios."

Pause & Reflect

1. Review the sentences that you underlined as you read. Which sentence below describes one of Anaya's concerns? Circle it.

Main Idea

His grandfather's values may be lost.

Anaya's memory of his grandfather is fading.

2. Read aloud the boxed passage on this page. Why does Anaya compare his writing to his grandfather's farming? (Compare and Contrast)

Pause & Reflect

What do you learn about Anaya's Mexican-American heritage as a result of reading this memoir? Review the essay for details that seem specific to Mexican-American culture. Mark passages that seem especially important. (Make Generalizations)

Wrapping Up

If you are using The Language of Literature, you can now move to the questions and activities on pages 460–461 of that book.

A Celebration of Grandfathers 125
Active Reading SkillBuilder

**Identifying Author’s Purpose**

*Author’s purpose* refers to a writer’s reason for writing. Usually a writer has one main purpose and one or more less important ones. The purposes for writing nonfiction include the following: (1) to inform; (2) to express ideas, opinions, and feelings; (3) to analyze; (4) to persuade; (5) to entertain. In the chart below, record statements from Anaya’s memoir that show some of the purposes he had for writing it. At the bottom of the page, write what you think is Anaya’s main purpose. An example is given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It was a greeting of respect, a cultural value to be passed on from generation to generation...&quot; (lines 4–7)</td>
<td>to express his opinion about the values of his grandfather</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main Purpose: _____________________________________________________________
Author’s Perspective and Tone

Author’s perspective refers to what a writer thinks, values, and believes. An author’s tone refers to the attitude he or she has toward a subject, or topic. The tone of a piece of writing can reveal the author’s perspective. For example, if a journalist’s tone is enthusiastic in support of money for better schools, you know he or she values education. Use the diagram below to show the relationship between tone and author’s perspective in Anaya’s memoir. In the left box, write two more adjectives that describe the tone of the essay. In the right box, identify the perspective you think the tone reveals. An example is given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Anaya’s Perspective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>respectful</td>
<td>He thinks the elderly should be valued and listened to.</td>
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</table>