

RECURSO GRATIS • NIVEL PRINCIPIANTE

La carta que cruzó la frontera

A B1 story about migration, family memory, and a message that arrives twenty years late.

MEMORY

COURAGE

HOME

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ANTES DE LEER

Prepare to read

Sofía discovers an unopened letter written during her family's move from Mexico to Oregon. Its journey reveals a story no one has told her.

Think before you read

Why might a family avoid discussing a difficult period from the past?

Reading goal

Follow a story told across two time periods. Notice language for migration, memory, sacrifice, and belonging.

THE STORY · PART 1

An unfamiliar envelope

On a rainy afternoon in Oregon, Sofía was helping her mother, Elena, empty the garage. They were moving to a smaller apartment, and every box required a decision.

Near the bottom of an old suitcase, Sofía found a yellow **envelope**. It carried three stamps and several addresses, each one crossed out.

The final address belonged to the apartment where Elena had lived twenty years earlier. Across the front, someone had written: PLEASE FORWARD.

‘Do you know who sent this?’ Sofía asked.

Elena recognized the **handwriting** immediately. She sat down without answering.

The letter was from her younger brother, Andrés, who had remained in Mexico when Elena moved north. The postmark showed that he had mailed it six months after her **departure**.

Sofía knew that her mother and uncle spoke occasionally, but their conversations were brief and formal. Neither of them discussed the years they had spent apart.

‘It was never delivered,’ Elena whispered. ‘By then, we had moved twice.’

The envelope was still **sealed**. Elena held it for a long moment before asking Sofía to open it aloud.

THE STORY · PART 2

Words from another year

The letter began with ordinary news about neighbors, school, and a mango tree that had finally produced fruit. Then the tone changed.

Andrés wrote that he had been angry when Elena left. Their mother was ill, money was scarce, and at sixteen he had suddenly inherited adult **responsibilities**.

He had believed Elena had chosen a new life over her old family. Months later, however, their mother showed him the receipts for the money Elena regularly sent home.

‘I understand now that leaving was also a **sacrifice**,’ Andrés had written. ‘You are carrying us with you, even from far away.’

He apologized for refusing Elena's telephone calls and admitted that his silence came from **pride**, not hatred.

At the end, he described his own dream of becoming a mechanic. ‘One day, when we are both less afraid, I hope we can begin again.’

Sofía stopped reading. Her mother was crying quietly.

‘Why didn't Uncle Andrés tell you this later?’ she asked.

Elena folded the pages along their faded **creases**. ‘After enough time passed, neither of us knew how to start. We became polite strangers.’

The letter had crossed a national border, but for twenty years it had failed to cross the distance created by silence.

THE STORY · PART 3

A different kind of arrival

That evening, Elena called Andrés. At first, they discussed the weather and their mother's health, following their familiar pattern.

Then Elena said, 'Your letter finally arrived.'

The line became silent. Andrés assumed she meant a recent document, but she read him the first sentence of the old letter.

'I thought it was lost,' he said. His voice sounded both surprised and **relieved**.

For the next hour, they spoke honestly. Elena explained the loneliness of her first years in the United States: unfamiliar customs, exhausting work, and constant worry about the family she had left behind.

Andrés described the **resentment** he had carried and how difficult it was to admit that his judgment had been incomplete.

Neither tried to erase the past. Instead, they allowed each other to remember it differently.

Before ending the call, Andrés invited Elena and Sofía to visit in the summer. He still repaired cars, and the mango tree still stood in the yard.

Elena placed the letter in a new envelope, together with a photograph of Sofía. She planned to return it to Andrés—not because it belonged in the past, but because it had created a new **beginning**.

Sofía realized that migration was not a single departure or arrival. It was a long process of deciding what to carry, what to release, and how to remain connected.

Some letters reach an address. Others, if given enough courage, finally reach the people who need them.

Words for memory and migration

envelope	sobre
handwriting	letra / caligrafía
departure	partida
sealed	sellado/a
responsibilities	responsabilidades
sacrifice	sacrificio
pride	orgullo
creases	pliegues / dobleces
relieved	aliviado/a
resentment	resentimiento
beginning	comienzo

COMPREHENSION

Read between the lines

A. Choose the best answer

1. Why did the letter fail to reach Elena? a) It lacked stamps b) She had moved twice c) Andrés forgot the address
2. What changed Andrés's opinion of Elena? a) He saw her money-transfer receipts b) He visited Oregon c) Their mother recovered
3. Why did the siblings become 'polite strangers'? a) They forgot each other b) They preferred writing c) Time made honest conversation difficult
4. What does Elena put in the new envelope? a) Money b) Sofía's photograph c) A mango leaf

B. Interpret

1. The unopened letter represents more than missing mail. What else does it represent?
2. Why is the phrase 'allowed each other to remember it differently' important?

C. Write

Write 4–6 sentences from Elena or Andrés after the phone call. Express one regret and one hope for the future.

ANSWER KEY

Review and reflect

A. 1. b 2. a 3. c 4. b

B. Suggested answers

1. The letter represents the siblings' unspoken feelings and the relationship that remained unfinished. 2. Both siblings experienced the separation differently; rebuilding trust did not require one person to abandon their memories.

Sample response

I regret that pride kept me silent for so many years. I believed my experience was the complete story. Our conversation helped me understand what you carried alone. I hope we can speak honestly from now on. When you visit, we will sit beneath the mango tree and begin again.

KEEP GOING

Discuss: Can understanding the past change a family's future?