

In “Why Couldn't I Have Been Named Ashley,” diction is used to contribute to the initial tone of disgruntled self-pity. In the exposition of the essay, Imma refers to her name as something she is “stuck” with, “alien” and “weird.” She even claims that the name will “haunt” her for her entire life. These negative words are derogatory and make her seem fed up with her name. She feels sorry for herself for dealing with the name’s burden. She sees no assets or positives to her name and only wallows in her disdain for it.

In “My Name,” syntax is used to emphasize the aggravated tone Esperanza feels toward her name. Cisneros uses long, run on sentences such as the ethnic exploration in paragraph two to dramatize the winding thoughts of Esperanza as she considers the implications of her name. But then, as she comes to firm feelings of negativity, short, simple sentences such as those at the beginning of paragraphs three and four are used. Esperanza is attempting to define her feelings for herself, and when she does, she makes her point clear and simple.

In “Why Couldn't I Have Been Named Ashley,” imagery is used to contribute to a tone of hopeless fear. When the teacher calls her name, her “palms start sweating” and her “ears [burn].” These visible physical changes make her inner terror obvious to anyone looking at her. As she realizes this, she wishes to “sink into the ground.” The anxiety makes her literally want to be removed from the situation. The reader is able to sense the nightmarish feelings she has as her or she visualizes these all too well known reactions Imma experiences.