

Read this selection about a Peace Corps volunteer and answer the questions that follow.

Only in the Peace Corps

by Rachel Peña

There you are sitting on the side of a muddy Paraguayan road, waiting for a bus, when you bite into a broccoli-filled tortilla and realize that you've made a difference.

Tranquilo. All 32 of you will fit on this 15-passenger bus.

Tranquilo. You'll learn Spanish and Guarani in 90 days.

Tranquilo. This isn't even close to as hot as it gets here.

Be *tranquilo*. Be patient. Relax. Take it easy.

I had come to Paraguay with big plans. I had goals. I had an agenda. I had very specifically defined how I would measure my success. I had trouble being *Tranquilo*.

Perhaps it's part of growing up in America, perhaps, it's just me, but patience was a virtue I'd always had trouble understanding. And now, as I prepared for my Peace Corps service in Paraguay, I was becoming more confused than ever. I thought we were here to help. I thought we were here to make a difference. I didn't think we were here to relax.

And yet, every time I turned around: *Tranquilo*. You'll learn Spanish and Guarani in the next 14 days.

Tranquilo. It gets much hotter than this.

Tranquilo. Tranquilo. Tranquilo.

I can't tell you how many times I heard that word during the three months of training. From trainers, from bus drivers, from my host family. In cafes, in the market, in the health center. And always, it was delivered with a calmness and a smile. In a manner that someone of little patience, like myself, could all too easily mistake for smugness.

At the end of the three months I couldn't wait to get to my site. At last, I could get started. I could begin doing all the things that I had told myself I would accomplish.

My assignment was rural health education. The job involved a variety of basic, but important work. I visited schools to teach children about the importance of brushing their teeth and eating healthy foods. I worked with women to educate them about the dangers of cervical cancer. I worked with a Paraguayan nurse to organize and run PAP* campaigns. I also started a community garden with some teachers and their students. I joined other Peace Corps Volunteers and local Paraguayans to build sanitary latrines. I worked with the community to help establish a health clinic.

I was doing stuff. I was accomplishing things, but I couldn't help but feel I could be doing more. If it wasn't for *tranquilo*.

Tranquilo. The supplies will get here.

Tranquilo. The pigs don't know that they are supposed to stay out of the garden.

Tranquilo. It's not that hot.

The work I was most proud of, and the best times I spent in Paraguay, involved the Mothers Club which I helped form soon after I reached my village. Once a week, we would meet at a different mother's house or sometimes at the river to do laundry and bathe while we talked and learned from one another. Those women soon became my family. They warmly welcomed me into their homes, where they treated me as a daughter, a sister, a granddaughter, and a friend.

Naturally, I always had an agenda for our club meetings. A topic for discussion. A list of things I wanted to accomplish. We would talk about ways to improve nutrition

***Papanicolaou:** test to detect cervical cancer

and their diets, breast feeding, pregnancy, vaccinations, child survival, first aid, and just about anything else that was related to keeping moms and their kids healthy.

And, of course, my goal was to do more than simply talk with the women. I wanted to see results.

Tranquilo. Things cannot change overnight.

Tranquilo. More people will show up for your next workshop.

Tranquilo. We can talk about that later. Let's have some tea first.

I wanted to see that my community had the lowest rate of cervical cancer in all of Paraguay. I wanted the Ministry of Health to single out my village as the only community in Paraguay with absolutely no intestinal parasites. I wanted every family to change their diets completely to include vegetables like broccoli, which grew like crazy in the community, but none of the mothers knew how to prepare. And I wanted all this now.

Tranquilo. You are trying too hard.

Tranquilo. You will learn Spanish and Guarani yet.

Tranquilo. It gets much hotter.

Every week I would remind my friends in the Mothers Club about, among other things, the many wonderful qualities of broccoli. Its nutritional value and its ease of preparation. Yet, for all my efforts, I felt I was getting nowhere.

One day, about a year into my service, I was waiting for a bus to Asuncion in front of my neighbor's house. It had rained a few days

earlier and the roads were still muddy so it looked as though the bus might never arrive. I paced back and forth and mumbled to myself.

Tranquilo. The bus will be here soon.

I paced back and forth some more.

Tranquilo. I told myself, the bus will be here soon.

Finally, frustrated, I sat down heavily on the ground. A short while later I looked up to see little Maria Brizuela, the daughter of one of the women in my Mothers Club.

Tranquilo. The bus will be here soon, she said.

I managed a slight smile and noticed that she was holding a plate of tortillas that her mother had sent. She sat down next to me and handed me one.

③④ I took one bite and all my delusions of grandeur slipped away. I let go of my timeline and my rigid agenda. Suddenly the heat and the disappointments and the pigs in my garden and the times when nobody showed up for a workshop and the crowded buses and the total frustration with the slower pace were all worth it.

Maria Brizuela's mother had put broccoli in her tortillas.

Maria explained that her mother was cooking broccoli in lots of different foods. She said that her father was even learning to like it.

After a while, Maria returned down the dirt road, and I returned to waiting for the bus.

Tranquilo, I said to myself, it doesn't matter if the bus ever comes.

"Only in the Peace Corps" by Rachel Peña at www.peacecorps.gov.

1. Which of the following **best** describes Rachel's approach to her work in Paraguay?
- A realistic but uninspired
 - B cautious and thorough
 - C determined but impatient
 - D relaxed and respectful
2. Based on the selection, what does the word *tranquilo* mean?
- A calm
 - B strong
 - C satisfied
 - D realistic
3. Which **best** explains why the author includes the following statement at the beginning of the selection?
- “There you are sitting on the side of a muddy Paraguayan road, waiting for a bus, when you bite into a broccoli-filled tortilla and realize that you’ve made a difference.”
- A to describe the location of her Peace Corps assignment
 - B to emphasize the difficult conditions she faced in Paraguay
 - C to establish the fact that she hoped to improve nutrition in Paraguay
 - D to emphasize the significance of the experience she is about to describe
4. What does the phrase “delusions of grandeur” refer to in paragraph 34?
- A Rachel's hopes for the future
 - B Rachel's basic self-confidence
 - C Rachel's inflated sense of self-importance
 - D Rachel's feelings of anger

5. How did the experience at the bus stop **most likely** affect Rachel's remaining work in Paraguay?

- A She became even more determined to reach all her goals.
- B She put all her efforts into convincing people to include broccoli in their diet.
- C She tried to remember that meaningful change occurs gradually.
- D She continued to think the people's relaxed attitude was her greatest obstacle.

6. Which conflict is **most closely** related to the theme of this selection?

- A Rachel vs. the hot climate
- B Rachel vs. her own attitude
- C Rachel vs. the Peace Corps
- D Rachel vs. the Mothers Club

7. What does the repetition of the word *tranquilo* throughout the selection emphasize about Rachel?

- A her knowledge of Spanish
- B her effort to learn Guarani
- C her impatience with Paraguayan culture
- D her lack of effectiveness in Paraguay

End of Set

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*Answers to
English I Textual Analysis Sample Items*

Passage Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
Only in the Peace Corps	1	C	Analyzing	5.01
Only in the Peace Corps	2	A	Analyzing	6.01
Only in the Peace Corps	3	D	Analyzing	4.02
Only in the Peace Corps	4	C	Analyzing	6.01
Only in the Peace Corps	5	C	Generating	5.01
Only in the Peace Corps	6	B	Analyzing	5.01
Only in the Peace Corps	7	C	Analyzing	1.01