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Prompt 1: Using specific examples from *Enrique's Journey*, write an essay that examines how Sonia Nazario reveals to readers certain universal truths about the human condition through Enrique's and Lourdes' stories.

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### Human to a Fault

Alexander Pope, famed English poet and satirist, once noted that “to err is human, to forgive divine.” Indeed, to err *is* human, but forgiveness seems to be a quality not inherent in the human spectrum of abilities. Perhaps forgiveness is labeled “divine” because it requires superhuman understanding and compassion that few individuals actually possess. Run-of-the-mill people seem to grapple with forgiveness, and many abandon it as an impossibility. Human nature itself seems dead-set against this “divine” attribute; the characters in *Enrique's Journey* are no exception. Indeed, in her novel author Sonia Nazario uses the development of her characters Enrique and Belky to reveal that the human condition inhibits forgiveness, particularly towards loved ones who leave lasting scars.

Of course one of Nazario's primary focuses is abandonment, but she also subtly reveals the deep, festering wounds that abandonment leaves in the all-too-human heart. She examines Enrique from infancy to adulthood, and the reader is able to trace the course of Enrique's resentment towards his mother for her abandonment. It buds with his confusion. As a toddler, “Enrique is bewildered” (Nazario 7) when his mother leaves. The question constantly on his lips is simply: “When is she coming for me?” (7). As Enrique grows into adolescence, “each telephone call [between himself and Lourdes] becomes more strained” (16). Unhappiness hovers

above him like a cloud, and his “confusion finally grows into anger” (19). Though Lourdes has done what she thinks is best, Enrique despises her for it.

Surely both Enrique and Lourdes yearn for a reunion, but neither has any idea of the secret, seething feelings that will be unleashed as a result. It would be lovely and satisfying to picture a mother and son who push everything else aside and simply revel in each other’s presence, but the human condition does not allow for erasure of years of resentment and emotional scarring left by abandonment. In other words, Enrique rejects his mother without wanting to, because he is human. The pair reunites, but “with each passing day, [Enrique’s] resentment grows. After months with his mother, he can no longer contain it” (197). These natural yet vehement feelings surprise Lourdes, who “expected Enrique to love her like the five-year-old who clung to her in Honduras” (198). Why can’t Enrique let go of his resentment and love his mother unconditionally? Because he is human. Because his mother’s abandonment left deep emotional scars; he loved her so much that her absence was more than he could bear. Human nature prohibits Enrique from ever forgiving his mother completely.

If Enrique is incapable of forgiveness toward his mother, so is Belky. Belky’s reaction to Lourdes’ departure differs from Enrique’s only because Belky is immediately incensed at her mother’s abandonment; she seems to be even less forgiving than her brother, perhaps because she is older. Even aunt Rosa Amelia senses that “the separation has caused deep emotional problems” (10) for Belky. She is “temperamental...sometimes she stops talking” (10). At the age seven, Belky “is struggling with an unavoidable question: How can [she] be worth anything if [her] mother left [her]?” (10). Eventually, like Enrique, she grows “furious” (16) at her mother for leaving.

Contrary to Enrique's anger, Belky's manifests itself quietly. Because she has no face-to-face contact with Lourdes, Belky is able to push her fury to the back of her mind through her maturation, marriage, and even through the birth of a child. Unfortunately, Belky is still human, and her dissatisfaction is always a present, potent force; her human nature forbids her from letting it go. At the very end of the novel, Nazario presents irrefutable evidence that Belky has never forgiven her mother. Belky herself says that the reunion with her mother can "never fill the void [she] has felt for so long...the love of a mother is something you cannot replace with anything else" (266). When she leaves her mother after one day's reunion and "boards an airplane back to Honduras [and]...her son" (267), Belky demonstrates through her actions the grave importance she attributes to the love of a mother. It is evident, therefore, that Belky has not forgiven Lourdes for childhood abandonment any more than Enrique has. How can she, when her every action speaks against leaving her child? Belky, too, falls victim to human nature and is unable to forgive her mother, even after time has done its best to heal her wounds.

Thus Nazario proves that forgiveness is not inherent in humankind; the race of man is not "divine." Nazario's development of Enrique and of Belky clearly shows that some wounds are too deep to heal. The consequences of Lourdes' choice are laid bare, and the reader is left pondering whether losing the love of a child is worth that child's marginally improved existence. By the end of the novel it is clear that both Enrique and Belky, as a result of their losing battle with their own natures, would respond with a resounding, unanimous "never."