

speak on a subject or who shares your interests and concerns. Following is the opening from “The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria” by Judith Ortiz Cofer. Note how she draws on her own Puerto Rican heritage as she describes her experience with prejudice as a young Latina:

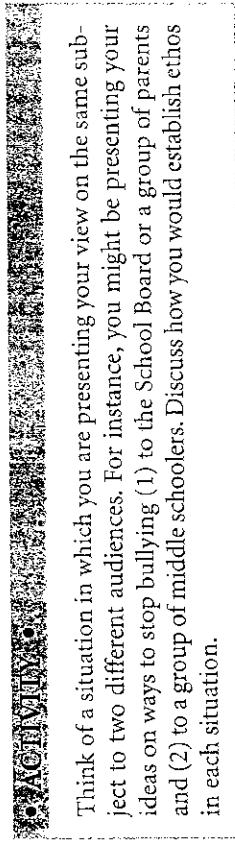
**from *The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria***

JUDITH ORTIZ COFER

On a bus trip to London from Oxford University where I was earning some graduate credits one summer, a young man, obviously fresh from a pub, spotted me and as if struck by inspiration went down on his knees in the aisle. With both hands over his heart he broke into an Irish tenor’s rendition of “Maria” from *West Side Story*. My politely amused fellow passengers gave his lovely voice the round of gentle applause it deserved. Though I was not quite as amused, I managed my version of an English smile: no show of teeth, no extreme contortions of the facial muscles—I was at this time of my life practicing reserve and cool. Oh, that British control, how I coveted it. But Maria had followed me to London, reminding me of a prime fact of my life: you can leave the island, master the English language, and travel as far as you can, but if you are a Latina, especially one like me who so obviously belongs to Rita Moreno’s gene pool, the island travels with you.

This is sometimes a very good thing—it may win you that extra minute of someone’s attention. But with some people, the same things can make you an island—not so much a tropical paradise as an Alcatraz, a place nobody wants to visit. As a Puerto Rican girl growing up in the United States and wanting like most children to “belong,” I resented the stereotype that my Hispanic appearance called forth from many people I met.

As Cofer develops her argument about common stereotypes of Latin women, she establishes her authority to speak on the subject of racial prejudice through her background (Puerto Rican, Latina), education (graduate student at Oxford University), and experience ( firsthand encounter with ethnic bias)—and thus she gains her readers’ trust.



Think of a situation in which you are presenting your view on the same subject to two different audiences. For instance, you might be presenting your ideas on ways to stop bullying (1) to the School Board or a group of parents and (2) to a group of middle schoolers. Discuss how you would establish ethos in each situation.

## Logos

Speakers appeal to **logos**, or reason, by offering clear, rational ideas. Appealing to logos (Greek for “embodied thought”) means thinking logically—having a clear main idea and using specific details, examples, facts, statistics, or expert testimony to back it up. Creating a logical argument often involves defining the terms of the argument and identifying connections such as causality. It can also require considerable research. Evidence from expert sources and authorities, facts, and quantitative data can be very persuasive if selected carefully and presented accurately. Sometimes, writers and speakers add charts and graphs as a way to present such information, but often they weave this information into their argument.

Although on first reading or hearing, Lou Gehrig’s speech may seem largely emotional, it is actually based on irrefutable logic. He starts with the thesis that he is “the luckiest man on the face of the earth” and supports it with two points: (1) the love and kindness he’s received in his seventeen years of playing baseball, and (2) a list of great people who have been his friends, family, and teammates in that time.

## Conceding and Refuting

One way to appeal to logos is to acknowledge a **counterargument**—that is, to anticipate objections or opposing views. While you might worry that raising an opposing view might poke a hole in your argument, you’ll be vulnerable if you ignore ideas that run counter to your own. In acknowledging a counterargument, you agree (concede) that an opposing argument may be true or reasonable, but then you deny (refute) the validity of all or part of the argument. This combination of **concession** and **refutation** actually strengthens your own argument; it appeals to logos by demonstrating that you understand a viewpoint other than your own, you’ve thought through other evidence, and you stand by your view.

In longer, more complex texts, the writer may address the counterargument in greater depth, but Lou Gehrig simply concedes what some of his listeners may think—that his bad break is a cause for discouragement or despair. Gehrig refutes this by saying that he has “an awful lot to live for!” Granted, he implies his concession rather than stating it outright; but in addressing it at all, he acknowledges a contrasting way of viewing his situation—that is, a counterargument.

Let’s look at an example by Alice Waters, a famous chef, food activist, and author. Writing in the *Nation*, she argues for acknowledgment of the full consequences of what she calls “our national diet”:

## from *Slow Food Nation*

ALICE WATERS

It’s no wonder our national attention span is so short: We get hammered with the message that everything in our lives should be fast, cheap and easy—especially food.