**11 AP Lang. & Comp.**

**Ethos**

Speakers appeal to ethos (Greek for “character”) to demonstrate that they are credible and trustworthy. Think, for example, of a speech discouraging teenagers from drinking. Speakers might appeal to ethos by stressing that they are concerned parents, psychologists specializing in alcoholism or adolescent behavior, or recovering alcoholics themselves. Appeals to ethos often emphasize shared values between the speaker and the audience: when a parent speaks to other parents in the same community, they share a concern for their children’s education or well-being. In his farewell speech, Gehrig brings the ethos of being a legendary athlete to his speech, yet in it he established a different kind of ethos – that of a regular guy and a good sport who shares the audience’s love of baseball and family. And like them, he has known good luck and bad breaks.

In some instances, a speaker’s reputation immediately established ethos. For example, the speaker may be a scholar in Russian history and economics as well as the nation’s secretary of state. The speaker may be the “dog whisperer,” a well-known animal behaviorist. In these instances, the speaker brings ethos to the text; but in other cases, a speaker establishes ethos through what he or she says in the text by sounding reasonable, acknowledging other opinions, or being thoughtful and well-informed. The speaker’s ethos – expertise, knowledge, experience, sincerity, common purpose with the audience, or a combination of these factors – gives the audience a reason for listening to this person on this subject.

1. Automatic Ethos

Let’s take a look at an example of how a speaker’s title or status automatically brings ethos to the rhetorical situation. On September 3, 1939, King George VI gave a radio address to the British people declaring that the country was at war with Germany. The very fact that he is king gives him a certain degree of automatic ethos to speak on the very subject of war, yet King George also emphasizes the shared values that unite everyone.

Directions: As you read the speech below, please highlight/underline words or phrases that helps him to establish ethos.

**The King’s Speech (September 3, 1939)**

**KING GEORGE VI**

In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful in our history, I send to every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message, spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself.

For the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war. Over and over again, we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves and those who are now our enemies; but it has been in vain. We have been forced into a conflict, for we are called, with our allies, to meet the challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilized order in the world.

It is a principle which permits a state, in the selfish pursuit of power, to disregard its treaties and its solemn pledges, which sanctions the use of force or threat of force against the sovereignty and independence of other states. Such a principle, stripped of all disguise, is surely the mere primitive doctrine that might is right, and if this principle were established through the world, the freedom of our own country and of the whole British Commonwealth of nations would be in danger. But far more than this, the peoples of the world would be kept in bondage of fear, and all hopes of settled peace and of the security, of justice and liberty, among nations, would be ended.

This is the ultimate issue which confronts us. For the sake of all that we ourselves hold dear, and of the world order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should refuse to meet the challenge.

It is to this high purpose that I now call my people at home, and my peoples across the seas, who will make our cause their own. I ask them to stand calm and firm and united in this time of trial. The task will be hard. There may be dark days ahead, and war can no longer be confined to the battlefield, but we can only do the right as we see the right, and reverently commit our cause to God. If one and all we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then with God's help, we shall prevail.

May He bless and keep us all.

2. Building Ethos

So what do you do if you’re not a king? Writers and speakers often have to build their ethos by explaining their credentials or background to their readers, or by emphasizing shared values. You’re more likely to listen to someone who is qualified to speak on a subject or who shares your interests and concerns. After reading the following passage, please answer the questions for analysis.

**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 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 las 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.

Questions:

1. What is the subject of this excerpt?

2. What is the argument that Cofer makes here?

3. As she develops her argument, how does she establish her authority to speak on this subject?