

**CLOSE READING & RHETORICAL ANALYSIS: "THE MYTH OF THE LATIN WOMAN: I JUST MET A GIRL NAMED MARIA" BY JUDITH ORTIZ COFER**

**Opening Thought / Reflection:** Answer the following prompt below, drawing from your own personal experience.

**Have you ever been stereotyped on the basis age, gender, religion, ethnicity, even dress? What emotions and/or responses did such a moment elicit from you?**

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**Vocabulary Journal:** Complete the vocabulary journal below for the following diction found in Cofer's text.

Word and Page #:	Complete Sentence(s) from the text:	Definition and Part of Speech:	Original Sentence (Your Own):	Author's Intended Effect:
1. Contortions (pg. 91)	"Though I was not quite as amused, I managed my version of an English smile: no show of teeth, no extreme <b>contortions</b> of the facial muscles—I was at this time of my life practicing reserve and cool."	Verb. To contort is to twist or bend out of one's original / normal state.	The acrobats at Cirque du Soleil <b>contorted</b> through the air as they moved from setting to setting.	As used in this context, Cofer uses the word contort to express how unnatural it was for her to smile during a moment in which she was particularly embarrassed by the insensitivity shown to her by her Oxford colleague. She also uses the word to express how uncomfortable it is for her to conform to the customs of English life.
2. Microcosm (pg. 92)				
3. Coalesced (pg. 93)				

4. Machismo (pg. 94)				
5. Promenade (pg. 94)				
6. Indelibly (pg. 95)				
7. Menial (pg. 95)				
8. Pervasive (pg. 97)				

### Rhetorical Analysis Guide

Select examples from the reading that most significantly and effectively support Cofer's larger purpose and argument. Complete the chart below to provide analysis of each selected example. Consider the following rhetorical elements: **Ethos, Logos, Pathos, Diction, Syntax, Imagery/Figurative Language, Structure/Arrangement, Tone.**

Example from Cofer's text:	<u>What</u> effect/appeal does this text move have on the audience?	<u>How</u> does this effect support the larger purpose/argument?
"It is custom, however, not chromosomes, that leads us to choose scarlet over pale pink" (Cofer 93).	Cofer is using antithesis to access the reader's sense of logic (logos) regarding the true nature of self-identification, classification, and gender. By contrasting customs, a very much chosen trait of one's identity, with chromosomes, an uncontrollable, biological makeup of one's identity, she is appealing to the logic that although women may identify as women, customs are the primary driver of that self-identification.	Cofer's use of antithesis further pushes the idea that although she has done everything she can to adapt to her surrounding culture, work for her station in life, and access a high quality education, she is still somewhat restricted by the cultural norms in which she finds herself.


**Questions on Rhetoric and Style**

Respond to each question in complete sentences, referencing specific details from the text.

1. What is the effect of Cofer's opening paragraph on the reader? Does her anger draw you in or distance you? How does she create this effect?

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2. How does Cofer broaden the argument from her personal experience to larger concerns and issues?

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3. What is the effect of Cofer's allusions to popular culture, such as "Maria," *Evita*, "La Bamba," and Rita Moreno?

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4. Cofer uses only a few Spanish words in her essay. Would she have been more effective if she had included more of them? Why, or why not?

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5. Who do you think is Cofer's audience in this essay? Would it include the woman at the poetry reading who asked her for a cup of coffee?

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**Notes:**