

Horace miner – nacirema tribe location

[Countries](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Body Rituals among the Nacirema” is an article written by Horace Miner about a group of people, the Nacirema, and their everyday functions or rituals. Miner relates the culture, practices, values, and beliefs of a seemingly exotic and strange tribe. He vividly and descriptively describes behaviors and activities that are interpreted as unusual and strange. The tribe Miner depicts seems primal and uncivilized, and yet somewhat familiar. They are a “ North American group living in the territory between the Canadian Creel the Yaqui and Tarahumare of Mexico, and the Carib and Arawak of the Antilles” (Miner). This area is the United States of America and upon recognizing the location, the reader starts to become cognizant of the presence of an ulterior message.

Miner’s depiction draws us in but shortly, we realize he is referring to American society; read backwards, Nacirema spells ‘ American. ’ Instead of describing a far-away and exotic tribe, as the reader first expects, the article describes very ‘ normal’ aspects of American life, such as dental hygiene and medicine. The use of language like “ mouth-rite,” “ holy-mouth-men,” and “ medicine men” frames these aspects in a very abnormal way. Miner does an exceptional job of disguising the American culture as ‘ Nacirema. ’ Once unveiling this disguise, many references can easily be seen and the article is interpreted in a whole new way; for example, the “ cleansing shrine” as the washroom, “ magical potions” as medicine, and “ latipso” as hospital. This article is written as an observation on American society but could be generalized as ‘ North American’ practices. The article demonstrates that attitudes about the body have a widespread influence on many social institutions.

Many of the rituals that we have in North America involve manipulating our image and this value contradicts the enlightened and rational creatures we sometimes imagine ourselves to be. Miner effectively convinces the reader of the somewhat ridiculous nature of (North) America's obsession with health and visual appeal. This is accomplished by provoking readers to form an outside opinion of themselves before realizing they are their own subject. His analysis portrays himself and the reader as superior, civilized beings studying this tribe, which creates a distance and differentiation leading to comparison. By describing American culture from the perspective of an external observer, we can realize how a different perspective or standpoint can perceive our rituals as quite strange. As such, Miner's article can be seen as speaking to how other cultures could view our own, and shows how ethnocentrism can affect how we see and interpret culture. Miner uses his style of writing to prove his apparent point that Americans are ethnocentric.

Furthermore, the tone of the article displays how this ethnocentrism can lead to judgment of other, unknown cultures. A resonating point for me throughout this article is Miner's success in translating Peter Berger's concept of the sociological perspective, making the reader see the strange in the familiar. By thinking of these familiar rituals as strange, a new perspective is formed and our regular, 'normal' world can be seen in a fresh, unique way. Importantly, the sociological imagination begins to engage and develop as we recapture the ability to be astonished by what we normally take for granted. This broadening of perspective and how we look at ourselves can lead us to think beyond our standpoint and better understand

someone of a different background. Upon first reading, the rituals/institutions described have a familiarity, but in everyday life we have become socialized so as we do not see the odd and sometimes illogical actions we perform. As Miner begins, " the anthropologist has become so familiar with the diversity of ways in which different people behave in similar situations that he is not apt to be surprised by even the most exotic customs.

I believe Horace Miner wrote this piece to touch on all of these points; to make us see the familiar as strange, to develop the sociological imagination, and to bring awareness to the ethnocentrism of our culture/society. The targeted audience may be fellow anthropologists, sociologists, scholars/ students, or even the general public. Miner challenges all North Americans to look at themselves in a new light, to look critically upon our own society. He is effective in conveying his messages through his unique approach to the idea, and ability to re-arrange our thought process. He seems to challenge the way cultures, and American culture in particular, may have been previously represented or misrepresented. Furthermore, the article breaks the barrier of viewing American culture as ' normal' and that which others may be measured against; he breaks the barrier of ethnocentrism. Another reason to comment on these points may have been to try to stimulate better, less biased research and inspire colleagues, students etc.

to consider the existence of perspective and potential for ethnocentrism in all that they do. I find the article relevant, personally, as a student studying sociology and business, and as a North American. Our society is continually becoming more culturally diverse, and international interaction (whether in business, academics or elsewhere) is becoming commonplace.

<https://assignbuster.com/horace-miner-nacirema-tribe-location/>

Therefore, it is increasingly important to learn to step outside of our accustomed perspective and to be aware of others we interact with, as well as of our own biases, viewpoints, and barriers. The clever way Miner provokes looking at the familiar as strange lead me think of the many ways we view the 'familiar,' having become accustomed to our social norms and values. I have begun to see these in a new way, and will further keep in mind the sociological perspective and presence of potential ethnocentric views when evaluating situations. We naturally look at other cultures or societies through the lens of our own but if we are able to understand our own culture - our social context - the water in which we swim, we can develop our relationships and interactions with those from other waters.