

## Overview:

This lesson plan provides links and an overview of activities that can be used in conjunction with the satirical anthropology paper, "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." The paper was written by Horace Miner in 1956, and it is meant to call attention to how anthropologists often "other" different cultures through their ethnographic research. Nacirema is American backwards, and the piece is written about Americans in the 1950s. However, Miner writes the piece in a way that is meant to distance readers (who are most likely American) from their own culture in order to view it as an observer.

## Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize that their own culture may be seen differently from an outside perspective.
2. Demonstrate a realization of the arbitrariness of cultural customs.

## Time:

30 minutes

## Group Size:

Entire group

## Materials:

Handouts of the article (in [Links](#)).

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

## Links to Activity Instructions:

- [Nacirema: Updating a Classic to See Your Own Culture as An Outsider from Sociology Toolbox](#)
  - This blog describes an activity where students write about a ritual or practice in their culture as an observer.
- [The Story of the Nacirema from the Eastern Illinois Writing Project \(pp. 3-10\)](#)
  - This activity uses the “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” to introduce the concepts of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism.
- [The Nacirema Tribe from Pennsville School District \(pp. 4-5\)](#)
  - In this activity, students brainstorm other rituals that the Nacirema perform and then write about them from an anthropological perspective, like in the essay.
- [Nacirema Fieldwork Essay Assignment from John A. Dowell at Michigan State University](#)
  - After reading “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” students are asked to write their own essay about a different body-related ritual. This activity is geared toward college students.
- [“Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” lesson from Eaton High School](#)
  - This lesson includes a worksheet and vocabulary quiz. It was designed for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- [The Nacirema Culture: How Different Are They? from the Fred T. Korematsu Institute](#)
  - In this activity, students answer questions about their impressions of the Nacirema culture. Then, when it is revealed that the article is referring to Americans, they reflect on what it means to refer to a culture as “weird.”
- [Middle School Lesson Plan from Jennifer Becker](#)
  - This activity uses “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” as an introduction to studying different cultures. Students are asked to think about their impressions of the Nacirema and how their rituals/beliefs are similar or different to other cultures.

## Related Tools:

### *Similar tools:*

- [Grocery Store Ethnography](#)
- [Martian Anthropology](#)
- [Martians at the Airport](#)