Body Ritual among the Nacirema (1956)

Define the following terms as they are used in the article:

Notgnishaw

charm-box

holy-mouth-men

mouth-rite

latipso

“body secrecy”

On the back or on a separate sheet of paper, reflect on one of these prompts. You may instead choose your own reflective topic. *Suggested length: two to three paragraphs*

a. Horace Miner contends that the Nacirema have a fundamental belief that the human body is ugly. What evidence does the author present to support this theory?

b. What is so significant about the in-home shrines of the Nacirema? What is found inside? What rituals do the Nacirema perform?

c. Describe the class structure of Nacirema society. How do rich and poor interact? How do these differences show up in material culture? Give at least three examples from the text.

d. Summarize the mouth-rite, especially the ritualized torture. Why do the Nacirema perform this ritual?

e. Miner claims that the ceremonial rituals of the Nacirema involve “discomfort and torture” to preserve human health and physical appearance, the “ethos of the people”. Based on his observations, do you agree? Why or why not?