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During the first five weeks of Cultural Anthropology class I have students read the following articles (found in Annual Editions: Anthropology) and answer specific questions:

Read (AE) Body Ritual Among the Nacirema. In written form, comment on the behaviors these people engage in and turn in next class period. Read (AE) Where Fat is a Mark of Beauty. Compare their behaviors with yours in written form and turn in next class meeting.

Read (AE) When Brothers Share a Wife. Discuss and explain in written form, from a cultural relativistic point of view, how these behaviors help people deal with various societal problems. Turn in next class meeting.

Read (AE) The Berdache Tradition. Discuss and explain in written form, from a cultural relativistic point of view, how these behaviors help people deal with various societal problems. Turn in next class meeting.

Read handout Little Dove. Discuss and explain in written form, from a culturally-relativistic point of view, how these behaviors make sense. Turn in next class meeting. (Little Dove originally came from the AE book, but is no longer included, so I give them a copy of it.)

We discuss each article at the beginning of class; the point is to try and get the students to recognize their ethnocentrism, which is very apparent when they find out who the Nacirema were, and to try and practice cultural relativism. I stress that my aim is not to get them to accept others' behaviors, but to understand them.

Resource:

Angeloni, Elvio, ed. Annual Editions: Anthropology 08/09. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2008.

Note: A new edition is published every year.