

**Review of  
Tim Weiner's Article entitled  
Mexico's Amber Miners Find Risk, Not Riches**



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A society's culture spawns values that shape science (Penrose and Katz, 4). Likewise, the science can attempt to influence the values of a society's culture. Weiner's article about amber miners accomplishes such a feat by communicating about a situation in order to spur the readers to action. This review discusses various roles and types of scientific communication that led to this article's development.

### **Why did the author pick this topic?**

The author uses facts in this *New York Times* article to bring the Mexican amber miners' situation to the attention of the American public. For example, reader attention is achieved when Weiner mentions that amber miners suffer harsh conditions and unjust treatment that is not under the purview of federal gold and silver mining laws or unions. Another example is that reader sympathy is invoked because the average amber product buyer is probably oblivious to the conditions that the amber miners endure. Lastly, the reader is exposed to the unfairness of additional markup on products sold to American markets that is not shared with the workers.

### **What elements of persuasion were used?**

In addition to invoking emotions by highlighting the harsh conditions and injustices, the author uses other effective methods of persuasion to attempt to spur the reader to solve the problem. By reading the facts in the article, the reader is subtly influenced to consider ways of improving the situation that uses methods "essentially unchanged from the 19<sup>th</sup> century." A reader could even be incited to start a moratorium on purchasing amber products until conditions improve. Some of the methods the author uses are that he:

- Explains facts to support his assertions.
- Juxtaposes the miner in the cave using "the pale light of a single candle" to a posh, retail store that sells amber jewelry. If a reader merely notices the color photographs and reads the captions, the reader can still glean the message of injustice.
- Uses vivid imagery to engage the reader in the problem; for example, "Buried in darkness, bathed in sweat and dusty, he searches through the rubble for a tiny nugget that might bring him a dollar or two. 'Nothing here.' "
- Mentions the risks of amber mining including lung illnesses and even death.

### **How did the author research and communicate the topic in the article?**

Since no sources are mentioned in a Works Cited section, the author probably researched the topic by conducting personal interviews because direct quotes are provided from three miners and one respected amber buyer.

### **What collaboration is evident?**

While only one author is listed in the byline, collaboration exists in the form of a consistent message from the four interviewed sources.

### **What forums were cited or implied?**

No forums, such as peer review teams or lawmakers, were cited or implied. However, the *New York Times* editor probably provided content and format suggestions.

Overall, Weiner's article successfully increased awareness of the amber miners' plight and might even spur some readers to rectify the deadly conditions.

## Works Cited

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Penrose, Ann M. and Steven B. Katz. Writing in the Sciences. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

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