

THE SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FORCED MIGRATION

A Multi-Media Educational Tool

Winter 2021

US-Mexico Borderlands, Identity, and Community Engagement

Target audience: high school (grades 9-12)

Keywords: activism, art, borders and borderlands

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International borders exist to divide political and geographical territory. The consequences of that political and geographic division, though, are tangible and complex. Along the border, the US and Mexico are divided by a physical wall, border patrol checkpoints, Customs and Border Patrol surveillance, and other structures enforcing separation which disrupt families, communities, cities, and ecosystems. In recent years, increased border militarization, family separation policies, and the criminalization of migrants centered the US-Mexico border in international debate that has emphasized division and separation between its two sides.

“The US-Mexico border,” then, encompasses not only the line separating the United States from Mexico but also the regions surrounding that line: the borderlands. For many people who live in borderland communities, the borderlands can represent both simultaneous division and unity. Community engagement projects — including creative art and activism-based initiatives — foster shared transnational borderland identities and support the borderlands as places of unification.

So what does it mean to live in the borderlands today? How can the US-Mexico borderlands be thoughtfully situated within their multinational and cross-border histories of land, labor, and identity building? How does living alongside a border wall impact the daily life of individuals? How do borderlands represent points of encounter and unification as well as of division? This section aims to facilitate conversations about living in and conceptualizing the borderlands while highlighting the voices of those who consider the US-Mexico borderlands home.

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LIVING WITH THE BORDER WALL: BORDERLAND, FRONTERIZX, AND
TRANSBORDER IDENTITIES

Guiding questions:

- What are borderlands?
- How is identity expressed? Why might people in the borderlands choose to share their identities and experiences in these ways?
- How does the presence of a physical border wall change the way that communities function and interact with each other?
- What are some ways that children interact with the border (daily, politically, physically, mentally, etc.)?

Gloria Anzaldúa, [*Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza \(1987\)*](#). Read a summary [here](#).

[Port of Entry \(2021\)](#), KPBS Public Media, podcast

Tamir Kalifa, Niko Koppel, and Samantha Quick, [“Before the Wall: A Borderlands Journey,”](#) *New York Times*, February 8, 2017 (video)

Edward J. McCaughan, [“‘We Didn’t Cross the Border, the Border Crossed Us’: Artists’ Images of the US-Mexico Border and Immigration,”](#) *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, January 2020 (2)

David Bowles and Erika Meza, [*My Two Border Towns*](#), (August 2021). Read a summary [here](#).

Leyla Santiago, [“They live in Mexico and go to school in the US,”](#) *CNN*, June 5, 2017

[*A 3 Minute Hug*](#) (2019), directed by Everardo González (film)

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ACTIVISM THROUGH ART

Guiding questions:

- In what ways do the borderlands represent division? In what ways do they represent unity?
- How does art foster community engagement and connection?
- How do communities in the United States and in Mexico collaborate through art?
- How does art reflect personal identity? How does art from this region reflect the various identities of people living in the US-Mexico borderlands?

[An architect's subversive reimagining of the US-Mexico border wall \(2019\), TED \(video\)](#)

[Borderlands \(2019\), directed by Merete Mueller, Val Alen Institute in collaboration with The New Yorker \(video\)](#)

[Freddy Martinez, "On the Streets of El Paso and Juarez, "Sister Cities" Art Project Pays Tribute to Border Communities," Remezcla, July 7, 2016](#)

Stefan Falke, [@borderartists](#), Instagram (photo project)

[Mallory Falk, "Interactive Art Installation Lets Strangers Talk To Each Other Across The Border," National Public Radio, November 22, 2019](#)

[Frontera Bugalú](#), Facebook (musical group)