

**Borders, Boundaries, and Belonging**  
**Literacy Unit**  
**by**  
**Darcy Nickel**

Note: This unit references ideas and photographs included in both the Museum of Contemporary Photography produced street photography and landscape and place curriculum guides available here: <http://www.mocp.org/education/resources-for-educators.php> It was produced as a part of the MoCPs professional development workshops for teachers which was supported with generous funding from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

**Common Core Standards:**

RL2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama response to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors.

RL7: Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

RI5: Compare and contrast the overall structure of events, ideas, concepts or information in two or more texts.

RI9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

W4: Produce clear and coherent writing

W5: Plan, revise, edit

W10: Write routinely over extended time frames and short time frames for ranges of discipline specific task, purposes, and audiences.

**Lesson 1**

**Materials:**

Poem - You Crossed the Border by Reeza Mohammadi

Photo – 29 Palms: Colonel Greenwood, 2003-2004 by An-My Le

Article – By Land or by Sea, Tougher Tests Illegal Immigrants

**Instruction:**

**Reading**

First, read aloud to students the poem *You Crossed the Border* as they read it silently. Ask students to read the poem again and have them underline any phrase or line that stands out for them. Discuss. Pose the following questions for discussion: What's happening in this poem? What is about? What are the clues in the text that support your idea? What's the mood of the poem? What in the text creates that mood? Next, read the photograph with discussion. Introduce the idea of landscape. Ask students to describe what they see in the photograph. Are there clues that suggest where or when the photograph was made? What do we learn about the place in the picture? How would you describe the mood? How does the photographer create the mood? (framing, composition, vantage point) Finally, read aloud the article *By land or by sea, tougher U.S. border tests illegal immigrants* as students read it silently. Ask students to read the poem again and have them underline any phrase or line that stands out for them. Discuss. Pose the question: What common links can you find between all three pieces? What is the evidence? When students mention the idea of borders, talk about the words border and boundaries with their various definitions. Is there a mood that seems to jump out in all the pieces?

**Writing (Found Poem to Create a Mood)**

Go back into the texts that we just explored. Record 8 words or short phrases that you believe are most powerful and create a certain mood. Performance style, have students say out a phrase moving around the room. Then, students will create a poem using these

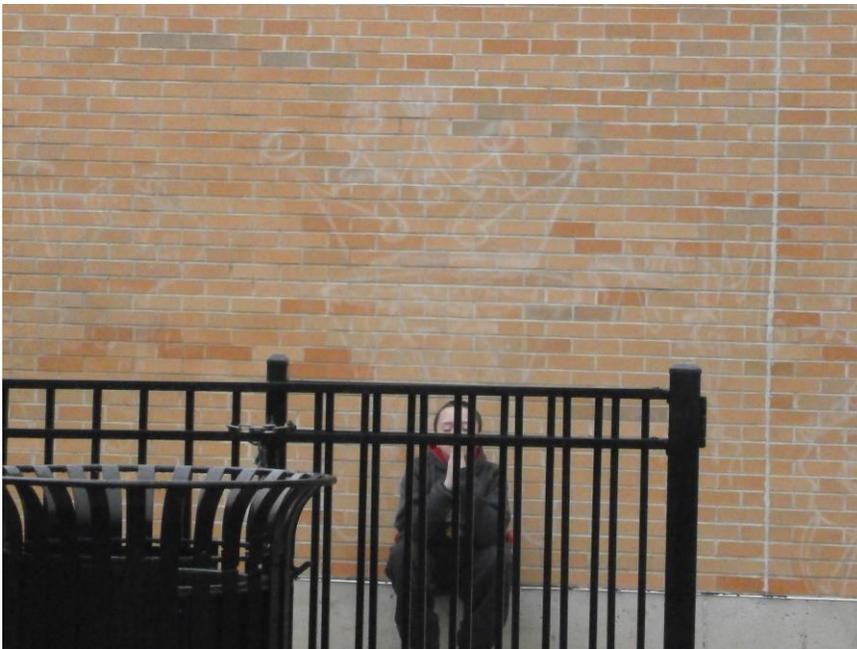
	words that creates a mood. They are allowed to add other words to the poem or use repetition.
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<p><b>Lesson 2</b></p>	<p><b>Materials:</b>          Poem – A Fence by Carl Sandburg          Photo – Washington D.C., 1973 by Lee Friedlander          Article – Fences – A Review by Dan Bacalzo</p> <p><b>Instruction:</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b>          First, read aloud to students the poem <i>Fence</i> as they read it silently. Ask students to read the poem again and have them underline any phrase or line that stands out for them. Discuss. Pose the following questions for discussion: What’s happening in this poem? What ideas are being conveyed? What are the clues in the text? Next, read the photograph with discussion. Ask students to describe what they see in the photograph. Are there clues that suggest where or when the photograph was made? What do we learn about the place in the picture? What message do you think the photographer is trying to convey? What tools does the photographer use? (framing, composition, vantage point) Finally, read aloud the article <i>Fences-A Review</i> as students read it silently. Ask students to read the article again and have them underline any phrase or line that stands out for them. Discuss. Pose the question: What common links can you find between all three pieces? What is the evidence? How do these pieces connect to the other pieces we read previously? Why do you think fences and borders are used by people? What do they do? Begin to discuss the idea of belonging.</p> <p><b>Writing (Personification Poem)</b>          Review with students the definition of personification. Offer a few examples. Together write a personification poem using the word window. Then, follow the process to help students write their own personification poem: Ask students to select one object any of the three pieces that we read. Give students a list of action verbs. Ask students to select verbs that represent something their object seems to do in a way that is characteristic of a person. (Note: For students who struggle, ask them to think of one person their object reminds them of and think of that person’s characteristics.) Students will then write their poem.</p>
<p><b>Lesson 3</b></p>	<p><b>Materials:</b>          Poem – <i>For the City that Nearly Broke Me</i> by Reginald Dwayne Betts          Photo – From the Changing Chicago Project, 1987-1988 by Stephen Marc          Article – <i>Jonylah’s Grandmother: “My neighbors of Chicago, what have thou done?”</i></p> <p><b>Instruction:</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b>          First, read aloud to students the poem <i>For the City that Nearly Broke Me</i> by Reginald Dwayne Betts as they read it silently. Give students a graphic organizer with 6 senses. Students will go back into the poem and record words on the graphic organizer that they think expresses the different senses. Discuss. Next, read the photograph with discussion.</p>

	<p>Ask students to describe what they see in the photograph. Are there clues that suggest where or when the photograph was made? What do we learn about the place in the picture? What sensory words would you use to describe this place? What tools does the photographer use to emphasize certain details? (framing, composition, vantage point) Finally, read aloud the article as students read it silently. Ask students to read the article again and have them record any sensory details that they find in the piece of writing. Pose the question: What common links can you find between all three pieces? What is the evidence? How do these pieces connect to the other pieces we read previously? Where do we see evidence of borders, boundaries, and belonging?</p> <p><b>Writing (My Chicago – Sensory Poem)</b></p> <p>Ask students to pick a place in their neighborhood or in the city that represents Chicago to them. Guide them through the 6 senses (6<sup>th</sup> sense is feeling), to list sensory details that capture that place for them. Then, have students create a poem called My Chicago using the list of details.</p>
<p><b>Lesson 4</b></p>	<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p>Poem – <i>Mine</i> by Lilian Moore  Photo – Portrait of Cate Blanchette and Portrait of Tom Wolfe 1972 by Annie Leibovitz  Poem – <i>Song of Myself</i> by Walt Whitman (1<sup>st</sup> Section only)</p> <p><b>Instruction:</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>First, read aloud to students the poem <i>For Mine</i> by Lilian Moore as they read it silently. Ask students to read the poem again making note what stands out for them. How would you describe the poet? What clues in the text create the character traits? Next, read the photograph with discussion. Ask students to describe what they see in the photograph. What do we learn about the person in the photograph? How do the photographer’s choices help create our impression of the person being photographed? What tools does the photographer use to emphasize certain details? (framing, composition, vantage point) What do you see as differences and similarities between the two photographs? Finally, read aloud the poem <i>Song of Myself</i>. Go back into the poem to answer the following questions. Ask: What message is the poet conveying? What is the mood of the poem? What evidence supports your interpretation? Pose the question: What common links can you find between all three pieces? What is the evidence? How do these pieces connect to the other pieces we read previously? Where do we see evidence of borders, boundaries, and belonging?</p> <p><b>Writing (Song of Myself – Portrait Poem)</b></p> <p>Explain to students that they are going to create a self-portrait poem that expresses gratitude for all of the traits that make them unique, anything they appreciate about themselves. Begin a web with the circle – “What’s Good About Me”. Have students web out all everything that they like about themselves. Then, students will create a poem with the first line: I celebrate myself... as in the Walt Whitman poem.</p>
<p><b>Lesson 5</b></p>	<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p>A variety of poem books.</p> <p><b>Instruction:</b></p>

	<p><b>Reading</b> Review the various meanings of Borders, Boundaries, and Belonging. Give each table of students a variety of poem books. Ask students to read poems and search for other poems that express themes connected to borders, boundaries, and belonging. Have students share and discuss findings with their smaller group. Then, share out whole class. Ask students to explain text in the poem that relates to the overarching idea.</p> <p><b>Writing</b> Ask students to divide a paper into three columns and label them borders, boundaries, and belonging. Under the first heading, borders, ask students to list places where there are borders in their lives. This could be both literal and figurative. (The window frame in my room, the locked door of the garage, etc.) Next, under boundaries, have students list things they will not do, fears, etc. (I will not hold a snake, etc.) Finally, ask students to list all the places they feel they belong, where they feel special. Show students a model poem created by the teacher with these three sections. Students will create their own poem using their lists.</p>
<b>Lesson 6</b>	<p><b>Materials:</b> Computer</p> <p><b>Instruction:</b> <b>Writing</b> Students will type out their poems on the computer. Ask students to review their poems and revise by eliminating unnecessary words. Tell them to get to the heart of the meaning by focusing on those necessary words that really express what they want to say. Next, ask students to look at the line breaks. Have they written it in the style of a poem or prose? Once students have polished their poems they will print.</p>
<b>Lesson 7</b>	<p><b>Materials:</b> Computer, printer, and cameras</p> <p><b>Instruction:</b> Students will create an image for an idea presented in one of their poems. First, have students chose the poem they most want to represent in an image. Ask them to figure out what the main theme of the poem expresses. Then, brainstorm possible ways they might be able to use the environment around our school to create an image that expresses the theme. Students will get a camera and take a picture. Remind students to think about vantage point, composition, and framing.</p>
<b>Lesson 8</b>	<p><b>Materials:</b> Construction paper, glue stick,</p> <p><b>Instruction:</b> Demonstrate for students how to mount a photograph to a mat. Students will work on finishing their pictures, typing their poems and mounting their photographs.</p>
<b>Lesson 9</b>	<p><b>Instruction:</b> Students will create a museum display and share their photograph and poem.</p>

Sample Student Works Created



Original Unit created by Darcy Nickel, 2013



Lee Friedlander  
*Washington DC, 1999*  
(From the MoCP collection)



Stephen Mark  
*Untitled from Changing Chicago, 1987*  
(From the MoCP collection)

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## **Borders Boundaries and Belonging Resource Links**

Lesson 1-

[http://www.poetrytranslation.org/poems/346/You\\_Crossed\\_the\\_Border](http://www.poetrytranslation.org/poems/346/You_Crossed_the_Border)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/20/us-usa-immigration-mexico-idUSBRE92J05120130320>

Lesson 2 -

[http://carl-sandburg.com/a\\_fence.htm](http://carl-sandburg.com/a_fence.htm)

[http://www.theatermania.com/new-york-city-theater/reviews/04-2010/fences\\_26808.html](http://www.theatermania.com/new-york-city-theater/reviews/04-2010/fences_26808.html)

Lesson 3-

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/244730>

[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-03-19/news/chi-jonylah-watkins-funeral-20130319\\_1\\_gun-violence-neighbors-south-maryland-avenue](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-03-19/news/chi-jonylah-watkins-funeral-20130319_1_gun-violence-neighbors-south-maryland-avenue)

Lesson 4-

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/176371> (Note: Poem is titled *Mine*. I mis-titled on the lesson.)

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174745> (Only the first section)