

BORDERS: A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH

Level: middle /high school
Course: social studies, language arts

Rationale

As students enter middle school, they are being constantly faced with borders in their own lives—whether they are gang turf lines, R-rated movies, the teachers' lounge or the recognition of city and town lines.

Students and teachers often look at issues from one perspective, or perhaps two, instead of multi-dimensional points of view. In this unit students will look at borders from many different angles and become aware of their complexity.

Recently California's Proposition 187 and the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) operation "Hold the Line," have placed the international 2,000 mile border between the United States and Mexico in the spotlight. This border brings up cultural, political, economic and linguistic issues that students frequently regard as answerable with one solution rather than seeing all the numerous factors involved.

This unit will enable students to explore the many aspects of borders in their own lives. These borders include, but are not limited to:

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| * psychological borders | * political borders |
| * economic borders | * social borders |
| * linguistic borders | * architectural borders |
| * cultural borders | |

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This unit will help students gain knowledge and understanding of causes and effects of the many types of borders they encounter in their daily lives.

Lesson Overview

The main objective of the unit is for each student to complete a culminating project (by student's design) to show a new perspective on borders. After determining what a border is and where borders are, each week the students will examine a new facet of borders. Students will examine: political borders (U.S./Mexico border), economic borders (trade laws, economic disparities), social borders (employer/employee, educated/non-educated), linguistic borders (French/German, Spanish/English), immigration (cause of and result of), architectural borders (building materials and psychological effect), art as a border (territorial warnings of graffiti and recent art projects), cultural borders (all aspects of similarities and differences), psychological borders (personal space and imagined personal limitations). The unit will utilize a variety of resources and will incorporate many levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of Knowledge as well as different learning styles.

Time Needed

The unit takes approximately 9 weeks. Throughout these 9 weeks are exploratory lessons that take 1-2 days. The students are also expected to spend five weeks reading a related novel and writing journal entries from a character's point of view. The culminating project will take 1-2 weeks.

Materials

- * markers/crayons
- * butcher paper
- * poster board
- * TV/ VCR
- * cassette
- * logs for journals
- * student project specific materials

Procedures

Lesson 1: What are borders and why do people cross or not cross them?

Rationale: When students think of the word border, they frequently think of an international border, in particular, the border between the US and Mexico. Students also commonly think that "crossing the border" refers solely to illegal aliens from Mexico or going to Taco Bell. It is important for students to be aware of the many types of borders that exist. Students will learn about different borders, e.g., psychological, cultural, social, economic, etc. They will also examine the cause and effect of choosing to cross or not cross these borders.

Lesson Summary

Students explore the definition of border and brainstorm about the various types of borders within their lives and communities. Students also examine reasons people choose to cross or not cross these various borders. They will brainstorming in cooperative groups and keep a personal log of borders they come across during a 24 hour period in their daily lives.

Time Needed

1-2 class periods

Materials

butcher paper, markers, stopwatch

Procedures

- * Students write in their journals for 5 minutes in response to: "What is a border? List as many types of borders as you can think of."
- * Have students quietly share their responses with a partner.
- * Ask students what they think a border is. Create an idea or word wall with student's responses. Accept all possibilities. Some possible responses may be: a line between a country, a county line, something around a picture, gang turf, marked territory, a person who pays to live in a stranger's space, etc. Explain that yes, a person who pays to live in someone's home is a boarder but they are a boarder not a border.
- * Direct the class to discover that a border is something that sets something apart, a real or imagined division setting one part apart from another. Hint: get students to explain the purpose of a border around a picture. Write a working definition on the board and also have a student read aloud a definition from a collegiate dictionary.
- * Once all students are comfortable with a working definition of borders in a broad sense, go through the same procedure to create a web of various types of borders. Some possible student responses may be, but certainly are not limited to,: international, city, county, state, social, geographical, cultural, political, imaginary borders. Use the picture example again by asking what the border sets apart and then have them apply that to their school, or the town. It is usually easier for students if you start small with known ideas and then work out to a broader scope. Guide students to acknowledge the various types of borders (as explained in the overview).
- * Now ask students to think why someone might want to cross a border (using the class' broad definition of border). Place students into cooperative groups of four and tell them to brainstorm and record as many

different possibilities of why someone might cross or not cross a border. Allow students ten minutes for this activity. Upon completion, ask for a reason from each group and create a web on butcher paper. Note: If students begin to see and make connections of central themes encourage this, if not, don't worry that is another lesson.

* Conclude the lesson by asking students to think of borders in their own lives. Give examples, such as, teacher's lounge, brother/sister's room, bars, and military bases. For homework have students keep a 24 hour log of borders that they encounter, if they did or did not cross these borders and why they wanted to do so. Tell students that they should log a minimum of 7 entries.

Follow-up Activities

Relevant homework assignments connect the themes for student synthesis and application. Students read a novel and write a journal from their character's point of view, identifying all the different borders the character comes across. A final culminating project will be designed and completed by the student.

Possibilities for this are:

- * An oral history of how the border has affected someone
- * A fictional story
- * A debate
- * A video of issues
- * A research paper
- * A play dramatizing types of borders
- * An architectural model of a border
- * An exhibition
- * A survey
- * A comparison/contrast of borders
- * Or the many, many other projects students' interests will create.

Bibliography

Books

Chavez, Leo R. Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society . New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

The author breaks the experience of undocumented immigrants into three phases: separation, transition, and incorporation into the larger society. Case studies are all set in San Diego.

Conover, Ted. Coyotes. First Ed. New York Vintage Books, 1987.

The author traveled with a group of illegal aliens into the U.S. and wrote about their experiences living and working in the U.S. Conover also went to the village in Mexico where these men were from and learned of the effects of the migration on the town.

Crow, Mary. Borders: Poems. First Ed. New York: BOA Editions, 1989.

Border poems written by new poets.

Hernandez, Irene Beltran. Across the Great River. Second Ed. Texas: Arte Publico Press, 1991.

This is a fictional young readers novel about a family immigrating illegally to the U.S. Portrays the "dream" of life in the U.S. and the disappointments of reality.

Mora, Pat. Borders. Texas: Arte Publico Press, 1986.

A series of poems reflecting on the border.

Santoli, Al. "El Paso del Norte and Blue Camp," New Americans: An Oral History. New York: Ballantine Books, 1988.

The author presents oral history from various people affected by immigration. In the cited chapters, he interviews a young couple, a third generation family in Texas, and a border patrol agent. Very informative and offers many different viewpoints.

Pamphlets

"Brutality Unchecked." AmericasWatch Report, a division of Human Rights Watch, 1992.

This report examines human rights abuses committed by the INS and its agents along the four states that border Mexico. It also looks at the policies of the Immigration agency that enable these abuses to occur.

"Illegal Aliens. Problems and Policies." American Enterprise Institute Legislative Analyses. Washington D.C., 1978.

This report examines the impact illegal aliens have on labor and economic markets within the U.S. prior to the 1985 legislation which made it illegal to hire undocumented workers. Gives good background information on policies and legislation prior to these new laws.

Electronic

World Wide Web

Markovitz, Jonathon. "Blurring The Lines: Art On The Border," 1994.

URL: <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmclissue.994/review-3.994.html>

This article was the springboard and inspiration for the unit. Markovitz reviews and explains the art exhibit held along the San Diego/Tijuana border, La Frontera/The Border: Art About the Mexico/ United States Border Experience. Looks at the "border" in a variety of ways.

Latin America Network Information Service

URL: <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/region.html>

Many links to Mexico and surrounding areas.

Latin America/Spanish Speaking Countries Page

URL: <http://edb518ea.edb.utexas.edu/html/LatinAmerica.html>

Has many valuable links.

Latin America Data Base

URL: <http://ladb.unm.edu>

"Devaluation of Peso Resulting in Increase of Undocumented Immigrants to United States," SourceMex, March 1, 1995.

"El Camino Cruel: Mexico and United States," Central America Update, January 27, 1989.

"Governmental Human Rights Commission Report on Treatment of Mexican Nationals at U.S. Border," SourceMex, March 18, 1992.

"Joint Communique, XII U.S.- Mexico Border Governor's Conference," SourceMex, June 1, 1994.

"Racist Shop Talk Common Along U.S.-Mexico Border," SourceMex, May 1, 1991.