

Border Boy by Alberto Ríos Lesson Plan

Facilitator Notes:

This assignment can be used as a discussion in an in-person lesson plan or as a virtual worksheet. Based on the feedback of the class the assignment can be extended through classroom discussion for one week or one hour. The assignment is designed for students' ranging from 8th-12th grade.

Poetry Background

I'm curious, do you like poetry? Why or why not?

What makes a poem, a poem?

Tell me about the last thing you read. What did you like about it?

The First Poem

Please read and underline anything that catches your eye.

Border Boy

By Alberto Ríos

I grew up on the border and though I left
I have brought it with me wherever I've gone.

Its line guides me, this long, winding thread of memory.
The border wasn't as big as they say—

It fit neatly behind my eyes and between my ears—
It guides me still, I know, but it is not a compass.

It is not a place out there but a place in here.
I catch on its barbed wire in both places.

It is a line I step over and a ledge I duck under.
I have looked underneath its skirts, and it has caught me—

Many times. We're old friends and we play the game well.
When someone says *border*, now, or *frontera*, or *the line*.

La línea, or *the fence*, or whatever else
We name the edge and the end of things—

I hear something missing in the words,
The *what it all used to be*. Its name does not include its childhood.

I grew up liking the border and its great scar,
Its drama always good for a story the way scars always are.

A scar is the place where the hurting used to be.
A scar the heroic signature of the healed.

The border is not a scar. Instead, it is something we keep picking at,
Something that has no name.

The border I knew was something with a history.
But this thing now, it is a stranger even to itself.

In your opinion, what has Alberto Ríos learned from the border?

Use your imagination, what do you think the border learned from Alberto Ríos?

What do you like or dislike about this poem? Why?

See what the poet did there. Now it's your turn.

Poem Writing

- Grab a clean sheet of paper
- On the upper right-hand corner of a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions:
 - What is your name?
 - What date did you begin writing this poem?
 - What are your pronouns? **He/Him** **She/Her** **They/Them** _____
 - Pronoun Tip: A pronoun is a way I refer to you and your work when you aren't around. So, let's say when I'm talking to the editor of this book about your work. Do I say what he wrote was awesome OR, she wrote this powerful line, OR should I use something else—like they/ze? I had a kid once who said their pronoun was dragon! Let me tell you, dragon's poems were fire breathing for sure. PS: My pronouns are he/him.
- Let's write. Choose one of the prompts below and begin your poem:
 - **Prompt One:** Choose an object that represents your personal growth. Write a poem that explains how it made you grow. If it helps use one of the following prompts:
 - *My pen and pad has carried me*
 - *If these walls could talk*
 - **Prompt Two:** If you are advanced, learn the rules so you can break them. Write a poem about an object that represents your growth. **Be sure to include how the object has influenced you and you have influenced the object. For example:**
 - My neighborhood raised me
 - I have raised my neighborhood
 - The world has seen me
 - I have seen the world
 - **Prompt Three:** Draw a picture of your own inspiration!