

Drawing Lines, Making Borders

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Grade Level: 7/8, 9/10, 11/12

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Time Required: 1 lesson

Select Curriculum Connections:

- Political boundaries and their impacts
- Human-environment interaction
- Colonialism and its legacies

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Distinguish between borders as a concept versus the lived realities they create.
- Identify the challenges with creating political boundaries.
- Consider who is affected by border decisions: for example, different groups and communities.

Activity:

PART I – Introduction

Have a group discussion with your students about borders, asking: what is a border? What are some examples of borders? Provide students with a brief overview of borders, emphasizing the difference between natural borders (rivers, mountains and lakes) and political borders (lines drawn on a map, walls, and checkpoints).

PART II – Partner Work

Have students work in pairs to read the article "Marking it Out" and to explore

relevant themes and ideas. Before reading, have students discuss the following questions:

- Who is a surveyor?
- Where might a surveyor work?
- What questions are you hoping this article answers about surveyors?

Have your students read “Marking it Out” to learn more about how surveyors create borders. After reading, have students discuss the following questions:

- What surprised you about how borders are created?
- What challenges do surveyors face?
- What questions do you still have after reading the article?

PART III – Wrap-Up: Sharing and Reflecting

Work with your students to fill out a T-chart comparing the difference between borders on a map versus how they impact people’s lives. Create a chart with two columns labelled “border as an idea (map)” and “border as a lived experience (on land).” Ask students: what is the difference between “border as an idea (map)” and “border as a lived experience (on land)?” Record students’ ideas, exploring examples of borders and how they affect people’s daily lives. Use the following questions to gather and discuss students’ entries:

- Can you see a border on a map? In real life?
- How would you describe it?
- What is a border’s purpose? Is it effective?
- How do people engage with borders on a map? In real life?
- How do you cross a border? Is it easy or challenging?

After completing the T-chart, have a discussion with students considering the following questions:

- Who benefits when borders are considered “lines on maps”?
- Who might be ignored?
- How might the lived experiences of surveyors and people who live on the land be similar or different?

Extension:

Provide students with a basic map of physical features of North America, Canada or the province/territory where they live. On their maps, have students sketch a “messy border” that reflects the geography of the area (rivers, mountains, communities) instead of straight lines. Have a discussion with your students about how these “messy borders” might impact people.

Have a class discussion to explore the Canada-U.S. border, considering the unique challenges that characterize it and might not exist anywhere else. Use the following prompts to guide your discussion: wildlife corridors, waterways, transportation, immigration, security, “defending” borders.