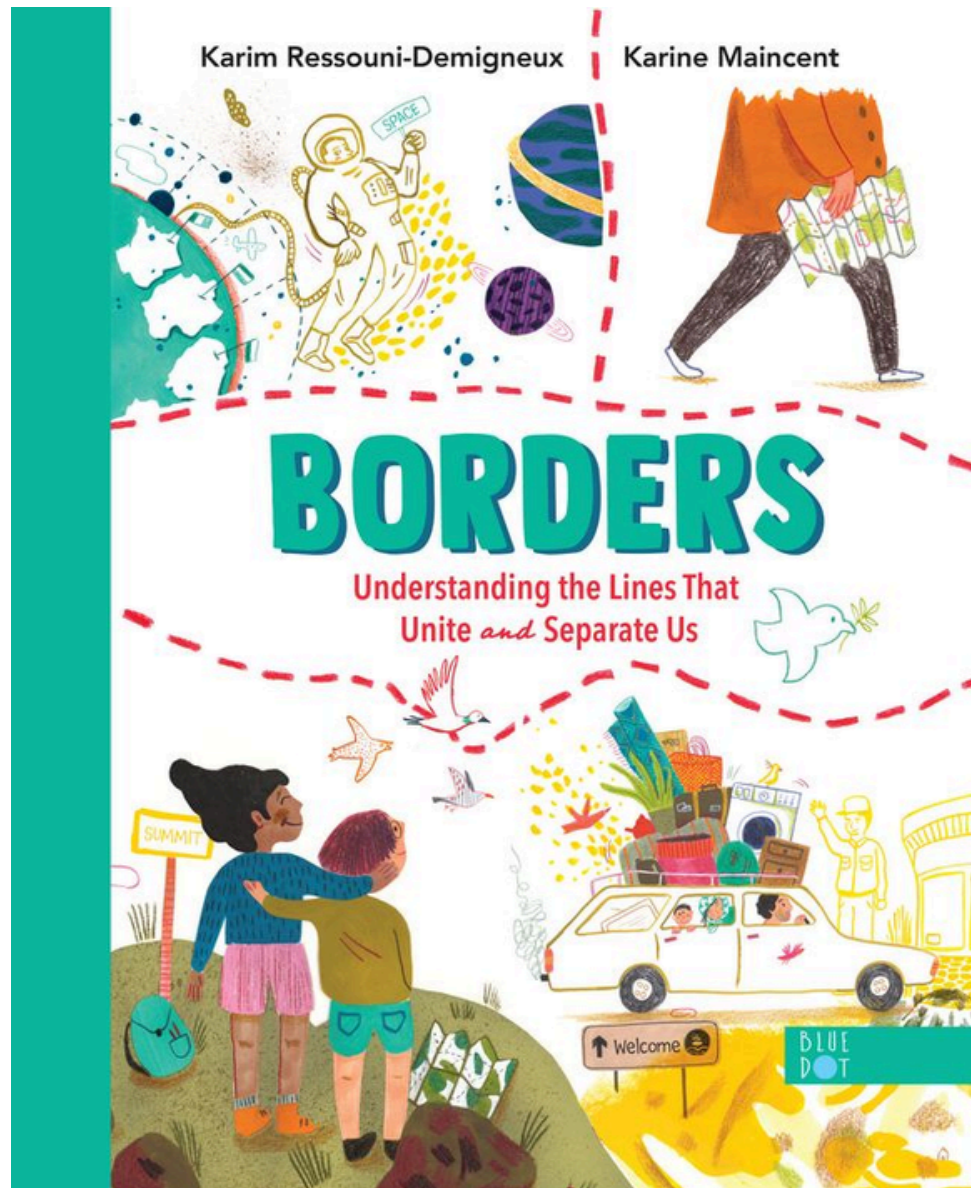


# Your Teacher's Guide

from Blue Dot Kids Press



*Borders: Understanding the Lines That Unite and Separate Us* written by Karim Ressouni-Demigneux and Karine Maincent **Published** August 11, 2026 | ISBN 9798985849493 | **Ages** 8-12



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## Before Reading

### *Essential Questions*

**What are borders?** Borders define the edges of cities, states, countries, and other districts or territories.

**Why do borders exist? Who creates them?** Borders exist to define where certain rules apply. In modern times, they are created by political bodies that make the rules within the delineated area.

**How have borders changed over history?** Borders change all the time! Geographical features like rivers and mountains served as the earliest borders. Later, as people began to form social structures, human-made borders came into being. Over time, as social structures have changed, borders have also changed, often as a result of war or colonization.

**How do borders affect the people who live within them?**

The governmental bodies that establish borders make rules for the people who live within their boundaries, and those rules can vary dramatically. There are also rules about crossing borders—the flow of people, goods, and services.

### *Discussion*

What do you already know about borders? What are some borders you are familiar with? What is the purpose of having borders?

Look at the front and back covers and the end papers of the book. Do they give any clues about what you will learn from the book? Look at the subtitle, “Understanding the Lines That Unite and Separate Us.” What does it tell you about the book? Does it raise any questions?

Look at the illustrations and page headings in the book. What can you gather from them? Which parts of the book look most interesting to you? Do you have any background knowledge that will be useful as we learn from this book?



## *Word Work*

You will be introduced to new vocabulary throughout the book. Here are some key words to learn before beginning the text. Then, as you go through the book, add the bolded terms to this list, along with any other unfamiliar words. (The bolded words in the book are defined in its glossary.)

- **cartography** — the science and art of making maps
- **checkpoints** — a place where people or goods are checked before they move from one place to another, as in between countries
- **colonize** — to extend political and economic control over another people or country, often through occupation
- **continent** — a large continuous mass of land
- **maritime** — relating to the sea
- **migration** — moving from one place to another
- **nomad** — a person with no single, set residence who moves from place to place
- **passport** — a travel document issued by a country that proves the passport holder's identity and citizenship
- **refugee** — a person who flees their home country due to danger
- **scale** — the relationship between distances on a map and corresponding actual distances
- **time zone** — a geographic area where the same time is used throughout
- **treaty** — an agreement made between two or more governments
- **visa** — a document issued by a country to a citizen of a different country who wants to visit

## *During Reading*

### *Reading Methods*

Borders can be used in various ways in a classroom. Students can read the text independently or in small groups. Or the teacher can read it aloud over several class periods, with students reading along.

Borders contains twenty-nine information-rich chapters. To allow for discussion and to aid in understanding, you could break up the book into smaller sections. Here is a sample reading schedule that divides the book over five days, grouping the chapters related by topic:

Day 1	pages 4–17	What Are Borders?; <i>Homo Sapiens</i> , an Animal That Knows No Bounds; Natural Borders; The First Fortifications; The Birth of Empires; Regional Borders; Conquering Territories
Day 2	pages 18–29	Cartography—Drawing Borders; The Geometry of Colonialism; Temporary Borders; Checkpoint Charlie; Walls That Separate; Wacky Borders
Day 3	pages 30–39	At Sea, the Rules Are Different; Sea Territories—Near, Far, and New; Border Checkpoints; Airports; Time Zones—Distorting Time
Day 4	pages 40–51	Living on the Border; Straddling the Line; Passports and Visas; Crossing Borders; Leaving Home—Migration; Action Without Borders
Day 5	pages 52–61	The Special Case of the European Union; Borders in Space; Environmental and Climate Change; A Border-Free Space; Beyond Borders



## *Discussion Questions*

*What Are Borders?* (pages 4–5) — The United Nations was founded in 1945, hundreds of years after countries started drawing borders. Why do you think this new organization was needed in 1945? How did the establishment of the United Nations affect how countries relate to each other?

*Homo Sapiens, an Animal That Knows No Bounds* (pages 6–7) — If you were an ancient Homo sapiens, you would not know anything about the world beyond your community. Would you have stayed put or would you have set off for parts unknown?

*The First Fortifications* (pages 10–11) — Why would humans organize city-states? What purpose do they serve? Can you imagine living in a world without any governments? Would there be any benefits? What about costs?

*Conquering Territories* (pages 16–17) — The end of the fifteenth century (the late 1400s, over five hundred years ago) brought the beginning of colonization, the conquering of lands by European explorers. Often, these explorers are said to have “discovered” these lands. Do you think that term is accurate? What might be a better term for the actions of these Europeans? How would the “New World” be different today if colonization had not occurred? (Hint: Think about language and cultural traditions.)

*The Geometry of Colonialism* (pages 20–21) — Why do you think European countries considered the African continent to be “terra incognita” (unknown land)? Do you think the residents of the continent felt the same way about their home?

*Checkpoint Charlie* (pages 24–25) — The government of East Germany built a wall around the section of Berlin that was governed by West Germany to keep East Berliners from moving to West Berlin. What do you think was different about living in the East Berlin sector that made the wall necessary?

*Walls That Separate* (pages 26–27) — Can you imagine what it would be like to be a nomad? Is there anything you would like about it? If you could only take a backpack with you, what would you pack for your travels?

*Wacky Borders* (pages 28–29) — The demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea was created in 1953 after the Korean War to keep the two countries separate, leaving a 375-square-mile area where no humans live. How would removing humans for over seventy years change an area?



*At Sea, the Rules Are Different* (pages 30–31) — Did you know there are special rules for borders in the ocean? Why would there need to be treaties about ocean borders? What do you think there is for countries to fight about in the vast oceans?

*Border Checkpoints* (pages 34–35) — Why do you think countries restrict people or stuff that crosses the border?

*Time Zones* (pages 38–39) — The continental United States has four time zones. China, which is almost the same geographic size, has only one. The whole country uses Beijing time. How would having only one time zone make life in China different than in the US? What would it be like in the US if everyone was on Washington, DC, time?

*Straddling the Line* (pages 42–43) — If you could pick any international border to build your house on, thereby living in two countries at once, which border would you choose?

*Passports and Visas* (pages 44–45) — Why do you think countries require passports and visas to travel across borders, rather than allowing full freedom of movement?

*Crossing Borders* (pages 46–47) — Have you heard any stories about people who have left their home country because of danger, becoming refugees? What do you know about asylum seekers?

*Action Without Borders* (pages 50–51) — Why are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) needed? What services do they provide that governments can't or don't? Should governments provide these services?

*The Special Case of the European Union* (pages 52–53) — What would change in the United States if North, Central, and South America formed a union like the European Union?

*Borders in Space* (pages 54–55) — You have learned a lot about how borders have developed on Earth. What do you think will happen if countries start building colonies on the moon or Mars?

*A Border-Free Space* (pages 58–59) — Why is it important to set aside areas of the Earth like national parks and biosphere reserves that severely restrict humans from visiting?

## After Reading

### *Discuss What You Learned*

Why do borders exist?

How do borders affect the lives of people who live within them?

How have borders changed over history?

Are there some rights that should transcend borders?

### *Demonstrate Comprehension*

*Borders* is filled with new vocabulary. Here are some ideas to reinforce that learning.

*Vocabulary Board Game* — Make a board game out of the new vocabulary words. Put the words on cards with point values based on their difficulty. Players move forward on the board according to the point value when they successfully define a word drawn from the deck. You can add some border-themed wild cards like Border Closed = Lose a Turn or Free Visa = Move forward 5 spaces.

*Vocabulary Charades* — Play charades using vocabulary words from *Borders*.

*Vocabulary BINGO* — Make BINGO cards with the vocabulary words you collected from *Borders*. Call out the definition and have students find the corresponding word on their card.



## Research

*Changing Borders* — Take a region of the world and research how the borders have changed over history. Make a map and color-code the different borders, annotating to show why they changed.

*Indigenous Nations* — Research indigenous nations that have lived in your region or another part of the world. Overlay current political borders on traditional indigenous boundaries.

*Geographic Features* — Make a map of your state showing primary geographical features: mountain ranges, major rivers, canyons, deserts, other natural structures. Using only those features, how would you divide your state into smaller states?

*Biospheres* — Learn more about biosphere reserves as designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). You can start here:  
<https://www.unesco.org/en/mab/wnbr/about>.

*Climate Change* — The authors discuss the loss of land because of climate change. One place experiencing a significant effect from sea level rise is Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay of Virginia. Research the changes in Tangier Island's borders as a result of the encroaching bay. Are there places near you that show the effects of climate change?

## Social Studies Activities

*Timeline* — Make a timeline of historical information in the book. Start in one corner of the room to represent when Homo sapiens first migrated out of Africa sixty thousand years ago (page 7). As you encounter historic events in the book, add them to your timeline, wrapping around the classroom.

*Find It* — As you encounter geographic locations in the book, have students find them on a world map or globe. There are many of them in the book, so finding all of them will help increase familiarity with world geography.

*Natural Borders* — Display a world map or a globe. Challenge students to find natural borders. They should look for examples of rivers, mountain ranges, deserts, and oceans that serve as natural borders. Are there any natural borders near your community?



*Reading a Map* — Obtain a street map of your town and challenge students to find well-known places on the map: their home, your school, the library, local parks, a favorite restaurant, etc. Have them chart the route from your school to these various places.

*Find Your Borders* — Using local, state, and national maps, have students find the borders of your school district (if applicable), town/city, congressional district, county, state, or country. Discuss why these lines are important and what changes when you cross these borders.

*Time Zones* — Display a map of time zones around the world, including the International Date Line. Based on the time and date in your classroom right now, have students determine the time and date in:

New York, New York	Sydney, Australia
Los Angeles, California	Cairo, Egypt
Honolulu, Hawaii	New Delhi, India
Mexico City, Mexico	Moscow, Russia
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Dakar, Senegal
London, England	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Beijing, China	Reykjavík, Iceland

Discuss the findings. Did they discover anything surprising?

*Cartography* — Challenge students (individually or in small groups) to make a map of your classroom, school, or playground. Each student should measure the length of their pace and then pace off the distances for the map. They will need to determine the appropriate scale for the map so it will fit on the paper and use a compass to orient the map.

*Play with Scale* — To understand scale and its effect on the detail that can be shown on a map, have students map three different sized areas using the same size paper. For example, they might map the playground using a 1 inch = 10 feet scale. Then, they could map a smaller section of the playground with a 1 inch = 1 foot scale. Finally, they could mark off a 1 foot square and map it with a 1 inch = 1 inch scale. How detailed can they make each map?



*Latitude and Longitude* — Invite students to look at a globe and find the latitude and longitude lines. Discuss how they are measured in degrees with latitude showing changes north and south relative to the equator and longitude showing changes east and west relative to the prime meridian. Students can then make a list of places they would like to visit and find the closest latitude/longitude coordinates shown on the globe.

## Citizen Science Activities

Citizen science, also called community science, happens when people study the world around them and send the data they collect to scientists. Citizen scientists are people—young or old, who have attended a lot of school or very little, from cities and from small towns—who help collect data for research projects and help to answer real scientific questions.

### *In the Classroom: A Focus on Migratory Birds*

While governments make rules about how people and goods cross borders, migratory birds follow their own instincts, crossing international borders as nature calls them to. But they need our help. The has information on how your class can participate in the conservation of migratory birds.

- Learn about international flyways — This map shows the vast distances that migratory birds travel within their flyways. Find your community on the map to understand where birds you might see in your schoolyard have been and are going.
- Participate in a community science bird count project to contribute data to the bird conservation effort. Bird count projects range from the Great Backyard Bird Count each year in February to Project FeederWatch that can happen at any time.
- Review the “[Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds](#)” and discuss ways you can implement them at your school. Here are some ideas that are well suited to a classroom setting:
  - Make the windows of your school bird safe by adding images of birds. Students can draw and color them and then tape them facing out to prevent birds from flying into the windows.



- Plant a native garden to provide shelter and food for migrating birds. Partner with a local garden club or cooperative extension service for guidance.
- Make a plan to reduce plastic waste that ends up in waterways, affecting birds and other wildlife.

## Taking Action

*Organizations Uniting Us Across Borders* — In small groups, students choose an organization listed on page 63 and learn more about the work it does. Students can educate their classmates about the organization by making an informational poster, a video public service announcement, or a zine. Encourage creativity to convey the information in an engaging way.

*The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* — To learn more about this important document, start at the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (<https://www.unhcr.org/us/>). The Declaration consists of thirty articles. Assign each student an article to research. Give each student a square of drawing paper to depict their article. They should include a brief definition in their own words, an illustration, and a colorful border. Put them all together to make a paper quilt of rights or bind them together into a class book.

*The Declaration of the Rights of the Child* — Look at the “kid-friendly” explanation of this important document, found on the UNICEF website: <https://www.unicef.org/media/60981/file/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf>. As a class, make your own list of fundamental rights that should be available to all children. As with the project above, students can describe and illustrate each of the ideas for a paper quilt or class book.

*Refugee Assistance in Your Community* — Find a refugee assistance agency working in your area. Coordinate a drive to collect needed items to support local refugee families and help welcome newcomers to your community.

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**Addresses Common Core Standards for English Language Arts Standards >> Reading:  
Informational Texts (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI), Grade 3 through Grade 7**

**Key Ideas and Details:** 3.1, 3.2, 3.3; 4.1, 4.2, 4.3;  
5.1, 5.2, 5.3; 6.1, 6.2, 6.3; 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

**Craft and Structure:** 3.4, 3.5, 3.6; 4.4, 4.5; 5.4; 6.4,  
6.6; 7.4, 7.5

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**  
3.7, 3.8; 4.7, 4.8; 5.7, 5.8; 6.7; 7.8

