



Cultural Tapestry Arts Lesson: Alberto Rios

The Border: A Double Sonnet

The border is a line that birds cannot see.
The border is a beautiful piece of paper folded carelessly in half.
The border is where flint first met steel, starting a century of fires.
The border is a belt that is too tight, holding things up but making it hard to breathe.
The border is a rusted hinge that does not bend.
The border is the blood clot in the river's vein.
The border says stop to the wind, but the wind speaks another language, and keeps going.
The border is a brand, the "Double-X" of barbed wire scarred into the skin of so many.
The border has always been a welcome stopping place but is now a stop sign, always red.
The border is a jump rope still there even after the game is finished.
The border is a real crack in an imaginary dam.
The border used to be an actual place, but now, it is the act of a thousand imaginations.
The border, the word border, sounds like order, but in this place they do not rhyme.
The border is a handshake that becomes a squeezing contest.

The border smells like cars at noon and wood smoke in the evening.
The border is the place between the two pages in a book where the spine is bent too far.
The border is two men in love with the same woman.
The border is an equation in search of an equals sign.
The border is the location of the factory where lightning and thunder are made.
The border is "NoNo" The Clown, who can't make anyone laugh.
The border is a locked door that has been promoted.
The border is a moat but without a castle on either side.
The border has become Checkpoint Chale.
The border is a place of plans constantly broken and repaired and broken.
The border is mighty, but even the parting of the seas created a path, not a barrier.
The border is a big, neat, clean, clear black line on a map that does not exist.
The border is the line in new bifocals: below, small things get bigger; above, nothing changes.
The border is a skunk with a white line down its back.

Poet: Alberto Rios – the inaugural state poet laureate of Arizona and author of many poetry collections, including *A Small Story about the Sky*. 1981 recipient of the Walt Whitman Award, he served as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 2014 to 2020.

NOTES:

Let's Explore

Spend several minutes to read the poem a few times...

- *What do you notice?*
 - *Who or what is the subject(s) and why was the poet inspired to write about them?*
 - *What do you learn about the subject - where might this be taking place, and when?*
 - *What makes this subject different or special?*

- *What do you wonder?*
 - *What is going on? What surrounds the subject of the poem?*
 - *What happened before the time of the poem, and what might come next?*
 - *Are there different ways to see the situation, or is it clear what is happening?*
 - *Have you ever seen someone or something like the subject? If you have, where did you see them or it?*

- *How does it make you feel?*
 - *If the poem describes an action, would you ever like to do something similar?*
 - *Do you see yourself in the poem? In what way?*
 - *Do things or feelings in the poem remind you of anything?*
 - *Does the title of the poem affect how you feel about it?*

Write down your thoughts and share with family and friends...

The Four Artistic Processes



RESPOND: Explore and Understand

- What words have impact? Why do you think the author chose them?
- What do you notice about tone, rhythm, pattern and mood of the poem?

CONNECT: Relate to the artwork

- How does the poem make you feel? Why?
- If you could interview the author or the subject, what questions would you ask?
- What do you think the subject (person) in the poem is doing? If there isn't a person shown, do you feel an emotion in what is written, such as affection, tension, or creativity?

CREATE: Make your own art

- Write a poem or short essay reflecting on the way the poem makes you feel, or a subject similar to that of the poem.
- Draw or paint an artwork or take a photograph that has a subject similar to that in the poem.
- Imagine you are the artist who created the poem. Write what they might say to describe their reason for writing the poem, from their point of view.

PRESENT: Share your artwork

- Share your creation with family or friends.
- Take a moment to share what you have discovered.