

Imaginary Borders
Discussion Guide
Grades 7-9

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

Before using this book with your class or recommending the book to students we suggest reading the book closely to determine if it is a good fit. We also suggest using Diana E. Hess and Paula McAvoy's text, *The Political Classroom*, for best practices and ethical considerations regarding classroom discourse on political issues.

- Activate prior knowledge: What do the words imaginary and border mean? What do you think these two words together mean?
- The author, Xiuhtezcatl (shoo-TEZ-kawt) Martinez, is an indigenous climate activist and hip-hop artist. Before reading, check out some of his music and activism on the internet.
- Frontload vocabulary: greenhouse gas, fossil fuel, prevention, restoration, climate, justice, economy, activism

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

- Martinez advocates for people to involve themselves in finding solutions instead of relying on the UN or world leaders to do so. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- Martinez writes, "we need to use our art and expression to build power and shape our movements" (p. 19). What does he mean by this?
- In what ways are marginalized communities more disproportionately vulnerable to climate change? Give examples from the book or from other sources.
- In what ways are migration and immigration related to climate change? Give examples from the book or other sources.
- What does the author mean, "all these imaginary borders exist in order to disempower us, and they keep our movements fragmented and divided" (p. 33)?
- How does Martinez's beliefs in the intrinsic connection between humans and the planet affect his words and actions?
- How was Martinez introduced to music and rap? How is Hip-hop a language?
- Why do you think Martinez began to question his identity and purpose in 2015? How did he overcome this?
- Martinez writes, "while statistics and science aim to change minds, art has always changed hearts" (p. 51). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- How was Martinez able to connect his music with his activism? What does he say about the power of music?

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After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- Martinez writes, “as our ability to communicate has gotten easier, the lines that have separated us are fading” (p. 60). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Provide examples to support your thinking.
- Youth involvement and activism are essential topics in this book and Martinez’s work. Research youth activism in your community to find out how you can get involved.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Check out RIF’s [Sustainable Futures](#) center to learn more about environmental justice with related books and resources.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.