

**Tales from the Chihuahuan Desert:
Borderlands Narratives about Identity and Binationalism**

National Endowment for the Humanities and The University of Texas at El Paso
2017 Summer Institute for Secondary School Teachers (Grades 6th–12th)

**Instructional Lesson Plan Framework with 5E Model
for E-Portfolio with Artifacts and Readings**

1. Title and Author of Lesson Plan

WeBuildtheWall_Diction by Tara Partow

2. Content or Subject Areas with Keywords

Business, Border Barrier, Border Wall, Connotation, Diction, English Language Arts, Crowdfunding, GoFundMe, Politics, Rhetoric, Intertextuality

3. Grade Levels and Time Required

This plan is relevant to 9th-12th grade students and takes one 50 minute class period.

4. Instructional Objectives and Student Learning

Objectives <i>Students will be able to</i>	Applicable Standards <i>Common Core</i>	Assessment Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determine the central idea and purpose of a text ● Identify smaller moments in a text that support or enhance its overall purpose ● Analyze the connotations of certain words and their impact 	<p>Reading Informational Text</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4</p>	<p>Homework Question: Annotate the text (front and back). Then, write two paragraphs describing this rhetorical situation. Analyze Kolfage’s choice to include certain details about himself, as well as his diction.</p>

5. Guiding Questions

- How do words influence our understanding of the border
 - Why do words matter? How does our word choice overtly or subtly reveal our attitudes about a group of people, an event, or an idea?
- How can multiple people have completely different perspectives about a particular word (e.g. wall, secure, etc.)?
- How do words create objectivity and subjectivity in rhetorical situations?

6. Materials and Resources

- Projector or Screen to display [videos and slideshow](#)

- Notebooks/Composition books (any location where students write frequent reflections and notes)
- Printed and cut copies of the [wall words](#) for guided practice
- Printed copies of [homework](#)

7. Introduction

The construction of a border wall along the length of the nearly 2,000 mile U.S.-Mexico border was a hallmark promise of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign. As a teacher, I saw the rhetoric of “the wall” incite students of all ages to voice passionate dissent or support for a construction project that few of them would ever see in person. This lesson creates space for students to confront, investigate, and discuss the physical extension of a fence or wall along the border and the rhetorical construction. By reading and analyzing campaign texts (Trump2016, WeBuildTheWall, and CardsAgainstHumanityStopsTheWall), students will examine and understand how rhetoric (words) can be used to build up and undermine an idea.

8. Instructional and Lesson Activities (ENGAGE, EXPLORE, EXPLAIN)

[This Google Slideshow](#) outlines the activities of the lesson.

Key vocabulary:

- Connotation
- Denotation
- Diction
- Spectrum

9. EXTEND/ELABORATE: Additional Learning

Students will add their new understanding of diction to their repertoire of literary devices to analyze rhetorical situations about the border and migration. I will personally follow this lesson with a second one titled “WeSaveAmerica_Satire” which is also posted to the institute’s webpage. The satirical lesson also uses a crowdfunding campaign as its primary text, so students can compare the satirical campaign to undermine and invalidate efforts to build and fund “the wall.” As a culminating project, students can work collaboratively to produce and publish their own crowdfunding campaign.

10. EVALUATE: Assessment

Students will be informally assessed during the guided practice activity where they share why they landed where they did on the connotation spectrum. Students will be formally assessed the following class period based on their responses [to the homework](#). The assignment can be graded out of 10 based on the following criteria:

2 pts Annotations

4 pts Description of rhetorical situation (subject, audience, author, purpose, format)

4 pts Analysis of author’s diction and inclusion of certain details about himself

11. Accommodations and Modifications

- Make considerations for students with disabilities that affect mobility when doing tasks that require movement.
- The guided practice diction activity is divided into two parts so that students who might be reluctant to read unfamiliar words out loud can listen to their peers who are more likely to be familiar with the pronunciation of the wall words.
- During the movement activity, students can be assisted by their peers while determining where their word falls on the connotation spectrum.

12. College and Career Readiness (optional)

13. Additional Resources

- For a resource on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands to challenge misconceptions about the border, see:
<http://apps.npr.org/borderland/>
- For a more comprehensive look at the history of Trump’s rhetoric around the wall, students can look at this New York Times article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/18/us/politics/trump-border-wall-immigration.html>
- Because media bias is responsible for the spread of misinformation, here is a tool I plan on using throughout my unit on rhetoric. It plots the most common periodicals on an x-axis of political neutrality and a y-axis of fact based reporting:
<https://www.adfontesmedia.com/>
- If you’d like a preview of the second lesson on satire, check out Card’s Against Humanity’s attempt to “save America”:
<https://www.cardsagainsthumanitysaveamerica.com/>

14. References (or Works Cited)

Works Cited

Inskeep, Steve. “BORDERLAND.” *Borerland*, NPR, 3 Apr. 2014, apps.npr.org/borderland/.

Jackson, Carter. “Cards Against Humanity Saves America.” *Cards Against Humanity Saves America*, Cards Against Saves America, 2017, www.cardsagainsthumanitysaveamerica.com/.

Manjarrez, Victor M. “Border Security: Defining It Is the Real Challenge.” *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2015, pp. 793–800., doi:10.1515/jhsem-2015-0052.

Manjarrez, Victor. “Finding the Truth in the Wall Debate.” *The Washington Times*, 18 Feb. 2019, www.dropbox.com/s/jczmfy7dgecl7m2/Victor%20M%201.pdf?dl=0.

Nixon, Ron, and Linda Qiu. "Trump's Evolving Words on the Wall." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 19 Jan. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/01/18/us/politics/trump-border-wall-immigration.html.

Otero, Vanessa. "Media Bias Chart: Version 4.0." *Ad Fontes Media*, Ad Fontes Media, Inc., Aug. 2018, www.adfontesmedia.com/.

15. Reflection

This modest lesson plan reflects such a small fraction of what I learned while at our summer institute in the Borderlands, and what I will bring back to my classroom in Gallup. The institute was the first time I have confronted the physicality of the border barrier. I was fascinated by the specific words our border patrol tour guide, Fidel Baca, used to describe his work and his office. Throughout the tour, Baca opted to use "illegal immigrants" and rejected the depiction of migrants from Central America as refugees. He also used "new toys" to describe new technology CBP has acquired over the years, and "tracking" to describe his role in border security. His use of these words reveal deep attitudes about how he perceives his job and the migrants he detains. I thought this lesson on diction would be an ideal way to provide a learning experience to my students that reveals how individual words are loaded with power through their connotations. They can be used to otherize people, creating rhetorical barriers that can rally support for physical ones.